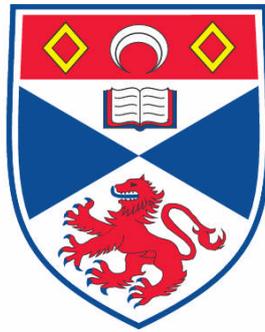


**THE OPHELIA VERSIONS : REPRESENTATIONS OF A  
DRAMATIC TYPE, 1600-1633**

**Fiona Benson**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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Fiona Benson

*A thesis presented for the degree of  
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School of English

August 2007

## ABSTRACT

‘The Ophelia Versions: Representations of a Dramatic Type from 1600-1633’ interrogates early modern drama’s use of the Ophelia type, which is defined in reference to *Hamlet’s* Ophelia and the behavioural patterns she exhibits: abandonment, derangement and suicide.

Chapter one investigates Shakespeare’s Ophelia in *Hamlet*, finding that Ophelia is strongly identified with the ballad corpus. I argue that the popular ballad medium that Shakespeare imports into the play via Ophelia is a subversive force that contends with and destabilizes the linear trajectory of Hamlet’s revenge tragedy narrative. The alternative space of Ophelia’s ballad narrative is, however, shut down by her suicide which, I argue, is influenced by the models of classical theatre. This ending conspires with the repressive legal and social restrictions placed upon early modern unmarried women and sets up a dangerous precedent by killing off the unassimilated abandoned woman.

Chapter two argues that Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen* amplifies Ophelia’s folk and ballad associations in their portrayal of the Jailer’s Daughter. Her comedic marital ending is enabled by a collaborative, communal, folk-cure. The play nevertheless registers a proto-feminist awareness of the peculiar losses suffered by early modern women in marriage and this knowledge deeply troubles the Jailer’s Daughter’s happy ending.

Chapter three explores the role of Lucibella in *The Tragedy of Hoffman* arguing that the play is a direct response to *Hamlet’s* treatment of revenge and that Lucibella is caught up in an authorial project of disambiguation which attempts to return the revenge plot to its morality roots. Chapters four and five explore the narratives of Aspatia in *The Maid’s Tragedy* and Penthea in *The Broken Heart*, finding in their very conformism to the behaviours prescribed for them, both by the Ophelia type itself and by early modern society in general, a radical protest against the limitations and repressions of those roles.

This thesis is consistently invested in the competing dialectics and authorities of oral and textual mediums in these plays. The Ophelia type, perhaps because of *Hamlet’s* Ophelia’s identification with the ballad corpus, proves an interesting gauge of each play’s engagement with emergent notions of textual authority in the early modern period.

## DECLARATIONS

I, Fiona Benson, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date: 07.08.07 signature of candidate .....

I was admitted as a research student in October, 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in October 2003; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2007.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of ..... in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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For my supervisor,

Neil Rhodes

*et*

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## CHAPTER I:

### “A CREATURE NATIVE AND INDUED / UNTO THAT ELEMENT.”

#### SHAKESPEARE’S OPHELIA AND THE POPULAR BALLADS

##### Introduction

Gertrude’s messenger speech describing the drowning Ophelia has provided one of the abiding images of *Hamlet* and indeed, of early modern literature. She describes Ophelia born “mermaid-like” down the “weeping brook” with “[h]er clothes spread wide”, surrounded by fallen garlands “[o]f crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples” (4.7.175, 174, 173, 167).<sup>1</sup> Crucially for this thesis, Ophelia is *singing*. As Gertrude tells Laertes:

Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,  
 As one incapable of her own distress  
 Or like a creature native and indued  
 Unto that element. (4.7.175-8)

The “element” that Gertrude refers to is most obviously the water that Ophelia seems to be so oblivious to. However, this “element” is arguably also the old lauds that Ophelia sings, the ballad fragments that are so appropriate to her own

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 2006). This text is based on the second quarto. All further references to this edition.

narrative. In fact, the more one reads Ophelia within a ballad context, the clearer it becomes that she is indeed “a creature native and indued / Unto that element,” a ballad daughter who moves in her own distinct, popular ballad genre, a genre that unfolds within the dominant revenge tragedy narrative, troubling and disrupting its trajectory.

Previous critical interest in the relationship between the ballad corpus and the character of Ophelia in *Hamlet* has largely focused on the specifics of Ophelia’s mad ballading. Firstly, it has attempted to find sources for Ophelia’s act five ballad songs, a forensic exercise for which Peter J. Seng has provided the definitive study.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, brief consideration has been given to the class implications of this mad ballading; it is inferred that Ophelia’s songs are “childhood recollections of a nurse’s songs”, evocative of a working class context, “a realm of childhood, of old, simple ballads sung by the spinners in the sun”, “not the aristocratic ayre, but crude songs of the common folk”.<sup>3</sup> This working class context has led to further critical commentary on the impropriety, according to contemporary codes of conduct, of both Ophelia’s singing in public and of the subject matter itself, which is “unbecoming to a maiden.” F. W. Sternfeld cites Castiglione’s advice in *The Book of the Courtier III* that “when she cometh to dance, or to show any kind of music, she ought to be brought to it with suffering herself somewhat to be prayed, and with a certain bashfulness....” As W. H. Auden comments, “we are meant to be horrified

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<sup>2</sup> Peter J. Seng, *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare: A Critical History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); see also Stuart Gillespie, ‘Shakespeare and Popular Song’ in Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes ed. *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), pp. 186-8; F. W. Sternfeld, *Music In Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 59; and Richmond Noble’s *Shakespeare’s Use of Song with the Text of Principal Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> John Robert Moore, ‘The Function of Songs in Shakespeare’s Plays’, *Shakespeare Studies by Members of the Department of English of the University of Wisconsin* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1916) cited in Seng, *Songs*, p. 143; John H. Long, *Shakespeare’s Use of Music, Volume Three: The Histories and Tragedies* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971), p. 114; Sternfeld, *Music*, p. 65.

both by what she sings and by the fact that she sings at all”.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, criticism has shown interest in Ophelia’s mad ballading as an instance of the manipulation of music as a pathetic device to elicit audience sympathy. Mildred E. Hartsock, for example, comments on the scene’s use of “the terrible pathos of a young girl’s madness. A quietness settles over the play punctuated only by the discordant music of a daft mind.”<sup>5</sup>

However, Ophelia’s relationship to the ballad corpus is not confined to the specific instance of her mad ballading, but is *generic*. Ophelia is very much a creature of the ballad corpus as a whole. Whilst her later, mad ballading is the most obvious indication of this allegiance, her earlier situation as an unmarried daughter and the way in which her plot develops are very much *of* the ballad genre. She moves through *Hamlet* to ballad time, her concerns are ballad concerns, she plays by ballad rules, and her fate is appropriately balladic. Her plot opens up a kind of ballad space in the play that is at odds with the other main genre in operation: revenge tragedy. Hamlet’s narrative is essentially concerned with his attempts to negotiate his way through this revenge tragedy genre. He is, of course, *the* literate early modern protagonist, a poet-philosopher who applies his creative writing skills in his poem for Ophelia and in his play in attempts to further both his love life and his revenge plot. Where Ophelia is identified with the ballads, Hamlet is explicitly identified with the revenge tragedy genre, and the well-worn role of revenger is one with which he contends from the very beginning of the play: “The time is out of joint; O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right!” (1.5.186-7) As John

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<sup>4</sup> Sternfeld, *Music*, p. 58 & 55; W. H. Auden, *The Dyer’s Hand and Other Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), p. 117; further criticism regarding Ophelia’s breach of modesty in singing includes Joseph T. McCullen Jr, ‘The Functions of Songs Aroused by Madness in Elizabethan Drama’, in Arnold Williams (ed.) *A Tribute to George Coffin Taylor: Studies and Essays, Chiefly Elizabethan, by his Students and Friends* (Richmond, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), p. 193, and Stuart Gillespie, ‘Shakespeare and Popular Song’, p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> Mildred E. Hartsock, ‘Major Scenes in Minor Key’, *SQ* 21:1 (1970), 55-62 at p. 57. See also A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1904), p. 60.

Kerrigan comments, “Why, the Prince wonders, should obedience to revenge make his life conform to the shape of some old pot-boiler (the audience will be thinking of the *Ur-Hamlet*)? Why is he in *this* play?”<sup>6</sup>

Hamlet’s comment registers not only his disbelief, but also his compulsion to move forward with the revenge action. As Margreta de Grazia notes, “it is precisely from Hamlet’s hesitation that criticism infers a directional trajectory.”<sup>7</sup> It is this sense of trajectory that colours Hamlet’s self-recriminations, and fretful reckonings of what he ought to have done by *now*, or *now*, or *now*, and it is the dictates of the revenge narrative that make Denmark “a prison”, the world “[a] goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o’th’worst”, and the earth “a sterile promontory” (F. 2.2.242, 244-5, Q2 2.2.265).<sup>8</sup> The promontory metaphor is relevant to the jutting stage of the Elizabethan theatre, towards which Hamlet is probably pointing. However, it is also an image of a corridor of land dead-ended by the sea, and vividly figures the linearity of the revenge tragedy trajectory that Hamlet finds himself confined to. The revenge dynamic has one inexorable goal and one known outcome: the killing of the killer and then, the killing of the killer, for the death of the revenger himself – increasingly a requirement of the genre – is the dead-end of this promontory. Shakespeare builds loopholes and exits out of the inexorable revenge narrative and opens up, with Ophelia and the romantic ballad genre space she moves in, the potential for comedy. She offers a door out of the peculiarly restrictive corridor of the revenge narrative and an opening into love and marriage, as the demands and

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<sup>6</sup> John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Margreta de Grazia, “Teleology, Delay, and the “Old Mole””, *SQ* 50:3 (1999), 251-267, at p. 255.

<sup>8</sup> Folio quotations taken from William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 2006). All further references to Q1 or F taken from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

priorities of her ballad narrative compete with the dictates of revenge tragedy throughout the play.

Importantly, this interaction of genre is also a collision of the oral and the literate. The ballad corpus is a popular, oral medium that contends with the usually elite and literate form of revenge tragedy, which found its traditional precedents in Oxbridge translations of Seneca's tragedies. Adam Fox has argued that in early modern England, there was a great deal of cultural two-way traffic between the spheres of the oral and the literate. The England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that he describes was:

a society in which the three media of speech, script and print infused and interacted with each other in a myriad ways. Then, as now, a song or a story, an expression or a piece of news could migrate promiscuously between these three vehicles of transmission as it circulated around the country, throughout society and over time.

For Fox, the oral and the literate cannot be described with any truth as discrete elements, and the very binarism of the opposition fails "to accommodate the reciprocity between the different media by this time."<sup>9</sup> The interchange between the two in *Hamlet* however is no fusion, but rather the controlled and deliberate import of the oral to challenge and undermine the literate from within the play, as the literate and literary revenge tragedy narrative is spliced with Ophelia's popular ballad scenes. The radical instability that is a feature of the popular, oral form challenges and undermines the literate revenge tragedy narrative, destabilising its

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 5 & 6.

progress and questioning its conclusions to create a text that is always in the process of *becoming*. In other words, the play appears to deliberately exploit the oral / literate dichotomy.

Crucially, this interaction between the oral and the literate is also an interaction of gender. Carol Thomas Neely argues that: “Ophelia’s madness, as the play presents it, begins to be gender-specific in ways that later stage representations of Ophelia and of female hysterics will exaggerate.”<sup>10</sup> While Neely concentrates on the physical symptoms of Ophelia’s madness as a nascent stage-representation of a love-sickness that began to be gendered as female with the publication of Edward Jorden’s *The Suffocation of the Mother* in 1603, this gender-specificity is also implicit in Ophelia’s use of and association with the ballad corpus itself, an association that continued to be a trademark of early modern stage representations of female madness.<sup>11</sup> The popular ballad source is so deeply embedded in a culture of female orality that it is possible to argue that the ballads are themselves gendered products of a female community. Furthermore, the revenge tragedy narrative that Ophelia’s ballad space subverts and disrupts is also an explicitly gendered, demonstrably male machine. Authored and populated by men, it also follows a linear teleology that is deeply rooted in historical time and can be metaphorically gendered as masculine.

Ophelia’s subversive, disruptive ballad space provides an alternative to and opens into this restrictive teleology, but is ultimately closed down by her suicide. As Neely comments, “[t]he mad woman characters in tragedy [...] are not cured but eliminated. Ophelia is reabsorbed into cultural norms by her narrated drowning

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<sup>10</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, “Documents in Madness”: Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare’s Tragedies and Early Modern Culture’, *ESQ* 42:3 (1991), 315-338, at p. 325.

<sup>11</sup> Of all the female characters treated in this thesis, *The Broken Heart’s* Penthea is the only one who does *not* sing ballads or songs.

and her Christian burial.”<sup>12</sup> Here, genre agrees with culture; Ophelia’s popular ballad space is shut down with the tools of classical drama, from which revenge tragedy derives. Her drowning may be a ballad demise but it is narrated in the high-literate style of classical tragedy with Gertrude performing the messenger-role, delivering tidings of a suicide that is classically conventional by virtue of its being performed offstage. This development reflects the narrowing of female freedom that feminist materialist criticism perceives in the early modern period as a product of Renaissance humanism, a similarly classically-derived idiom which, in its categorizing of experience and humanity, sought to confine women to domestic roles in the private sphere of the home.<sup>13</sup>

More specifically, this suiciding of the anomalous, abandoned woman responds to and colludes with the narrowing of the single woman’s freedoms in the early modern period. Merry E. Wiesner finds that civic and religious authorities in sixteenth century Europe increasingly regarded women who lived alone with hostility; laws in France and Germany, for example, “forbade unmarried women to move into cities, required widows to move in with one of their male children, and obliged unmarried women to move in with a male relative or employer”. This hostility, Wiesner writes, was exacerbated by “the Protestant emphasis on marriage

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<sup>12</sup> Neely, “Documents in Madness”, p. 336.

<sup>13</sup> This argument was introduced in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1977) in Joan Kelly’s ‘Did Women Have a Renaissance?’ pp. 174-201, and Merry E. Wiesner’s ‘Spinning Out Capital: Women’s Work in the Early Modern Economy’, pp. 220-49. Kelly herself drew on the work of Emily Putnam, *The Lady* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1970), and Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956). Kelly and Wiesner’s arguments have since been extrapolated and developed in a variety of ways. Key texts include: Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1982); Mary Beth Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Syracuse University Press: 1986) and Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendships and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994).

as a woman's only 'natural' vocation."<sup>14</sup> The Ophelia-suicide disposes of the discarded and unmarriageable woman. It is a deeply conservative ending.

Despite the conservatism of Ophelia's suicide, her ballad narrative continues to trouble the text, firstly as the unassimilated damage and fall-out of the pursuit of revenge, and secondly because her narrative's radically unstable form always holds within itself the possibility of a different ending. This dialectic of subversive potential in contention with an essentially conservative, suppressive force is one that is played out to different, greater or lesser subversive effect in all the later manifestations of the Ophelia role.

In this chapter I will first explore the ideas that the two genres of the popular ballads and revenge tragedy are themselves *sexuate*, examining both their thematics and origins.<sup>15</sup> I will then investigate the idea that the popular ballads, as a fundamentally oral and unstable form present a very potent challenge to the strictures of the literate revenge tragedy teleology. As a result of this tension between the popular-oral and the literate-elite this thesis as a whole will be deeply invested in notions of elite cultures of textual authority and oppositely the subversive instability of popular-oral traditions. In this chapter I will then examine how this opposition between the popular ballads and revenge tragedy, the feminine and the masculine and the oral and the literate, plays out within *Hamlet* itself.

The following chapters will explore the implications of this interaction between the two genres in subsequent early-modern plays that involve an Ophelia-type character. By Ophelia-type, I mean characters that exhibit (or, in some cases, resist) the pattern of dramatic behaviour established by Shakespeare's Ophelia, the

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<sup>14</sup> Wiesner, 'Spinning Out Capital', pp. 227-8.

<sup>15</sup> "Sexuate" is Luce Irigaray's term for sexual genre; see 'The Necessity for Sexuate Rights' in Margaret Whitford ed., *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991), p. 199.

main elements being abandonment, madness and suicide. The characters' social status as daughters is also crucial. Later representations choose either to reinforce *Hamlet's* Ophelia's popular ballad associations and return her to health via pragmatic folk-cures as in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* or to insist on the literary precedent that Shakespeare's Ophelia sets up by pursuing the character's death, as in *The Maid's Tragedy* and *The Broken Heart*.

Chapter two finds in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613) a tension between the kinsmen's duel narrative and the Jailer's Daughter's ballad plot that parallels the tension in *Hamlet* between revenge tragedy and Ophelia's popular ballad medium. In this reprise, however, Shakespeare and Fletcher amplify Ophelia's ballad and folk associations to reintegrate the daughter into society. It is an optimistic retelling that is problematised by the ambiguity of the coital cure imposed upon the Jailer's Daughter as well as by *The Two Noble Kinsmen's* overall pessimism regarding heterosexual relations; this play is drafted with a proto-feminist sense of an early modern woman's losses in marriage.

Chapter three investigates the Ophelia-type Lucibella in Henry Chettle's *Hoffman* (1602). This early play is analysed as a direct response to *Hamlet* and as an attempt to disambiguate its predecessor's revenge ethics by reviving the strategies of late medieval popular entertainments such as the morality and mystery plays and the interludes. Chettle's representation of Lucibella is implicated in this work of disambiguation as she is recruited to the ranks of the virtuous and the mechanisms of justice. Unlike Ophelia, Lucibella does not move in a differentiated folk medium. Rather, the play as a whole assumes a medieval, popular entertainment approach to the subject of revenge. This investigation of medieval drama – in particular the structural patching of the mystery and morality plays and the

medieval interludes – nevertheless casts interesting light on Shakespeare’s own structures and approaches in *Hamlet*.

Chapter four’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* marks a departure from popular tradition. Both the play and its Ophelia-type heroine Aspatia are deeply invested in notions of literary precedent and revision. The character figures the authors’ attempts to outdo the *Hamlet*-precedent but her struggles to meet the demands of the Ophelia-role illuminate the strictures and cruelties of the precedent and figure revision itself as an agonistic and masochistic process. Aspatia’s eventual death is a work of radical conformism that seriously questions the political implications of Ophelia’s suicide and its annihilation of the problematic single woman.

*The Broken Heart*, discussed in chapter five, develops this work of radical conformism to present an Ophelia-type heroine in Penthea whose self-starvation indicts both the conservative aspects of the Ophelia-role and the position of the married woman in early modern society. Her vanishing body literalises the effacement of the feme covert and her behaviour, from her absolute conformism to conduct-book tenets of wifely obedience to her classically-influenced offstage death forces conformism and obedience to the point at which they become non-conformist and disobedient. This is the radical conformism of the anorexic hunger-strike and the logical outcome of the conservative strain in the Ophelia role.

**“O haud your tongue, foolish man, dinna talk vainly, / For ye never kent  
what a woman driet for you”. Female thematics: the ballad corpus as a  
female genre<sup>16</sup>**

While a casual emphasis on women as singers and transmitters of the ballad corpus is a consistent feature of twentieth century ballad criticism, these observations are rarely formalised into any recognition of female origin. Ballad criticism has almost invariably posited male composers and originators and the female role has generally been understood as custodial rather than creative.<sup>17</sup> David Buchan is a rare exception to this critical milieu. He investigates the ballad contributions of Anna Gordon, otherwise known as Mrs Brown, who provided F. J. Child with a substantial number of transcripts of ballads from oral memory. In *The Ballad and the Folk*, Buchan considers that “Mrs Brown’s stock”, which consisted mostly of romantic and marvellous ballads, “very definitely constitutes a women’s corpus, and may perhaps represent a women’s tradition within the regional tradition.” However, Buchan perceives an “imbalance” in Mrs Brown’s selection, an over-privileging of female interest ballads at the expense of the “wealth of historical ballads of the region”, and stops just short of declaring the popular ballads in general to be a predominantly ‘female’ genre.<sup>18</sup> Yet Buchan’s more recent work applies Vladimir Propp’s model of tale-role analysis to subgenres such as the magical popular ballads and finds that “[e]vidently the supernatural subgenre has a

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<sup>16</sup> Title quotation taken from ‘Bonnie Annie’ (24B), in F. J. Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (New York: The Folklore Press, in association with Pageant Book Company, 1956). All further references to the popular ballads (unless otherwise stated) refer to this collection. I have followed Child’s indexing.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Alan Bold, *The Ballad* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1979), p. 40; M. J. C. Hodgart, *The Ballads* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1950), p. 131; Sigurd Bernhard Hustvedt, *Ballad Books and Ballad Men: Raids and Rescues in Britain, America and the Scandinavian North since 1800* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA: 1930), p. 20; Francis B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* (London: Archibald, Constable & Co Ltd, 1907), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 64.

particular concern with, and therefore relevance for, women”. Buchan describes this subgenre as a treatment of “the relationships of unmortals and mortals and with the stuff of mortal relationships: the familial and amatory links that bind human beings together.”<sup>19</sup>

As Buchan’s research indicates, specifically female-interest material is a strong feature of the ballad corpus. The first group of ballads in the Child collection in particular, widely considered to be the ‘best’ group – the most widely distributed throughout Europe and the most firmly identified with an oral folk-culture – is emphatically a woman’s corpus and a strong repository of female narratives. In fact, the ballads in the first two volumes of the Child corpus almost universally invoke female protagonists. While this is not the place for an exhaustive analysis of the ballad corpus, a cursory study reveals that one hundred and one of the one hundred and twelve ballads that comprise the first two volumes of the ballads – that is, an overwhelming ninety percent - involve female protagonists.<sup>20</sup> I am not using this term in its original, narrow sense of the first character to appear, but rather in its more general sense of a character with either a major speaking role and / or major agency. My count of protagonists therefore includes powerful but non-speaking characters such as the wicked stepmother of ‘The Laily Worm and the Machrel of the Sea’ (36) who has turned her stepson into the laily worm, and her stepdaughter into mackerel, and who is later burnt for a witch on whins and

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<sup>19</sup> “Talerole Analysis and Child’s Supernatural Ballads”, in Harvard English Studies 17, *The Ballad and Oral Literature*, ed. Joseph Harris (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 68 & 72; see also pp. 75-6.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix A for data regarding the popular ballads. My research takes as its sample study volumes one and two of the Child collection. Percentages cited in the main body of the thesis have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. These figures would be significantly altered should my sample study have included volume three of the ballads. As opposed to volumes four and five, which return to the female interest material of volumes one and two and include the comic ballads, volume three contains ballads of Robin Hood which are mostly of minstrel origin. They are the product of a professional male world, and very rarely include women. These ballads do not register the same oral stylo-structural features as the popular corpus in general, and are not the subject of my present study.

hawthorn. This stepmother is clearly the narrative motor of the ballad, although her actions are reported in her stepson's narrative. Similarly the adulterous affair of the wife in 'The Bonny Birdy' (82) drives the ballad, although the wife herself does not speak. The majority of the ballads need no such exegesis; they involve active and vocal female protagonists and are concerned with personal and often specifically female dilemmas, returning again and again to subject matter that interrogates the position of women in society and which 'writes' the female body.

Female sexuality in particular is a strong feature of the ballad corpus. With estimates of sexual content varying from one third to a half of the total Child collection, criticism has recognised that the vast majority of the ballads are concerned not with history but with romantic love, and the critics themselves have been variously thrilled and appalled by the pepperings of sexual encounters.<sup>21</sup> Criticism has not been as attuned to the fact that the recurrent preoccupation with sexual intercourse betrays a strong interest in issues of female consent. This ranges from narratives of intrusive voyeurism such as 'The Whummil Bore' (27) in which a serving man watches the princess dressing through a knothole, to the ambiguous consent of 'Gil Brenton' (5C) ("And was I weel or was I wae, / He keepit me a' the simmer day") and the explicit rape and torture of the woman in 'Prince Heathen' (104).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gordon Hall Gerould's estimate is that one third of the popular ballads are concerned with romantic love – *The Ballad of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932); Hodgart's estimate is one half, *The Ballads*, p. 135. The popular ballads' interest in domestic and personal relations has been noted but not developed by both Gummere and Gerould; see *The Popular Ballad*, p. 9; *The Ballad of Tradition*, p. 38. For ballad sexuality celebrants, see Gerould (*The Ballad of Tradition*, p. 39) and Bold (*The Ballad*, p. 49) and for an apology, see James Reeves, *The Idiom of the People: English Traditional Verse, edited with an introduction and notes from the manuscripts of Cecil J. Sharpe*, (London: Heinemann, 1958), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Other narratives of ambiguous or doubtful consent include: 'Willie's Lyke-Wake' (25) 'The Twa Magicians' (44), 'The King's Daughter Jean' (52), 'Glasgerion' (67), 'The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter' (110) Other rape narratives include version B of 'The Lass of Loch Royale' (76) and the foiled attempts in 'Brown Adam' (98) and 'Crow and Pie' (111).

This spectrum of sexual behaviour also details female sexual initiative, as the young women of ‘Riddles Wisely Expounded’ (1), ‘Leesome Brand’ (15) and ‘King Henry’ (32) inaugurate sexual contact. Expressions of female desire surface repeatedly, with the pregnant heroine of ‘Lady Maisry’ (65A) stoutly declaring that she won’t give up her English love for an hour longer than she is with child, and various maidens issuing summons to their bowers and bedrooms, or demanding immediate elopement.<sup>23</sup> Consensuality similarly finds a forum in the ballads, from the elevated passion or “paramour” that features in ‘Willie O Douglas Dale’ (101) and ‘Willie and Earl Richard’s Daughter’ (102) to the grotesque lovers’ mutually robust greeting in ‘Kempy Kay’ (33B):

Whan thir twa lovers had met thegither,  
                   O kissing to get their fill,  
 The slaver that hang atween their twa gabs  
                   Wad ha tetherd a ten year auld bill.

An emphasis on female sexual pleasure is also manifest, as for example in the euphemism for sexual intercourse or possibly even female orgasm that occurs in ‘Young Andrew’ (48A): “twise or thrise he pleased this may / Before they tow did part in twin.” This interest in consent is equalled by an interest in consequence. As ‘Bonnie Annie’ (24B) frames it, pregnancy is the logical outcome of sexual intercourse: “There came a rich squire, intending to woo her, / He wooed her until

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<sup>23</sup> Summons include ‘Kemp Owyne’ (34), ‘Allison Gross’ (35), ‘Tam Lin’ (39), ‘The Twa Brothers’ (49), ‘Glasgerion’ (67), ‘Willie and Lady Maisry’ (70), ‘Brown Robin’ (97). Demands for elopement include ‘Earl Brand’ (7) and demands for marital commitment include ‘Young Beichan’ (53), ‘Child Waters’ (63), ‘The Lass of Loch Royale’ (76), ‘The Bailiff’s Daughter of Islington’ (105) and ‘The Knight and Shepherd’s Daughter’ (110).

he got her wi babie”. Pregnancy and childbirth are both persistent concerns.<sup>24</sup> Thirty-one percent of the ballads in the first two volumes of Child’s collection are directly concerned with the female experience of pregnancy. Accounts range from narratives of social embarrassment to explicit descriptions of gestation and childbirth and clearly locate the popular ballads in a terrain of female narratives and experience; the content of the majority of the popular ballads in the first two volumes certainly invokes a female milieu.

**“In the old ignorant times, before Woomen were Readers”; the ballad corpus and the problem of origins, or, the female illiteracy filter.**

As well as being a specifically female territory, the ballads are also an emphatically *oral* folk tradition. This has caused difficulties for forensic ballad scholarship, which has been unable to define a fixed originating text or event for the majority of the ballads, still less an ‘author’. Hodgart, attempting to trace the events that triggered both Sir Aldingar and Sir Patrick Spens gives up in disgust, noting with reference to the genre as a whole that: “It even looks as if Robin Hood was a fairly common name, perhaps one used generically for outlaws in the thirteenth and fourteenth century.”<sup>25</sup> While early twentieth century ballad scholarship was preoccupied with the vexed question of communal versus individual composition, contemporary criticism has instead focussed on questions of printed versus oral origin, questions that are further complicated by the distinction made between printed, known as ‘black letter’, ‘street’, ‘minstrel’ or ‘broadside’ ballads (henceforth referred to as

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<sup>24</sup> A brief study of pregnancy in the popular ballads can be found at appendix B.

<sup>25</sup> Hodgart, *The Ballads*, p. 68.

‘broadsides’) and the popular ballads.<sup>26</sup> Briefly, the popular ballads are distinguished by oral, stylistic and structural features such as discontinuous narrative, the use of formulae and repetition, reductive and expansive impulses (“leaping and lingering” in Gummere’s terms), a stress on situation, and episodic development. They are also designed for singing, and as such are usually written in ballad metre. Crucially, the popular ballads do not claim an authoritative version, but may vary considerably from performance to performance and still be a legitimate rendering of that ballad.<sup>27</sup>

When Hamlet (rightly) identifies Ophelia as a ballad daughter, he (wrongly) associates her with the broadside genre rather than the popular corpus. Hamlet sings part of the broadside ballad ‘Jephtha, Judge of Israel’, which does not seem to have been adopted by the popular corpus, and trails off while referring Polonius to the written text, which is a fairly telling reflection on the attitudes of the literate revenge hero Hamlet himself:

Why,  
 As by lot God wot,  
 and then, you know,

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<sup>26</sup> In the early twentieth century, ‘communalists’ such as Kittredge and Gummere argued that the ballads were group compositions emerging from dance, whereas Sharp and Bold argued instead for individual authorship followed by widespread oral dissemination.

<sup>27</sup> For reductive and expansive impulses such as omission and conversely the refrain, the rule of three and incremental repetition see Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, p. 73 onwards; Hodgart ed., *The Faber Book of Ballads* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), pp. 13-14, and *The Ballads*, pp. 27-31; Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition*, pp. 6-11; Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, p. 55; Bold, *The Ballad*, p. 17; James Reed ed., *Border Ballads: A Selection* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd, 1991) p. 11. For the rule of three specifically, see Vladimír Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* trans. Laurence Scott (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1968/71) p. 74. For the use of oral formulae, see Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics* trans Richard Howard (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd, 1981/1968), pp. 24-5; Flemming G. Andersen, ‘Technique, Text, and Context: Formulaic Narrative Mode and the Question of Genre’, in Harris ed., *The Ballad and Oral Literature*, pp. 18-39; Hodgart, *Faber Ballads*, pp. 14-5. For the musical design of the ballads see Cecil J Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London: Simkin, 1907), Bold, *The Ballad*, p.14; Bertrand Harris Bronson, *The Ballad As Song* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 16, and *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads, with their Texts* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

It came to pass, as most like it was.

The first row of the pious chanson will show you

more, for look where my abridgement comes. (2.2.411-6)

As Hamlet's misidentification demonstrates, broadside ballads presume a fixed text. Adam Fox has documented contemporary descriptions by writers such as Nicholas Bownd of broadside ballads being pinned up on walls or mantelpieces to be memorised, even by the illiterate, who would learn the ballad by having it read to them.<sup>28</sup> Generally speaking, broadside ballads are more literate in nature; they are more concerned with rhyme, which is a trickier thing to maintain in oral improvisation, and less concerned with rhythm, which is a trickier thing to abuse when attempting to carry a melody. They are also more concerned with historical events, often scurrilously ballading an actual person or happening. However, the popular ballads and the broadside ballads are not mutually exclusive. It seems that popular culture seized upon some elements of the broadside ballads and ignored others, while minstrel balladeers treated popular sources in a similar fashion. Reeves speaks of a "two-way traffic" between the broadside and popular ballads, as certain elements of the broadside ballads were absorbed into oral form and became part of the grammar of oral composition, while elements of the popular ballads or entire songs perhaps were poached by the broadside ballad industry to be printed up and sold on black letter broadsheets.<sup>29</sup>

Strong connections similarly exist between popular ballads and the Breton *lais*, and in 1914 W. J. Courthope even controversially asserted that every single popular ballad reproduces "in a mould peculiar to itself, the subject-matter of the

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<sup>28</sup> Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 9, citing Nicholas Bownd, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath Plainely Layde Forth*, (London: 1595), p. 242.

<sup>29</sup> See Reeves, *The Idiom of the People*, p. 15.

older geste, romances or lais.”<sup>30</sup> The lais are short narrative poems usually based on a single incident and infused with Celtic folklore. These were adapted into courtly French poetry by ‘Marie de France’ and others at the end of the twelfth century, and a few were translated into English versions, and survive in fourteenth and fifteenth century manuscript; Hodgart similarly notes their influence on the popular ballad corpus.<sup>31</sup> The popular ballad ‘Sir Orfeo’, for example, is a reworking of the lai ‘King Orfeo’, which in turn is a Celtic version of the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.<sup>32</sup> The question of the lais as a textual origin for the ballads, however, is further complicated by these lais’ claims to *oral* origins; in her prologue, Marie de France writes:

So I thought of lais which I had heard and did not doubt, for I knew it full well, that they were composed, by those who first began them and put them into circulation, to perpetuate the memory of adventures they had heard. I myself have heard a number of them and do not wish to overlook or neglect them.<sup>33</sup>

Marie de France describes her raw material as an oral phenomenon issuing from a community of story-tellers, whose stories concern female protagonists and

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<sup>30</sup> W. J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1914), p. 454.

<sup>31</sup> Hodgart, *The Ballads*, pp. 75-6.

<sup>32</sup> The question of authorship regarding the lais of ‘Marie de France’ has raised similar issues to those of this chapter. Noting the “vagaries of scribal practice and the uncertainty of manuscript transmission” in their introduction to *The Laís*, Glynn S. Burgess and Keith Busby acknowledge difficulties in attributing the manuscripts to a single author, let alone a female one. Despite the book’s advertisement that Marie de France is the “earliest known French woman poet”, the editors demur in their introduction that “[t]he question of whether the twelve poems were written by a woman is [...] delicate.” (p. 9, blurb, p. 10) Rather as I have done with the ballad corpus, the editors then look to thematic evidence to provide some support for the idea of female authorship (see p. 10). The lais of Marie de France share the central preoccupations of the ballad corpus: amatory relationships. Forced marriage, for instance, is a strong concern; the heroine of *Yonec*, for example, exclaims: “Cursed be my parents and all those who gave me to this jealous man and married me to his person! I pull and tug on a strong rope! He will never die”; Burgess and Busby ed. *The Laís of Marie de France*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1999), p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

adventures that once again indicate a female folk-culture. Marie de France's description of her lays' genesis as something *heard* therefore does little to clarify the issue of whether the ballads themselves are the product of an oral or textual culture; she herself is gesturing back to an oral milieu.

Effectively, the vicissitudes of medieval and early modern transmission could mean that a particular ballad passed back and forth between print and oral form. 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland', for example, which both David Atkinson and Bruce Smith discuss, was printed by Thomas Deloney in a scene in *The Pleasant History of John Winchcomb, In His Younger Years Called Jack of Newbury*. While it is reasonable to assume that Deloney had recorded it from popular tradition, it was then disseminated by the text, passing between oral and textual cultures.<sup>34</sup> Estimating that "between eighty and ninety-five per cent of the standard English folk song repertoire has circulated in cheap printed form, as broadsides or garlands, at one time or another", Atkinson concludes that "distinguishing in any meaningful way the transmission of ballads among singers from their transmission in print" is impossible.<sup>35</sup> Smith similarly accepts *both* oral *and* literate origins for the popular ballad corpus as possibilities, noting that the Stationers Register contains six entries pre 1600 for now lost broadsides of ballads that are recorded in the Child corpus, and accepted as popular ballads.

Citing Wye Saltonstall and Richard Brathwait, Smith envisions a process of popularisation that is impossible to pin down to either oral or literate origins. Smith writes that:

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<sup>34</sup> David Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory, Method and Practice* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), pp. 19, 23. In *Oral and Literate Culture* Fox uses the ballad of Chevy Chase to illustrate the movement of ballads between print and oral cultures and hence the themes of the entire book.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

The printed broadsides hawked around the countryside by a ballad-monger might grow so common “as every poore Milkmaid can chant and chirpe it under her Cow; which she useth as an harmelesse charme to make her let downe her milke” (Brathwait 1631: B4v). Wye Saltonstall says the same of a peddler at a country fair: “If his Ballet bee of love, the countrey wenches buy it, to get by heart at home, and after sing it over the milkepayles” (1951: no. 21)<sup>36</sup>

What is particularly interesting about Smith’s choice of citations here is that, along with Thomas Deloney’s working women in *Jack of Newbury*, both Brathwaite and Saltonstall associate the singing of ballads with women, and in the latter case associate their longevity with a specifically female interest in affairs of the heart. It seems sensible to accept multiple sources for the ballads, ranging from songs that have emerged out of folk-dance practices to the absorption of elements from gests, romances, lays and broadside ballads, but this anecdotal evidence suggests that elements of literate ballads were rendered into popular form by and through women.

Recent work by Tom Pettitt on the passage of journalistic accounts of murdered sweethearts, which then passed from printed broadsides into oral circulation, evolving into recognisably popular form, demonstrates a process of feminization in the paring down of the broadside ballads to their oral versions. The first stage is the transformation of journalistic accounts to broadside ballad narratives. The journalistic accounts “tell the story, as it unfolds, from the

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<sup>36</sup> Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 177, citing Saltonstall, *Picturae Loquentes*, (London: Thomas Slater, 1631?) and Richard Brathwait, *Whimzies: Or, A New Cast of Characters* (London: Ambrose Ritherdone, 1631). Hustvedt similarly argues that ballad origins are “plural and complex” and that “[i]t is to be suspected that popular and non-popular elements have been strangely intermingled during the whole period of ballad testimony”; *Ballad Books and Ballad Men*, p. 14.

perspective of those trying to find out what happened”. Interestingly, Pettitt likens the journalistic, literate accounts to “detective stories”, which is very much the modality of revenge tragedy, as John Kerrigan and Linda Charner have discussed.<sup>37</sup> The broadside ballads, still planted in the literate world, then transform the account into a first person narrative of male misdemeanour and punishment.<sup>38</sup> However, the popular versions that evolve out of these broadsides instead bring the tale down to its female narrative components, the story of the sweetheart going to meet her death:

It is as if tradition, more interested in the personal confrontation than its institutional aftermath (and more interested in the girl than the man?), in stripping away non-essential material, also strips away the story of the lover (his trial and execution) to leave bare the story of a dramatic and tragic personal relationship: while most of the original broadsides are technically “murderous lover” ballads (and the murderer figures in their titles much more often than the victim), most of the oral derivatives are better qualified as “murdered sweetheart” (-proper) ballads.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Tom Pettitt, ‘The Murdered Sweetheart: Child of Print and Panic?’, Proceedings Version, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Communications Forum, Fourth Media in Transition Conference, May 2005: ‘The Work of Stories’, p. 13. See, for example, Kerrigan, ‘Sophocles in Baker Street’ in *Revenge Tragedy* and Linda Charner, ‘Dismember Me: Shakespeare, Paranoia, and the Logic of Mass Culture’, *SQ* 48:1 (1997) 1-16.

<sup>38</sup> Pettitt, ‘Murdered Sweetheart’, p. 13; see also Flemming G. Andersen and Thomas Pettitt, ‘The Murder of Maria Marten: The Birth of a Ballad?’ in Carol L. Edwards and Kathleen B. Manley ed. *Narrative Folksong: New Directions; Essays in Appreciation of W. Edson Richmond* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 132-178. Comparable research in folk and fairy tales suggests a similar contrast between oral tales centred on the girl, and the male-framed versions represented by, for example, the Grimm brothers. See Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> Pettit, ‘Murdered Sweetheart’, p. 15.

Pettitt's research seems to confirm the process suggested by Wye Saltonstall of female ballad consumers filtering and adapting broadside ballads for the popular corpus. Female tradition in particular, perhaps, is more interested in the girl.

In the light of women's historically underprivileged access to education, and the context in which these songs were sung (while spinning or milking, for example) this may also account for the distinctly oral and popular aspects of the genre. Buchan recognises the impact illiteracy has had on the role women have played as custodians and transmitters of the tradition, but argues that this cannot be taken as evidence of early modern practices:

Certainly women outnumber men as recorded sources in the transitional period between general orality and general literacy, but this fact tells us little about the pre-1750 tradition. During the heyday of ballad recording in the region, rural women received a much skimpier education than men, and consequently were likely to retain longer into the literate period the habits of the old oral culture. We cannot, however, argue about the place of women in the tradition's oral period on the basis of evidence from the transitional or modern, literate periods.<sup>40</sup>

However, contemporary accounts such as the earlier examples from Wye Saltonstall and Richard Brathwait support this association of women with illiteracy and oral culture. In *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* for example, John Aubrey documents a range of social customs and superstitions still active or recently active in his society. Women's beliefs and practices figure largely in his book, an

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<sup>40</sup> Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, p. 78.

inclusiveness that Aubrey feels obliged to excuse in his preface: “[o]ld customes, and old wives fables are grosse things: but yet ought [not] to be quite rejected: there may be some truth and usefulness be elicited out of them: besides ’tis a pleasure to consider the Errours that enveloped former ages: as also the present.”<sup>41</sup>

In his anecdotes, Aubrey gives casual evidence that the singing of ballads may have been a female cultural phenomenon, passed down from female generation to female generation and preserved among lower class working women such as nurses and maidservants: “In the old ignorant times, before women were Readers, the history was handed down from Mother to daughter, & c: [...] So my Nurse had the History from the Conquest down to Carl. 1. in ballad.”<sup>42</sup> Shakespeare makes mention of a similar female tradition in *Macbeth* as Lady Macbeth chides her husband for “these flaws and starts”, which

... would well become

A woman’s story at a winter’s fire,

Authoris’d by her grandam. (4.3.62-5)<sup>43</sup>

This is a female-centred authority that Lady Macbeth evokes as inappropriate to Macbeth’s masculine, warrior-persona. For Aubrey, the importance of song to women is specifically connected to female illiteracy, an association which is reiterated by his opposition of a folklore that is by implication feminine, to the introduction of the printing press:

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<sup>41</sup> Aubrey, *Remaines*, p. 132.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 290.

<sup>43</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, Arden 2 (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1962).

Before Printing, Old-wives tales were ingeniose: and since Printing came in fashion, till a little before the Civil-warres, the ordinary sort of People were not taught to reade: now-a dayes Bookes are common, and most of the poor people understand letters: and the many good Bookes, and variety of Turnes of Affairs, have put all the old Fables out of dores: and the divine art of Printing and Gunpowder have frighted away Robin-good-fellow and the Fayries.<sup>44</sup>

Writing in the 1680s, Aubrey's comments on the pre-Civil war state of education and the encroachment of literacy and violence on the folklore world reflect, however nostalgically, precisely on Shakespeare's era.

What emerges from Aubrey's catalogues of folk customs and beliefs is a strong sense of a female folk tradition rooted in a labouring society, a sense that is corroborated by other early modern accounts. Wye Saltonstall for example, in his character study of 'A Country Dame' writes: "In the winter evenings she sits amongst her maides [...] while they sit round her spinning, and merrily chanting some old song, that may keepe time with the drawing out of their thread."<sup>45</sup> Adam Fox cites Miles Coverdale's evocation of "carters and plow men" whistling while they worked, and crucially "women syttng at theyr rockes, or spynnyng at the wheles", singing "hey nony nony, hey trolly loly, and such lyke fantasies."<sup>46</sup> Time and again, the sources associate singing, and specifically the singing of ballads, with

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 290.

<sup>45</sup> Wye Saltonstall, *Picturae Loquentes or Pictures Drawn forth in Characters. With a Poeme of a Maid* (London, 1631), rept. from edns of 1631 and 1635 (Oxford: Printed for the Luttrell Society, Basil Blackwell, 1946), p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Miles Coverdale, *Goostly Psalmes and Spirtuall Songes Drawen out of the Holy Scripture*, preface (London, 1535?) in Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 27-8.

a female plane of existence and a labouring world that is at a far remove from literate society. Crying babies are “stilled with their nurses singing”, or “in hearing theyr mother syng”; “young wenches” keeping “sheep and cows” in the summer meadows “sitt in the shade singing of ballads.”<sup>47</sup>

Statistics seem to support this loose association of women’s singing with a greater level of female illiteracy. Adam Fox writes that by Elizabeth’s succession an aggregate of twenty percent of men and five percent of women were able to sign their name. While Fox is optimistic that more people would have been able to read at a faltering level than could necessarily sign, these figures still identify literacy itself as a predominantly male skill.<sup>48</sup> In his studies of witcombat and revenant minigenres, Buchan himself notes that: “those in the bespelled role are all women, or in one instance a child.” Buchan comments “It is the more vulnerable members of the community who are visited by the Devil or revenants.”<sup>49</sup> Perhaps one might also say that it is the more *illiterate* members of the community who receive these visitations; those steeped in and most closely involved with the oral world that generated the popular ballads themselves.<sup>50</sup>

**“An ye hae spoilt them a’ thegither. They were made for singing, an’ no for reading”<sup>51</sup>**

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<sup>47</sup> Martin Fotherby, *Atbeomastix: Clearing Foure Trutbes, against Atheists and Infidels* (London: 1622) pp. 337-8; Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus: The Schole of Shootinge* (London: 1545, i.fo.11<sup>r</sup>) and John Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, in *Three Prose Works*, p. 284; all of the above in Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>48</sup> Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 17; by the outbreak of the civil war, Fox’s figures for signing stand at thirty percent for men, and ten percent for women.

<sup>49</sup> Buchan, ‘Talerole Analysis’, pp. 68 & 72.

<sup>50</sup> *A Winter’s Tale* suggests a similar association of women and children with folk culture, as Mamillius tells his mother Hermione a tale “[o]f sprites and goblins” in act two, scene one. William Shakespeare *A Winter’s Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford, Arden 2 (London: The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1963), 2.1.22-34.

<sup>51</sup> James Hoggs’ mother; Hustvedt, *Ballad Books and Ballad Men*, p. 65.

The oral, illiterate nature of the ballad corpus has had serious implications for ballad scholarship. Recording the tradition is problematised by the essential mutability of the genre. This view holds that there is no such thing as an ‘authoritative version’ in the ballad corpus because, like folk-tales, the ballads are ‘live’ and each transmitter is also an improvising composer. As Buchan writes, “To the literate mind, the process of transmission posits firstly, a fixed text, secondly, a chain of events to memorize that text.”<sup>52</sup> The evidence of the multiple versions in the Child corpus indicates that, far from following a fixed text, the ballads recreate themselves with every performance and can make quite radical changes to what the literate world might consider essential to the narrative. Mrs Brown, famous for her contribution to the Child corpus, often submitted different versions of the same ballad. Bold cites Bronson’s observation that she retained “not a *text* but a *ballad*: a fluid entity soluble in the mind, to be concretely realised at will in words and music.”<sup>53</sup> It is a traditional precept of ballad criticism that to write down a ballad is to do something of a disservice to the genre, because as Gerould writes, “[s]trictly speaking, the ballad as it exists is not a ballad save when it is in oral circulation”.<sup>54</sup>

More recently, David Atkinson has engaged with this idea that the ballads only have significance as they are performed, questioning this critical deference to ballad transience. In *The English Traditional Ballad* Atkinson draws on theories of traditional referentiality, an aspect of John Miles Foley’s reader-response theory, which suggest that tradition itself provides an interpretative context for oral

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<sup>52</sup> Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, p. 56.

<sup>53</sup> Bronson, *The Ballad As Song*, in Bold, *The Ballad*, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> Child attempted to honour the mutability of the corpus by recording all the available versions of the ballad. Work on recording the melodies for the ballads was continued by scholars such as Sharp and Bronson.

literature, establishing domains of meaning and horizons of expectation.<sup>55</sup> Atkinson therefore argues for a certain stability to the ballads, particularly with regard to audience reception. These ideas are developed in Atkinson's paper 'Oral Ballad and Material Text', which argues that a ballad is language and music and as such is no different to canonical literature: a performance of *Hamlet*, for example, is similarly experienced as language and music. Furthermore, Atkinson reasons that every production of *Hamlet* and every member of the audience's experience of that particular production of *Hamlet* will be different, and that knowledge of *Hamlet* as a 'work' will be the touchstone against which this experience is measured. This 'work', Atkinson explains, is an abstract idea dependent on the agency of the authors, manufacturers, and the reception process, and modern criticism insists that we study the materiality of the text – cover pages, typeset etcetera – as performances of the 'work'. Atkinson's argument then is that we regard the ballad texts in a similar light as performances of a 'work', a work that theories of traditional referentiality assist in establishing.<sup>56</sup>

I would argue that any idea of a 'work' with regard to the ballads is deeply problematised by the radical instability of the texts themselves. These are not minor differences (although no two ballads are the same, and minor differences are found in every ballad version), nor indeed differences in audience reception, but instead the kind of alterations between versions that change the outcome of the ballad quite radically, and can even make a comedy of a tragedy, and vice versa. So in 'Brown Robin' (97) the lover escapes dressed as a waiting-woman in version A, is shot by the porter and dies in version B, and in version C successfully elopes with the help of the porter. Other examples include the first ballad in the Child

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<sup>55</sup> Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad*, pp. 17, 10-1, 31; citing John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> David Atkinson, 'Oral Ballad and Material Text', Sound Effects Conference, St Andrews University, July 2006.

collection, ‘Riddles Wisely Expounded’ (1), a wit-combat ballad in which a clever lass solves her lover’s questions and wins his hand in marriage, apart from in versions C and D, in which the final riddle solved is that the knight is in fact the devil. In C, the devil then flies away “in a blazing flame” (19) giving the ballad quite a different complexion to versions A and B. The multiple endings of these and other ballads demonstrate the instability of this oral-culture product. The adaptations seem endless, and the differences unimaginable in a literate context like that of revenge tragedy.<sup>57</sup>

**“[Y]our Father lost a Father, / That father lost, lost his”: the (almost) all-  
male cast-list of revenge tragedy**

In contrast to the popular ballad corpus, Elizabethan revenge tragedy is a peculiarly male genre. It engages predominantly male protagonists in a vendetta waged on

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<sup>57</sup> Other ballads with significant narrative variations in the first two volumes of the Child corpus are: ‘Babylon’ (14) – E is significantly variant; ‘Leesome Brand’ (15), ‘Hind Etin’ (41) – in C the husband is not involved in the wife’s return; ‘The Broomfield Hill’ (43) – in B the lover mourns that he will never see his true love, a separation the other ballads are far from enacting; ‘The Twa Brothers’ (49) – the circumstances of death vary considerably, and in E, F and G Willie is interrogated by his mother; ‘Young Beichan’ (53) – in F, the heroine travels with her father’s blessing; ‘Dives and Lazarus’ (56), ‘Sir Patrick Spens’ (58) – K develops the narrative of an ill-used ship boy, in P and Q a mermaid wrecks the ship etc; ‘Fair Janet’ (64) – in most of the versions both lovers die, but D ends with the heroine dying in childbirth but asking her lover to take care of their son and remember her by him and F has the hero killing his rival by kicking him downstairs and then going mad in the fields; ‘Lady Maisry’ (65) in which the tardy hero oscillates between jumping into the fire with Maisry or running mad; ‘Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet’ (66) in which after the death of both men the heroine goes to beg (A, E), goes mad, gives birth and dies (B), is discovered as pregnant (C), or simply goes brain (D); ‘Glasgerion’ (67) – in B ‘Glenkindie’ goes mad; ‘Young Hunting’ (68) in which the murderess is given the motive of a cruel rejection in B, C and D, and in which the corpse begins to bleed when she comes near it in J; ‘Clerk Saunders’ (69), ‘Willie and Lady Maisry’ (70) in which Willie kills the father’s men or Maisry’s own brother, and Maisry oscillates between her heart breaking and running brain; ‘The Lass of Loch Royale’ (76), ‘Sweet William’s Ghost’ (77) in which the dead lover is transformed in C into something of a scoundrel, tailed by three maidens he had promised to marry on earth, and their three illegitimate children; ‘Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard’ (81) which varies the death of the woman with madness (E) and a child born weltering in blood (F); ‘Jellon Grame’ (90) – C introduces claims that the woman has used the homicidal man badly, and D is significantly changed; ‘Fair Mary of Wallington’ (91) – in B and C the mother forces the seventh and last sister to marry; and finally ‘Lamkin’ (93) – in B the lord kills Lamkin and the nurse, they are not legally prosecuted and executed.

behalf of the predominantly male dead, and is overwhelmingly concerned with the deaths of fathers and sons. Fathers avenge sons in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and *Titus Andronicus* (1594), while sons avenge fathers in *Horestes* (1567), *Antonio's Revenge* (1602), *Hamlet* (1601), *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (which even has the alternative title *A Revenge for a Father*, 1602) and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606). The genre reverberates with statements such as “Sons that revenge their father’s blood are blest”, “For since my worthy father’s funeral, / My life’s unnatural to me” and “the heavens are incensed / That I thus tardy am to do an act / Which justice and a father’s death excites.”<sup>58</sup>

This emphasis on filial and paternal relations derives in part from the influential models of classical tragedy. The Senecan revenge tragedy *Thyestes*, with its mentality of *scelus* and its grim revenger Atreus, is a particularly strong subtext in *Hamlet* and much of Elizabethan revenge tragedy.<sup>59</sup> Its issues are of inheritance and adulterated offspring. Atreus understands revenge itself to be the prerogative of an individual who has suffered from the breaking of “sacred law”, and this law is clearly the law of male relationships to each other and to power, the sacred bonds of a man amongst men.

Atreus’ brother Thyestes’ failure to honour sacred bonds (he commits adultery with Atreus’ wife as well as usurping Atreus’ kingdom) leads to an anxiety about the provenance of sons that is typical of the genre as a whole. Prototypes such as Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* have fathers such as Heracles commanding his son Hyllus to “show thyself thy father’s son in deed, / Mine not thy mother’s” and

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<sup>58</sup> John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge* (1602) in A. H. Bullen ed., *The Works of John Marston* (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1887), 5.2.115; Thomas Middleton (and Cyril Tourneur?), *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: Ernest Ben Ltd, 1967) 1.1.118-9; Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman, or A Revenge for a Father* ed. Harold Jenkins (Oxford: Oxford Malone Society Reprints, 1950) 1.1.12-4; all subsequent references to these editions.

<sup>59</sup> Jasper Heywood trans., *Thyestes* in H. De Vocht ed. *Seneca's Troas, Thyestes and Hercules Furens* (Louvain: A Uystpruyst, 1913). All future references to this edition. For an analysis of the driving force of the *scelus* – the awesome crime – in Seneca and *Hamlet* see Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 4.

urging him to hand his mother over to him, so that he might then “make trial which sight moves thee more, / A mother or a father’s agony” (1.1062-3; 1066-7).<sup>60</sup> As Emrys Jones notes, it is impossible not to hear these lines resonate in Claudius’ challenge to Laertes in act four of *Hamlet*: “what would you undertake / To show yourself in deed your father’s son / More than in words?” (4.7.123-5)<sup>61</sup> Vengeance on a father’s behalf is explicitly a confirmation of male legitimacy, especially if that vengeance is against the mother. Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* even sets out the argument in divine court, ruling that a son’s primary allegiance is to his father because “the father, experts say, is the only parent. / The mother is the nurse but nothing more.” (1.568-9)

The genre also contends with issues of paternal authority that operate on three distinct levels, as the plays engage with the protagonists’ conflicting duties to father (or son), king and God. On the first two levels, the duty to revenge either the father or the son’s death contends with the subject’s duty to the crown.<sup>62</sup> As Maus comments:

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<sup>60</sup> Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, in F. Storr trans., *Sophocles Vol.II: Ajax, Electra, Trachiniae, Philoctetes* (London: William Heinemann, 1913); all subsequent references to this edition.

<sup>61</sup> Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 24; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* in David R. Slavitt ed. & trans., *Aeschylus 1 The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

<sup>62</sup> Twentieth century critics who perceived the performance of revenge on a father or son’s behalf as a “dread duty” include A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Hiram Hadyn, *The Counter Renaissance*, and J. Q. Adams, cited in Lily B. Campbell, ‘Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England’, *Modern Philology* 28 (1930), 281-297, at p. 281. Critics who have investigated the condemnation of revenge in early modern England include Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940) and Lily B. Campbell, ‘Theories of Revenge’. From the sheer weight of anti-revenge literature, and also historical records witnessing to an increase of brawling and duelling as well as the vogue for revenge tragedy itself, criticism has inferred a conflict between the ideal and reality in early modern England. See Stevie Simkin in Simkin ed., *Revenge Tragedy: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001); Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (California: Stanford University Press, 1967 / 1971); Ronald Broude, ‘Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England’, *JQ* 28:1 (1975) 38-58 and Katherine Eisaman Maus in Maus ed., *Four Revenge Tragedies: The Spanish Tragedy, The Revenger’s Tragedy, The Tragedy of Bussy D’Ambois, The Atheist’s Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Persons who take justice into their own hands implicitly proclaim their lack of faith in this system: either because, in their view, the monarch fails to dispense justice fairly or because the monarch himself is the offending party. Blood vengeance, in other words, almost automatically subverts the power of the crown.<sup>63</sup>

As this analysis indicates, anxieties about a single monarch system and its potential tyrannies find a productive outlet in the genre; its villains and perpetrators are Dukes, Kings and Heirs Apparent – the very people who, under normal circumstances, would be expected to prosecute the crime.<sup>64</sup>

Ronald Broude sees the preoccupation of revenge tragedy with social injustice as symptomatic of the developing nation state, which was imposed upon the older social-legal, clanship system of small, self-governing social units. In its effort to centralise authority the Tudor government needed to arrogate the prerogative of revenge / punishment to the crown, and therefore widened the distinction between personal revenge and public, judicious, disinterested punishment. Official Tudor theory sought to discredit the practices of self-government, and the pursuit of personal revenge was presented as a direct challenge to the authority of crown and government. Francis Bacon's 'Of Revenge', for example, argues that:

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<sup>63</sup> Maus, *Four Revenge Tragedies*, p. xiv. See also Catherine Belsey's discussion of the position of the revenger as a sovereign subject who is entitled to take action against the crown if it is in accordance with conscience and on behalf of the law; *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 116.

<sup>64</sup> For further discussion see Broude, 'Revenge', p. 57; J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy Of State* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1959); Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, pp. 111-2; Maus, *Four Revenge Tragedies*, p. xii; and Peter Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare', *ELH* 49:3 (1982) 576-601.

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of the wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior...<sup>65</sup>

Bacon's comments also indicate the early modern legal view that in taking revenge the revenger himself became criminal; in becoming "even with his enemy" the revenger also legally became the same as his enemy. In putting the law out of office, the revenger also puts himself outside the law. However, early modern attitudes to revenge were by no means unambiguous. As Broude comments, "Tudor practices lagged well behind Tudor theory";

[...] so much a part of English thought and custom were the assumptions and usages of self-government, and so far were the civil authorities from being able efficiently to discharge the functions claimed for them, that [...] English socio-legal institutions retained their dual nature through much of the Renaissance.<sup>66</sup>

The loyalties of revenge tragedy reflect this tension, split between loyalty to the father (symbolic of the authorities of the smaller self-governing unit or clan) and loyalty to the governing body of the nation state.

The genre also registers conflict between obedience to an earthly father and obedience to a Heavenly Father. As the punishment for crime is, in legal terms,

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<sup>65</sup> Francis Bacon, 'Of Revenge' (1625) in James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath eds, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 6 (London, 1890), pp. 384-5.

<sup>66</sup> Broude, 'Revenge', p. 43.

not the prerogative of the injured party but of the crown, so in theological terms, revenge is to be left to God. Campbell cites in full the scriptural text which Kyd excerpts in *The Spanish Tragedy*, act three, scene thirteen, when Hieronimo cries “*Vindicta mihi!*”: “Recompense to no man evil for evil ... Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”<sup>67</sup> As Thomas Bower’s translation of Peter de la Primaudaye’s *The French Academy* asks: “And how cansst thou execute it, seeing thou art not called to do, but to demand justice? Tarie, and the just Judge will returne double that which hath been unjustly taken from thee ...”<sup>68</sup> Hieronimo himself considers that “heaven will be revenged of every ill, / Nor will they suffer murder unrepaid.” This concept of revenge as God’s prerogative is complicated by the fact that divine vengeance was sometimes understood to operate through human agents, and the right of the revenger to take revenge sometimes remains ambiguous, as Hamlet’s identification of himself as ‘scourge and minister’ indicates (3.4.173).<sup>69</sup>

On a deeper level, the revenger also pits himself against God in pitting himself against death. Watson, Maus, Dollimore, Kerrigan and McAlindon all argue that revenge tragedy witnesses to a strong current of religious scepticism in early modern England. Taking *The Spanish Tragedy* as its central text, this vein of criticism argues that revenge tragedy expresses a deep-seated discontent with

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<sup>67</sup> Romans 12:17-9. See also Deuteronomy 23:25. Cited in Campbell, ‘Theories of Revenge’, at p. 281.

<sup>68</sup> *The French Academie, wherein is discerned the institution of maners, and whatsoever els concerneth the good and happie life of all estates and callings, by precepts of doctrine, and examples of the lives of ancient Sages and famous men.* By Peter de la Primaudaye, Esquire ... and newlie translated into English by T.B. [Thomas Bowers], 1586, pp. 384-5, cited in Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 20.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of Hamlet as “scourge and minister”, see Paul Gottschalk, ‘Hamlet and the Scanning of Revenge’, *SQ* 24:2 (1973) 155-170. Further discussions of the ambiguous morality of the revenge project include Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy* p.120. Campbell concludes that, as the lawful King, Hamlet is justified in pursuing revenge (‘Theories of Revenge’, p. 296). Critics such as Maus (*Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and Prosser (*Hamlet and Revenge*) would disagree.

human mortality, challenging the idea of a God who seems willing to inflict suffering and misery on his creation, and ultimately framing this as an abuse of power.<sup>70</sup> By featuring death as an unnatural crime, revenge tragedy downplays the inevitability of death and decline, portraying it as an avoidable accident, rather than a result of natural decay. Revenge itself can be interpreted as performing a “delusional function”, by playing to the fantasy that death can be cancelled out by a revenge killing. However, killing the killer quite clearly fails to raise the dead and the original criminal of revenge tragedy begins to look more and more like the being who invented death; he begins to look more and more like God.<sup>71</sup> For Watson, *The Spanish Tragedy* is illustrative. It is ultimately “a complaint about death itself, in all its forms. If the monarch fails to respond, then we may [like Hieronimo] find ourselves dreaming of killing his only begotten son in compensation.”<sup>72</sup>

While engaging thematically with issues of paternity and paternal authority, the emphatic masculinity of the revenge tragedy genre is ingrained in the very building blocks of the plot. When C (male) kills B (male) to avenge A (male), he takes on the role of assassin and is identified with the original murderer. The male protagonists fall into each others roles and repeat the revenge dynamic again and again. It is an endlessly replicating narrative of male reparation and substitutability. As John Kerrigan notes, “[t]he avenger reflects upon what has been done in order to reflect what has been done.” This project of “grim equivalence”, “the impulse to reciprocal signification (A marking B as A was marked)” is, according to

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<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004 / 1984), p. 88, and T. McAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986), p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> See Robert N. Watson, *The Rest Is Silence: Death As Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 58 & 83. Kerrigan similarly explores Protestant theory regarding the crucifixion as expressive of an antagonistic relationship with God; *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 120.

<sup>72</sup> Watson, *The Rest Is Silence*, p. 73. See also Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre*, p. 93 & 99.

Kerrigan, manifest in Hamlet's insistence that he should kill Claudius "about some act / That has no relish of salvation in't" (3.3.91-2) because his father was himself killed "[w]ith all [his] imperfections on [his] head." (1.5.79) Like Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hamlet is pursuing an exact talion, one "unaneld" death for another (1.5.77).<sup>73</sup>

Yet, as Kerrigan observes, multiple variables with regard to perceived injury and the means of retribution mean that exact equivalence will always be an impossibility. Kerrigan discerns in Hamlet's reluctance to dispatch Claudius at prayer:

a recognition that revenge is incoherent unless it possesses that recapitulative power which (*pace* Hieronimo) the passage of experience makes impossible. If the prince found Claudius gaming or swearing he would want him asleep in an orchard, and not *now* but *then*.<sup>74</sup>

This frustrated search for equivalence finds expression in the genre's thematic insistence on mirroring, and the multiple reflections of male doppelgangers that ricochet throughout the plays. In *Gorboduc*, for instance, the two protagonists Ferrex and Porrex are brothers distinguishable only by age and name; the former distinction is annulled by their father's decision to divide his kingdom equally between them, and the latter is confused by the fact that their names are only one syllable apart. The brothers' parallel arms race ends when Porrex kills Ferrex. At his trial, Porrex describes his brother in terms that are appropriate to his own role as assassin:

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<sup>73</sup> *Lex talionis* is the law of repayment in kind; see Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>74</sup> Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 187.

Then saw I how he smil'd with slaying knife  
 Wrapp'd under cloak; then saw I deep deceit  
 Lurk in his face and death prepar'd for me. (4.2.1176-8)

Porrex might as well be describing himself.

**“He who seeks revenge...should dig two graves”: the temporality of revenge  
 tragedy<sup>75</sup>**

The revenge tragedy plot fits almost too neatly into an Aristotelian view of tragedy. As Kerrigan notes, the tripartite ordering-within-unity Aristotle advocates for tragic plots of peripeteia, anagnorisis and pathos coincides with the injury / anticipation / reaction pattern that structures an Ur-revenge action.<sup>76</sup> Jackson G. Barry similarly analyses the Ur-revenge plot as comprised of three stages: the discovery of wrong, the struggle to anticipate revenge and the satisfaction of that revenge. It is almost *too* perfect a structure; as Kerrigan writes:

one man's vengeance being another man's injury, the single exchange on an open stage will breed others as blood calls for blood and the symmetries of action extend into plot. Revenge tragedies practically construct themselves at this level, and the problem for an author is to prevent the material ramifying endlessly.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Chinese proverb, epilogue to Alex Cox dir. *Revenge Tragedy* (Bad Entertainment, Exterminating Angel Productions & Northcroft Films, 2002).

<sup>76</sup> Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

This construction of ever-increasing retaliation is also noticeably linear one and this sense of linearity is further magnified by the temporality of revenge tragedy.

For Barry, the initial discovery of wrong moves the avenger into:

a period of intense temporality. Time cannot be turned back – the hero cannot unlearn what he now knows, and his only course is to set things right [...] a goal is introduced and, as it were, a clock is thrust in the hero's face.

For Barry, the tension of this temporality is further aggravated by the awareness that it is the only remaining part of the avenger's life; the avenger is "hastened towards a difficult and often distasteful goal", which Barry sees as psychologically analogous to suffering from a terminal illness.<sup>78</sup>

While the revenger's death did not begin as an absolute rule in revenge tragedy, it soon became prerequisite with the christianizing of the genre. In the early *Antonio's Revenge*, all those responsible for the mass stabbing of the tyrant Piero (after they have shown him the hewn limbs of his innocent son Julio) are blessed by the Senator and troupe off to live out their lives in a religious order. This model of re-assimilation owes much to classical theatre. Aeschylus' Orestes, for example, is absolved of his mother's death and Orestes is then reinstated as ruler of Argos. He commits himself to establishing peace between Argos and Athens. Even the Furies are persuaded to leave their hard-stalking, punitive ways to become the kindly Eumenides (as one Fury comments: "It's a tempting idea. My rage is less than it was").<sup>79</sup> Increasingly however, Elizabethan theatre began to

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<sup>78</sup> Jackson G. Barry, 'Shakespeare's Deceptive Cadence: A Study in the Structure of Hamlet', *SQ* 24:2 (1973), 117-127, at pp.118, 125.

<sup>79</sup> Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*, in Slavitt trans. *Aeschylus* 1, l. 900.

diverge from the classical model in its understanding that purging society included purging the avenger. The classical convention of purgative action is qualified by an understanding that to cleanse the world of terrible wrong through revenge replicates the original wrong, and as a consequence the revengers of *Gorboduc*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Revenger's Tragedy* and even *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* all die at the summary of the play.

This transition between the classical attitude towards revenge towards the christianized Elizabethan attitude can be seen in John Pickeryng's *Horestes*.<sup>80</sup> In the first half of the play, revenge - in this case matricide - is discouraged as ethically insupportable, and revenge appears personified, tricked up like a medieval tempster. However, in the second half of the play, Pickeryng conforms to his classical precedent of assimilation. Horestes is crowned King by Truth and Dewty and is married to Menelaus' daughter. As Eleanor Prosser notes, while revenge is still a vice at the end of the play, Horestes is clearly virtuous, leading Prosser to suppose Pickeryng: "either a very confused moralist or a very careless playwright."<sup>81</sup> As the death of the revenger becomes the norm, however, the time-frame of revenge tragedy becomes one of impending mortality. The avenger himself is not only nemesis but victim, by nature of the genre. He is confined to a linear, tunnel-vision plot governed by an ineluctable logic which will almost certainly require his death to cleanse the blood-guilt of the revenge action.

Any assertion of the generic maleness of revenge tragedy obviously contradicts Alison Findlay's recent and influential argument that revenge tragedy is "a feminine genre in spite of the fact that the revenge protagonists are usually male

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<sup>80</sup> John Pickeryng, *Horestes* (1567) in Marie Axton ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes: Thersites, Jacke Jugeler, Horestes* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer Ltd, 1982).

<sup>81</sup> Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 44.

and female characters appear to play more passive roles.”<sup>82</sup> Findlay’s argument rests on an exploration of feminized allegories of vengeance – the female ‘Vengeance’ of *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, the stern “Vindicta” of *Antonio’s Revenge* and the Furies of *Gorboduc*, as well as more general feminised figures of vengeance in early modern literature, such as Nemesis. However, allegories of vengeance do not necessarily indicate a valid “female origin”. Gloriana’s skull may well be prostituted in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, pimped out in the service of Vindice’s revenge ambitions, but that does not mean that Gloriana is actually the agent of revenge. Women and / or desire are permitted in the revenge plot only if they, or it, enable the revenge mechanism. The genre demands of its protagonists fidelity to a single, bloody discourse, and women are often simply an unwelcome distraction from it. In Henry Chettle’s *The Tragedy of Hoffman* for example, Hoffman blames himself even as he is being executed for having been distracted from his revenge cause by desire for a woman. As the burning crown is set upon his head he roars: “I deserve it, that have slacked revenge / Through fickle beauty and a woman’s fraud.” (5.2.2380-1).

While examples of women who participate in the revenge dynamic certainly exist, when they enter the revenge dynamic, I would argue that they enter a male economy, and participate in what is more normally understood as a male prerogative. When Charlotte in *The Revenge of Bussy D’Ambois* decides to take vengeance into her own hands therefore, she tries to enter the revenge economy by disguising herself *as a man*. Ultimately she has to concede the role to her brother. Similarly, while desirous of revenge, Bel-Imperia relies on the men in the play to orchestrate it. She moves Hieronimo to vengeance by urging him that he owes this

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<sup>82</sup> Alison Findlay, *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999) p. 49.

duty to his son, emphasising the male lineage that is such a dominant theme in revenge tragedy:

Be not a history to after-times  
 Of such ingratitude unto thy son.  
 Unhappy mothers of such children then,  
 But monstrous fathers, to forget so soon,  
 The death of those whom with love and cost  
 Have tender'd so, thus careless should be lost. (4.1.2229-34)<sup>83</sup>

Bel-Imperia only offers to take matters into her own hands should Hieronimo fail to act upon her words; it is a kind of threat. Hieronimo himself regards her role as one of solicitation rather than agency, and places her at a remove from the revenge action itself by correlating her with Heaven, which

approves our drift,  
 And all the saints do sit soliciting  
 For vengeance on those cursed murders. (4.1.2246-8)

While Bel-Imperia is in fact also an agent of vengeance, stabbing Balthazar in the masque, her role is one of participation rather than authorship. Very similarly, in *Antonio's Revenge* Maria participates in her son's scheme – again, a masque – to kill Piero. The execution is enacted communally (“*They all stab Piero then run at him with swords*” s.d. at 5.2.96) and is received by the Senators as a public service. Again, in

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* in William Tydeman ed., *Two Tudor Tragedies: Gorboduc and The Spanish Tragedy* (London: Penguin Books, 1992). All subsequent references to *The Spanish Tragedy* are to this edition.

*The Maid's Tragedy*, Evadne is manoeuvred into the position of avenger by her brother Melantius, and her actions serve his schemes.

While women may participate therefore, revenge is typically male centred, and failure to honour the revenge requirement is seen as a failure of virility. In *Thyestes* Atreus maligns himself as “a coward, sluggard, impotent” for remaining unavenged. He is failing male standards of courage, action and potency explicitly associated with war, telling himself that “all Argos towne through out / In armour ought of thine” (1081-2). There are clear textual echoes in Hamlet’s sense that:

ere this

I should ha’ fatted all the region kites

With this slave’s offal. (2.2.513-5)

When Hamlet curses himself for his inactivity it is specifically in terms of impotence and effeminacy. He “peak[s] / Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause” (2.2.502-3) in an image that simultaneously feminizes his body (he is “unpregnant”), and is evocative of either premature ejaculation or impotency, “peaks” meaning to: “mope, languish. Cf. *Mac.* 1.111.23, ‘dwindle, peak, and pine’.”<sup>84</sup> Hamlet finally falls to cursing himself *for* cursing, but again in terms of effeminacy, despairing that he “[m]ust like a whore unpack my heart with words, / And fall a-cursing like a very drab” (2.2.520-1). Hamlet associates himself with female prostitutes twice here (drab and whore), aligning himself with a figure defined by her physical, female sex and her work. His further comparison of himself as a “stallion” aligns his passivity with that of a male prostitute. According to his logic, the failure to take revenge action is effeminate, and he explicitly

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<sup>84</sup> Notes to William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jones, Arden 2 (Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1997), p. 270.

contrasts the male sphere of revenge action with a feminine realm of labour, passivity and the spoken word.

### **Authorizing Authors and the Literate Nature of Revenge Tragedy**

Jasper Heywood's dedication and preface to that seminal revenge tragedy text, *Thyestes* (1560) situates the Senecan translation in a culture that still understood its narratives as having an acoustic dimension and yet was beginning to emphasize the visual and material existence of the text itself in an emerging literary market of print and publication at the expense of this acoustic world. In both dedication and preface, Heywood moves between a conception of the text as a written artefact and as an acoustic phenomenon; the material object that is the "lytle booke" is yet imagined in the dedication as capable of addressing the dedicatee with speech.<sup>85</sup> The ghost of Seneca, figured in the preface as appearing to Heywood in a dream, celebrates the immortality that his written works grant him, as his work is disseminated through ages and languages:

And make me speake in straunger speche

And sette my works to sight,

And skanne my verse in other tongue

Than I was wont to write. (167-178)

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<sup>85</sup> "Spie well thy tyme, when thou him seest alone, / An ydle houre for the shalbe moste meete, / Then steppe thou foorth, in sight of him anone, / And as behoves, his honor humbly greete", ll. 46-7.

Speech, language, sight, scansion, tongue and the written word; the lines dance between an understanding of the text as existing on the page and on the tongue.

While the acoustic dimension might seem to offer a tenuous link with the oral ballad material, in actual fact its provenance is emphatically literate and masculine. For even at this oral-literate crossroads, the emergent idea of an authorial community is unquestionably male, elite and literate. Scholarly composition is not a matter of trying things out on the tongue, but of writing them down on the page. Heywood's persona demurs from the task of translation ahead of him and directs the ghost instead to:

... Lyncolnes Inne and Temples twayne,  
 Grayes Inne and other mo,  
 Thou shalt them fynde whose paynfull pen  
 Thy verse shall florishe so,  
 That Melpomen thou wouldst well weene  
 Had taught them for to wright,  
 And all their works with stately style,  
 And goodly grace t'endight. (259-66)

Heywood proceeds to recommend "Northe", "Dyall", "Sackvylle", "Norton", "Yelverton", "Baldwin", "Blunduille", "Bauande" and "Googe", advising that:

These are the witts that can display  
 Thy Tragedies all ten,  
 Repleat with sugred sentence sweete,  
 And practice of the pen. (311-4)

His words inscribe a masculine legal environment from which women were excluded, but which is crucially the modality of the revenge plot. The driving imperative of revenge tragedy is a pursuit of a justice that has often been denied or withheld. Kerrigan tracks the origins of this to the classical world, citing Mary Whitlock Blundell: “Not only are enmity and revenge accepted as natural motives for a lawsuit but language of revenge came to be used for legal punishment, while litigation is often treated as legalised revenge.”<sup>86</sup>

This argument regarding the literate nature of revenge tragedy clearly ventures into the areas of debate mapped out by Lukas Erne. Erne discerns a tension between playhouse versions and print texts of plays, dating this to the 1590 octavo edition of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*. Erne argues that critics should abandon the idea of a print industry hungry for play texts:

The social cachet of plays was low, their aim mere entertainment and their realization by nature collaborative and subject to constant change. Transferring them from playhouse to the printing house and supplying them with an authorizing author and a stabilizing single text was no easy undertaking. The performance of this task [...] brought about the formation of a dramatic author.

Erne observes that unlike early play texts for the public stage, the academic Latin dramas, translations of Seneca and other plays such as Heywood’s *Thyestes*, translations of modern continental plays, closet tragedies and Inns of Court tragedies were all published acknowledging the author’s identity. “What [they all]

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<sup>86</sup> Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: 1989), p. 55 in Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 21-2.

have in common is that they were associated neither with the disreputable acting profession nor with the stigma of commerce.”<sup>87</sup> Erne goes on to suggest that the play texts of histories and tragedies were perceived as more respectable material than those of comedies, pointing out that only five of Shakespeare’s comedies were published in his lifetime. Publication of the histories on the other hand was prolific, with *Henry VI:I* printed in six editions. Of the tragedies, *Hamlet* was published in four editions before the folio and *Titus Andronicus* in three; the remaining tragedy printed in multiple editions was *Romeo and Juliet* which achieved four editions. It is surely possible that the credibility of *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet* as printed products may have derived from the fact that revenge tragedy in particular was not discontinuous from the academic tradition that Erne regards as a separate issue, but that revenge tragedy travelled on the coat-tails of its literary Senecan predecessors. While the genre accommodates potboilers such as the *Ur-Hamlet* in its early stages, it seems that the genre may have increasingly assumed some of the literary prestige of these influential classical predecessors. If this is the case, then it is significant that the play Erne discusses as following *Tamburlaine* in enacting a separation between the performance and the print text is *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Central to Erne’s argument is the idea of an emerging concept of the authorizing author and the single stabilizing text, and this is of quintessential interest in an analysis of the interaction of genre in *Hamlet*, for where a revenge tragedy play might make claim to a single authoritative version, the ballads certainly do not. Heywood understands himself as participating in a print culture in which his translation is the true work and in which faulty reprints of his work betray and

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<sup>87</sup> Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 34, 45.

do damage to their original. He complains of the printers to whom he had previously given his work:

That though my selfe perused their prooues  
     the first tyme, yet ere long  
 When I was gone, they wolde agayne,  
     the print thereof renewe,  
 Corrupted all i suche a sorte,  
     that scant a sentence trewe  
 Now flythe abroade as I it wrote. (341-7)

The corruption of his work is a diminishing of its truth. Seneca commiserates, confiding that

They have my selfe so wronged ofte,  
     And many things amys  
 Are doon by them in all my works (361-3).

He blames their “negligence [...] / and partly lacke of skill” (371-2), and then proceeds to situate the work in a community of learning and analysis, comforting Heywood that

learned men shall soone discerne  
     thy fautes from his, and say,  
 Loe here the Printer dooth him wrong,  
     as easy is to trye. (377-80)

Perceiving that the text has been tampered with is a matter of intelligent reading in a community of educated male readers; a matter of discernment and a pointing out on the page of where the printer has wronged the poet.

Erne's arguments are particularly relevant to *Hamlet* in their discussion of the 'good' and 'bad' quartos of plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. Erne argues that many of Shakespeare's plays existed in two significantly different forms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One form would be the authorial manuscript, the longer authorized version, "the poem" in Webster's terminology, and the "true original copy" according to the title pages of the manuscripts. This form is what is commonly identified as the 'good' quarto. The other form, Erne argues was the manuscript that had undergone the company's preparation for actual performance – "the play" in Webster's terms, and the text "as it has been sundry times performed" according to the title-pages, and otherwise known as the 'bad quarto'. For Erne, the *raison-d'être* of the long poems was "basically literary" while the shorter plays were compatible with the two hours traffic of the stage. For Erne, these texts witness to the difference between "the writing practice of Shakespeare the dramatist, on the one hand, and the performance practice of Shakespeare and his fellows, on the other."<sup>88</sup>

The bad quartos in this scheme are therefore possibly "the best witnesses of what would actually have been performed on London's stages."<sup>89</sup> They are also aligned with an acoustic, oral world in which the unstable medium of the theatre would have resulted in performances that varied from day to day. Erne cites Johnathan Goldberg with reference to *Romeo and Juliet* that "what stands behind Q2 is a manuscript that offers an anthology of possible performances of the play, one

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 194.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 194.

of which is captured by Q1.”<sup>90</sup> The ‘bad’ quartos exhibit the same oral stylo-structural features and instability as the popular ballads; ballad quartos, rather than bad quartos, perhaps. The bad quarto of *Hamlet* correspondingly moves much more hastily through its plot and while not necessarily episodic, is certainly streamlined. As the actor Peter Guinness has commented, Q1 is “*Hamlet* with the brakes off.”<sup>91</sup> Laurie Maguire, cited extensively by Erne, writes that: “a transitory culture, with ‘secondary’ or ‘residual’ orality, such as that of the Elizabethans, might conceivably aim for memorisation but be satisfied with remembering.”<sup>92</sup> A primarily oral genre such as the ballads remembers and recreates but does not aim for replication; when Maguire argues for “memorial variation” in the ‘bad’ quartos rather than “memorial error”, she is advocating an attitude that has long been the practice of ballad criticism.

Taking this idea of a more oral version in contradistinction to a literary text, Karen Klein has argued that the bad quarto ‘Ofelia’, along with the bad quarto Juliet is a more oral direct, forthright and boldly drawn character. Klein specifically contrasts the meeting between Ofelia / Ophelia and Hamlet in Q1 and Q2, and Ofelia / Ophelia’s response to her father’s prohibition of contact with Hamlet.

First Quarto

Second Quarto

*Ham. ...*

Soft you now,

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<sup>90</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, “What? In a Names that which we call a Rose’: The Desired Texts of *Romeo and Juliet*” in Randall McLeod ed., *Crisis In Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance* (New York: AMS Press, 1994), p. 186 in Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, p. 195.

<sup>91</sup> In Brian Loughrey, ‘Q1 in Recent Performance: an Interview’, in Thomas Clayton ed., *The ‘Hamlet’ First Published (Q1, 1603): Origins, Form, Intertextualities* (Newark, Del: Delaware University Press, 1992), p. 128, cited in Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor ed. *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 & 1623*, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), p. 27 (all future references to Q1 or F are to this edition, unless otherwise stated). Thompson and Taylor write that Q1 is “fast, plot-driven and far less ruminative than the other texts”, *ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The Bad Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 146-8, in Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, p. 210.

*Ham.* Lady in thy orizons, be all my sins  
Remembered.

The faire *Ophelia*, Nimph in thy orizons  
Be all my sins remembred.

***Ophe.* Good my Lord,  
How dooes your honour for this many  
a day?**

***Ham.* I humbly thank you well.**

*Ofel.* My Lord, I haue sought opportunitie  
which now I haue, to redeliuer to your  
worthy handes, a small remembrance, such  
tokens which I haue receiued of you.  
(CLN 861)

*Oph.* My Lord, I haue remembrances of  
yours  
That I haue longed long to redeliuer,  
I pray you now receiue them.  
(TLN 1742-49)

*Ofel.* I shall obey my lord **in all I may.**  
(CLN 402)

*Ophe.* I shall obey my Lord.  
(TLN 602)<sup>93</sup>

In the first as opposed to the second quarto Ophelia cuts immediately to the chase to return Hamlet's love tokens, and the sense of directness is enhanced by the omission of the opening greetings which Ophelia initiates in Q2. Klein argues that the caveat 'Ofelia' inserts after her promise to obey her father in "all [she] may" in the second parallel text ("that is, possibly not in everything") depicts a woman who intends to use her own judgement in the matter, and suggests that Ophelia is not as obedient in Q1 as in Q2.<sup>94</sup>

Klein's distinctions between the Q1 and Q2 *Hamlets* alongside Erne's arguments for two versions of *Hamlet* are obviously extremely relevant to my thesis, which in the light of plural text criticism has to be refined to the argument that Q2 and the Folio versions of *Hamlet* in particular import an oral, ballad

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<sup>93</sup> Kareen Klein, 'Shakespeare's "Bad" Women on Stage', paper presented in the 'Shakespeare and Oral Culture' Panel at the British Shakespeare Association Biennial Conference, Newcastle, September 2005. Klein cites Bernice W. Kliman and Paul Bertram eds., *The Three Text Hamlet: Parallel Texts of the First and Second Quarto and First Folio*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: AMS Press, 2003).

<sup>94</sup> Klein, 'Shakespeare's "Bad" Women', p. 10.

creature into a literate and literary revenge tragedy environment. While the ‘bad’ Quarto is overall a more oral version, the ‘good’ quarto which according to Erne constitutes the authorial version, may be seen to deliberately heighten the contrast between the literate / literary revenge narrative and the oral Ophelia. Klein’s example is itself illustrative; the returning of the love-tokens, as I have already demonstrated in this chapter, is very much a ballad-narrative development, and in fact Q2’s Ophelia returns them with rather more directness than the slightly circuitous and halting returning-of-the-love-tokens speech allows to Q1 Ophelia. What the Q2 passage contrasts, therefore, is a rather literary Hamlet who has just finished his ‘To be or not to be’ speech and upon seeing Ophelia conjures up Latinate mythology and vocabulary with ‘Nymph’ and ‘orizons’, with the ballad-character Ophelia who greets Hamlet and then returns his love tokens with marked economy. This contrast is less obviously delineated in Q1, which is more streamlined as a whole, and therefore levels out the points of contrast between the ballad daughter Ophelia and the vengeful son Hamlet that are evident in Q2.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that Q1 Ophelia’s ballad space still asserts its distinction from the main, albeit colloquial, narrative. Most notably, Ophelia’s madness is given an extreme ballad treatment. Following Hamlet’s murder of ‘Corambis’ (the text’s version of Polonius) and his discovery and exile to England, Q1 omits Hamlet’s meditation on Fortinbras’ army, and cuts straight to a discussion between the King and Queen in which Ophelia’s madness and Laertes’ insurrection is discussed. The transition between Corambis’ death, Hamlet’s departure, Ophelia’s madness and Laertes’ revenge quest is therefore markedly more direct in Q1 than in Q2. The King and Queen’s short, thirteen line confabulation is immediately followed by Ophelia’s entrance, which is accompanied in Q1 only by the stage direction “*playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing*” (s.d.

13.14)<sup>95</sup> The very introduction of the musical instrument, apart from providing a good indication of Elizabethan stage practice as to Ophelia's madness, marks Ophelia out acoustically as moving in a different element, her music placing her in a different aural register. Her loose hair is also consonant with the popular ballads in which unkempt hair signals derangement. Perhaps most importantly, in this scene she only sings ballads. The interjections and snatches of dialogue with the King and Queen that are in evidence in Q2 are almost completely removed. Instead Ophelia runs through her ballads of misidentification and incomplete burial without hesitation or introduction, running them together in a continuous narrative that relates far more strongly and immediately to the old King Hamlet's death than the dispersed fragments of ballad in Q2, by seeming to insist on a continuous and logically contiguous run of events:

*Ophelia:* [*sings*] 'How should I your true love know

From another man?'

'By his cockle hat, and his staff,

And his sandal shoon.'

White his shroud as mountain snow,

Larded with sweet flowers,

That bewept to the grave did not go

With true lovers' showers.'

'He is dead and gone, lady,

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<sup>95</sup> Seng comments that this Q1 stage direction is: "probably decisive as to how the song was rendered on Shakespeare's stage. A pirate might have come away from a performance in the Globe theatre and proceeded to garble lines and confuse speech assignments, but he is hardly likely to have forgotten what he *saw* on stage", *The Vocal Songs*, p. 513.

He is dead and gone.  
 At his head a grass green turf,  
 At his heels a stone. (13.15-26)

Q1 reserves the bawdy Valentines ballad to Ophelia's second episode of madness, and instead this first episode is entirely concerned with the burial ballads. With the exception of Ophelia's reply to the king that she is "[w]ell, God yield you", and her remark that "[i]t grieves me to see how they laid him in the cold ground, I could not choose but weep" (13.28-30). Her ballads dominate as she again runs straight through the remaining burial ballads before asking for mercy on "all Christian souls I pray God" and then exiting on the line "God be with you ladies, God be with you" (13.41-2).

A sense of the potentially disjunctive registers of Q1 is conveyed in Zdenek Střibný's experience of Q1 as performed by the Balustrade Company: "[g]radually it dawned upon the audience that the whole play was meant to oscillate between farce and tragedy, approaching the modern genre of tragic grotesque".<sup>96</sup> His comment resonates with my own understanding of the play oscillating between comedic and tragic potential with Hamlet's choice to pursue either Ophelia / Ophelia or revenge tragedy. While analysis does seem to reveal a deliberate aural / oral contrast between Ophelia and the revenge tragedy environment even in Q1, the aim of this thesis is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of the different ways in which a ballad-Ophelia is maintained between Q1 and Q2 Ophelia. This chapter will concentrate on Q2 *Hamlet* with the belief that the deliberate, authorial version Lukas Erne posits, accentuates the contrasts between the literate and literary revenge tragedy narrative and Ophelia's popular ballad space. The text sets up an

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<sup>96</sup> Zdenek Střibný, *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) in Thompson & Taylor, *1603 & 1623*, p. 23.

authoritative, revenge tragedy text only to break with it in the Ophelia episodes, thereby creating a critique of its own literate and stabilising ambitions. With regard to the ballads, Buchan asserts that for a *non*-literate person, “the belief that a story and the words in which it is told must be the same or else the story is altered would be to him incomprehensible.”<sup>97</sup> The idea of a “true and perfect Coppie” is an anomaly in the ballad world.<sup>98</sup> Ophelia imports a radically unstable ballad medium into *Hamlet* that troubles the revenge tragedy’s pretensions to a stable, ‘true’ text. The popular genre’s endless possibilities and mutations undermine the strict teleology of the literate revenge tragedy form, insisting on the possibility of a better, happier ending.

### ***Hamlet: The Battle of the Genres***

Ophelia’s narrative unfolds a chain of events that are consistent in both form and content with the ballad genre. A basic ballad narrative is driven forward by dialogue, and develops in short, tight flashes; the stress is on situation. Ophelia’s narrative in Q2 and F moves forward at a similarly hasty pace, and her narrative is correspondingly compressed. In a five-act play that comprises twenty scenes in total, Ophelia appears in only five scenes. Brought down to its component elements, Ophelia’s story is seen to develop in a series of short, sharp episodes that punctuate the play. The ballads themselves are most accurately described as episodic. Gerould could be writing of Ophelia herself when he describes the ballads:

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<sup>97</sup> Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Q2 title page, *The Three Text Hamlet*, p. 7.

There is nothing irrelevant here, but there is a good deal left unexplained. The events burst out in a series of flashes, each very sharp and each revealing one further step in the action. What lies before and after remains in darkness, and can be learned only by inference.<sup>99</sup>

Ophelia's plot is similarly one of action. Transitional periods are left out of her narrative, and we enter her story halfway through, at the interdiction of her love affair rather than at its initiation. While Ophelia's ballad narrative attempts to open into the play, the narrowing of the action to the dictates of the revenge dynamic can be seen at work, literally squeezing Ophelia out of the plot.

Ophelia's consonance with the romantic ballad genre places her in opposition to the teleology of the revenge tragedy narrative, setting up conflicts of temporality and priority, and opening an alternative space in the otherwise telescoping revenge trajectory. Julia Kristeva's article 'Women's Time' illuminates this interaction. Arguing ultimately that feminists must reconcile maternal time with linear (political and historical time), Kristeva interrogates

... the problematic of space, which innumerable religions of matriarchal (re)appearance attribute to 'woman', and which Plato, recapitulating in his own system the atomists of antiquity, designated the aporia of the *chora*, matrix space, nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One, to God and, consequently, defying metaphysics.

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<sup>99</sup> Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition*, p. 77.

This alternative, nurturing, female space in some ways parallels the play's positioning of Ophelia and her ballad medium as a space that Hamlet might take refuge in instead of pursuing his revenge goal. For Kristeva, female subjectivity relates to time in two ways – an experience of time as cyclical, expressed for example through the recurrence of bodily rhythms and patterns, and secondly an experience of monumental time, “all-encompassing and infinite”, which might be called eternity, and which female subjectivity can access through *jouissance*, gestation and generation.<sup>100</sup> It is a case of species rather than time, and it is clearly the temporality of the ballad corpus with its apparently a-historical narratives (in that they appear not to belong to a specific historical event or milieu) of basic human concerns such as love, sex, pregnancy and childbirth.

Kristeva sees ‘women’s time’ as being at odds with a historical conception of time, “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression and arrival – in other words, the time of history.” This is clearly the temporality of the revenge quest, which needs a point of departure (the discovery of wrong) and which progresses towards its projected end with an urgent awareness of time passing. As Kristeva writes, “this temporality renders explicit a rupture, an expectation or an anguish which other temporalities work to conceal.” The discovery of unnatural death in revenge tragedy is just such a rupture; it insists on redress in historical time, and pulls the mourner out of the natural progression of their own life’s pattern, which includes the possibility of generation, and inserts them into a dynamic of *lex talionis*. “This time rests on its own stumbling block”, writes Kristeva, “- death.” Kristeva adds: “A psychoanalyst would call this

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<sup>100</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’, in Toril Moi ed., *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 191.

‘obsessional time’, recognising in the mastery of time the true structure of the slave.”<sup>101</sup>

A brief sketch of *Hamlet*’s plot illustrates the competing claims of these two versions of time, the obsessional time of Hamlet’s revenge, versus Ophelia’s ballad space and the potential for generation. The play opens with the ghost, the stimulus for the entire revenge action, and scene two establishes the context of the offence and introduces the protagonists of the revenge narrative, the ‘villain’ and the ‘hero’. The revenge tragedy narrative is set in motion and the scene ends with Hamlet’s being informed of the appearance of his father’s ghost, and responding with a generic ‘blood will out’ sentiment: “foul deeds will rise / Though all the earth o’erwhelm them to men’s eyes.” (1.2.255-6) The contrast between Hamlet’s grim prediction with the following scene is marked. Laertes takes his farewell of Ophelia; their language is lyrical and courtly and, leaving aside the sexual politics of the scene, expresses affection. The focus of the scene is, moreover, Ophelia’s position as an unmarried daughter and her burgeoning romance with the prince. The scene’s priorities and preoccupations could not be more different from those of the revenge tragedy narrative which swiftly resumes in scene four as the temperature plummets from metaphors of the blood burning, and blazes that give off false heat to the first line of this new scene: “The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.” (1.4.1)

Hamlet is a slave to the obsessional time of the revenge quest. He forfeits his own free will, as the cause allows of no distractions or compassion, and insists on a single-minded dedication to the cause. As Hamlet himself says:

My fate cries out

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 192.

And makes each petty artery in this body  
 As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.  
 Still am I call'd – unhand me, gentlemen –  
 By heaven I'll make a ghost of him that lets [hinders] me!  
 I say away! – Go on! I'll follow thee. (1.4.81-6)

Hamlet's call to revenge is felt as a sense of stiffening resolve and a predestined trajectory which will not tolerate impediment; his very arteries stiffen. Ophelia, on the other hand, is just such an impediment, and Hamlet honours his threat in act one scene four, making a ghost not only of her father (“Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool” 3.4.29) but of Ophelia herself.

Crucially, while the Ghost countermands pity, insisting instead on a “serious hearing” of the narrative he will “unfold” (1.5.5-6), Ophelia is persistently associated with compassion. As such she is antithetical to the revenge trajectory which demands action rather than empathy. Ophelia's report to her father of Hamlet's strange behaviour in her bedchamber, for example, is all about pause, perusal and pity; Hamlet's look is “piteous in purport”, and his sigh is “piteous and profound” (2.1.79, 91). For a moment the encounter slows the forward momentum of the revenge imperative as Hamlet looks back at her:

[...] with his head over his shoulder turned  
 He seemed to find his way without his eyes,  
 (For out o'doors he went without their helps)  
 And to the last bended their light on me. (2.1.94-7)

Hamlet's backward looks decelerate the forward momentum of the revenge quest, an effect that is compounded by Ophelia's role as one of the play's sites of memory. She remembers Hamlet himself as:

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,  
 Th'expectation and rose of the fair state,  
 The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
 Th'observed of all observers ... (3.1.150-3)

This is not necessarily a Hamlet the audience have met. Furthermore, when Hamlet denies that he has ever given her gifts Ophelia insists on their history, answering:

you know right well you did,  
 And with them words of so sweet breath composed  
 As made these things more rich. (3.1.96-8)

Her insistence on Hamlet and her own shared past creates a space of delay within the forward momentum of the play's revenge action. Her words evoke a place of warmth and sweetness with the enriching, fragrant breath she imagines powering Hamlet's words.

Furthermore, Ophelia's overt identification with Catholicism opposes her to the scepticism of the revenge tragedy genre by returning to the consolations of a Catholic faith. When Polonius sets Ophelia in Hamlet's path in act three, he gives her a book to read, which in traditional iconography indicates a devout woman and

is the traditional attitude of the Virgin Mary in depictions of the annunciation.<sup>102</sup> This emphasizes Ophelia as a site of potential generation, by aligning her with the Virgin Mary at the moment of conception, and also with the Virgin Mary's role of intercession. The tableau resonates with Ophelia's later pleas "help him, you sweet heavens!" and "[h]eavenly powers restore him." (3.1.133, 140) Her last words on stage similarly entail an intercessory aspect:

He is gone, he is gone,  
 And we cast away moan.  
 God a' mercy on his soul.  
 And of all Christian souls. God buy you. (4.6.189-92)

Not only do her words include the idea that human mourning is ineffective because the deceased has moved out of the fallen world and into God's jurisdiction, she hopes that God will have mercy not only on the dead man's soul, but on *all* Christian souls. Her final words are a rendering of 'God be with you'. When the church refuses to grant her full burial rites, Laertes rails:

I tell thee, churlish priest,  
 A ministering angel shall my sister be  
 When thou liest howling. (5.1.29-31)

There is a gentle sympathy between his words and Horatio's upon Hamlet's death: "Goodnight, sweet Prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." (5.2.343-

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<sup>102</sup> *The Revenger's Tragedy* makes a similar move in having Vindice's chaste sister enter meditating on virtue; finding her thus, the messenger Dondola calls her "Madonna" (2.1.10); Thomas Middleton (Cyril Tourneur?), *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1967).

4) Laertes' words also summon Hamlet's original response to the appearance of the ghost: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (1.4.39) Hamlet's later sense that he has been appointed heaven's "scourge and minister" (3.4.173) may well be self-deluding. Having asked to be protected by angels he nevertheless follows the ghost who, as Prosser has demonstrated so convincingly, is aligned with the underworld and the devil. Hamlet's scourge and minister paradox may well be one of the underlying structural contrasts of the play, with Ophelia's ministering angel rejected in favour of undertaking a vengeance duty as scourge.

Overall, Ophelia's narrative's relationship to the revenge tragedy action is one of distraction and delay. It creates an empathetic space that is 'other' to the teleology and priorities of the revenge plot. Patricia Parker has famously investigated the association of women with the dilation of biblical, classical and early modern texts. She writes with regard to Virgil's *Aeneid* that:

Virgil's poem [...] seems almost to be commenting, in what we would now call self-reflexive fashion, on the differing tendencies and gender associations of both epic and romance: the resolutely teleological drive of epic in its repeated injunctions to "break off delay" ( *rumpe moras*) and the Odyssean or romance delaying tactics which make it the long poem it is and which disrupt or postpone the end promised from the beginning. [...] it is the female figures – Dido, Allecto, Amata, Juno (and their agents) – who are the chief perpetrators of delay and even of obstructionism in relation to the master or imperial project of the completion of the text.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 13.

The dialectic Parker describes of epic teleology and romantic delay corresponds to my argument that an opposition is set up between Hamlet's revenge tragedy teleology and Ophelia's romantic ballad space, which threatens the completion of the revenge project. Parker specifically designates this romantic delay as a textual space, noting the rhetorical tradition of dilating discourse by 'partition', or rhetorical dividing walls, thereby metaphorically indicating rooms within the text.<sup>104</sup> Ophelia's narrative correspondingly builds delays into *Hamlet*, as her ballad space waylays the progress of the revenge tragedy plot. Her ballad narrative also specifically makes this romance plot available to *Hamlet*, as it suggests an alternative ending of love, marriage and procreation that could potentially redirect Hamlet altogether.

Tellingly, Parker sees pregnancy as yet another feminized metaphor for rhetorical dilation:

Still another use of "dilation" occurs in the context of propagation or generation, the postponing of death through natural increase, one of the principal arguments against the premature closure of virginity and a meaning crucial to the potential identification of the rhetorical tradition of "increase and multiply" with the more fruitful dilation of another kind of "fat lady" – the pregnant female body, promising even as it contains and postpones the appearance of an "issue".<sup>105</sup>

The idea that Ophelia is a space available to Hamlet, and that she is a potential site of generation for him, is constantly affirmed by the text. Most obviously, Gertrude

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

hopes that her “good beauties” are “the happy cause / Of Hamlet’s wildness” and tells Ophelia:

[s]o shall I hope your virtues  
 Will bring him to his wonted way again  
 To both your honours. (3.1.38-41)

It is an alternative that Hamlet himself acknowledges even as he rejects it, asking Ophelia:

Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. (3.1.120-6)

The desire Hamlet implies that Ophelia has to mother his children is immediately followed by reasons why Hamlet himself would make an unsuitable father. Crucially, Hamlet anticipates the retaliatory crime of the revenge narrative in his speech; it is the offence at his “beck” (i.e. waiting to be committed), and his anxiety that he may lack “time to act [it] in” reflects his sense of the revenge plot’s intense temporality. Hamlet’s words also carry an admission of guilt; revenge is the “offence” at his beck, not the duty.

Offering a very different resolution to that of an ur-revenge action, Ophelia’s narrative could potentially confound the entire revenge project. As Robert Watson writes,

In Shakespearean comedies such as *All's Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and even *The Winter's Tale*, the procreative answer to mortality must overcome the rituals of mourning – not only the threat of death – as time passes. This is the alternative Hamlet overlooks in giving his father's deadly demands over his mother's hopes for his eventual marriage to Ophelia.<sup>106</sup>

Watson contrasts the Protestant effort to valorize fruitful marriage with Catholicism's exaltation of chastity, and the belief that the chaste body would resist decay in the grave. He regards the emphasis on procreation in Protestant marriage tracts as in part an attempt to justify the dissolution of the monasteries, but adds that “a supplementary motive may well have been the desire to reconstruct the Catholic promise of immortality in a doctrinally acceptable form.”<sup>107</sup> Procreation could be regarded as a tangible form of immortality, tied to species and the cycle of human life.

This concept was certainly familiar to Shakespeare. His first seventeen sonnets obsessively urge their subject to procreate, warning “Die single, and thine image dies with thee” (3), “Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee” (4) ““Thou single wilt prove none”” (8), “And nothing ‘gainst time’s scythe can make defence / Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence” (12). The speaker’s antidote to annihilation is generation: “Make thee another self for love of me” (10). Sonnet sixteen could almost be addressed to Hamlet:

But wherefore do not you a mightier way

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<sup>106</sup> Watson, *The Rest Is Silence*, p. 101.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

Make war upon this bloody tyrant time,  
 And fortify yourself in your decay  
 With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?  
 Now stand you on the top of happy hours,  
 And many maiden gardens yet unset  
 With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,  
 Much liker than your painted counterfeit.<sup>108</sup>

We are reminded of Hamlet's portraits of his dead father and of Claudius: "The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (3.4.52). The maiden garden image corresponds both to the association of Ophelia with a space that Hamlet could gain access to, and also resonates with her withered violets which signify faith in love. Hers is a garden that her family is eager to protect. Consider the recurrent images of guarded spaces and of locks that constellate around Ophelia. She promises her brother that she will keep the import of his lesson "[a]s watchman to my heart" (1.3.45) and reassures him again, "[t]is in my memory lock'd / And you yourself shall keep the key of it." (1.3.84-5) This conforms to an idea of virginity as a type of treasure-chest, one which Polonius tries to convert into a safety-deposit box:

... I prescripts gave her  
 That she should lock herself from his resort,  
 Admit no messengers, receive no tokens (2.2.139-41).

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<sup>108</sup> William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 1997).

Ophelia obediently repels Hamlet's letters and "denie[s] / His access to me" (2.1.106-7). The semantics of the phrase deftly denote Ophelia as a space Hamlet might gain access to and enter, as well as a person he cannot approach. Presumably Polonius should lock Ophelia up in the dark, for she is "a treasure" (2.2.340-1) requiring vigilant watch.

Kristeva rightly sees the association of women with space as problematic. In designating women as 'other' to linear historical time as a nourishing, generative "matrix space", patriarchal discourse can also lock women into that space, denying them access to historical time and confining them instead to biological function. It is a space, in other words, that patriarchal discourse appropriates for its own ends and attempts to own, rather as Polonius attempts to regulate the space that his daughter's body constitutes. Parker writes regarding Erasmus' *De Copia* that:

The preoccupation of this massively influential text is not only how to expand a discourse – to make its "matter" or *materia* respond to the rhetorical counterpart of the command to Adam and Eve to "increase and multiply" – but also how to control that expansion, to keep dilation from getting out of bounds [...] Dilation, then, is always something to be kept within the horizon of ending, mastery, and control, and the "matter" is always to be varied within certain formal guidelines or rules.<sup>109</sup>

What if, in *Hamlet*, the dominant revenge tragedy narrative fails to contain Ophelia's ballad space, a ballad space that is in any case resistant to horizons of ending, mastery and control by nature of its own integral instability? Such a

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<sup>109</sup> Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, p. 14.

dynamic might result in an endlessly troubled and subverted text, as Ophelia's ballad narrative both resists Polonius' attempts at containment and the text's mastery.

### **“Haue you a daughter?” Ophelia and the ballad daughters**

Ophelia's ballad space is repeatedly confirmed in the text. Throughout *Hamlet* Ophelia is marked out as a ballad character, “a creature native and indued / Unto that element”. Her position as an unmarried daughter interrogates familiar ballad territory. Daughters, as we have seen, are central to the narratives of a massive 54% of the first and strongest eighty five ballads of the Child corpus, which are populated with nubile young women whose physical bodies represent a threat to their father's standing in society. The anxieties that these ballads represent are strongly agnatic; they are located in patrilineal societies and demonstrate related kinship structures that agree with anthropological analysis of such communities.<sup>110</sup> David Buchan's description of the social organisation of the North-Easterly area of Scotland from which Mrs Brown's ballad corpus arose is of a fiercely “clannit” structure:

The primary bond of the clan system was that of kinship, whereas the feudal plan was basically a system of landholding arrangements; and these two systems merged in the Northeast where the landholding arrangements were fortified by the ties of blood-relationship. These

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<sup>110</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1977).

clannit houses laid great stress on the ties of kindred and consequently on the family name.<sup>111</sup>

The ballad narratives recognise that the female body constitutes a unit of exchange in traditional kinship structures, and that autonomous female desire has the potential to disrupt the fluid workings of such a structure. A young woman is of immanent value; if she marries well and in accordance with her family's wishes she may enhance the social standing of her own family, or strengthen their alliances. A subjective choice of husband or lover may not be as conducive to a politic marriage, especially if the daughter's choice falls upon a man with whom her own family do not wish to be married.

In the ballads, then, daughters are of immanent and unstable value, and require careful guard. In many of the ballads, the threat that daughters pose to their father's standing in society is manifested as an actual financial liability. 'Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight' (4D,E), 'Earl Brand' (7), 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland' (9), 'Leesome Brand' (15) 'Bonnie Annie' (24), 'Young Andrew' (48) and 'Young Beichan' (53) all feature daughters who steal red gold, money, jewels, horses and occasionally all of the above from their fathers, or set their fathers' enemies free. Correspondingly, Polonius' word-games persistently associate Ophelia with the metaphor of currency. Romance is figured as a financial exchange, as Polonius chastises Ophelia for taking Hamlet's "tenders for true pay / Which are not sterling" (1.3.105-6). Hamlet's vows, according to Polonius, "are brokers / Not of that dye which their investments show" (1.3.126-7). "Tender yourself more dearly", Polonius warns "Or [...] you'll tender me a fool." (1.3.106, 108) The "fool" refers to Ophelia, the child that Ophelia could give birth to if she yields

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<sup>111</sup> Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, pp. 35-6.

sexually to Hamlet and to Polonius himself, who would lose standing in society if his daughter were to become pregnant.

Pregnancy is a persistent ballad concern, as it visibly and publicly devalues the unit of exchange that is the daughter's body. The ballad daughters are as predictably "bonnie" as Ophelia is "fair", but from a paternal perspective their very attractiveness is double-edged: beneficial, in that it enhances the potential of a socially desirable marriage and increases the daughter's marriage-value, but also alarming, in that it makes these young women particularly liable to fall prey to opportunistic male desire before they are married. The extreme emphasis that such kinship structures place on the daughter's virginity protects her value as bride-to-be by hypothetically ensuring that as a virgin bride she will give birth to the husband's children only and thereby enable the unadulterated perpetuation of the name of the father. This concern is very much in evidence in 'Gil Brenton' (5) which makes a heroic effort to erase all doubt as to the child's provenance by physically stamping him with marks of his paternity. Version A has: "An it was well written on his breast-bane / 'Gil Brenton is my father's name'". Version C adds "It was weel written on his right hand / He was the heir o his daddie's land." The care that Polonius and Laertes have for Ophelia's virginity is very much in keeping with the ballad corpus, in which fathers are sometimes so solicitous of their daughters' honours that they brick them up in Rapunzel-style towers, as in Erlinton (8), which narrates:

Erlinton had a fair daughter

I wat he weird her in great sin:

For he has built a bigly tower

An a' to put that lady in.<sup>112</sup>

In 'Lady Maisry' (65) these concerns climax with the examination of the pregnant heroine by her brother. It is clear that for him, her pregnancy is a family shame that is exacerbated by the fact that she has crossed cultural boundaries in her choice of lover:

'O coud na ye gotten dukes, or lords,  
Intill your ain country,  
That ye draw up wi an English dog,  
To bring this shame on me?'

His reaction is ramified in other versions by the rest of his family, the father of Version D wishing his daughter "in a fire strang, / To burn for ever mair." Maisry is in fact burnt at the stake in all nine versions of the ballad as a "wile whore". As Hamlet warns Polonius, "conception is a blessing but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to't." (2.2.181-3)

The complication for both the ballad corpus and *Hamlet* is that these daughters do not experience themselves as objects to be guarded until they are passed around in marriage exchanges, but are both desirable and, crucially, *desiring*. In *The Newly Born Woman*, Hélène Cixous speaks of the representation of female

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<sup>112</sup> This concern with the protection of virgin daughters is shared by classical tragedy. Virgin girls are ushered inside, out of the public space in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (Agamemnon: "Go inside the tent – it is not pleasing that girls should be seen in public") in James Morwood trans. *Euripides: Bacchae and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 104; Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (Kreon: "Get yourself into the house, Antigone, / and act as a maiden should") trans. Elizabeth Craik (Wiltshire: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1988), p. 155; Sophocles' *Antigone* (Kreon: "Take them and keep them within - / The proper place for women") in E. F. Watling trans., *Sophocles, The Theban Plays: King Oedipus, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1971), p. 142; and Seneca's *Agamemnon* (Clytemnestra: "Wicked child! What are you doing here? / A virgin walking the public streets? It's shameless!") David R. Slavitt, *Seneca: The Tragedies*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 205.

desire in canonical literature, in which women enact distance and postponement in order to maintain male desire, which is conditional on pursuit:

Each story, each myth says to her: “There is not place for your desire in our affairs of state.” Love is a threshold business. For us men, who are made to succeed, to climb the social ladder, temptation that encourages us, drives us, and feeds our ambitions is good. But carrying it out is dangerous. Desire must not disappear. You women represent the eternal threat, the anti culture for us. We don’t stay in your houses; we are not going to remain in your beds. We wander. Entice us, get us worked up – that is what we want from you.

For revenge tragedy love is, precisely, threshold business. The ballads on the other hand provide a forum for female desire and the threshold position that Ophelia’s love story occupies in *Hamlet* becomes the centre or even whole of the narrative. They create an arena for the expression of a female subjective choice which Cixous sees as almost unimaginable in canonical literature “where women’s desire cannot shoot straight [...] but must take a thousand detours to express itself, and so often resigns itself to the comedy of eloquent silence.”<sup>113</sup>

A ballad clue to Ophelia’s own desire for Hamlet is held in her sudden production of Hamlet’s love-tokens. On the level of the dominant, patriarchally stage-managed plot in which Polonius and Claudius have set Ophelia up as bait, her introduction of love tokens is an anomaly. It dismantles the object position Polonius and Claudius have placed her in, and instead asserts both Ophelia’s own motivation for this meeting with Hamlet, and her own subjective memory of a

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<sup>113</sup> Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 67.

past, private relationship with him. Crucially love-tokens are a common feature of the ballad corpus and tend to iron out conflicts and usher in a happy, romance ending, as in Gil Brenton (5), 'Hind Horn' (17) and Kempy Kay (33), which satirizes the love-token tradition with the lines:

She gied to him a gravat,  
                   O the auld horse's sheet,  
 And he gied her a gay gold ring,  
                   O the auld couple-root.

In the ballad context then, Ophelia's love-tokens take on a new complexion as an attempt to re-establish identity and relations.

As a whole, the ballad corpus may be understood as a series of soundings. While it creates a forum for the playing out and expression of female desire, it also maps out the limitations and boundaries with which agnatic societies curb this libidinous subjectivity. Each ballad that engages with a question of female desire sends out a kind of sonar pulse that probes the potential and the limits of each particular scenario. Ballad-daughter narratives record an almost uniformly sparse social tolerance for female desire. Even in the gentle 'Glenlogie' (238), Jeanie's father tells her that in "seeking ane that cares na for thee" she is "acting the part of a [whore]". Jeanie's father is mild in comparison to the patriarch in 'Andrew Lammie' (233). Annie falls in love with the eponymous trumpeter, and refuses to marry the man her father has chosen for her, Lord William. The conflict ends with incredible violence in a chillingly recognizable domestic setting:

Her father struck her wondrous sore,

As also did her mother;  
 Her sisters also did her scorn,  
 But woe be to her brother!

Her brother struck her wondrous sore,  
 With cruel strokes and many;  
 He broke her back in the hall-door,  
 For liking Andrew Lammie.

Both Jeannie and Annie are refusing to marry Lords in favour of lower-class lovers, a scenario that also features in 'Fair Janet' (64) and 'Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet' (66). Fathers dictate marriage partners; as Janet's father tells her:

'My will wi you, Fair Janet,' he said,  
 'It is both bed and board;  
 Some say that ye loe Sweet Willie,  
 But ye maun wed a lord.'"(64A)

"Bed and board" is ambiguous, seemingly referring to both Janet's bed and board, in that she will live with the Lord if she marries as her father wills, and also perhaps to the family's bed and board, augmented by the enhanced social status that Annie's marriage would afford.

These daughters incur anger because they are denying their families a socially advantageous connection. In Ophelia's case, her desire is socially problematic in that it aims above her own family's status rather than below it. As Polonius presents the case to the King and Queen, Ophelia is warned "Lord Hamlet is a

prince out of thy star. / This must not be.” (2.2.141-2) Polonius perhaps has reason to be concerned; ballad logic dictates that socially disadvantaged maidens are the most vulnerable of ballad daughters. Lord Thomas chooses a nut-brown bride over ‘Fair Annet’ because Annet does not have a dowry equivalent to the nut-brown bride, who is rich in oxen and ‘kye’ (‘Lord Thomas and Fair Annet’, 73). The working-class ‘Burd Isabel’ (257) is not fully fifteen when she goes into service, and not fully sixteen when she becomes pregnant by the privileged Earl Patrick, who promises to marry her if she bears him a son, but then procrastinates and procrastinates, nevertheless promising:

‘If eer I marry anither woman,  
                   Or bring anither hame,  
 I wish a hundred evils may enter me,  
                   And may I fa ower the brim!’

Eventually the Earl marries a Duke’s daughter, but when he comes to retrieve his son from Burd Isabel his own vow turns upon him, a hundred evils enter him, and he falls over the brim to hell. It takes a supernatural punishment to avenge a class of women which has so few rights in the material world.

A related scenario to these interclass affairs is the horizontally-transgressive love-match, by which I mean that the daughter desires across national or communal boundaries rather than vertically, above or below status boundaries. Lady Maisry’s brother in Child no. 65 is, as previously discussed, particularly aggravated by the nationality of his sister’s lover, an “English dog”. Like the socially powerful lords of ‘Lord Thomas and Fair Annet’ (73) and ‘Burd Isabel and

Earl Patrick' (257), alien men are also untrustworthy. Version A of 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland' (9) in fact ends with the caution:

All you faire maidens be warned by me,  
 Scots were never true, nor never will be,  
 To lord, nor lady, nor faire England.

'Young Andrew' (48) similarly specifies an unfaithful Scottish knight, while in 'Young Beichan'(53) it is the Englishman who fails to redeem his promise to the 'Moor's' daughter Shusy-Pie.

And while the ballads do reward some of their daughters for faithfulness and persistence in love in ways that will be particularly relevant to the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the ballad corpus repeatedly warns that men in general are unwilling to marry those they have already gained full sexual access to. Liaisons are often brief, but even prolonged attachment fails to ensure commitment. In 'Clerk Colville' (42), 'Child Waters' (63), some variants of 'Young Hunting' (68), 'Lord Thomas and Fair Annet' (73), 'Fair Margaret and Sweet William' (74) and 'Burd Isabel and Earl Patrick' (257), the men abandon their current and committed loves for a new bride. In 'Fair Annie' (62), the male and female protagonists are to all extents and purposes living in a common-law marriage. Annie has born the man seven sons, and is pregnant again. However, the man decides that it is high time he found himself a legitimate wife:

It's narrow, narrow, make your bed,  
 And learn to lie your lane;  
 For I'm ga'en oer the sea, Fair Annie,

A brow bride to bring hame.

Wi her I will get gowd and gear;

Wi you I neer got nane.'

His 'narrow, narrow, make your bed, / And learn to lie your lane'' resonates strongly with Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia, in which he instructs her to get to a nunnery (and therefore a single bed) no less than five times (3.1.120, 129, 136, 139, 148). His effort to contain her distracting body is hysterical in its intensity. Hamlet's humiliating invective finds a physical as well as rhetorical parallel in 'Young Andrew' (48); where Hamlet strips Ophelia verbally, this ballad has the male protagonist literally stripping the heroine.

She had vpon a gowne of blacke veluett

(A pittiffull sight after yee shall see:)

'Put off they clothes, bonny wenche,' he sayes,

'For noe ffoote further thoust gang with mee.'

The heroine's undressing occurs in four stages, its escalating dynamic paralleling Hamlet's abuse of Ophelia; both scenes are charged with a sense of ritual humiliation.

In all cases, when the daughter marries against her family's will, the ensuing scenes of split loyalty are brutal and bloody. Lovers kill fathers and fathers or brothers kill lovers with gruesome frequency. In 'Earl Brand' (7) versions B, C, D, E the daughter's lover kills all seven of her brothers before sparing her father's life at the loss of his own when the daughter's confused allegiance collapses her resolve:

‘O hold your hand, Lord William!’ she said,  
     ‘For your strokes they are wondrous sair;  
 True lovers I can get many a ane,  
     But a father can never get mair.’

She binds her father’s wounds with her handkerchief, and then rides on with Lord William because, as she points out, he has “left [her] no other guide”, a predicament that version D states even more plainly: “For to go home to my mother again, / An unwelcome guest I’d be:” This split or dual loyalty scenario reoccurs with alarming frequency. Willie kills all of Erlinton’s men (8), leaving one old man alive to carry the news home; another ‘Sweet Willie’ kills his lover’s three brothers when they attack him in ‘The Bent Sae Brown’ (71). In ‘Willie and Lady Maisry’ (70) Willie kills all of the king’s guard in version A, and the king’s son in version B on his way to Margerie / Maisry’s chamber. By the time he arrives at his lover’s chamber, “The buckles were sa stiff they wudna lowse, / The blood had frozen in.” Margerie / Maisry’s father then enters his daughter’s bed-chamber and kills Willie as he sleeps, a scenario which is reenacted in ‘Clerk Saunders’ (69) in which May Margret’s seventh brother kills her lover as he lies in her arms. In both ballads, the waking daughter mistakes her lover’s blood for sweat.

In killing Polonius, Hamlet unwittingly stumbles into ballad genre, and does so at a crucial intersection between the revenge tragedy genre and Ophelia’s ballad narrative. Polonius is the interfering ballad father who, instead of pursuing the eloping couple as in ‘Earl Brand’ (7), unwittingly intrudes on Hamlet’s revenge trajectory in an attempt to unravel what he diagnoses as a love-induced madness. Like the father of version B of ‘Fair Margaret and Sweet William’ (74), Polonius is

at first anxious to ascertain the state of affairs between his daughter and Hamlet, demanding of Ophelia “What is between you? Give me up the truth.”(1.3.97) In the ballad it is the male lover who is interrogated:

Down then came her father dear,  
 Clothed all in blue:  
 ‘I pray, Sweet William, tell to me  
 What love’s between my daughter and you?’

Like Fair Margaret, Ophelia finds her love publicly and bluntly denied within earshot of both her eavesdropping father and the king:

*Hamlet.* [...] I did love you once.  
*Ophelia.* Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.  
*Hamlet.* You should not have believed me. For virtue cannot so  
 inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you  
 not.  
*Ophelia.* I was the more deceived. (3.1.114-9)

‘Fair Margaret and Sweet William’ has the lover rejecting the woman in the direct interview with her father, but the effect of public renunciation is much the same. Answering Margaret’s father’s question regarding the love between himself and Margaret, Sweet William answers:

‘I know none by her,’ he said,  
 And she knows none by me:

Before tomorrow at this time

Another bride you shall see.

Where Fair Margaret's father, having played his part, vanishes from the ballad, Polonius persists in his belief that Hamlet's madness stems from "neglected love" and continues to intrigue towards an audience with Hamlet's hidden feelings, counselling a private meeting between Hamlet and his mother at which he will eavesdrop (3.1.177). He then becomes the excess damage of Hamlet's narrative's revenge tragedy logic, whilst Hamlet steps briefly back into the ballad narrative to kill the maiden's father at this flashpoint between the two genres.

While Hamlet's revenge plot is one of a narrow revenge linearity, governed by the forward-momentum witnessed to by Hamlet's own recurrent sense of hesitation and delay, Polonius' plot is one of interception and distraction. Like Hamlet, Polonius is a deviser of schemes and intrigues, but for the different cause of the romance plot. As Hamlet lays a mousetrap for Claudius, so Polonius baits Hamlet with his own daughter. While Hamlet walks in the lobby, Polonius will "loose" his daughter to him (2.2.159). Polonius even gives Ophelia a disguise or pretext of sorts, giving her a book which he commands her to read, "[t]hat show of such an exercise may colour / Your loneliness." (3.1.44-5) All this is in an effort to redirect Hamlet from his 'madness', itself a symptom or feigned affect of the revenge cause, back into a romantic ballad narrative. Taken as a whole, Polonius is all about intrusion and getting in the way, forbidding Ophelia to see Hamlet, "board"-ing Hamlet (i.e. accosting him) in his reverie, setting Ophelia in Hamlet's path and conveying himself behind the arras in order to eavesdrop on Gertrude and Hamlet. Finally he waylays the revenge plot in a way he never would have

anticipated by receiving the vengeance meant for Claudius on his own body.<sup>114</sup> As Hamlet comments, “[t]hou wretched, rash, *intruding* fool” (3.4.31; italics mine).

Hamlet interprets the killing of Polonius as heaven’s punishment;

... For this same lord

I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so

To punish me with this, and this with me,

That I must be their scourge and minister. (3.4.170-3)

Polonius’ death is, from Hamlet’s revenge tragedy perspective, assimilated into the revenge dynamic, whereas Hamlet becomes the murderous lover to Ophelia’s ballad narrative of split loyalty, leaving her to “run braine”.<sup>115</sup> When Polonius makes the mistake of ingratiating himself into the revenge plot and getting between A and B, avenger and victim, Hamlet and Claudius, he becomes both a part of the excess damage that characterizes revenge tragedy and is simultaneously one of the wounded fathers of ballad narrative. This further problematises the revenge project of exact equivalence that Hamlet subscribes to. Like other avengers (Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*, for example) Hamlet is constantly foiled by the bodies that keep getting in the way. This mounting body count includes this kill from the other, ballad genre and the fierce, flash-violence of its split loyalty scenarios. According to Maus, revenge tragedy is analogous to warfare with wrongs proliferating in “a spiral of violence”, whose “horrors exacerbate the agony it attempts to alleviate.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> In many ways Polonius’ death is comparable with the later deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who also find that “to be too busy is some danger” (3.4.31). Explaining the ensuing dual homicide, Hamlet explicitly excuses the murders as a direct result of the pair’s intervention: “[...] their defeat / Does by their own insinuation grow. / ’Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes / Between the pass and fell incensed points / Of mighty opposites.” (5.2.57-61).

<sup>115</sup> Ballad expression for madness.

<sup>116</sup> Maus, *Four Revenge Tragedies*, p. x; see also Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*: “[r]evenge is always in excess of justice”, p. 334.

With Polonius' death, revenge tragedy's excess damage is compounded by the split loyalty ballad scenario, which belongs less to warfare and more to an explosive and localised feudal society engaging in bloody, hand-to-hand skirmishes. Ballad combat is the microcosmic aspect of the warfare that Maus perceives as the revenge tragedy dynamic, and this double intake of violence makes this particular play textually equivalent to a mass grave.

Overall then, Ophelia's plot-elements betray a strong ballad birthright; dangerously desirable, she produces love-tokens and is rejected by her lover after the ballad fashion. The problems of her story – insubordinate desire and split loyalties – are ballad problems. The stage business of her mad appearance following her father's death, specified in the stage directions of the oral first quarto as “[e]nter *Ophelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing*” is yet another example of her popular allegiance. A disregard for appearance, and particularly for hair, is in the first place ballad shorthand for utter dejection. In ‘Bonnie Bee Hom’ (92) the maid undertakes at her Lord's departure to leave her hair uncombed for seven years. Similarly the protagonist of ‘The Baron of Brackley’ (203) asks:

O wherefore shoud I busk my head?

O wherefour shoud I Kame my hair?

For my true-love has me forsook,

And says he'll never love me mair.

Version G of ‘Clerk Saunders’ (69) details the squalor of this neglect: “At length the cloks and wanton flies / They biggit in her yellow hair.” In the second place, running mad is such a familiar ballad scenario that it earns its own shorthand; in

version H of 'Lady Maisry' (65) the lover, coming too late to save the pregnant heroine from being burnt at the stake, runs mad with grief. As the ballad puts it,

Great meen was made for Lady Maisry,  
     On that hill whare she was slain;  
 But mair was for her ain true-love,  
     On the fields for he ran brain.

The formula reappears in version F of 'Fair Janet'(64) (although Willie runs "mad" instead of "brain" in the fields following Janet's death), and version B of 'Glasgerion' (67). The female runs brain in version B of 'Willie and Lady Maisry' (70), in which again no moan is made for the dead protagonist but instead "a' was for sweet Maisry bright, / In fields where she ran brain." Version B of 'Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet'(66) follows the heroine's madness with death, a death which is explicitly feminized by the baby delivered into her blood:

There was nae mean made for that godd lords,  
     In bowr whar they lay slain,  
 But a' was for that lady,  
     In bowr whar she gaed brain.

There was nae mean made for that lady,  
     In bowr whar she lay dead,  
 But a' was for the bonnie babe  
     That lay blabbering in her bleed.

This formula is repeated in ‘Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard’ (81E) and is multiply significant for the Ophelia narrative. It predominantly situates madness outside the home; its distressed protagonists “run brain” in fields or bowers. Ballad madness is kinetic, a dynamic motor that physically and viscerally drives its sufferers outside the human community and into uncultivated green places. This ballad madness can lead with very little preamble into death, and is specifically framed as a site of pity.

Crucially, it is in her madness that Ophelia herself sings ballads. Her songs confirm her popular allegiance. Writers of handbooks on courtly etiquette such as Castiglione did not recommend uncalled-for public singing, and modesty in musical matters was counselled repeatedly.<sup>117</sup> Ophelia is not therefore behaving like a daughter of the court, but she *is* behaving like a daughter of the ballads. For Sternfeld, Ophelia is quoting a song of the poor, but “is not of the poor itself.”<sup>118</sup> However, Ophelia’s dexterous handling of her ballad material to the discomfort of all around her suggests a rather more intimate knowledge of the ballads than Sternfeld’s comments allow. Perhaps socio-economic groupings are less relevant here than relationships to authority. If Seng is correct in identifying the source of Ophelia’s ‘How should I your true love know’ as the song ‘As ye came from the Holy land of Walsingham’, then Ophelia’s projection of her ballad is very definitely in keeping with the fluid conventions of ballad composition, as well as its adoption and moulding of more literate material. As Seng notes, the Walsingham ballad’s authorship is disputed, but as it is subscribed ‘Sir W.R’ in one manuscript, editors of Raleigh’s work usually claim it as his. Ophelia’s ballad takes the literate Walsingham ballad and moulds it into a more recognisably popular form, modifying the gender to fit her own situation (the speaker of Raleigh’s ballad is

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<sup>117</sup> Sternfeld, *Music*, p. 34.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

male). Shakespeare makes Ophelia a practitioner of the ballads as well as a ballad character, and in doing so demonstrates a process of feminization, by which the ballad material available is modified to fit a female situation.

Ophelia's mad ballading presents her at her most subversive and dangerous as well as most pitiful. Where her dialogue had previously been dominated to the point of silence by the other characters in the play, her madness claims the stage. From her first mad entrance in act four to her first exit she has forty-seven lines, and allows the King and Queen nine lines only. She is indeed "importunate", and dismisses the Queen's interruptions twice, first pausing with a "[s]ay you? Nay, pray you mark" (4.5.28) and then in the second instance insisting "[p]ray you, mark" (4.5.35). She gives the King similarly short shrift when he tries to interrupt her 'Saint Valentine's Day' ballad, riding over his interruption and carrying her song through to its conclusion: "[i]ndeed, without an oath, I'll make an end on't." (4.5.57) Insane, Ophelia asserts herself in ways previously impossible for her. During her second interlude of madness, during which only she and her brother speak, she has twenty-eight lines, and he only sixteen, giving her 64% of the total dialogue, and comprising a ratio of almost 2:1. It is undoubtedly the ballads that do the majority of the work in asserting this space for Ophelia.

Furthermore, her ballads are not simply emotive nonsense pieces, and one feature in particular of the minstrel and broadside ballads informs her use of the popular genre. Broadside ballads frequently commented on, or had implications for, the society that they arose out of. Adam Fox's chapter 'Ballads and Libels' makes the social context of broadside ballads resoundingly clear, documenting a popular culture in which ballads were made *against* somebody, as evidenced by the weight of libel cases going through Star Chamber in the sixteen hundreds, in which

entire songs were often recorded as part of the litigation process.<sup>119</sup> For Bruce Smith, who does not distinguish between popular and broadside ballads, ballading itself is an intrinsically subversive act:

As voice projects the singer into the acoustic space around her, as the singer takes her place in a speech community, so that ballad ranges outward to grasp authority figures and draw them by force into the singer's song. To *ballad* is to make a political gesture. Intransitively, one ballads by making up a song; transitively, one ballads by making someone or something the ballads object.

While I do not wish to elide the popular and the broadside ballads in the same way, Ophelia's ballads certainly work *against* some of her audience. Listening to Ophelia's ballad fragments draws her audience into a process of interpretive reading, and this in turn leads to conjecture. As Horatio comments before the mad Ophelia enters, "Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew / Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds." (4.5.14-5) Ophelia's mad ballading contains dangerous implications for the society she moves in. As Smith writes, "Ballads may begin *within*, they may reverberate *around*, but they have their social being *among*."<sup>120</sup> Ophelia subversively 'ballads' both society in general and the royal figures in particular. She draws the King and Queen into her ballads, allowing both the characters and the audience to read implications regarding the behaviour of the royals into her fragments. Ophelia's ballads of incomplete burial (4.5.29-32; 36-40) clearly resonate with Claudius, whose comments regarding "good Polonius' death" follow swiftly after ("we have done but greenly / In hugger-mugger to inter him",

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<sup>119</sup> Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 308-74.

<sup>120</sup> Bruce R. Smith, *Acoustic World*, pp. 188, 184.

4.5.83-4). There are also implications for Gertrude's smooth transferral of affections from one brother to another in the aforementioned Walsingham ballad of confused identity, "How should I your true love know / From another one?" (4.5.23-4).<sup>121</sup>

The more general focus of Ophelia's critique of society is sexual double standards and inequalities. Her mad ballads posit a desiring female; the Valentine maid actively pursues the male, and reverses the usual ballad pattern of the man knocking at the woman's door by having the woman knocking on his, and the man opening the chamber door as opposed to the woman. In the folksong equivalent, the woman becomes pregnant, and makes the man marry her by threatening him with prison. He spends seven years away on a ship, but when he returns is welcomed back with open arms (a considerably more optimistic return from sea than Hamlet enjoys).<sup>122</sup> It is unclear whether this folk song is a version of Ophelia's ballad, or if Ophelia's ballad in fact draws upon the folksong, and perhaps it is irrelevant. What the consonance between the two proves is how far Ophelia is both a character and composer of ballad tradition. The morality of her ballads proves no exception to this consonance; the ballad corpus in general attributes male phallic desire with an opportunism and lack of discrimination that will take its pleasure wherever and whenever it can. Opportunistic male desire ranges from the ineffectual ('Crow and Pie' 111) to the predatory ('The King's Daughter Jean' 52) with a whole spectrum of bad behaviour in between. Ophelia's ballad acknowledges the female folk-truth that "Young men will do't if they come to't: / By Cock they are to blame." (4.5.60-1)

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<sup>121</sup> See Seng, 'Ophelia's Songs in *Hamlet*', *Durham University Journal* 56 (1964) 77-85, at p. 78, cited in Seng, *The Vocal Songs*, pp. 133-4. Ellipses are Seng's own.

<sup>122</sup> The folk-song version runs: "Twas Valentine's day come early in the morn / Come early in the morning betime / A fair young damsel came at my bedside / And she would fain be my Valentine." For the full text and a discussion of this folksong, see Reeves *The Idiom of the People*, p. 160.

Sexual union itself disadvantages the female. It is clearly understood that men will rarely honour physical relations with marital relations:

Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me  
You promis'd me to wed.'

He answers,

'So would I a done, by yonder sun  
An thou hadst not come to my bed.' (4.5.62-6)

Bruce Smith has commented on the work of identification that singing a ballad entails. The speaker puts herself into the first person subject position and in some ways becomes the character. "Chanted again and again", writes Smith, "the phrase '*And I the faire flower of Northumberland*' turns the subject's position into each singer's own."<sup>123</sup> Ophelia's ballading is wary of this 'I' position. The 'Saint Valentine's Day' ballad begins in the first person ("And I a maid at your window / To be your valentine") but as the material becomes more explicit moves into the third person position. However, the dialogue form of the ballad ensures that she is forced to step back into the first person, as in the stanzas cited above. This forcibly presents Ophelia's *own* situation in a ballad framework, treating her own isolation in ballad analogies. While the ballad corpus concedes that double standards apply with regard to male and female desire and sexual behaviour, it is not necessarily reconciled to it.

Ophelia's singing may be seen to perform an affective function in much the same way that a film soundtrack will operate today. Music elicits a less cerebral and more emotive response from the audience, and Ophelia's songs serve to waylay

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<sup>123</sup> Smith, *The Acoustic World*, p. 176.

not only the plot but the pity. Arguably, Ophelia's mad singing gives the play its empathetic centre, providing an emotional focus for the whole work, which destabilizes and disrupts the revenge trajectory. Linda Wagner, beginning with the words of Dr. Johnson that "The mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness" concludes that Ophelia is *only* a pathetic plot device, "a condescension to the audience, who were expecting some romance and pathos".<sup>124</sup> But the pathos of Ophelia's madness is far more structurally significant than Wagner allows. It both redirects the focus of the play away from the master, revenge narrative *and* questions its values. In the later play *The White Devil* (1612) the implications of this use of Ophelia as a site of pity are restated. Cornelia's maternal grief at the death of one son at the hands of his brother draws heavily on the Ophelia-type to open up a comparable space of empathy and compassion. She distributes flowers and sings songs that concentrate on the incomplete burial of her son. Crucially, Cornelia's madness develops the Ophelia-role to explicitly open up a space of redemption and pity. She declines the empty consolation of revenge, refusing to take vengeance upon the elder son Flamineo: "One arrow's graz'd already; it were vain / T'lose this: for that will ne'er be found again." (5.2.52-69) Her comment overturns the central fallacy of the revenge cause, that the dead victim can somehow be ransomed by killing the author of their death, and her words put a stop to the domino-effect of retributive violence. Witnessing her final distraction, an unfamiliar sense dawns on Flamineo:

I have a strange thing in me, to th'which

I cannot give a name, without it be

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<sup>124</sup> Linda Welshimer Wagner, 'Ophelia: Shakespeare's Pathetic Plot Device', *SQ* 14:1 (1963) 94-97, at p. 94, citing F. E. Halliday, *Shakespeare and His Critics* (1949), p. 413, and at p. 96.

Compassion (5.4.113-5).<sup>125</sup>

Ophelia's drowning is a ballad death delivered by the queen in a highly literate, classical style. It is the second flashpoint between the two genres, an explosive combination of the popular-oral, and the elite-literate. Gertrude's preamble to announcing her suicide marks this shift into classical tragedy, echoing almost word for word Euripides' Iphigenia's: "One woe treads on another's heels / by some god's dispensation".<sup>126</sup> Gertrude's lines are: "One woe doth tread upon another's heel, / So fast they follow." (4.7.161-2) Gertrude's sense of the suddenness of Ophelia's death is again appropriate to Ophelia's ballad genre. Like the ballad narratives her character derives from, her story develops in a series of flashes which punctuate the play. Hodgart writes of the ballads that "the story is told in sharp flashes, with a distinct scene or a separate passage of dialogue in each stanza".<sup>127</sup> The word 'stanza' of course means room, and Ophelia's narrative opens rooms into the revenge tragedy narrative at certain intervals throughout the play, carving out her own distinct scenes and passages of dialogue. Act one, scene three, in which Ophelia and Polonius bid farewell to Laertes establishes the fact that Ophelia and Hamlet are romantically implicated. Act two, scene one, in which Ophelia tells her father about Hamlet's strange behaviour, sets up a crisis. Act three, scene one, stages Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia, and scene two portrays her quiet and suppressed. Following Polonius' death, act four, scene five presents us

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<sup>125</sup> Webster, John, *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1960).

<sup>126</sup> Euripides, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, in Morwood trans., *Euripides*, p. 25. There is also a more distant echo of Hecuba's "O my child, / how shall I deal with this thronging crowd of blows, / these terrors, each with its petition, clamouring / for attention? If I try to cope with one, / another shoulders in, and then a third / comes on, distracting, each fresh wave / breeding new successors as it breaks" in Euripides, *Hecuba*, David Grene & Richmond Lattimore eds, *The Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol III: Euripides* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 33, l. 584-9.

<sup>127</sup> Hodgart, *The Faber Book of Ballads*, pp. 13-4.

with Ophelia's derangement, and in scene seven, Gertrude announces that Ophelia is dead.

This is a typical ballad leap. But Gertrude's speech relating Ophelia's death places Gertrude in a long line of classical theatre messengers relating offstage female deaths. E. F. Watling notes the formulaic nature of these messenger speeches; they "fall into a stereotyped pattern – the description of the place, the horror of the act, the stoical courage of the sufferer."<sup>128</sup> Gertrude's speech features instead, but similarly, the description of the place ("There is a willow grows askant the brook" 4.7.164), the pathos of the act ("Her clothes spread wide, / And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up" 4.7.173-4), and the pathetic indifference of the sufferer ("one incapable of her own distress" 4.7.176). Ophelia's "fantastic garlands" mark her out in the classical tradition as a sacrificial victim. Iphigenia, for example, demands "garlands to bind my head", adding "here is a lock of my hair to wreath the altar - / and streams of purifying water."<sup>129</sup> Ophelia's garlands cease to be pretty, and become altogether sinister, an adornment for a sacrificial victim.

Examples of drowning told in the ballad style are blunt in contrast. They include 'Bonnie Annie' (24), in which Annie and her baby are both thrown overboard. The drowning is described with austere economy. Version A has:

As the ship sailed, bonnie Annie she swam,

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<sup>128</sup> Introduction to *Seneca: Four Tragedies and Octavia*, trans. E. F. Watling (Penguin Books Ltd, London: 1966), p. 23.

<sup>129</sup> Euripides, *Iphigenia At Aulis*, in Morwood trans., *Euripides*, l.1478-80, p. 128. Similarly, the Maiden (usually taken to be Macaria) in *The Children of Heracles* dictates: "Put garlands on me, if this is your wish; begin the rite"; John Davie trans., *Euripides: Alcestis and Other Plays*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1996), p. 106. Alcestis, who gives herself to death in exchange for her husband's life, prepares for death by washing her body "with water from the river": "Then she approached all the altars in Admetus' house and, covering them with garlands, she made her offering of prayers, breaking off shoots of myrtle from their branches", Euripides' *Alcestis* in Davie, *Euripides*, p. 13. The First Chorister in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, observing Cassandra's equanimity in the face of the imminent death she has herself prophesied, compares her to oxen, "that, decked with garlands, amble on their own / to the waiting altars of their sacrifice", Slavitt, *Aeschylus 1* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 53, l.1085-88.

And she was at Ireland as soon as them.

He made his love a coffin of the gowd sae yellow,

And buried his bonnie love down in a sea valley.

Version B is even more sparing of detail: “Sometimes she did sink, sometimes she did float it / Until that she cam to the high banks o Yarrow.” In “The Twa Sisters” (10), one sister jealously pushes the other in: “Sometyes she sanke, sometimes she swam, / Until she came unto the mil-dam”. “The Twa Sisters” has especial resonance with the Queen’s description of Ophelia’s death, as the fair sister is mistaken for a mermaid or a swan.<sup>130</sup> Ophelia’s lay – the ballad story that her life has constituted – is extinguished when she drowns, exactly as her own fragments of ballads are. Gertrude’s account fuses the popular and the elite, the ballad and the classical to devastating effect, and the question remains whether this account of Ophelia’s death is in fact the abiding image of *Hamlet*.

In the ballads, revenge tragedy *and* classical tragedy, death is both socially recuperative and essentially conservative. Revenge tragedy is a fundamentally conservative genre; in the end, it is on the side of God and centralised government. Taking the renegade course and pursuing private revenge in the face of monarchical and divine authority can lead only to death. In the ballads, death renders lovers harmless and unimpeachable, death being ballad shorthand for a true love, a fact that the ballad then doubly guarantees in the form of the sympathetic flowers (a rose and a briar, or a birk and a briar) growing out of their graves, whose intertwining signals to the whole world “They were twa lovers

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<sup>130</sup> Version D of ‘The Lass of Roch Royale’(76) and Version A of ‘Young Benjie’ (86) similarly feature drowning women. In the first, Fair Anny comes “floating oer the main” with her young son in her arms, and is “tossed about the tide”.

dear.”<sup>131</sup> The socially recuperative nature of death is particularly true for ballad women. Dead, they are beyond reproach. In ‘Young Andrew’ (48) the maid returns from her misadventure to her father’s house, naked save for the curtains of her hair, and tries to gain re-admittance. Her father tells her that if she doesn’t restore his red gold to him, she will never come back into the house. The maid dies of a broken heart on the doorstep. Upon her death, her father repents:

I the morning, when her ffather gott vpp,  
 A pittyyffull sight there he might see;  
 His own deere daughter was dead, without clothes,  
 The teares they trickeled fast ffrom his eye.  
 .....  
 Sais, Fye of gold, and ffye of ffee!  
 For I sett soe much by my red gold  
 That now itt hath lost both my daughter and mee!

Her father dies for loss of his daughter. This is typical of the ballad corpus, in which errant daughters who were cursed in life are mourned in death and through the mourning process are reintegrated into society. In ‘Andrew Lammie’ (233) Annie correspondingly predicts that she will be vindicated for her love in death, “My youthful heart was won by love, / But death will me exoner.’ This undoubtedly has much to do with the fact that a dead daughter is no longer a threat to family honour. Where Ophelia’s madness was disturbing and difficult to

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<sup>131</sup> ‘Earl Brand’ (7), p.101. Similar floral phenomena adorn the graves of the lovers in ‘Fair Janet’ (64), ‘Lord Lovel’ (65), ‘Lord Thomas and Fair Annet’ (73), ‘Fair Margaret and Sweet William’ (74), ‘Prince Robert’ (87), ‘Lord Saltoun and Auchanachie’ (239) and ‘Lady Diamond’ (269) for example.

contain, her dead body is far easier to accommodate. Laertes' concern for Ophelia's chastity is obliterated by her death. She is given "her virgin crants, / Her maiden strewments" (5.1.221-2), and according to Laertes, her flesh is "fair and unpolluted" (5.1.228). Elevated to the "ministering angel" of her brother's elegies, the dead Ophelia is beyond reproof. Silent (or silenced) the court can make of her what it will, and accordingly reach for unthreatening lyrical and romantic elegies. The mouldering corpse is accordingly transformed into an image of flowers, "Lay her i'th' earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring." (5.1.227-9)

Female death in classical tragedy is similarly conservative. In *Tragic Ways of Killing A Woman*, Nicole Loraux observes how wives in Greek tragedy retire from the communicative and disruptive space of the stage to return indoors to die. Virgins, on the other hand, are put on stage only to be removed and delivered "out of sight to the slaughterer's knife". Citing Antigone as a "striking exception", Loraux notes that virgins in the main: "do not kill themselves: they are killed." Antigone's death is for Loraux "a mixture of a very female suicide and something like a sacrifice outside the norm."<sup>132</sup> Imprisoned in a cave for insisting that her brother should receive the customary burial rituals, Sophocles' Antigone hangs herself with linen woven of her dress. Ophelia occupies a similarly ambiguous position. Taking her own life she is yet, like Antigone, "something like a sacrifice".

The sacrifice of virgin girls in Greek drama works to move the plot forward from a position of stalemate. Iphigenia's sacrifice in *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* is prerequisite to Agamemnon and Menelaus' ships leaving for Troy. Of course, conversely, the sacrifice of Polyxena to the ghost of Achilles is then required as a condition for the Greek ships leaving Troy for home. Immediately following

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<sup>132</sup>Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing A Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA: 1987) pp. ix, 31.

Polyxena's sacrifice in Seneca's *The Trojan Women*, the messenger comments: "Sails are unfurled on every ship, the fleet / Is ready to depart." The sacrifices allow the war and revenge plots to move forward; it follows that giving oneself to sacrifice willingly marks the virgin out as a servant loyal to the male cause, an emphasis which Euripides hammers home in *Iphigenia At Aulis*. Iphigenia decides to die "gloriously, to reject all meanness of spirit", and is passionately, patriotically rhetorical: "I give my body to Greece. Sacrifice me and sack Troy. This shall be my lasting monument, this shall be my children, my marriage and my glory."<sup>133</sup> In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, not only is the furtherance of a male plot at stake, the concept of male honour is crucially implicated. Agamemnon considers that if he does not sacrifice his daughter:

... we never shall set sail  
to Troy, as we have pledged to each other to do,  
and I shall dishonour myself and each of you.

If he does not sacrifice his daughter, a male pledge will be broken. In Euripides, the messenger recounts Iphigenia's rousing declaration upon her sacrifice, "I gladly give my body for my fatherland and for the whole land of Greece." Similarly in Euripides' *The Children of Heracles*, Demophon is ordered by the oracles to sacrifice a virgin girl of noble blood in order to "make our enemy turn and flee and bring [this] city out of danger."<sup>134</sup> The sacrifice will precipitate a movement in the plot. The maiden daughter of Heracles, not named in the play but in other accounts

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<sup>133</sup> Seneca, *The Trojan Women*, in E. F. Watling trans., *Seneca: Four Tragedies*, p. 204; Euripides, *Iphigenia At Aulis*, in Morwood trans., *Euripides: Bacchae and Other Plays*, pp. 125-6, ll.1376, 1398-1400.

<sup>134</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, in Slavitt ed. & trans., *Aeschylus 1*, pp. 16-7, ll.160-4; Euripides, *Iphigenia At Aulis*, p. 130, ll.1552-3; Euripides, *The Children Of Heracles*, in Davie trans., *Euripides*, p. 104.

'Macaria', who, with Heracles' other children is seeking sanctuary in Athens, offers herself as a sacrificial victim.

The willingness of these virgins to meet death blurs the boundaries between sacrifice and suicide. In Seneca's precedent, Euripides' *Hecuba*, Polyxena hates her state of slavery to the extent that she "prefer[s] to die / than go on living". She tells Odysseus: "I go with you because I must, but most / because I wish to die" and "Of my own free will I die." Her death is a hybrid of sacrifice and suicide. While she does not perform the act itself, she offers herself up to the sword. Since the virgin sacrifice so emphatically serves the male cause, it should come as no surprise that her death is eroticized:

Strike, captain.

Here is my breast. Will you stab me there?

Or in the neck? Here is my throat, bared

For your blow.<sup>135</sup>

I would argue that Ophelia's death is a hybrid suicide / sacrifice, with an opposite emphasis to Polyxena's. Polyxena's death is a sacrifice that is also a suicide, whereas Ophelia's is a suicide that is also a sacrifice. Virgin sacrifice / suicide serves the male community, moves the male plot forward, and features as a kind of marriage. Ophelia's death falls into the classical pattern on all counts. Gertrude conflates Ophelia's funeral with the idea of a wedding, and the burial itself brings Laertes and Hamlet into a headlong confrontation as they grapple together in her grave, thereby accelerating the *scelus* plot. Bringing the two young men into direct antagonism, it precipitates the organised dual which leads to the uncovering of

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<sup>135</sup> Euripides, *Hecuba*, in Grene & Lattimore eds, *Euripides III*, ll. 377-8, 349-50, 546 & 563-6.

treachery and the general bloodbath that constitutes the final scene of *Hamlet*. Ophelia's death has broken the stalemate, and the male revenge plot grinds back into action. The subversive space of Ophelia's madness is closed down by her death, which is then subsumed into the overriding mechanisms of the revenge tragedy plot.

However, Ophelia's burial also reinstates her ballad alignment, and continues to trouble the text. Although Laertes is distressed by Ophelia's "maimed rites"(5.1.208), Ophelia's burial is in fact appropriate to genre. In the ballads dead women are never taken to church; instead there is a wake, or a funeral procession.<sup>136</sup> According to the priest, Ophelia is afforded no requiem because "Her death was doubtful" (5.1.216). A requiem would also have been generically inappropriate. Indeed, Ophelia's whole burial is very much of the ballad corpus. 'Lord Lovel' (65A) and its numerous Scandinavian and German equivalents bear strikingly similar circumstances. The errant (or at least, late) lover comes across his sweetheart's funeral procession, or in some Germanic equivalents, the grave-digging. There then follows a reunion of sorts:

He caused her corps to be set down,  
 And her winding sheet undone,  
 And he made a vow before them all  
 He'd never kiss woman again.

'The Lass of Roch Royal' (76) follows a similar pattern; the male lover finds his sweetheart's funeral procession, slits her winding sheet, and proceeds to kiss her cheek, chin and lips – "But there was no breath within." When Hamlet leaps into

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<sup>136</sup> Examples include 'Lord Lovel' (65), 'The Lass of Loch Royale' (66) and 'Fair Margaret and Sweet William' (74).

Ophelia's grave, he is jumping straight into genre. As the lover-brother tensions in 'Fair Margaret and Sweet William' (74) demonstrate, even the unseemly graveside ruction between Laertes and Hamlet is normal ballad-behaviour. We can compare Hamlet's:

I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
 Could not with all their quantity of love  
 Make up my sum. (5.1.264-6)

with Sweet William's:

I'll do more for thee, Margaret,  
 Than any of thy kin;  
 For I will kiss thy pale wan lips,  
 Tho a smile I cannot win.'

With that bespeak her seven brethren,  
 Making most piteous moan:  
 'You may go kiss your jolly brown bride,  
 And let our sister alone.'

Traditionally there is some conflation of the bridal-bed with the grave. In the Swedish version of 'Young Benjie' (86), 'Verkel Vejemandson' the virgin Gundelild is abducted by Verkel, but then escapes and throws herself into the sea, saying "It

was a very different bride-bed that my mother meant me to have.”<sup>137</sup> Gertrude’s farewell is uncannily similar:

[*scattering flowers*] Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife:

I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,

And not have strewed thy grave. (5.1.232-5)

This is also a return to literate classical precedent however, as the Queen is yet again responsible for a conflation of the ballad with the literate, Ophelia’s ballad burial merging with the classical confusion of virgin funerals with weddings.<sup>138</sup>

Despite Ophelia’s apparently conservative, assimilative death, her narrative continues to pose a serious challenge to the revenge imperative. Her death throws the very ethics of revenge into question even from within the classical paradigm.<sup>139</sup> Her ruin embodies the ‘collateral damage’ of the vendetta. The play insists on pity, and her death is consonant with a Senecan conception of vengeance as a passion that knows no mean and exacts a high cost in terms of human life. In *De Ira*, Seneca accepts the earlier, Aristotelian association of anger with vengeance but denies that rage can be useful:

When he is enraged against a fellow man, with what fury he rushes on working destruction – destruction of himself as well and wrecking what cannot be sunk unless he sinks with it. Tell me, then, will any one call the man sane who, just as if seized by a hurricane, does not walk

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<sup>137</sup> Grundtvig IV, 151, no. 198 cited in Child, *Ballads*, p. 281.

<sup>138</sup> See Rush Rehm, *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Wedding And Funeral Rituals in Greek Tragedy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>139</sup> Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 213.

but is driven along, and is at the mercy of a raging demon, who entrusts not his revenge (*ultio*) to another, but himself enacts it, and thus, bloodthirsty alike in purpose and in deed, becomes the murderer of those persons who are dearest and the destroyer of those things for which, when lost, he is destined ere long to weep.<sup>140</sup>

Hamlet's killing of Polonius leads to Ophelia's madness and death, and eventually to Hamlet's grief at her graveside. Seneca's description of raging destruction leading to repentant tears is exactly the dynamic circumscribed by Hamlet's cruelty towards Ophelia in act three scene one, his killing of her father, and finally his declarations of love over her corpse.

As the insupportable remainder of Hamlet's revenge course, Ophelia's death belongs to that other narrative perspective that is often in operation in Greek tragic theatre and Seneca, which is the story of the powerless, those swept to the margins of the *scelus* plot whose voices nevertheless infiltrate the plays and occasionally take centre-stage. William Arrowsmith describing *The Hecuba*, for example, writes that it is "a taut, bitter little tragedy of the interrelationships between those who hold power and those who suffer it."<sup>141</sup> This holds true for many of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Seneca. To look beyond the distinctively male narrative-mechanism of the *scelus* is to find a subversive gathering of female concerns. Time after time it is the women in classical tragedy who can do nothing that suffer everything. Occasionally their suffering ceases to be a marginalised subplot and becomes instead the entire *raison-d'être* of the play. Themes of bereaved women and enslaved mothers and wives that are peripheral in Aeschylus' *Seven*

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<sup>140</sup> Seneca, *De Ira*, III.i.ii.1-3, in John W. Busore ed. and trans., *Moral Essays*, 3 vols (London: 1928-35) cited in Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 113-4.

<sup>141</sup> William Arrowsmith, introduction, *The Hecuba*, in Grene and Lattimore eds, *Euripides*, p. 3.

*Against Thebes* and Euripide's *Helen* or *Heracles* become the central crises of Aeschylus' *The Persians*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *The Suppliant Women*, *The Trojan Women* and *The Hecuba*. Growing out of this tradition, Seneca's *The Trojan Women* presents the aftermath of the Trojan War as a female tragedy. Counted amongst the spoils of war, the women's captors draw lots for the bereaved women, who prepare to enter into a lifetime of slavery. The play details the systematic annihilation of their children. The one role society has allowed to women, motherhood, is made a mockery of by war and its disregard for human life. Hecuba can hardly believe that her life's work has been so totally extinguished:

A time I can remember  
 When there were happy faces at my side,  
 So many children to be mother to,  
 They tired me out with kissing.<sup>142</sup>

The force of female grief throws the morality of war and revenge into doubt, just as Ophelia's empathetic madness and grief destabilises and interrogates the revenge teleology of *Hamlet*. In Euripides' *The Suppliant Women* the women's reaction to the futility of their own roles in childbearing and rearing is anarchic. Lamenting "O my child, to an evil fate I bred you!" the chorus conclude "Would my body had never been yoked to a husband's bed".<sup>143</sup> The deaths are too much, and the women's revolt encompasses the very hierarchy of male and female relations in early modern and classical society.

Ophelia's demise is similarly in excess. The dying Laertes asks Hamlet to

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<sup>142</sup> Seneca, *The Trojan Women* in Watling trans., *Seneca*.

<sup>143</sup> Euripides, *The Suppliant Women*, trans. Frank William Jones in Grene & Lattimore eds, *Euripides IV*, pp. 171, 168.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me. (5.2.334-7)

Ophelia is left out of Laertes' homosocial equation, however; she is unaccounted for. Her death is outside and beyond the entire revenge economy. Claudius kills the old King Hamlet, and is therefore killed by Hamlet. Hamlet kills Polonius, and is killed by Laertes. Ophelia dies because of the revenge circumstances, but kills herself. As such she is anomalous; early modern culture ostracised even the suicide corpse, burying it at a crossroads at night, with a stake driven through the body.<sup>144</sup> Her death is unaccommodated, and as such she undermines the fantasy Watson identifies at work in revenge tragedy that the dead can be ransomed by vengeance.

The key difference between death in revenge tragedy and in the ballad corpus, however, is that the ballads elude definition. As we have seen, happy endings are possible, and ballad versions can radically alter plot elements that in a literate world would be regarded as unalterable. Ballad instabilities that seem particularly relevant to Ophelia's narrative include 'Leesome Brand' (15). Version A redeems the tragedy of version B in which the heroine dies by providing the hero with magic drops to revive the dead heroine and her child. The tragic ending is averted. In 'Clerk Saunders' (69) variations similarly occur regarding the heroine's fate. In A, B and F we simply leave her to her grief; in C, she demands that she be married to the "Queen o Heaven / For man sall never enjoy me." In

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<sup>144</sup> See Michael MacDonald, 'Ophelia's Maimed Rites', *SQ* 37:3 (1986) 309-317. This also holds true in the ballad corpus; Lord Thomas who commits suicide in 'Lord Thomas and Fair Annet' (73A) is "buried without kirk-wa".

D, she resolves to neither wear stockings, shoes or shirt, nor to comb her hair or allow coal or candle-light in her bower. In E she requests that she be put in a:

... high, high tower,  
 Be sure you make it stout and strong,  
 And on the top put an honour's gate,  
 That my love's ghost may go out and in.

In G, Clerk Sandy's ghost comes back for the lady a year and a day after his death; she follows him out into the greenwood, painfully climbing over a wall, but then loses sight of him, and sits mourning in the forest. Finally her lover's ghost returns to tell her that in nine nights they will both be in Paradise. The heroine's fate therefore varies between versions from survival to death, with ghost-romancing and madness in between.

In 'The Lass of Loch Royale' (76), the pregnant heroine travels to claim sanctuary with her lover from her own disapproving family, but is denied admittance to the stronghold by the hero's mother. In most of the versions both she and her child drown in the sea, and the hero either drags them out, or comes across their funeral procession. In version F however, the tragedy is turned on its head, and the ballad transformed into a magical-comic narrative, which ends with the heroine undoing the spell of the hero's wicked mother:

Sche sailed it round, and sailed it sound,  
 And loud, loud cried she,  
 'Now break, now break, ye fairy charms,  
 And let the prisoner free.'" (8)

Anything is possible in the ballads. Revenge tragedy commits its protagonist to death. The ballads do no such thing, and while in this particular ‘version’ of Ophelia’s story the heroine dies, the unstable nature of the genre constantly gestures towards the possibility of another, better ending. Far from being an attractive subplot or embellishment, this popular tradition import severely undermines the logic and prerogatives of the dominant revenge narrative, destabilising the progress of that plotline and even threatening to waylay it altogether. Luce Irigaray writes that female desire:

is often interpreted, and feared, as a sort of insatiable hunger, a voracity that will swallow you whole. Whereas it really involves a different economy more than anything else, one that upsets the linearity of a project, undermines the goal-object of a desire, diffuses the polarisation toward a single pleasure, disconcerts fidelity to a single discourse...<sup>145</sup>

Correspondingly, the ballad corpus has a different economy and occupies a different position in relationship to authority than that of revenge tragedy. Revenge tragedy demands “fidelity to a single discourse”, and is linear and goal-orientated. But *Hamlet* has, if you like, pockets of dissent built into the structure of the play, which destabilise the very premises of the revenge tragedy formula it sets up. Crucially the vehicle of this dissent is the oral, popular, female form of the ballads.

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<sup>145</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex*, pp. 29-30.

## CHAPTER II:

**“TO MARRY HIM IS HOPELESS / TO BE HIS WHORE IS WITLESS.”**

**THE JAILER’S DAUGHTER AND THE PROBLEMATISING OF  
MARRIAGE IN SHAKESPEARE AND FLETCHER’S *THE TWO  
NOBLE KINSMEN***

**Introduction: “To marry him is hopeless”**

Written collaboratively by Shakespeare and John Fletcher *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613) has popularly been treated in recent scholarship as a disillusioned return to the themes and settings of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>146</sup> Theseus and Hippolyta are once again called upon to adjudicate a conflict of desire in and around the time of their own nuptials; the action again moves from the court to the forest and back to the court again; and the working classes yet again provide the comic focus of the play.<sup>147</sup> However, the tragicomedy of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* follows its Chaucerian

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<sup>146</sup> For the co-authorship of the play, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Vickers surveys all previous scholarship on the dual authorship of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as well as conducting his own analysis of the writer’s stylistic features and thematic emphases and interests. Vickers, using his own research as well as that of his predecessors, concludes that Shakespeare is responsible for: acts 1.1-4, 2.1, 3.1, 4.3 and 5.3-4 while Fletcher is responsible for the remainder. See also Lois Potter: “Hoy’s division of the play (89) gives Acts 1 and 5 (except 5.1.1-33 and 5.2) wholly to Shakespeare, as well as 2.1 and 3.1-2. Other scholars are doubtful about the authorship of 1.4-5, and 3.2, but Hope (86) claims both as Shakespeare’s.” Introduction, John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter, Arden 3 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997), p. 25, (all future references to this edition) citing Cyril Hoy, ‘The shares of Fletcher and his collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon’, *SB* 13 (1960), 77-88, and J. Hope, *The Authorship of Shakespeare’s Plays: A Socio-linguistic Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>147</sup> See Glynne Wickham, ‘*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, or *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Part II?’, *Elizabethan Theatre* 7 (1980) 167-196; Richard H. Abrams, ‘Gender Confusion and Sexual Politics in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*’ in James Redmond ed., *Drama, Sex and Politics: Themes in Drama* 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 69-75; E. Talbot Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 50-1; Douglas Bruster, ‘The Jailer’s Daughter and the Politics of Madwomen’s Language’, *SQ* 46:3 (1995), 277-300, at p. 280; Alan Stewart, ‘Near Akin’: The Trials of Friendship in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*’ in Jennifer Richards and James Knowles ed., *Shakespeare’s*

precedent to replace the comedy ending of a triple marriage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the death of Arcite. The consequently dispirited betrothal of Palamon and Emilia is the icing to a bitter cake, as the play closes on a mouthful of ash, Palamon lamenting "That we should things desire, which do cost us / The loss of our desire!" (5.4.107) *The Two Noble Kinsmen* diverges from the *Dream* model, which closes with matrimony, and instead ends in disillusioned apathy. Perhaps there is little to be hopeful about; this is a play in which marriage is repeatedly marred with mortality. From the first scene in which the mourning Queens interrupt Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding procession to demand that Theseus take up arms in order to return their own husbands' corpses to them, death struggles with passion to create "mirth in funeral" and "dirge in marriage" in a truly Hamletian fashion (*Ham* 1.2.12). Indeed, *Hamlet* weighs in as the tragic counterpart to the *Dream*-influenced comic strain. Usefully, Michael Bristol follows Thaker Brooke in describing *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as an apocryphal text, defining such a work as one that "diverge[s] from the centre of authority to an alarming degree, without offering to that authority sufficient reason for absolute exclusion or suppression."<sup>148</sup> We can accept and adapt this description to consider *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as the bastard progeny of an unholy fight-come-alliance between *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as the two precedents wrestle for ground in the tragicomic forum of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The final product is a text that belongs to neither house, but troubles both, and is subversive and destructive of the 'truths' of its two background texts.

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*Late Plays: New Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 57-71, at pp. 59 & 61; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 265-6 and Katrina Bachinger, 'Maidenheads and Mayhem: A Morris-Dance Reading of William Shakespeare and John Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', *English Language and Literature: Positions and Dispositions* (1990), 23-38, at p. 29.

<sup>148</sup> Michael D. Bristol, 'The Two Noble Kinsmen: Shakespeare and the Problem of Authority', in Charles Frey ed., *Shakespeare, Fletcher and The Two Noble Kinsmen*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), p. 84.

Nowhere is the return to *Hamlet* more clearly seen than in Fletcher and Shakespeare's revision of the Ophelia-figure, the Jailer's Daughter. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* recreates the oppositional dynamic at work in *Hamlet* between Ophelia's female ballad space and Hamlet's male revenge tragedy dynamic. The authors intensify both elements, building on the folk associations of the ballads to create an amplified folk heroine, and focussing on the duel as a concentrated microcosm of an elite revenge dynamic. Like Ophelia's ballad space, the Jailer's Daughter's narrative troubles and destabilizes the master narrative of the duelling cousins. However, this altogether more pessimistic text raises severe doubts about the concept of love, marriage and generation as providing a productive alternative to male homosocial structures and conflicts. It questions, in fact, the very idea set up in the earlier play that union with Ophelia would provide a productive alternative to the narrow revenge trajectory, and it does so with a proto-feminist sensibility for the peculiar losses of a woman who entered into marriage in the early modern period.

The idea of marriage as a happy ending has clearly been ideologically tricky for feminists, and this chapter problematises the assumptions of the last, as *The Two Noble Kinsmen* recognises that the comedy-marriage alternative to the tragic revenge tragedy trajectory that Ophelia offered in *Hamlet* is not viable. Examined in an early modern context, and from a female perspective, marriage constitutes gift-wrapped annihilation. While women on the verge of marriage are frequently represented in early modern literature, married women are scarce to the point of extinction. The high value placed on women as commodities in agnatic kinship structures is reflected in the relatively high proportion of women depicted in early modern literature as teetering on the marital threshold. Lorna Hutson has analysed women's role within agnatic kinship systems as a sign of credit between men. Citing Gayle

Rubin, Hutson writes that women are trafficked in the “most basic form of gift exchange, in which it is women who are the most precious of gifts.”<sup>149</sup>

As this most precious gift between men, women momentarily flare into importance as they reach a marriageable age. The absconding and cross-dressing heroines of the ballads and early modern drama alike (Ellen in ‘Childe Waters’ (63) and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, for example) inhabit liminal territories which reflect their own highly charged and ambiguous status. On the threshold of marriage they are invested with importance by their position as gifts within agnatic systems of kinship, and may fulfil or fail family expectations with their marriages. In other words, as substantial bargaining chips in the male governed dynastic casino, they suddenly become very interesting. *The Taming of the Shrew*, a comedy that is also a woman’s tragedy, makes women’s position as merchandise abundantly clear in an exchange between Katherine’s father and his two advisors.

Gremio: Was ever match clapp’d up so suddenly?

Baptista: Faith, gentlemen, now I play a merchant’s part,

And venture madly on a desperate mart.

Tranio: ’Twas a commodity lay fretting by you,

’Twill bring you gain, or perish on the seas. (2.1.354-5)<sup>150</sup>

Like any other product in the merchant world, daughters are commodities who will either be shipwrecked or bring profit on other shores. The fathers are venture

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<sup>149</sup> Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendships and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7; citing Gayle Rubin, ‘The traffic in women: notes on the ‘political economy’ of sex’, in Rayna Reiter ed., *Towards an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975) at p. 173.

<sup>150</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Brian Morris, Arden 2 (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002). All future references to this edition.

capitalists who watch how their nubile daughters will match with all the fascination of a gambler waiting to see how the dice will fall.

In the liminal, threshold realm of pre-nuptial bartering and bargaining, women appear to gain access to some agency. Fathers frequently defer to the obtaining of their daughters' consent; when Petruchio tries to hurry Baptista into drawing up the contract of marriage, with a more than special interest in the dowry, Baptista demurs: "Ay, when the special thing is well obtain'd, / That is, her love; for that is all in all." (2.1.128-9) It is in the pre-marital, liminal territory of the forest of Arden that Rosalind is able to govern Orlando. But even this momentary empowerment is delusory. Not only do the forced marriages of Katherine and Juliet demonstrate that these fathers are only paying lip-service to the idea of female consent, but perhaps most subtly, romantic attachment is itself manipulated for patriarchal interests. Hutson questions the assumption that dramatisations of clandestine marriages are romantic fantasies of defiance against parental coercion, arguing that we should rather see them in a context of *amicitia* (the humanist model of idealised male friendship) as allegories of masculinity as persuasive power. So, for example, Othello's social agency is expressed as a victory in persuading a woman (Desdemona) into a secret marriage. Furthermore, the polarisation of the love match and the arranged marriage in early modern drama is, Hutson argues, misleading, with women more likely to think of their kin and friends as supporters of their matrimonial interests.<sup>151</sup>

In early modern literature romantic attachment serves to naturalise a process in which women's identities are transferred from subservience to paternal authority and identity to subservience to a husband's authority and identity. Investigating the use of the marriage contract as a metaphor for the hierarchical, inequitable political

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<sup>151</sup> Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter*, pp. 154, 5.

relations of sovereign and subject, Victoria Kahn notes that the small degree of autonomy allowed to women in the time before marriage is unrepresentative of the married state before her. The point of such an analogy between wife and political subject, argues Kahn, “was to naturalize and romanticize absolute sovereignty by making it seem that the subject, like the wife, was both naturally inferior and had consented to such inferior status out of affection.” Kahn concludes: “it is not good for women to have romances end, for romantic closure is antithetical to female independence.”<sup>152</sup> Alice Thornton’s *Autobiography* records resentment for the romantic manipulation as well as the violent intimidation that forced her into marriage in the 1600s. She records that “the bargain was strucke betwixt them before my deare mother and my selfe ever heard a silable of this matter”, and adds: “[w]hich manner of perswasion to a marriage, with a sword in one hand, and a complement in another, I did not understand, when a free choice was denied me.”<sup>153</sup>

Upon marriage, women’s legal identity disappeared. A married woman could not bring suit in a court of law. Although she could nominally own land, her husband retained the rights and profit from it. Her movables became her husband’s property. She couldn’t make a will without his consent. Her ability to make contracts or buy and sell property was severely restricted. A mother had no legal rights over the guardianship of her children unless she was explicitly appointed a guardian by her husband in his will for their own children.<sup>154</sup> As Wiesner writes, “[t]hese limitations appear in the earliest extant law codes and were

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<sup>152</sup> Victoria Kahn, ‘Margaret Cavendish and the Romance of Contract’ in Lorna Hutson ed., *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 286-316, at pp. 290 & 307.

<sup>153</sup> Alice Thornton, *Autobiography* (London: Surtees Society, vol. LXII, 1873) cited in Mary Beth Rose, ‘Gender, Genre, and History: Seventeenth-Century English Women and the Art of Autobiography’, in Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 245-278, at p. 62.

<sup>154</sup> See Merry E. Wiesner, ‘Women’s Defence of their Public Role’, in Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, pp. 1-27, at p. 3.

sharpened and broadened as the law codes were expanded.”<sup>155</sup> *The lawes resolution of women’s rights*, the first early modern tract on women’s legal position asserts that: “[a] married woman perhaps may doubt whether shee bee either none or no more than half a person”.<sup>156</sup> A woman became her husband’s possession, both as part of his property and, concomitantly, as an extension of his identity. As Petruchio summarizes:

I will be master of what is mine own.  
 She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,  
 My household stuff, my field, my barn,  
 My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing,  
 And here she stands. Touch her whoever dare! (3.2.228-32)

Petruchio’s possessive aggression (“Touch her whoever dare!”) will come to the fore in the two kinsmen’s competition for Emilia, and his marriage is an arrangement that embodies the advice of contemporary conduct books. The early modern wife is an extension of her husband’s agency or, more accurately, an arena in which the husband’s agency may be seen to work.

Lawrence Stone summarises that “[b]y marriage, the husband and wife became one person in law – and that person was the husband.”<sup>157</sup> Mary Beth Rose argues that this lack of agency and identity contributes towards the scarcity of mothers in Shakespearean drama: “When seen in the terms by which Renaissance legal discourse constructs the married woman’s identity [...] the exclusion of

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>156</sup> T.E., *The lawes resolution of women’s rights* (London: 1632) in N. H. Keeble ed., *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 175, cited in Mary Beth Rose, ‘Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance’, *SLQ* 42:3 (1991) 291-314 at p. 293.

mothers from Shakespeare's father-dominated plays could be viewed as a dramatic economy, the conflation of two characters into one."<sup>158</sup> Both Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter conspicuously lack mothers. It is a trend that continues with later representations of the Ophelia type in early modern drama. Lucibella, Aspatia and Penthea are all motherless.

Both Rose and Wiesner indicate the ways in which women negotiated with the limitations of their agency. Rose notes recent evidence that women exercised legal agency on a broad scale that contradicted their conceptual agency, and Wiesner argues that women used Protestantism and the unmediated relationship with God that it permitted to claim some authority and identity. However, the socio-political drive to exclude women from structures of power cannot be denied.<sup>159</sup> Simply, the suppression of women was a work in progress, in which literature played its part. Anne Rosalind Jones writes that in humanist literature and family theory, woman came to be constructed as an absence; "legally, she vanishes under the name and authority of her father and her husband; as daughter and wife, she is enclosed in the private household. She is silent and invisible: she does not speak, and she is not spoken about."<sup>160</sup>

Hutson has argued that the literary culture of humanism sought to "‘fashion’ women by addressing them through persuasive fictions of themselves", such as the chaste, silent and invisible women of the humanist literature Jones refers to. Once

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<sup>158</sup> Rose, 'Where are the Mothers', at p. 293.

<sup>159</sup> See Rose, 'Where are the Mothers', at p. 293, and Wiesner, 'Women's Defence'; also Mary Prior, 'Women and the Urban Economy: Oxford 1500 – 1800', in Mary Prior ed., *Women in English Society* (London: Methuen, 1985) and Susan Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) The conduct books themselves recognise that some women were exercising agency beyond their prescribed roles; William Gouge criticises women "such as [...] take ware out of the shop, come out of the garner, sheepe out of the flocke, or any other goods to sell it and make money of: or to giue away, or otherwise to use so as their husbands shall never know if they can hinder it"; *Of domesticall duties eight treatises* (London: Printed by John Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), p. 312.

<sup>160</sup> Anne Rosalind Jones, 'Surprising Fame: Renaissance Gender Ideologies and Women's Lyric' in Hutson ed., *Feminism and Renaissance Studies* at p. 317.

so fashioned, women could be passively exchanged between men in contracts which cement relationships between men rather than between men and women. Hutson's first chapter explores the presentation of an exemplary husband who fashions an unruly woman by producing fictions in Xenophon's humanist tract *Oeconomicus*. The woman becomes an emblem of the socially transformative potential of humanist literary culture; as Hutson writes:

Shakespeare's dramatic output establishes itself within this paradigm, alleviating the scandal of theatrical imposture by identifying theatre as a site of humanist textual 'husbandry' in which socially transformative (and hence prophetic) fictions of the relations between men and women could be produced.<sup>161</sup>

Fictions of romance are from a female perspective, an extremely manipulative art.

Yet *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, along perhaps with *The Shrew*, undoes the fictions of the earlier comedies, demystifying romance. While Petruchio's systematic abuse of Katherine in *The Shrew* produces a wife who at least appears to have accepted this fictional naturalisation of a grotesque imbalance in power and status, Katherine's sincerity is ambiguous. She preaches that:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,  
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,  
And for thy maintenance, commits his body  
To painful labour both by sea and land  
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,

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<sup>161</sup> Hutson, *Usurer's Daughter*, p. 7.

Whilst thou lies warm at home, secure and safe;  
 And craves no other tribute at thy hands  
 But love fair looks, and true obedience. (5.2.143-54)

Not only does she submit to her abusive husband's rule in this passage, Katherine also appears to accept the allocation of women to the private sphere of the home and men to the public sphere of the world at large. Humanist works such as Juan Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, while counselling a humanist education for women, also condemned them for playing a role in public life. Women were instructed to stay at home and "nat medle with matters of realmes or cities. Your own house is a cite greate inough for you."<sup>162</sup> While life in the public realm brought honour to men, this same public realm was framed as a place of dishonour for women. Furthermore, women who entered into public life were associated with doubtful chastity and scandal.<sup>163</sup> However, in spite of Katherine's protestations, an audience that has witnessed the cruelties of her 'taming' will in all probability distrust her description of marital relations. What we have seen does not match up to what she describes. The sincerity of Katherine's speech is ambiguous, and radically destabilizes the ending of the play.

The persuasive romantic fiction is similarly destabilized in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. It is stripped bare to reveal not only the risky ideology of marriage itself

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<sup>162</sup> Cited in Carole Levin, 'John Foxe and the Responsibilities of Queenship', in Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, p. 116.

<sup>163</sup> As Louis Adrian Montrose notes, critics who sought to discredit Elizabeth I did so through charges that she was unchaste and had illegitimate children; 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text' in Patricia Parker and David Quint eds., *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986). Jones comments on the seemingly arbitrary nature of the association of female learning and writing with immorality, and suggests that "[t]he link between loose language and loose living arises from a basic association of women's bodies with their speech: a woman's accessibility to the social world beyond the household through speech was seen as intimately connected to the scandalous openness of her body"; 'Surprising Fame', p. 319. In 'Women's Defence', Wiesner documents women's resistance to the narrowing of their public role, as they sought access to the public sphere through Protestantism.

but also the underside of *amicitia*. Rather than a woman who comes to cement a friendship between men, both men in this play desire the same woman against each other's interests, and the winning of the woman comes to symbolise the breaking of male relationship bonds rather than the forging of them. Alan Stewart has usefully emphasized that Palamon and Arcite's kinship is cognatic rather than agnatic; they are the sons of two sisters rather than two brothers, and were therefore born into different houses. "This means", writes Stewart, "that the connection between the two cousins is not necessarily mutually beneficial – what benefits one need not benefit the other."<sup>164</sup> Stewart parallels the cousins' rivalry with that of two contemporary cognatic cousins, Sir Robert Francis and Francis Bacon, as the former was consistently favoured and promoted by his father's house at the expense of Sir Robert's mother's sister's son. This is the underside of *amicitia*, male relationships in which there is no gain or interest to be had.

Stewart interestingly argues that Palamon and Arcite's declarations of friendship are a pragmatic response to the imprisonment which has deprived them of social agency, and "the minute that a way back into the real world is spied (in the form of Emilia, marriage to whom will ensure not only freedom but social success in Athens) the eternal friendship is shelved."<sup>165</sup> The desired relationship is therefore one with Theseus, not with each other or Emilia, and the rivalry between the two men is ultimately settled in a game of war under the approving jurisdiction of Theseus and to the extreme distress of Emilia. In another sense the intense partnership of the duel binds Palamon and Arcite in an exclusive and erotically charged relationship to which Emilia is again peripheral. She is unnecessary to both the three-way dynamic of Palamon, Theseus and Arcite, and to the two-way obsessive relationship of Palamon and Arcite. She becomes the silent prize of

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<sup>164</sup> Stewart, "Near Akin", p. 64.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

Palamon and Arcite's war. Emilia's loss of identity and worth in the transaction is abundantly clear; "I am extinct", she comments (5.3.20). Attempting to excuse herself from the tournament itself, Emilia is forced to translate herself into patriarchal terms of possession, figuring herself as a piece of land that is being warred over: "Sir, pardon me; / The title of a kingdom may be tried / Out of itself." (5.3.32-4) In this light, the comedy ending of marriage begins to look more and more conservative and objectionable. One woman certainly took such endings personally. Leah Marcus notes that in the 1560s Elizabeth I offered the Spanish ambassador several explications of comedies performed at court. She saw them as politically and personally specific: "[i]n each recorded case she [Elizabeth I] took the inevitable marriage of the heroine at the end of the play as an implied criticism of her own single state; she expressed with some vehemence "her dislike of the woman's part."<sup>166</sup>

As Bristol comments, the idea of love in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is troubled not by an inappropriate or objectionable marriage (as with Gertrude and Claudius' union in *Hamlet*), but by the idea that *any* marriage "is in principle an objectionable social event", particularly when the early modern model agreed so nearly with Petruchio's: "[a]n awful rule, and right supremacy, / And to be short, what not that's sweet and happy" (5.2.109-11).<sup>167</sup> Petruchio's second line mocks the romantic trivialisation of the highly serious conditions of marriage, which are outlined in the first line. In *The Shrew*, the "sweet and happy" comedy ending reveals its true, grotesque nature as trap and foreclosure. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* goes still further, undermining the persuasive fiction of romantic attachment and revealing its damages. This is not to completely dismiss the idea that amatory

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<sup>166</sup> Leah S. Marcus, 'Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny' in Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 135-153, at p. 144.

<sup>167</sup> Bristol, 'The Problem of Authority', p. 87.

relations can be redemptive, productive opportunities, but the double-edged nature of affective relations for women that is enlarged upon in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* surely problematises the romantic alternative that Ophelia offers to Hamlet from this female perspective.

Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker usefully investigate the ambiguous nature of love relationships in early modern literature. They cite Livia's advice to the Isabella's father in Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women*:

You may compel out of the power of father  
 Things merely harsh to a maid's flesh and blood,  
 But when you come to love, there the soil alters;  
 Y'are in another country, where your laws  
 Are no more set by than the cacklings of geese  
 In Rome's great Capitol. (1.2.133-8)

As Kehler and Baker write, while acknowledging the powers of patriarchy, Livia's speech "also asserts a domain where women make the rules, calling attention to the values traditionally construed as feminine, those of the emotional or affective relations." This is certainly the territory of much of the ballad corpus, and Kehler and Baker add that feminist criticism can usefully (and, I would add, *carefully*) "celebrate such values". As the editors comment in reference to our own milieu, but with resonance for *Hamlet's* revenge tragedy teleology, this is "surely a crucial project in a world at risk of annihilation."<sup>168</sup>

However, the editors also note feminism's strong concern with the history of marriage, because it is in the direct interests of patriarchy that marriage should be

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<sup>168</sup> Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker ed., *In Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama* (Metuchen NJ: The Scarecrow Press inc., 1991), p. 3.

seen to have no history, that it should be regarded as normal, natural and inevitable:

Feminists do not – and need not – agree on precisely how far social definitions of gender are constrained by biological facts. Feminists do agree, however, in objecting to the degree of sexual determination licensed and sustained by our society (and others) in the past and present.<sup>169</sup>

This seems to me to be a wise analysis; Ophelia's ballad space offers a realm of affective relations that is not to be dismissed in the frightening and self-destructive world that *Hamlet* represents. But *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is a far more pessimistic text, perhaps especially with regard to the possibility of relationships between men and women, and engages in a work of demystification that makes marriage look like a pretty unappealing alternate ending to tragedy.

In the second section of this chapter I will investigate the narrative of male relationships that governs the main plot, and analyse the teleology of the duel dynamic. Like *Hamlet*, this play sets up a retaliatory, male economy to which women are peripheral. Like *Hamlet*, the play associates this retaliatory narrative mode with a literate, male, authorial community which inherits from and competes with predecessors such as Chaucer. The third section will be concerned with that Ophelia reprise, the Jailer's Daughter, and will examine both the strengthening of her ballad space and its unruly interactions with the duel narrative. Like Ophelia's ballad space in *Hamlet*, the Jailer's Daughter's narrative will be seen as a similarly destabilizing force. The way in which the Jailer's Daughter's oral, folk narrative is

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

set up in opposition to the literary inheritance of *The Knight's Tale* narrative trajectory will also be examined. While the authors present themselves as in some sense in competition with their esteemed and established predecessor, the Jailer's Daughter may be their true collaborative achievement, whose wayward narrative celebrates these collaborative values. The final section will then analyse how the play discredits the romance alternative that Ophelia offers in *Hamlet*, demonstrating the play's loss of faith in male-female affective relations, particularly amongst the dynasty-grabbing upper classes and its treatment of Emilia, who is burdened with the marriage that the Daughter desires. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* drafts its romance conclusion with a keen sense of Emilia's attendant and very real losses.

### **“We are one another's wife”; Palamon, Arcite and the Homoerotic**

#### **Exclusivity of the Duel**

The prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* situates the play it promotes in the context of a literary productivity that is emphatically male-gendered. The male gendering of the text's generation and reception that was evident in the prologue to *Thyestes* which I discussed in chapter one, and the literary culture it records, are enhanced still further by *The Two Noble Kinsmen's* dual-authorship and its relationship with its source text, Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale'.<sup>170</sup> The prologue's commentary is particularly attentive to the collaborative nature of the project. Its sexualised portrait records a literary world in which an estimated fifty percent of plays written

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<sup>170</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* in Larry D. Benson ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

between 1590 and 1642 were produced collaboratively.<sup>171</sup> Of the 282 plays mentioned in Henslowe's diary, Sandra Clark adds, the proportion is more like two thirds. Sexualising these authorial partnerships was a familiar trope. John Aubrey described Beaumont and Fletcher in the following terms:

They lived together on the Banke side, not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together – from Sir James Hales etc.; had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same clothes and cloake, &c., betweene them.<sup>172</sup>

Shakespeare and Fletcher's prologue then, is a tangled ball of male relationships. First, it importantly figures the play itself as a maid about to be married:

New plays and maidenheads are much akin:  
 Much followed both, for both much money gi'en,  
 If they stand sound and well. (Pro. 1-3)

The first night of the play is then equated with the first night of a virgin bride's nuptials in a move that aligns the audience with the new husband:

[...] a good play,  
 Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day

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<sup>171</sup> G. E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590 – 1642* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 199, in Sandra Clark *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>172</sup> John Aubrey, *Brief Lives* ed. A. Clarke, 2 vols (Oxford: 1898), vol. 1, p. 96. For a discussion of the sexualising of collaborative relationships, see Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-5.

And shake to lose his honour, is like her  
 That after holy tie and first night's stir  
 Yet still is Modesty and still retains  
 More of the maid, to sight, than husband's pains. (Pro. 3-8)

Notably however, while it plays the part of the female, the play itself is *male*, as is indicated by the consistent use of the possessive pronoun "his". The play then is an effeminized male boy-child losing its virginity to its husband, the audience.

This is complicated still further by the description of the play as having "a noble breeder" (Pro. 10); Geoffrey Chaucer is credited with the play's insemination. The maternal term is, by implication, both Shakespeare and Fletcher. Charles Frey unpicks the tangles of this analogy in 'Collaborating with Shakespeare'; "the missing term becomes the play's mother. Implicitly the playwright(s) would occupy that position if the metaphor of human sexual procreation were to remain in mind."<sup>173</sup> As male mothers to Chaucer's father then, the process of creative procreation dispenses entirely with women. They are unnecessary to the production of literary offspring. The literary product is in turn figured as a boy-child who renders women doubly obsolete by taking their place in the bride-bed, in a move that parallels the way in which boys were taken for women on the Elizabethan stage. However, whilst certainly child-bearing, the authors are no more women at the beginning of the prologue than the blushing bride that is the play is a girl. What the complicated analogy depicts is the male boy child brought to the bridal bed of the male audience by two of its three male parents, who have presumably gestated, given birth to and brought up this young

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<sup>173</sup> Charles Frey, 'Collaborating with Shakespeare', p. 36. While Charles Frey explores the tangled male relationships of the prologue, he does not discuss the male gendering of the play itself.

Ganymede. At no point is sexual difference of a male / female construction a feature of the Prologue.

Instead, accepting Frey's gendering of the audience itself as male, we must understand the generation of the play as an exclusively male collaborative achievement.<sup>174</sup> It is also a specifically literary achievement. Like Heywood's interactions with Seneca in the Prologue to *Thyestes*, the writers of the Prologue are in dialogue with literary forebears. While *Thyestes* goes to some lengths to establish Seneca as a benign and approving presence, the reaction of the Chaucer of Shakespeare and Fletcher's Prologue to this new version of his tale is less certain. They anticipate that Chaucer may castigate them from the grave for treating his works with inappropriate levity (Pro.18-21). The literary and literate world that the Prologue establishes is one in which relationships can be competitive and hierarchical, but may also be collaborative as Shakespeare and Fletcher pit themselves against Chaucer. The Jailer's Daughter's subplot may be seen as the fruit of the maternal term of Shakespeare and Fletcher's collaboration; both playwrights have some responsibility for her narrative and it is an original addition to the source material. In addition, hers is a narrative of collaboration, in which the labouring classes of the play work to guide the daughter back to health, offering the helping hands envisaged in the Prologue. The competitive combat narrative of the two cousins is, however, a reworking of the Chaucerian narrative and its aggressive masculine antagonism may in some way figure the playwright's engagement with their source text as they both accelerate its teleology and intensify the tale's bleakest implications.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>175</sup> For a full discussion of the relationship between Palamon and Arcite's narrative and 'The Knight's Tale', see Donaldson, *The Swan at the Well*.

The homosocial and homosexual dialectics of the play's authorship are paralleled in the play's plot, in which Palamon and Arcite initially strive to collaborate in a male friendship complete enough to take the place of wives, friends and offspring. As Arcite, philosophizing on their imprisonment, decrees:

We are an endless mine to one another;  
 We are one another's wife, ever begetting  
 New births of love; we are father, friends, acquaintance,  
 We are, in one another, families;  
 I am your heir and you are mine. (2.2.79-83)

The dizzying ramifications by which Arcite proposes the two cousins, already impossible to tell apart, multiply into an entire kinship and friendship group *including* wives, replicates the male same in a seemingly endless hall of mirrors. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* builds upon the doubling motif of revenge tragedy and specifically of *Hamlet*. Palamon and Arcite are virtually indistinguishable, war-mongering doubles who charge into battle "Like to a pair of lions smeared with prey" (Theseus, 1.4.18) They are mirrors to each other, as Arcite indicates when he tells his cousin:

You might as well  
 Speak this and act it in your glass  
 As to his ear which now disdains you. (3.1.69-71)<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Abrams notes the association of Palamon with mirrors and Narcissus, 'Gender Confusion', pp. 70-1.

However, the initially collaborative and exclusive partnership soon disintegrates into a competitive (although equally exclusive) antagonism, in which it is precisely this sameness that is the problem.<sup>177</sup> Their mutually approved love-object is unable to choose between them. The cousin's combat returns to the scenario of the prologue but instead of collaboration offers competition. The kinsmen vie for the right to offer the maiden to Theseus as a cementing of their homosocial relationship with the Duke. Significantly, the maiden that they seek to offer is not one of the available females of the text, but the losing combatant, the effeminized boy of the prologue who takes the part of the blushing bride. It is a part that neither cousin is particularly eager to take on.

Abrams, Frey and Hedrick have all explored the same-sex relationships of the play. Abrams, for example, writes that in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* "strict differentiation of a sexual kind breaks down, becoming as fluid as in King James' openly homosexual court", and interprets anxiety in Hippolyta's meditation upon the "knot of love" (1.3.41) between Theseus and Pirithous.<sup>178</sup> Certainly, while Hippolyta's speech seems to approve of the men's friendship, there is also a subliminal reference to its sexualised nature in the demi-image of penetration, the "finger of so deep a cunning" that has worked at this knot of love, which seems suddenly to take on anal connotations. Abrams notes that while Emilia reassures her sister, her "graphic description of the men's intimate bond, whose "needs / the one of th'other may be said to water / Their intangled roots of love' [57-9], aggravates with sexual innuendo, rather than removing anxiety."<sup>179</sup> In a sexual equation that comprises of Palamon and Arcite, the text repeatedly situates

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<sup>177</sup> For a discussion of the competitive mode of labour of the play itself, see Donald K Hedrick, "Be Rough With Me": The Collaborative Arenas of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in Frey ed., *Shakespeare, Fletcher and The Two Noble Kinsmen* p. 47.

<sup>178</sup> Abrams, 'Gender Confusion', p. 69. See also Charles Frey 'Collaborating with Shakespeare', and Donald K. Hedrick 'Be Rough With Me'.

<sup>179</sup> Abrams, 'Gender Confusion', p. 72.

Palamon as *mollis*, a Greek term which was modified to the ‘molly’ of slang, the passive, effeminate partner in homosexual intercourse.<sup>180</sup> Abrams points to the text’s designation of Arcite as “[p]hallic” (Emilia describes his eyes “like an engine bent or a sharp weapon / In a soft sheath” 5.3.42-5) and Palamon as the “devouring mother earth”, his brow “seem[ing] to bury what it frowns on.” (5.3.45-6)

Palamon and Arcite’s own reactions to Emilia confirm them in these sexual roles. Palamon declares:

Were I at liberty, I would do things  
 Of such a virtuous greatness that this Lady,  
 This blushing virgin, should take manhood to her  
 And seek to ravish me. (2.2.259-62)

Arcite appositely, warned by Palamon not put his head out of the window, replies:

Put my head out? I’ll throw my body out  
 And leap the garden, when I see her next,  
 And pitch between her arms, to anger thee. (2.2.215-20)

Notably, Palamon wishes to be ravished *by manhood*, and Arcite’s phallic aggressiveness is only ostensibly aimed at Emilia. The agent he wishes to effect and

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<sup>180</sup> Thomas Laqueur writes that “the issue is not the identity of sex but the difference in status between partners and precisely what was done to whom [...] It was the weak, womanly male partner who was deeply flawed, medically and morally. His very countenance proclaimed his nature: *pathicus*, the one being penetrated; *cinaedus*, the one who engages in unnatural lust; *mollis*, the passive, effeminate one.” *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 53, cited in Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in Early Modern Drama and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 77.

to anger, is Palamon. As Abrams writes: “Emilia desires neither to seize on nor to be seized. But Arcite’s fantasy of thrusting through the window into Emilia’s arms to anger Palamon corresponds to Palamon’s fantasy of being ravished by his manly lady.”<sup>181</sup> It is with each others’ fantasies that the cousins engage, rather than with Emilia. Instead, Emilia increasingly comes to represent the locus of the cousins’ interactions with each other, and these interactions involve clearly designated homosexual roles, with Palamon and Arcite being associated with the feminine and masculine poles of gendered behaviour respectively.

When Palamon and Arcite relive their experiences in battle in the suddenly intimate and tender scene in which they dress each other like lovers for the duel (“Stay a little: / Is not this piece too strait?” 3.6.85-6), it is clear that they are each others’ most attentive audience. Again Arcite is phallic, and dominant; he remembers:

When you charged  
 Upon the left wing of the enemy,  
 I spurred hard to come up and under me  
 I had a right good horse. (3.6.74-7)

He associates himself with penetration (the prick of the spurs) and the mastery of the horse underneath him. Paula Berggren discusses the sexual symbolism of horses and the associated mastery of the rider. “The equestrian image”, she writes, pointing to the multitude of statuary tributes of men on horseback of every age,

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<sup>181</sup> Abrams, ‘Gender Confusion’, p. 71.

has always denoted rational and purposeful control; the man on horseback symbolizes military prowess, but the image enshrines an even greater civilian virtue: self-mastery, frequently of an explicitly sexual nature.<sup>182</sup>

The horse underneath Arcite represents in some way his own sexual nature, again a masculine force. Arcite describes Palamon instead as the mass of thunder that is consonant with Palamon's later description as mother earth:

When I saw you charge first,  
 Methought I heard a dreadful clap of thunder  
 Break from the troop. (3.6.82-4)

Returning to Arcite's phallic identification, Palamon responds: "But still before that flew the lightning of your valour" (3.6. 84-5) In response to Theseus' instruction that Emilia "must love one of them" and her reply ("I had rather both"), Abrams suggests that "[t]he solution of a *ménage-à-trois* suggests itself in muttered asides."<sup>183</sup> Reaching the same conclusion, Frey writes "[w]hat makes such a solution repellent, finally, is the anticollaborative convention of paternity that is assumed on all sides."<sup>184</sup> This is a society, after all, that insists on the one, lawful father; Arcite himself fantasizes offspring who will reproduce his own person faithfully and perfectly, regretting that as a consequence of their imprisonment, wives:

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<sup>182</sup> Paula S. Berggren, "For what we lack / We laugh": Incompletion and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Modern Language Studies* 14:4 (1984) 3-17, at p. 11.

<sup>183</sup> Abrams, 'Gender Confusion', p. 73. Frey reaches the same conclusion in 'Collaborating with Shakespeare', pp. 40-1.

<sup>184</sup> Frey, *ibid*, p. 40.

Shall never clasp our necks; no issue know us;  
 No figures of ourselves shall we e'er see,  
 To glad our age (2.2.32-4).

This is the same process that was discussed in chapter one as a feature of Shakespeare's sonnets, which entreat the male addressee to reproduce himself in defiance of mortality: "Against this coming end you should prepare, / And your sweet semblance to some other give" (13).<sup>185</sup> Notably, the female disappears into generation, and her part in procreation is not witnessed in either the sonnet or Arcite's description of the offspring. This is implied in Frey's term "anticollaborative", although Frey himself relates the term instead to our cultural unease with collaborative authorship, writing that "if we so strongly, singly desire only Shakespeare in the play and will accept no collaborators, then we may find ourselves desiring what costs us the loss of our desire."<sup>186</sup> Frey is referring to the fact that the brunt of previous critical work has been consumed with the arcana of who wrote which parts of the play and the play has, as a result, become buried in arguments regarding authorship and has been relatively neglected in critical terms. Yet this insistence on authority and paternity also works to elide the feminine term.

In fact, the ménage-à-trois scenario is also precluded by the relationship between Palamon and Arcite. We have seen that Palamon occupies the 'feminine' pole, while Arcite takes the 'masculine' pole in the homoerotic subtext of their relationship. This is the context in which Arcite's assertion that

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<sup>185</sup> William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 1997).

<sup>186</sup> Frey, 'Collaborating with Shakespeare', p. 41.

... We are an endless mine to one another;  
 We are one another's wife, ever begetting  
 New births of love

resides (2.2.79-81). When considered in a homoerotic context, the “endless mine” and the “new births of love” resonate in newly sexualised ways. However, it also doubly excludes women, as Arcite imagines the pair both begetting *and* inheriting in a short-circuiting dynamic of love.

[W]e are father, friends, acquaintance,  
 We are, in one another, families;  
 I am your heir and you are mine. (2.2.81-3)

Framed this way, the relationship dispenses with the need for women entirely. Palamon and Arcite's rivalry leads to a duel that only emphasizes the homoerotic dynamic of their relationship, and further marginalises the biologically female (as opposed to the culturally constructed feminine) from their narrative. Where commitment to revenge in *Hamlet* had necessitated the rejection of distractions such as romantic love, the exclusion of women is heightened in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* through the homoeroticism of the duel to render women completely peripheral. The duel becomes both martial and marital, combining the aggressive, masculine motivation of revenge with the erotic romance of male sparring partners so close that they can consider each other “one another's wife”.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Consider also the erotic terms with which the soldiers greet each other in William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank, Arden 2 (London: Methuen & Co, 1976). Martius embraces Cominius with the words: “Oh! Let me clip ye / In arms as sound as when I woo'd; in heart / As merry as when our nuptial day was done, / And tapers burn'd to bedward” (1.6.29-32). Aufidius

The duel is perhaps best understood as a secularized microcosm of revenge tragedy. Like revenge tragedy, duelling contends with the masculine authority of the king and centralised government, but is far less concerned with God. Theseus clearly feels the cousins' duel encroaches on his jurisdiction, and his response parallels James I's position in his 1613 proclamation against duelling.<sup>188</sup> Theseus splutters:

What ignorant and mad malicious traitors  
 Are you, that 'gainst the tenor of my laws  
 Are making battles, thus like knights appointed,  
 Without my leave and officers of arms. (3.6.132-5)

His later explanation to Emilia makes it clear that the question is one of royal prerogative rather than the idea of a judicial duel. As he tells Emilia,

I have said they die.  
 Better they fall by th'law than one another.  
 Bow not my honour. (3.6.224-6).

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similarly greets Martius vowing "that I see thee here, / Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart / Than when I first my wedded mistress saw / Bestride my threshold" (4.5.116-9).

<sup>188</sup> *A Publication of his majesties edict, and sever censure against private combats and combatants* (London, 1613) in James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes ed., *Stuart Proclamations*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). As Jo Eldridge Carney points out, it is not the fact that the cousins are fighting that angers Theseus, but that they have not sought his permission to do so; 'The Ambiguities of Love and War in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', in Carol Levin and Karen Robertson ed., *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama: Studies in Renaissance Literature*, 10 (The Edwin Mellen Press: 1991), 95-111 at p. 103.

As Jennifer Low notes, from a monarch's perspective duelling threatened social stability; James' 1613 proclamation was prompted by six duels that had occurred that year amongst some of the King's closest associates.<sup>189</sup>

The arguments against duelling are also the arguments against the pursuit of private revenge, and the anti-duelling tracts witness to both the official attempts at suppression and the duel's continuing practice. The most frequent criticism was that practitioners sought to arrogate to themselves the king's role as judge. So for example, in a sentence that could apply to both duelling and revenge, La Primaudaye writes that "[t]he sword is in the hands of the king and of the magistrate that representeth his person: and it belongeth to him onely to use it against them that trouble publike tranquillitie and civil societie".<sup>190</sup> Again Ronald Broude's model of a centralised government struggling to assert itself over smaller self-governing social units becomes relevant.<sup>191</sup> The duel is a focussed manifestation of the urge towards self-government. It is not, however, a necessarily English practice. Markku Peltonen has raised objections to the idea that duelling was essentially an English phenomenon, rising from the remnants of self-government and neo-feudal customs. Instead Peltonen points to the slew of Italian honour treatises in the English literary market, and argues that "[f]ar from being a remnant from medieval honour culture which a new humanist culture of civility replaced, the duel of honour came to England alongside the Italian Renaissance notion of the courtier and gentleman." The duel of honour, Peltonen argues, was "essentially a Renaissance creation", which derived from increased travel on the

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<sup>189</sup> Low, *Manhood and the Duel*, p. 22.

<sup>190</sup> *The French Academie, wherein is discerned the institution of maners, and whatsoever els concerneth the good and happie life of all estates and callings, by precepts of doctrine, and examples of the lives of ancient Sages and famous men.* By Peter de la Primaudaye, Esquire ... and newlie translated into English by T.B. [Thomas Bowes] (1586), pp. 384-5 cited in Lily B Campbell, 'Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England', *Modern Philology* 28 (1930), 281-296 at p. 288.

<sup>191</sup> Ronald Broude, 'Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England', *SQ* 28:1 (1975) 38-58; discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

continent, and was criticised as neither ancient nor homebred by anti-duelling commentators such as James I. “[D]uring the first half of the sixteenth century the medieval forms of single combats were refashioned in Italy into a duel of honour which replaced the vendetta.”<sup>192</sup> While this raises questions about the origins of the duel, it nevertheless establishes duelling as a development of revenge, and the duel combat of plays such as Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, part 1* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and Middleton and Rowley’s *A Fair Quarrel* is clearly a natural evolution of the revenge tragedy.

The emphasis of the duel, however, was less on redeeming a harm done to the family of the revenger, and more on establishing the protagonist’s social standing. As Peltonen notes, Italian honour treatises in English translation such as Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* (1561) and Giovanni della Casa’s *Il Galateo* sought to advise the English gentleman on projecting as good an image of himself as possible, while taking his fellow courtiers and gentlemen into account and modifying his behaviour accordingly. The duel itself was inextricably linked with status, and its most common manifestation was the duel of honour. Both Peltonen and Low regard the duel as an instrument of social regulation and status definition. The duel worked to valorize individual challengers, and indeed the whole social group, which relied upon manners and social precedence to regulate itself. Low writes that “[a]s a social phenomenon, the duel in early modern England became an overdetermined sign of masculine identity that helped to stabilize significantly volatile notions of both rank and gender.”<sup>193</sup> Low situates the duel within the parameters of humanism’s emphasis on fashioning a place for

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<sup>192</sup> Markku Peltonen, “‘Civilised with Death’: Civility, Duelling and Honour in Elizabethan England”, in Jennifer Richards ed., *Early Modern Civic Discourses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 52.

<sup>193</sup> Low, *Manhood and the Duel*, p. 3. See also Peltonen, ‘Civilised with Death’, p. 58. While Low, unlike Peltonen, includes older English traditions such as jousting in her analysis of the origins of duelling, like Peltonen she privileges the new, Italian-influenced fashions.

oneself in society, arguing that while humanism itself was not necessarily militaristic, it helped to create the atmosphere in which duelling was popularized, as “aristocratic pastimes were blended with humanistic goals.”<sup>194</sup>

Interestingly, Low suggests that attitudes to duelling were inflected by social class, and that while the duel of honour was not only the province of aristocrats, responses to duelling among the proto-bourgeoisie were less positive. Low writes that consideration needs therefore to be given to “how the social rank of a playwright might inflect the portrayal of a practice not his own”<sup>195</sup>. This is relevant to *The Two Noble Kinsmen’s* class-inflected dramatic narratives, such as the boisterously represented folk-space of the Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative and the increasingly tiresome aristocratic narrative of the duel. Where Low’s comments are perhaps most pertinent is in this reference to volatile notions of rank and gender. The rivalry between the cousins is on some level a matter of establishing precedence; moreover, the comments that precede their duel make it clear that this precedence is itself gendered. Their duel is, consequently, predicated on notions of both social and sexual status. Palamon is the first to broach the idea of a duel between the two cousins, to protect what he regards as his rights of possession of Emilia. He considers that he

took possession

First with mine eye of all the beauties in her

Revealed to mankind!” (2.2.169-71)

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<sup>194</sup> Low, *Manhood and the Duel*, p. 20.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

Arcite's possessive approach to Emilia is equally aggressive, but uses instead the allegory of conquering in battle. As Theseus seeks to own the cousins as his prisoners of war, so Arcite seeks to own Emilia.

Because another

First sees the enemy, shall I stand still

And let mine honour down, and never charge? (2.2.196-8)

Masculine desire is framed in the first instance, therefore, as a matter of possession. Yet this quickly shifts to an emphasis on status. Palamon desperately wishes:

To be one hour at liberty and grasp

Our good sword in our hands! I would quickly teach thee

What 'twere to filch affections from another;

Thou art baser in it than a cutpurse. (2.2.211-14)

Likening Arcite to a 'cutpurse', Palamon almost immediately shifts the emphasis from a fight for Emilia, to a fight to prove that Arcite has not behaved like a gentleman and is, therefore, not a gentleman. As Low might well have predicted, Palamon's abuse of his cousin is class-inflected; he denounces him as a common pickpocket. Palamon's challenge in the forest again denigrates Arcite's social status, while simultaneously exhibiting symptoms of the naïve belief that outward signs can indicate the inward man, which Low calls the: "unproblematic link between essence and self-representation".<sup>196</sup> It is almost a text-book challenge.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

[C]all'st thou her thine?

I'll prove it in my shackles, with these hands,

Void of appointment, that thou liest, and art

A very thief in love, a chaffy lord

Not worth the name of villain. (3.1.38-42)

Palamon threatens to physically prove that Arcite is socially inferior. The Arden editorial notes explain “chaffy” as “as light and worthless as chaff, the husks of corn” and, cast in threshing terms, Palamon’s insults try to denigrate Arcite by associating him with exactly the rural, labouring world of the morris dancers and the Jailer’s Daughter. These class-inflected insults challenge Arcite’s gentlemanly status. Predictably, Arcite reacts by standing on his honour, and insisting on his social equality with Palamon. He too assumes that his calibre will be unproblematically manifested in his martial performance:

Your question's with your equal, who professes

To clear his own way with the mind and sword

Of a true gentleman. (3.1.73)

Emilia falls from their argument. Instead, it is their bravery that is under dispute, as Palamon dares Arcite to the fight and Arcite responds: “My coz, my coz, you have been well advertised / How much I dare” (3.1.58-9)

This is also, more subtly, a question of the volatile nature of gender-roles. Low has demonstrated the sexualised nature of duelling. As she notes, the term for breaching an opponent’s “ward” (the duellist’s defence) in Vincentio Saviolo’s fencing practise was almost always “enter”. The competitors are in a peculiarly

gendered relationship, in which the victor features as the initiated man who has entered his opponent's ward, and the loser's wounded body is perceived as feminine, or boyish. This is also a sexually charged relationship. As Low notes, penetrating, or being penetrated, are gendered behaviours, and combat provokes a bawdy language that, along with "enter", acknowledges the phallic significance of the rapier. Low writes that "[s]uch unintentionally suggestive language makes it impossible to avoid perceiving the duellist as penetrable, permeable, and open to assault of a sexually ambiguous nature."<sup>197</sup> Low also interprets the winner and loser's roles in duelling as equated to manliness versus womanliness, or manliness versus boyishness. While the conquered body is implicitly analogous to the female body in both women's conduct books and fencing manuals, in the context of competitive masculinity, fencing becomes a rite of passage whereby one competitor becomes a man; the loser, by implication, remains a boy.

While Low does not discuss *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, this logic is very much in evidence in the play. Both Arcite and Palamon manipulate duelling terminology in an attempt to cast the other in the passive role. When Palamon offers to fight, Arcite responds, "[d]efy me in these fair terms, and you show / More than a mistress to me." (3.6.25-6) Palamon is here cast as the feminine counterpart to Arcite's masculine. It is a move that ramifies upon Arcite's pronouncement in act three scene one that:

I am persuaded, this question sick between's,

By bleeding must be cured. I am a suitor

That to your sword you will bequeath this plea

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<sup>197</sup> Low cites Saviolo: "[B]y how much the more strongly hee thrusteth, and the more furiouslie hee entereth with the passate, by so much the more srongly hee thrusteth, and the more furiouslie hee entereth with the passata, by so much the more easily may you hurt him... Furthermore, if you finde his Rapier long..." (sig. K1v) *Manhood*, p. 76.

And talk of it no more. (3.1.113-6)

Arcite perceives himself as the suitor to Palamon's mistress, and counsels bleeding. As Gail Kern Paster has demonstrated, the Galenic association of bodily fluids (blood, semen, milk) and permeability with feminine processes means that the wounded male body may also be perceived as feminized: "The male body, opened and bleeding, can assume the shameful attributes of the incontinent female body as both cause of and justification for, its evident vulnerability and defeat."<sup>198</sup>

However, Arcite and Palamon are presented throughout the play as physically an equal match, and Palamon similarly attempts to cast Arcite as his own feminine counterpart, considering that if Arcite fails to honour their appointment for the duel "He's neither man, nor soldier." (3.6.3-4) So, while Arcite casts Palamon as a woman, Palamon retaliates by casting Arcite as a boy. Arcite trumps him by comparing him to both women *and* boys when he challenges Palamon to leave aside his

upbraidings, scorns,

Despisings of our persons, and such poutings

Fitter for girls and schoolboys. (3.6.32-4)

Arcite's grouping of girls and very young boys is socially accurate; Low discusses the social alignment of boys with women in the early modern period, as conduct books taught both boys and women to efface themselves in the presence of men. Low cites F Seager's pamphlet, 'The School of Vertue, and booke of good

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<sup>198</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, p. 93, cited *ibid*, p. 75.

Nourture for children”, which taught young boys: ‘How to behave thy selfe in taulkinge with any man’, advising:

Low obeisaunce makyng,	lokinge him in the face,
Tretably speaking,	thy wordes see thou place.
with countinaunce sober	thy bodie uprighte
Thy fete juste to-gether,	thy handes in lyke plight. <sup>199</sup>

The question of who is the ‘boy’ is not only one of ascendant maturity. As Low notes: “Immaturity and the passive role in homosexual intercourse had been linked in the minds of early modern gentlemen since the resurgence of interest in Greek texts.”<sup>200</sup> The outcome of the duel establishes who is the boy, or the passive partner in an eroticized male relationship, and the loser’s experience, Low argues, may in some ways be equivalent to the experience of violation or rape: “Whereas the victor may experience an expansion of his personal space [...], the loser (if he lives) is likely to perceive his personal space as smaller, and as violated.”<sup>201</sup>

The kinsmen’s duel may therefore be understood as seeking to establish which of the cousins should occupy the *mollis* role of the penetrable, effeminized body, but it is clearly not a role either cousin is in the mood to volunteer for. As Emily Vermeule writes regarding *The Iliad*:

A duel at close quarters may be treated formally as a love-struggle ...

In a duel, an isolated world inside the main battle, one soldier must be

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<sup>199</sup> Seager, ‘The School of Vertue’, p. 235, cited *ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>200</sup> Low, *Manhood*, p. 76.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.



our good swords now

(Better the red-eyed god of war ne'er wore),

Ravished our sides (2.2.20-2).

It is a loss that reinscribes him in the passive, feminine position. He associates the seizure of his weapon with a rape and ravishment.<sup>203</sup> However, in this scene the gendered status of Palamon and Arcite has become unstable; it is yet to be decided by the duel and Palamon imagines himself equipped with a sword / phallus with which he might touch Arcite, thereby challenging his customary identification with the feminine.

The duel is of course, interrupted and its conclusion postponed by Theseus' intrusion. Theseus regards the tournament he proposes as the radical solution to extinguish their hatred: "To blow that nearness out that flames between ye" (5.1.10). His solution depends on one of the two being themselves extinguished, the annihilation of one half of the double to achieve a socially normative 'one'. He reaches, therefore, the same conclusion that Palamon and Arcite have been pursuing with the duel. However, Theseus' tournament triples and fatalises the dynamic, decreeing that both kinsmen should be accompanied by three other men, and that all four of the losers will be executed. Theseus devises a tournament centred around a pillar which both knights will struggle to force the other to touch. Like the breach of the fencer's ward, the touching of the phallic pillar is also a kind of loss of head / maidenhead. The winner shall "enjoy" Emilia (3.6.296) the other "lose his head, / And all his friends." (3.6.296-7) In this tournament, instead of the sword coming to the loser (and we may recall the sword edge which Palamon claims is the only thing he wishes to touch Arcite with) the loser will go to the

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<sup>203</sup> For Palamon's lack of sword see also 2.2.212, 3.1.33-4, 3.1.42 and 3.1.72.

sword; passivity is doubly inscribed. The structure of the tournament also highlights the contradictions inherent in a society that places so much value on the homosocial community and same-sex bonds, and which devalues the other to the point of invisibility (“I am extinct”, Emilia, 5.3.20), yet stigmatises same-sex love relations and insists upon heterosexual marriages such as Hippolyta and Theseus’ and, ultimately, the ashen travesty of Emilia and Palamon’s. It suggests the kind of punishment and ostracisation reserved in some communities for those who engage in homosexual activity; the phallus is placed in the centre of the field as ultimate fetish, and yet, despite being pushed by the community around him to touch the phallus, the contender must on no accounts be seen to touch it, even while he wrestles intimately with his male opponent. As Berggren notes, “Fletcher [...] totally reconceives the medieval joust, converting a prototypical “contact sport” into an exercise in renunciation.”<sup>204</sup> The contradictions inherent in such a formula are extreme.

Emilia’s extinction parallels Ophelia’s marginalisation by the revenge tragedy plot. Revenge tragedy’s emphasis on masculinity – the male cast-list, issues of male inheritance and authority, its proliferation of doppelgangers, and its linear narrative of violent repercussion discussed in chapter one are intensified in the duel to a dynamic which not only does not permit women, but also extinguishes the need for them entirely. In their struggle to establish one another as their own potential wife, Arcite and Palamon pay less and less attention to that other potential wife, Emilia. The duel dynamic situates the male as masculine and feminine and precludes the need for women entirely. Low effectively argues that the duel’s

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<sup>204</sup> Berggren, “For what we lack”, p. 7.

derivation from a masculinist ethos is presented in the theatre as a recreation of masculine community. In plays in which combat is a central element, we see repeatedly that the rite serves to consolidate homosocial bonds and to render women peripheral. Whether the bonds are formed with the duellist's opponent or with the observers, the result is a valorisation of a military elite in which women have only a secondary role.<sup>205</sup>

Far from a secondary role, Emilia has no role, and dreams of extinction: "Oh, better never born / Than minister to such harm!" (5.3.65-6) Abrams writes that:

Protesting love sooner or finer than his rival's, each kinsman nonetheless shows unconcern for Emilia's anguish as she seeks to halt their battle. Instead they vow to kill each other in honour's name 'On any piece the earth has' (3.6.263), and this vanity, together with lack of curiosity about Emilia, suggests the moral inequality of the traditionally powerful (men) vs. the politically disenfranchised (women).<sup>206</sup>

Emilia only becomes marginally significant again when Arcite wins the duel and her body assumes the status of a prize that is envisaged in crudely monetary terms. He addresses her with the words:

Emilia,

To buy you, I have lost what's dearest to me,

Save what is bought; and yet I purchase cheaply,

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<sup>205</sup> Low, *Manhood*, p. 94.

<sup>206</sup> Abrams, 'Gender Confusion', p. 74.

As I do rate your value. (5.3.111-4)

His words echo the prologue's statement that: "New plays and maidenheads are near akin; / Much followed both, for both much money gi'en." (Pro.1-2)

Significantly however, both Palamon and Emilia are situated in his greeting as commodities; Palamon also has a monetary value attached to him. The tournament has confirmed him in the passive role of the Palamon and Arcite relationship, and this is all that it has done. The duel's claim to judicial status as an arbitration of love rights is ultimately undermined by Theseus' report, upon Arcite's injury, that:

Your kinsman hath confessed the right o' th' lady  
 Did lie in you, for you first saw her and  
 Even then proclaimed your fancy. He restored her  
 As your stolen jewel and desired your spirit  
 To send him hence forgiven. (5.4.115-9)

The duel then has only established the physical ascendancy of Arcite over Palamon; it has served no judicial purpose whatsoever, deciding in favour of a man who then confesses himself to be the thief of Palamon's earlier insults. The duel dynamic, then, builds upon the revenge trajectory's marginalisation of women to dispatch with the need for them altogether.

Therefore, while Abrams sees Emilia as an alternative to the militaristic logic of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, commenting on the "healing superiority" of her values, it is an alternative that the cousin's relationship excludes.<sup>207</sup> While Emilia's celebration of same-sex friendship is certainly an alternative to the homosexual

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, p. 175.

dialectic of Palamon and Arcite, it is not one that the cousins would either desire or be permitted access to. Its values are rather beautifully portrayed in her elegiac description of her girlhood friendship with Flavina, and the seductive scene in the garden in which Emilia and her maid flirt outrageously right under the noses of Palamon and Arcite, bantering in a shared language of flowers, in shared lines, and then exiting, quite possibly to go to bed with one another (Woman: “I could lie down, I am sure.” Emilia: “And take one with you?” Woman: “That’s as we bargain, madam.” Emilia: “Well, agree then” 2.2.152-3). Emilia’s same-sex preference carries a great deal of poetic weight; it is gently rendered, and the flirtation in the garden is an example of the kind of collaborative rather than competitive interaction that Hedrick argues belongs to the women of the play. It manifests in dialogue the harmony that Emilia describes as belonging to her relationship with Flavina.<sup>208</sup> Yet Emilia’s same-sex emphasis does not function as an alternative to the competitive, aggressive bent of Arcite and Palamon’s homosocial dynamic. Rather, it wants no part of it; it is an alternative world, and one that Arcite and Palamon are not permitted to enter. That this is so is in many ways no wonder, given that Palamon and Arcite’s murderous aggression is ultimately unpalatable.

Lastly, the retaliatory structure of revenge tragedy discussed in chapter one as linear and rooted in historical time similarly short-circuits in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with the duel dynamic, which concentrates on retaliation between two men, rather than an endlessly ramifying chain reaction of A kills B, C kills A, D kills C. Instead we are caught in the crossfire between two men, and return to their wrangling again and again. The antagonism repeatedly returns the audience to the same forum of aggression, and highlights the lack of imagination and unwillingness to

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<sup>208</sup> Hedrick, “Be Rough With Me”, p. 60.

search for alternative solutions that the protagonists exhibit. As in *Hamlet*, there is a sense of Arcite in particular racing down a death-bound trajectory; he tells Palamon:

Your person I am friends with  
 And I could wish I had not said I loved her,  
 Though I had died; but loving such a lady  
 And, justifying my love, I must not fly from 't. (3.6.39-42)

The compulsion he describes is a trap. He tells Theseus, that although he does not believe he will ever “enjoy” Emilia, he will still maintain: “[t]he honour of affection and die for her, / Make death a devil.” (3.6.268-71) As this claustrophobic sense of a short and dead-end corridor indicates, the revenge tragedy dynamic is rarefied in the duelling / dualling dynamic between Palamon and Arcite to the point of stasis. The cousins’ duelling plot is in many ways predetermined by the Chaucerian source. Chaucer’s tale provides the blueprint, skeleton or Ur-text for the master narrative of the play, and his plot elements are almost always kept in sight; which is to say that the tale rests on death.

### **“To be his whore is witless”: the Jailer’s Daughter and the Folk**

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* sets up a similar opposition to *Hamlet*, which was discussed in chapter one as subverting its own revenge narrative’s teleology with Ophelia’s ballad space. Instead *The Two Noble Kinsmen* opposes the rarefied duel dynamic with the jailer’s daughter’s ballad space, which builds on the folk associations of the

ballads, intensifying and fortifying them with other folk practices and genres. Her ballad narrative, an original addition to *The Knight's Tale* material, subverts the Chaucerian literary original in the same way that *Hamlet* subverts its “own true coppie” through Ophelia’s unstable and destabilizing ballad medium. Yet the play is ultimately unhappy with the idea that marriage might provide a productive alternative to retaliatory violence. The text’s representations of both the Jailer’s Daughter’s eventual marriage, and Palamon’s match with Emilia, register a distinct unease with the institution of marriage.

In revisiting Ophelia, Shakespeare and Fletcher do more than reiterate her ballad status; they augment it. The Jailer’s Daughter is even more emphatically a creature of the ballad corpus, and here the authors emphasise the folk origins of the ballads, amplifying the folk associations of their earlier heroine to an unmistakable pitch. While criticism has largely neglected the idea of the ballad corpus as an intrinsically female corpus, it has nevertheless been attuned to the popular, folk nature of the genre. Bruce Smith, suggesting the existence of a “cryptic relationship between women and ballads”, writes that:

Early Modern women [...] seem to have had a vital connection with folk ballads. In singing snatches of ballads, Ophelia is adding her voice to those of the singing women workers Thomas Deloney says he overheard in about 1595 in one of the earliest factories in England. Sixteenth-century ballads like “Geordie” [...] give women a voice, literally as well as figuratively – a voice by and large denied to them by the literary high culture of Renaissance England.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Smith refers here to Thomas Deloney, *The Pleasant History of Iohn Uinchcomb ... called Iack of Newberie* (London: 1619), p. 26.

Smith's comments regarding the voice denied to women by the "literary high culture" of early modern England are particularly germane to the relationship between the ballads and mainstream literature. As both an emphatically acoustic and domestic folk phenomenon, the popular ballads have evolved outside of the centralising tradition of the canon, and are strongly associated with an illiterate, labouring and highly localized culture. Bold notes Child's appraisal that "the popular ballad was an oral phenomenon, a narrative song that had been preserved on the lips of unlettered people."<sup>210</sup> According to Gerould, these ballads were: "the work of people whose knowledge of the world has usually been limited to the parish or the county", and they showed people acting either individually or in small groups, "seldom with consciousness of anything beyond."<sup>211</sup> Fox similarly notes the "parochial context" and "highly localized" nature of many folk stories and songs, adding that "these memorials of the microcosm had little chance of ever being written down, still less of finding their way into print".<sup>212</sup> The negative connotations of 'parochial', exhibited in the belief that a small, illiterate culture is physically and culturally limiting, goes some way towards explaining the low cultural premium placed on 'female interest' material. Women were confined to a domestic role, and their stories issue from a doubly localised position, a microcosm of the microcosm, if you like.

As the folk culture origins of the ballads have been recognised, so too has the social class of the Jailer's Daughter. Indeed Paul Bertram suggests that the negative reactions of nineteenth century critics such as William Hazlitt to the Jailer's Daughter ("The jailer's daughter ... is a wretched interpolation in the story, and a

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<sup>210</sup> Alan Bold, *The Ballad* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1979), p. 2.

<sup>211</sup> Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 66.

<sup>212</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 31.

fantastic copy of Ophelia”) derived: “more from their feelings about social decorum than from any inferences about dramatic purpose.”<sup>213</sup> Yet the Jailer’s Daughter amplifies Ophelia’s folk and working class associations to important dramatic effect. Like her predecessor, the ballad element the Jailer’s Daughter moves and breathes in, and which she is the principal vehicle of in the play, threatens the dominant narrative scheme, which in her case is that of the kinsmen’s love-duel. This dominant, duelling scheme is clearly situated in the classical world of the Chaucerian and Boccaccian source, whereas the ballad folk-space of the Daughter’s subplot is an original addition to the source material. The insertion of this subplot within the play, and its position within it as it threatens at points to overwhelm the main narrative entirely, enacts a subversion of authority on the part of the authors with regard to the source material. The Jailer’s Daughter’s plot is their major original, collaborative addition to *The Knight’s Tale* source. While act two, scene one is attributed to Shakespeare, and is our first introduction to the Jailer’s Daughter, the rest of the Jailer’s Daughter’s scenes are attributed to Fletcher. The character is nevertheless a collaborative achievement. Apart from the minor revisions that Potter believes the writers would have made to each others work, the Jailer’s Daughter is universally acknowledged to be a reworking of Shakespeare’s Ophelia. Writing the Jailer’s Daughter’s scenes, Fletcher is in dialogue with the earlier Ophelia version.

This retelling of Ophelia’s ballad narrative competes with the retelling of *The Knight’s Tale*, challenging its premises and goals in much the same way that the

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<sup>213</sup> Paul Bertram, *Shakespeare and The Two Noble Kinsmen* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 230, citing William Hazlitt, *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820), p.163. Susan Green agrees: “As if the play were a broken-backed thing to begin with, the attributors of authorship apply pressure where they think to find the play’s weakest point – the mad female of the piece – and forge a critical apparatus made to intensify class divisions. Lower-class characters go with Fletcher, the lesser dramatist; Shakespeare is preserved for the formal, “sane” realm of male authority.” “A Madwoman? We are made boys!” The Jailer’s Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in Frey ed., *Shakespeare, Fletcher and The Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. 122.

Ophelia narrative challenged those of revenge in *Hamlet*. This subversion is in turn played out at an authorial level by the misrule of the Jailer's Daughter's narrative, which jostles for space with the smooth retelling of the dominant original. The Prologue worries – or, pretends to worry – about the possibility that the play will make Chaucer's "famed work" "lighter / Than Robin Hood!" (Pro. 20-1) Robin Hood, folk legend and the stuff of numerous ballad accounts, is approached in the Prologue as an inferior, worthless sort of a genre. And yet it is this very folk strain that the play sets up in contention with the dominant über-narrative again and again. It is this folk-genre that seems to hold the promise of a happier ending, the "lighter" alternative to Chaucer's tortured tale; yet ultimately the courtly romance world is unable to access this folk alternative; its characters have lost the keys and the way, like the inebriated man stumbling through the Chaucerian source, "the Boethian image of the drunken man: every step he takes towards his house is a step away from it."<sup>214</sup> The focus and main vehicle of this folk strain is at all times the Jailer's Daughter, who is in fact obliquely identified with the Robin Hood legend at several points. She is the subversive and, in this play, irrepressible Ophelia-element. Irrepressible because, in contradistinction to Ophelia, the Jailer's Daughter's folk-space is surprisingly robust; the classical conclusion of the Ophelia narrative is avoided or averted, and instead the Jailer's Daughter's narrative ends with a pragmatic folk cure which speaks for the sustaining powers of community in this play.

Where Ophelia was associated with this folk background through her implication in the ballad medium, the popular credentials of the Jailer's Daughter are reinforced still further by the Daughter's association with a number of folk practices such as maying, Morris dancing and the telling of folktales, all of which

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<sup>214</sup> Philip Edwards, 'On the design of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', *A Review of English Literature* 5:4 (1964), 89-105, at p. 94.

are studied by John Aubrey in *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* as “old customes” of the day.<sup>215</sup> At a very basic level, her position as a daughter of the folk is emphasized by her lack of a name; she is defined by her father’s occupation and her relationship to him. She is the “Jailer’s Daughter”, and as such is linked to the other unnamed daughters of the male working class that populate this play. Daughters then, to men who are defined by their occupation or labour such as the Jailer, the Doctor, the Schoolmaster, the Taborer, the Executioner, the Sempster, and lastly the Countrymen, whose dialogue makes clear that they work the land. The designation of these women as daughters places an emphasis on homosocial relations; a man interacts with another man’s daughter. In the text we have “Cicely, the sempster’s daughter” (3.5.45), who puts the morris dance in jeopardy by failing to turn up, and is familiarly cursed as “that scornful piece, that scurvy hilding” (3.5.43); and the Schoolmaster is said to have relations with the “tanner’s daughter” (2.3.45), a relationship which precipitates the morris dance in act three; as the third countryman explains,

The matter’s too far driven between him  
 And the tanner’s daughter to let slip now;  
 And she must see the Duke and she must dance too. (2.3.45-7)

To be a “daughter” is furthermore to be in a peculiarly sexualised position. Still a daughter and not yet a wife, these women are perceived as decidedly nubile; as Polonius comments: “I have a daughter – have while she is mine -” (2.2.106). The innuendo of *what* is too far driven between the schoolmaster and the tanner’s

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<sup>215</sup> John Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* in John Buchanan-Brown ed., *John Aubrey: Three Prose Works. Miscellanies, Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme, Observations* (Suffolk: Centaur Press Ltd, 1972), p. 132.



A pretty brown wench 'tis. There was a time  
 When young men went a-hunting, and a wood  
 And a broad beech; and thereby hangs a tale – (3.3.39-41).

While the notes gloss “brown” simply to mean brunette, an audience familiar with the ballads might well be reminded of the “nut-brown bride” of the popular ballad ‘Lord Thomas and Fair Annet’ (73) as well as the eponymous “Brown Girl” (295).<sup>218</sup> The innuendo of “thereby hangs a tale” in this forest setting is reminiscent of numerous ballad liaisons. The vulnerability of these sexualised daughters’ (or sisters’) social position is clearly demonstrated by Arcite and Palamon’s attitude towards them. They regard such daughters as ‘fair game’ as they go “a-hunting” in the woods, and reserve their more serious commitment for the noblewoman Emilia.

Concomitant to the term “daughter” is the heavy use of the term “wench” in this play, applied thirteen times to denote young, working class women. The Jailer’s Daughter uses it in reference to herself, giving it a sexual impetus that the rest of the usages work to confirm; “What pushes are we wenches driven to / When fifteen once has found us!” (2.4.6-7) She uses it twice more to indicate a type of young women who would understand and commiserate with, or perhaps even share, her sexual desire for Palamon (2.4.12; 2.6.14) Others use the term to address her in her sexually obsessed, maddened state; her father at 4.1.117, the Doctor at 5.2.73 and the Wooer at 5.2.74. The schoolmaster uses the term to praise the Jailer’s Daughter and the other female morris dancers for their dancing at 3.6.157.

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<sup>218</sup> All ballads from F. J. Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (New York: The Folklore Press, in association with Pageant Book Company, 1956). Numbering corresponds to Child’s.

The country men use it in reference to a wife who will 'behave' if she is sexually obliged that night (2.3.36). Emilia uses it twice to address the serving maid she flirts with (2.2.124, 129). Palamon toasts Arcite "to the wenches / We have known in our days" (3.3.28-9), and Arcite in turn refers to the "pretty brown wench" of Palamon's liaison, making the term's connotations of sexual availability clear. The audience is assumed to be complicit in the cousins wenching; the Epilogue asks "He that has / Loved a young handsome wench" to show his face (Epi.6-7)<sup>219</sup>

The Jailer's Daughter's 'wenchly', dependent social position, deriving from her father and her relationship to him, a relationship as 'daughter' that moreover seems to qualify her as sexual game for the men in the play, enlarges upon the social status of that earlier daughter, Ophelia. The oblique, socio-political commentary that Ophelia's narrative and mad ballading constituted is emphasised in the Jailer's Daughter's narrative. A sense of the social difference that exists between the Jailer's family and the two imprisoned princes is perhaps initiated by the Jailer's own admonishment of his daughter: "Go to, leave your pointing; they would not make us their object. Out of their sight." (2.2.54-5) There is some irony in this; the Jailer's perception of the mannerly etiquette of the two princes he is host to is rudely belied by the prince's actual behaviour. Palamon points Emilia out through the window ("*[Indicates Emilia.]* Behold, and wonder." 2.2.133) and then literally makes her his object, considering that he "took possession / First with

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<sup>219</sup> The term is also used twice in act four, scene two in reference to Emilia, in distressed and sexually determined circumstances. Hippolyta tells the weeping Emilia with regard to the approaching fight for her hand, "Wench, it must be." (4.2.148) Emilia then adopts it in reference to herself: "Poor wench, go weep, for whosoever wins / Loses a noble cousin, for thy sins." (4.2.155-6) The adjective "Poor" is significant, and its economic connotations are significant to the term "wench". However, the other connotation of the term 'wench' as one who is sexually available is also significant here, for the two men are fighting for conjugal rights over Emilia, and Hippolyta uses the term at the point in which Emilia becomes sexual prize. Emilia is otherwise referred to as "lady" or "madam", and also frequently a "maid", an attribution of virginal sexual status that is applied cross-class to the labourers' daughters also.

mine eye of all those beauties in her” (2.2.169-70). Palamon’s bad manners are also in evidence in his petulant exchange with the Jailer:

Palamon:                   By this good light,  
                                  Had I a sword I would kill thee.

Jailer:                                 Why, my lord?

Palamon: Thou bringst such pelting, scurvy news continually,  
                                  Thou art not worthy life. I will not go. (2.2.267-70)

Despite his weak grasp on the finer points of etiquette, Palamon does not make the Jailer’s Daughter his object, even though both he and Arcite seem complicit in earlier liaisons with working class “wenches”. It is one of the peculiarities of the Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative that she barely seems able to impinge upon the consciousness of Palamon. So much the underside of the Prince socially, so much his reverse that they are never seen to interact on stage, the Jailer’s Daughter and Palamon dramatically inhabit different worlds. They are only ever conversant in a remote, offstage realm that is refracted through the subjective narrative of the daughter as a place of longing and wish-making in which:

                                  Once, he kissed me.

                                  I loved my lips the better ten days after:

                                  Would he do so every day!” (2.4.25-7)

Importantly, the Jailer’s Daughter understands Palamon’s indifference towards her as specifically socially determined. Regarding her love for Palamon, she soliloquizes:

Why should I love this gentleman? 'Tis odds  
 He never will affect me: I am base,  
 My father the mean keeper of this prison,  
 And he a prince. To marry him is hopeless,  
 To be his whore is witless. (2.4.1-5)

Her sentence on the matter contains a good, stern piece of folk advice that is certainly embedded in the ballad corpus; male sexual desire is an untrustworthy phenomenon, and it is unwise for a woman to commit herself to a male sexually before she has been committed to him socially, particularly if she is of a lower social class. In the ballads pre-marital intercourse leads inevitably to pregnancy and the woman is, almost without exception, left holding the baby.<sup>220</sup> In sixteen of the twenty-one ballads in which premarital sex occurs in the first two volumes of the ballads, an illegitimate pregnancy follows.<sup>221</sup> In chapter one I described the ballads as sending out a kind of sonar that probes the limits of social tolerance for female behaviours. As we have already seen from Ophelia's own ballads on the subject, premarital sex and illegitimate pregnancy are particularly sensitive issues in the corpus, especially with regard to the double standard that applies to male and female sexual behaviour. The corpus indicates that premarital sex leads to pregnancy, which then leads in a best-case scenario to social embarrassment and in

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<sup>220</sup> One exception is 'Fair Janet' (64), in which the soon-to-be-married Janet tells her lover: "O I have born this babe, Willie, / Wi mickle toil and pain; / Take hame, take hame, your babe, Willie, / For nurse I dare be nane." (A11)

<sup>221</sup> Ballads in which premarital sexual intercourse is followed by pregnancy are: 'Gil Brenton' (5), 'Leesome Brand' (15), 'Sheath and Knife' (16), 'The Cruel Mother' (20), 'The Maid and the Palmer' (21), 'Bonnie Annie' (24), 'Burd Ellen and Young Tamlane' (28), 'Tam Lin' (39), 'Lizie Wan' (51), 'Fair Annie' (62), 'Childe Waters' (63), 'Fair Janet' (64), 'Lady Masry' (65), 'Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet' (66), 'The Lass of Loch Royale' (76) and 'Child Maurice' (83). These figures include incestuous sexual intercourse, but exclude extra-marital sexual intercourse.

the worst, to abandonment, extreme ostracisation and even death ('The Lass of Loch Royale'(76)). As the Daughter summarizes, "To be his whore is witless."

The Daughter's sense that while Palamon might make her his whore, he would not love her seems to derive from her acute awareness of their differing social classes, a conviction that is entirely confirmed by Palamon and Arcite's accounts of their behaviour towards "wenches". She perceives that she is "base", that her father's position is lowly, and that Palamon is himself a prince. The audience is reminded of another ballad daughter who apparently desires beyond her means, and is informed by a father who occupies a not dissimilar custodial role, cross-questioning and spying, that "Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star. / This must not be." (*Ham.* 2.2.141-2) Ophelia's relative social inferiority – she is high-born but at a social disadvantage in her interactions with Hamlet – is exaggerated in the Jailer's Daughter beyond mistake. She regards herself socially as the negative and inverse of the two princes; according to her, "they have no more sense of their captivity than I of ruling Athens." (2.1.38-9) Interestingly, the Jailer's Daughter reserves a special place in the Hades-come-Hell she conjures in her madness for upper class 'gentlemen' who have impregnated maids and then left them, such as, for example, Arcite with the Lord Steward's Daughter:

Lords and courtiers that have got maids with child, they are in this place. They shall stand in fire up to the naval and in ice up to the heart, and there th'offending part burns and the deceiving part freezes. In troth, a very grievous punishment, as one would think, for such a trifle. Believe me, one would marry a leprous witch to be rid on't, I'll assure you. (4.3.41-7)

An audience familiar with the popular ballads would perhaps recall at such a point the punishment of the Squire in the ballad of ‘Burd Isabel and Earl Patrick’ (257) who is pulled “ower the brim” by devils. The Jailer’s Daughter’s sentiment echoes that of the ballad; the man would have been far better off if he had honoured the seduction, rather than risking supernatural justice. There is an element of wish-fulfilment in both texts; they carry the frustrations of an underdog class that hopes for justice in the afterlife because it gets none in a world which considers its injuries “trifles”.

In her later madness, the Jailer’s Daughter figures her sense of the social difference between herself and Palamon with the typically earthy analogy of two imaginary horses, the one a gift from Palamon that “dances very finely, very comely” (5.2.48), “gallops to the tune of ‘Light o’ Love” (5.2.54) can read and write with “A very fair hand, and casts himself th’accounts / Of all his hay and provender.” (5.2.58-9) The other is a “Chestnut mare” (5.2.61) who is “horribly in love with him, poor beast!” (5.2.62) but whom he rejects. Horses, as previously noted, are sexually charged symbols. The mare’s dowry is homely and emphatically rustic – “Some two hundred bottles [bundles] / And twenty strike of oats” (5.2.64-5) but:

[...] he’ll ne’er have her.

He lisps in’s neighing, able to entice

A miller’s mare. He’ll be the death of her. (5.2.65-7)

The horse’s social accomplishments are over and above the mare’s means. Indeed the very issue of vocal production – the horse’s lisp in neighing – is an oblique reference to the different, class-determined modes of pronunciation and language

that exist between Palamon and the Jailer's Daughter. Katrina Bachinger has argued that the Jailer's Daughter is in fact middle class, and has used the daughter's occasionally highly complex use of language to illustrate this.<sup>222</sup> The Daughter's syntactical sophistication, however, is offset by the weight of dialect language that constitutes the basic tenor of her speech. Douglas Bruster notes that "Whoobub", "reak", and "mop'd" were Northern English dialect usages, and that "char'd", "rearly", "ken'st", "shrowd" and "cut" also had a dialectal valence. Bruster notes in passing that this type of dialect use was often in evidence in the ballads; indeed, the ballads rarely appear in standard English, and dialectal variants mark their mutations through their different, provincial recordings.<sup>223</sup> The Jailer's Daughter moves in an acoustic as well as narrative territory that is primarily balladic and rooted in folk culture. The sense of the differing equine social positions of the horse and the love-stricken mare translate into the daughter's sense of her own small and undistinguished dowry. As she tells the Wooer, believing him to be Palamon, "you care not for me. I have nothing / But this poor petticoat and two coarse smocks." (5.2.83-4) As Paul Bertram, noting Isaac Reed's comparison of Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* to the Jailer's Daughter, observes: "Helena is upper middle class, and she will get her unwilling count; the Daughter does not even have a name, and her very kind knight is out of the question."<sup>224</sup>

Like Ophelia then, the Jailer's Daughter occupies the socially troubling and sexualised position of an unmarried daughter. Like Ophelia, her very nubility holds the Jailer's own social position precariously in the balance, promising either to boost it through an advantageous and socially appropriate match – in this case to the Wooer – or putting it at risk through an inappropriate sexual adventure, such

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<sup>222</sup> Bachinger, 'Maidenheads and Mayhem', p. 27, quoting 2.1.40-5.

<sup>223</sup> Bruster, 'The Jailer's Daughter', p. 292. See any of the ballads quoted in this chapter for evidence of this dialect use.

<sup>224</sup> Bertram, *Shakespeare and The Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. 228.

as eloping with one of his prisoners. As with Ophelia's narrative, the social realities of the female position as an item of exchange, an expendable commodity to be traded amongst communities in a patriarchally governed society comes to the fore.<sup>225</sup> The old question of a daughter's "tocher" or "portion" that crops up so repeatedly in the ballads, and is such a blight on the prospects of the poor old chestnut mare, is in fact the very question that initiates the Jailer's Daughter's narrative. The first time that we learn of her existence, her proposed dowry and "the old business" of her marriage to the Wooer (2.1.17) are under discussion. The Jailer advises the Wooer: "I may depart with little while I live; something I may cast to you, not much." (2.1.23) We open then on a not dissimilar situation to that of our first introduction to Ophelia. In the Jailer's Daughter's case we are introduced to the sanctioned Wooer, who follows protocol in his application to the Jailer for his daughter's hand in marriage. In Ophelia's, we open instead on the idea of an unapproved wooer, who has not followed protocol.

It seems that there may be some saving grace in having less socially at stake however; the Jailer is attentive to his daughter's wishes, asking the Wooer "Have you a full promise of her" (2.1.13) and her disaffection from loyalty to her father later on in the play does not place her beyond the pale of her family and the communal, collaborative care it provides. Polonius' language of grubby business transactions is nevertheless in evidence, unmistakably revisited in the Jailer's "I tender my consent" (2.1.14) which sets off a barrage of textual echoes relating to Polonius' own multiple use of the word "tenders" in relation to his own daughter's precarious marital status. While this intertextual echo is then calmed by the Jailer's

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<sup>225</sup> Interestingly, John Aubrey cites Sir Thomas Smyth's conviction in *Common Wealth of England* (p. 240) that contemporary marriage ceremonies bore traces of Roman marriage ceremonies: "For the woman at the Church-door was given of the Father, or some other of the next of kinne, into the hands of the husband, and he layd downe gold and silver for her upon the Booke, as though he did buy her; the Priest was belike instead of Lipercus", *Remaines*, p. 168.

further use of “tender” embedded in the word “tenderly”, which ameliorates Polonius’ vicious use of the stem, this type of business arrangement remembers the Prologue’s cynical treatment of maidenheads as commodities. Maidenheads and plays are “followed” in the prologue (2), both in the sense that they are sought after and observed, but also, in the case of maidenheads, literally tracked down as sexual game as Palamon and Arcite’s banter regarding their past (s)exploits demonstrates. Furthermore, money is given both in marriage and in prostitution, and the prologue’s manner of aligning the literary market, marriage and prostitution, sets the tone for the play’s demystification of romance.<sup>226</sup>

The practical matter of the Daughter’s dowry concerns the other male characters in the play. While the Wooer himself promises the Jailer that he will “estate your daughter in what I have promised” (2.1.11). Palamon and his knights organise a whip-round on the brink of execution to piece out the Daughter’s dowry. It may be that this whip-round is made more urgent by the fact that the Daughter’s maidenhead is not as publicly, verifiably intact as it had been before she hared off into the woods alone in search of Palamon. In ‘The Fair Flower of Northumberland’ (9) the errant and eloping daughter is returned to the bosom of her family, her mother swearing that:

She shanna want gold, she shanna want fee,  
 Altho that her love was so easy won,  
 She shanna want gold to gin a man wi,  
 And she’s still the fair flower of Northumberland.

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<sup>226</sup> Wye Saltonstall writes satirically of his time that “To make love the foundation of marriage is contemn’d as befitting the Innocency of Arcadian sheapheards, and therefore men they marry portions and take wifes as things to boote.” *Picturae Loquentes or Pictures Drawne forth in Characters. With a Poeme of a Maid*, rept. from editions of 1631 and 1635 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Luttrell Society, 1956), p. 18.

A good dowry can bolster up the fair flower's attractiveness as a marriage prospect following her indiscretion. Pragmatism wins over, and Palamon's corresponding generosity might also betray some death-bed anxiety of conscience with regard to how he might have devalued the Daughter's marketability, however unwittingly.

The robust heterosexuality of the ballad corpus finds something of a celebrant in the Jailer's Daughter. Where Ophelia's sexual language is reserved for her two mad scenes, innuendo, ribaldry and a fierce insistence on female sexual desire permeates the Jailer's Daughter's language and narrative as, indeed, it does the ballads. Her sense of sexual urgency is described in visceral terms, as she exclaims on the "pushes" wench's are driven to once they arrive at puberty. Driven to hustle for sexual fulfilment, the Daughter desperately asks: "What should I do to make him know I love him? / For I would fain enjoy him" (2.4.29-30). Douglas Bruster pays particular attention to the "sexually frank language" of the Jailer's Daughter's madness and notes that: "This increasingly conventional [i.e. conventional to stage madness] language derives from a subgenre familiar from, and perhaps originating in, Ophelia's mad discourse."<sup>227</sup>

Bruster observes the clear intertextual links between Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter's language, including, for example, their mutual use of the word "cock / cockle", but questions why, when Ophelia's bawdy has clearly formed the basis of the Jailer's Daughter's speech, "the Jailer's Daughter nonetheless asserts sexual desire more clearly than her predecessor, whose statements are often enigmatic and riddling."<sup>228</sup> Bruster concludes that the Jailer's Daughter's social class is the primary reason for her 'coarse' language, writing that "[h]er speech is more directly about her body, and bodies generally, because in dramatic representations of her social

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<sup>227</sup> Bruster, 'The Jailer's Daughter', p. 280.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, p. 281.

stratum, neither madness nor bawdy is typically phrased in decorative poetry.”<sup>229</sup>

However, I think it is possible that the Daughter’s greater directness is a symptom of Shakespeare and Fletcher’s attempts to correct some of the more repressive aspects of the Ophelia element. It could be that the classical, conservative closure of Ophelia’s offstage suicide and the ensuing, disinfecting, canonizing speeches and tributes that seek to render her an unthreatening, dead virgin were, on consideration, felt to be unsatisfactory; they were just too effective a repressive mechanism. With the Jailer’s Daughter the authors seek to emphasize all that was troubling and disruptive in Ophelia’s narrative, strengthening and reinforcing the allusions to her ballad background, and heightening her folk credentials to an unmistakable pitch. After all, Ophelia’s sexual references are not particularly “riddling”. How could: “By cock they are to blame” be made any more direct? But Laertes’ insistence on his sister’s “fair and unpolluted flesh” in the burial scene works to tame the subversive, insistent, female ballad sexuality of Ophelia’s mad ballads.

The Jailer’s Daughter’s sexuality resists this interral and situates her firmly in the folk, directly associating her with the sexually explicit, innuendo-laden language of the Countrymen she eventually dances the morris with who, in our first introduction to them in act two, scene three, resolve to reconcile themselves to their jealous wives with the following formula:

2 Countryman: Clap her aboard tomorrow night and stow her,

And all’s made up again.

3 Countryman: Ay, do but put

A fescue in her fist and you shall see her

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid, p. 282.

Take a new lesson out and be a good wench. (2.3.33-6)

A “fescue”, according to Arden 3, is “[a] small stick, pin, etc. used for pointing out the letters to children learning to read; a pointer’ (*OED*, which gives this as an example). Here, with the double meaning of penis.”<sup>230</sup> The Daughter’s “For I must lose my maidenhead by cocklight; / ’Twill never thrive else” (4.1.112-3) and her warning to the first friend that should his sister see Palamon once “she’s gone; she’s done, / And undone, in an hour.” (4.1.124-5) are very much in the same vein as the Countrymen’s bawdy. They weave her into the folk and ballad background that is at the heart of Ophelia’s Saint Valentine’s Day ballad of lost virginity.

The heterosexual ribaldry of the countrymen’s dialogue works in opposition to the same sex preferences of the courtly elite in this play, locating heterosexuality in a rural, working class, folk context.<sup>231</sup> This ballad heterosexuality shapes the Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative as her earlier piece of wisdom that “To be his whore is witless” is discarded under the pressure of sexual desire. Resolving to set Palamon free and thereby expecting to gain both his gratitude and her own sexual gratification, the Jailer’s Daughter falls into the classic ballad pattern of the high-risk, dangerously nubile daughter who betrays her family’s interests in favour of her lover’s. The heroine’s actions in ‘Young Beichan’ (53) seem uncannily familiar:

O barefoot, bareffot gaed she but,

An barefoot came she ben;

It was no for want o hose and shone,

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<sup>230</sup> Potter, *TINK*, n. 35, p. 201.

<sup>231</sup> Bachinger considers that the Jailer’s Daughter’s heterosexuality is instead symptomatic of her middle class social position. Susan Green similarly writes of the Daughter’s insistence on heterosexual passion and the contrast created in the play with the elite pursuit of same sex relations; “‘A Mad Woman?’”, p. 130.

Nor time to put them on.

But a' for fear that her father dear

Had heard her making din;

She's stown the keys o the prison-house door

An latten the prisoner gang.

The Daughter's question regarding the law is apt:

Say I ventured

To set him free? What says the law then?

Thus much for law or kindred! I will do it!

And this night, or tomorrow, he shall love me. (2.3.30-3)

Douglas Bruster notes that the powers affecting the Daughter are more properly law *and* kindred, as opposed to law *or* kindred, because as a jailer's daughter she is part of a family "whose social role is to penalise."<sup>232</sup> This can be developed still further into an understanding of the interests of *male* law and kindred – the patriarchal society that the Jailer's Daughter is situated in – and whose plans for her body-as-commodity are in conflict with her own subjective desires, a conflict between female desire and homosocial interest that I discussed in chapter one as a frequent concern of the ballad corpus.

That the Jailer's Daughter understands the "law or kindred" she speaks of to be a male force of legitimacy is recognised in her second soliloquy, which begins with the lines, "Let all the dukes and all the devils roar, / He is at liberty!" (2.6.1-2)

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<sup>232</sup> Bruster, 'The Jailer's Daughter', p. 280.

These lines clearly invoke that principal agent of patriarchal law in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Duke. She follows them with the brief meditation,

oh, Love,

What a stout-hearted child thou art! My father

Durst better have endured cold iron than done it. (2.6.8-10)

She allies her father with the Law, and yet positions him under it, considering that he would rather have submitted to the Law's iron rule than contravened it as she has done. Her comments evoke a stratified society in which men are allied with law-giving, and yet men of the labouring class are subordinated to the ruling class. She recognizes in true ballad fashion that it is erotic love that has set her in opposition to a Law that can be dangerous to those that offend it. She states:

I love him beyond love and beyond reason,

Or wit, or safety; I have made him know it;

I care not, I am desperate. (2.6.11-3)

The masculine, homosocial nature of this law is reiterated when the Jailer's Daughter predicts that:

If the law

Find me and then condemn me for't, some wenches,

Some honest-hearted maids, will sing my dirge

And tell to memory my death was noble,

Dying almost a martyr. (2.6.13-7)

Douglas Bruster notes that the Jailer's Daughter "creates a female community, imagining female voices chronicling her martyrdom to this penalty of law and kindred."<sup>233</sup> I would argue further that the female community the Jailer's Daughter sets up in opposition to male law and kindred is a specifically balladic community. Her own narrative is of a theme with the eloping ballad daughters and the Daughter's evocation of communal, female production agrees with the argument of chapter one that the popular ballads are a female genre. The daughter's projected "martyr's death" recalls the numerous ballad daughters whose deaths provoke terrible remorse on the parts of fathers and lovers and whose relationships are retrospectively blessed by the sympathetic flowers that grow out of their graves. These are the martyrs of ballad tradition.

The Jailer's Daughter makes a second reference to a balladic, female community in her madness when she fantasizes that, should Palamon be arrested, she would:

bring a bevy,  
 A hundred black-eyed maids that love as I do,  
 With chaplets on their heads of daffadillies,  
 With cherry-lips and cheeks of damask roses,  
 And all we'll dance an antic 'fore the Duke  
 And beg his pardon. (4.1.71-6)

This community of presumably abandoned women, garlanded and demanding an audience with the ruling elite for an off-kilter folk performance (an "antic" is "an

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p. 280.

antic / antique dance”) recalls Ophelia’s importunate folk ballads, sung before the king and queen of Denmark.<sup>234</sup>

The Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative continually makes references to these ballad paradigms in which, as discussed in chapter one, dilemmas of split loyalty inevitably follow the abandonment of the familial hearth. The Jailer’s Daughter is initially flippant with regard to the effect that her actions might have upon her father in her first and second soliloquies, declaring in the second:

Farewell, father!

Get many more such prisoners and such daughters  
And shortly you may keep yourself. (3.1.37-9)

This gives place to a guilty concern that repeats itself in each increasingly unbalanced speech. In the third, she observes “My father’s to be hanged for his escape” (3.2.22) and in the fourth:

Now, my father

Twenty to one is trussed up in a trice  
Tomorrow morning;” (3.4.16-18)

The Wooer relates hearing the daughter in her madness oscillate between concern for Palamon (“His shackles will betray him, he’ll be taken;” 4.1.70) and concern for her father:

Then she talked of you, sir:

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<sup>234</sup> Potter ed., *TINK*, n. 75, p. 264.

That you must lose your head tomorrow morning,  
 And she must gather flowers to bury you,  
 And see the house made handsome. (4.1.76-9)

The apparent casualness of the daughter's references to her father's fate is belied by the frequency with which she returns to the subject. Her comment, in connection with the Wooers proposal of marriage in act five, scene two that "Beside, my father must be hanged tomorrow / And that would be a blot i' th' business." (5.2.80-1) makes a fourth specific reference to her father's imagined execution. There are a total of six references in her speech to this tender subject of split loyalty. The same dual concern for father and lover striates Ophelia's mad speech, and indeed the Jailer himself diagnoses his daughter's madness as perhaps the outcome of this very split loyalty:

Either this was her love to Palamon,  
 Or fear of my miscarrying on his 'scape,  
 Or both. (4.1.49-51)

The Jailer's Daughter's madness, like Ophelia's, opens the floodgates for an influx of ballad snatches and references. Her first snatch of song is a close reference to 'Child Waters' (63): "For I'll cut my green coat, a foot above my knee / And I'll clip my yellow locks, an inch below mine eye" revisits the ballad lines in which Child Waters tells Ellen:

'If you will my ffootpage be, Ellen,  
 As you doe tell itt mee,

Then you must cutt your gownne of greener

An inche aboue your knee.

‘Soe must you doe your yellow lockes,

Another inch aboue your eye;

You must tell noe man what is my name;

My ffootpage then you shall bee.’

‘Child Waters’ is immediately relevant to the Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative. The heavily pregnant Ellen crops both hair and gown and chases after Child Waters as he rides post-haste to the North Country, purportedly to find a bride. The Jailer’s Daughter similarly pursues an indifferent man through rough, hostile terrain which is cold and dark and populated – at least, in the Daughter’s imagination – with wolves. Potter notes the Jailer’s Daughter’s snatch of ‘Child Waters’, noting its resemblance to both ‘Young Beichan’ and ‘The Fair Flower of Northumberland’.<sup>235</sup> The thematic context of both ballads is deeply significant to the Jailer’s Daughter’s narrative. The happy endings of ‘Young Beichan’ (53) and ‘Child Waters’ are secured by their heroine’s sheer persistence, determination and, at points, utter abjection. Ellen’s physical trials as she struggles to keep up on foot with her horseback lover are extreme. Eventually she has to swim to cross the water:

The salt waters bore vp Ellens clothes,

Our Ladye bore vpp he[r] chinne,

And Child Waters was a woe man, good Lord,

To ssee Faire Ellen swime.

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<sup>235</sup> Potter, *TINK*, appendix 6, p. 361.

When they arrive at their destination, Ellen is commissioned to find Child Waters a whore, and to carry her back to prevent her feet from getting dirty:

And goe thee downe into yonder towne,  
 And low into the street;  
 The ffairest ladye that thou can find,  
 Hyer her in mine armes to sleepe,  
 And take her vp in thine armes two,  
 For filing of her ffeete.

The emphasis throughout Ellen's journey and this pimp-finale is on her total abjection. Having been refused a place to sleep at the foot of Child Water's bed, and having fed the horse, Ellen goes into labour and gives birth in the stable. The turning point in the narrative comes at Ellen's expression of utmost misery as she lullabies her child with the words: "I wold thy father were a king, / Thy mother layd on a beere!" Typically, even in her misery she exalts Child Waters to the position of king while consigning herself to death, an annihilation of the self that is a logical extension of the degradation she has endured thus far. Child Waters at long last concedes defeat with the lines:

'Peace now,' he said, 'good Faire Ellen,  
 And be of good cheere, I thee pray.  
 And the bridal and the churching both,  
 They shall be vpon one day.'

One wonders exactly what kind of a husband Ellen has won for herself.

In 'Young Beichan' (53), the emphasis is less on the heroine's abjection and humiliation, yet its happy ending also depends on the heroine pursuing the somewhat unreliable male of the piece across countries. Having set Young Beichan free from her father's prison in an unspecified "Moor"-ish country, Shusy Pye is then compelled to travel by ship to his country seven years later, Young Beichan having failed to redeem his promise to return in seven years and marry her. He is in fact on the brink of marrying quite another woman, but reneges on that marriage with the lines: "For I maun marry my first true love, / That's done and suffered so much for me." 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland' (9) departs from the narratives of 'Young Beichan' and 'Child Waters' in that the errant daughter of the narrative does not win her man but is turned back within sight of Edinburgh with the information that

'For I have wife, and children five,  
                   In Edenborow they be alive;  
 Then get thee home to faire England.'

This is the same ballad that was mentioned earlier in reference to the Daughter's augmented dowry, as the Fair Flower's mother concludes in version B that "She is not the first that the Scotts have beguild", and resolves to provide her daughter with a generous dowry in order to secure her a good marriage. This is perhaps the closest narrative of the group to the Jailer's Daughter's; both abscond from home, to the detriment of their father's interests (A: "And all to helpe this forlorne knight"). Both are received back into the home and treated with understanding and

compassion.<sup>236</sup> Indeed, the maidens of the various versions of ‘The Fair Flower’ could be the Jailer’s Daughter herself. Version C has:

She went unto her father’s bed-head,  
                   She’s stown the key o mony a lock,  
 She’s let him out o prison strong.

Version E, even more closely, has the Bailiff’s fair daughter who: “stole from her father’s pillow the key, / And out of the dungeon she soon set him free”.

We can however add a fourth ballad to the Arden editor’s thematic grouping, and that ballad is ‘Young Andrew’ (48). While the unnamed heroine does not set Young Andrew free from jail, she damages her father’s interests in another way by stealing away five hundred pounds of his red gold. ‘Young Andrew’ rides very close to the narrative of the ‘Fair Flower’, with the young man of the piece taking advantage of the young woman to the detriment of her father’s interests, and then turning her back home with the revelation that he has a wife in another country.<sup>237</sup> Like Ellen in *Child Waters*, the heroine is humiliated in a ritual of abjection that has her forced to strip off her black velvet gown, her silk kirtle and her fine head gear, with Young Andrew informing her that he is going to give them to his lady. She is then left with only her hair to cover her nakedness. This ballad has already been discussed in the context of Ophelia, because unlike the other ballads the editors mention, this one has a tragic ending. Refused admission to the family

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<sup>236</sup> Not all versions of the ballad carry the narrative this far. Version A has the Fair Flower “brought to her father’s againe / And he the good Earle of Northumberland”, and goes no further. B and C end with the compassion of the mother, as cited above, and E has the father expressing the same compassionate and rather resigned sentiments. D is incomplete.

<sup>237</sup> This resemblance, as well as a resemblance to ‘Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight’ (4) is noted by Child in the introduction to this ballad, *Popular Ballads*, p. 432.

hearth by her furious father the daughter dies shivering from a combination of exposure and grief:

She stood soe long quaking on the ground  
 Till her heart it burst in three;  
 And then shee ffell dead downe in a swoond,  
 And this was the end of the bonny Ladye.

Interestingly, the wolf the Jailer's Daughter fears will attack Palamon, devours Young Andrew. The ending of the ballad is incomplete, and is as a result slightly confusing, but a wolf is introduced to finish the scoundrel off:

He was not gone a mile into the wild forrest,  
 Or halfe a mile into the hart of Wales,  
 But there they cought him by such a braue wyle  
 That hee must come to tell noe more tales.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ffull soone a wolfe did of him smell,  
 And shee came roaring like a bear,  
 And gaping like a ffeend of hell.

Soe they ffought together like two lyons,  
 And fire betweene them two glashet out;  
 They raught eche other such a great rappe,  
 That there young Andrew was slaine, well I wott.

But now young Andrew he is dead,  
     But he was neuer buried vnder mold,  
 For ther as the wolfe devoured him,  
     There lyes all this great erles gold.

The wolf that the Jailer's Daughter fears will "jaw" her and attack Palamon seems to have stepped out of 'Young Andrew' and into her own ballad narrative (3.2.7).

While the ballads that end happily – either with marriage or a family reconciliation – provide the dominant subtext for the Jailer's Daughter, as the tragic ballads ending in death are perhaps the dominant subtext for Ophelia's narrative, tragic ballads such as 'Young Andrew' still remain an element of the Jailer's Daughter's narrative, as indeed the possibility of a 'happy' marriage ending still weighs into the balance as a ballad element for Ophelia's narrative. As Ophelia's narrative contends from within its flexible ballad context for a happy ending, so too the Jailer's Daughter's narrative contains the germ of an altogether more tragic ending. This possibility is audible in the harmonic ballad context of the tales of these other ballad daughters, including Ophelia. The same ballad narratives provide a backdrop to both Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter's narratives, but differing specific ballads – and ultimately, endings, achieve dominance.

The sadness that remains an element of the Jailer's Daughter's narrative and that in part derives from the influence of the tragic ballads in her background is confirmed by the Wooer's description of her singing a willow song in act four, scene one. Famously, Desdemona sings a willow song as she prepares for bed before Othello smothers her. It is a folk song of sorrow and abandonment that

finds its setting in the rural, anti-pastoral, just as Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter do:

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,  
 Sing all a green willow:  
 Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,  
 Sing willow, willow, willow.  
 The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans,  
 Sing willow, willow, willow.  
 Sing all a green willow must be my garland.  
 Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve –

As Stuart Gillespie comments, Peter Seng notes an analogue that contains the line, “Let nobody chide her, her scorn I approve” but, as Gillespie adds, Desdemona has “promoted it to the wrong point”.<sup>238</sup> Again what the willow song and the dramatic situation it immediately refers to in *Othello* stress is the heroine's abjection. Othello may be acting unpardonably aggressively, yet he is not to be blamed, and neither is the hero of this willow song piece. Indeed, “his scorn I approve” implicates the heroine in her own abjection. Desdemona corrects the line with the words, “Nay, that's not next”, and continues:

I called my love false love; but what said he then?

Sing willow, willow, willow:

If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men. (4.3.54-6)

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<sup>238</sup> Peter J. Seng, *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare: A Critical History*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1967), p. 196; Stuart Gillespie, ‘Shakespeare and Popular Song’, in Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes eds, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p. 188.

These lines set up an antagonistic sexual dynamic whereby the male suspects that women are false, unfaithful and sexually avaricious, a suspicion that is a major source of unease in *Othello*. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the text suspects instead that male possessive aggression, manifested in the cousin's aggressive and homosocial combat rituals, condemns the two sexes to mutual exclusivity.

In chapter one, the ballads were described as the product of an anonymous, female community. Their consequent lack of a single author means that the textual authority criticism might look for in canonical works does not exist in this folk genre. The ballads are performative, and do not recognise an authoritative, 'right' text. They belong to whoever is doing the ballading at the time, and that ballading is not a work of *recreation* but of creation; the songs are therefore liable to be rendered in a myriad of different ways. This polymorphous instability relates back to the subject of textual inheritance that is broached in the prologue, in which Chaucer is invoked as a kind of canonical figurehead, "of all admired" (Pro. 13).<sup>239</sup> The daughter's ballad background is in direct opposition to this kind of cultural fetishization of an author. While the spectre of Robin Hood folk-lore is conjured up as a tongue-in-cheek potential fate for Chaucer's esteemed tale, the prologue demands exactly the collaborative, communal effort that is the ethos and also the process behind the Robin Hood tales and ballads to save the play. The speaker asks:

Do but you hold out

Your helping hands, and we shall tack about

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<sup>239</sup> Shakespeare's other engagement with Chaucer is *Troilus and Cressida*; the play is directed at an academic audience, far from the popular ballad tradition. This supports the argument that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* introduces a popular, folk element in contradistinction to the received Chaucerian plot.

And something do to save us. (Pro. 25-7)

The competitive model that the anxieties about Chaucer as a precedent betray is contrasted with this more collaborative approach. This very collaborative scenario is enacted in act four, scene one in which the Jailer and his friends begin their cure of the daughter, helping her tack about her imaginary boat (Daughter: “For the tackling, / Let me alone; come, weigh, my hearts, cheerily!” 4.1.144-5) and “something do” to save her. The textual authority of Chaucer’s tale is subverted by the introduction of the Jailer’s Daughters narrative, both by the communal, folk world she represents, and the collaborative, anti-authoritarian ballad genre she moves in.

The popular misrule associations of the daughter similarly confound the idea of authority and hierarchy; for example, the Daughter’s statement with regard to Palamon and Arcite that: “It is a holiday to look on them. Lord, the difference of men.” (2.2.56-7) not only evokes holiday misrule and the pursuit of pleasure before labour but also reverses normal roles; women are not meant to look at men but rather vice versa, as Palamon and Arcite’s scopophilic fetishization of Emilia demonstrates. The daughter’s misrule can be seen as an expression of the author’s misrule, and the liberties that they take with their source material in introducing this subversive folk-element that did not previously exist and which threatens to turn the tale upside-down. The morris-dance, which the Jailer’s Daughter is swiftly co-opted for both as participant and almost as mascot (“A madwoman? We are made, boys” 3.5.77) perhaps represents the climax of this misrule. Morris-dancing was a vehicle of “the politics of mirth”, which is Leah Marcus’ term for the drive

to encourage traditional sports by the Jacobean court in order to defuse popular unrest and to counteract the repressive mores of Puritanism.<sup>240</sup>

A popular, country romp, morris dancing often featured bavians or baboons and / or hobby-horses who engaged in “animal impersonation and wild, indecent gestures”. The dance was often performed around a maypole which had “phallic significance”, and the editors note that “the morris itself was seen by its opponents – for instance, Philip Stubbes, in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) – as an occasion for licentious behaviour.”<sup>241</sup> The countrymen certainly seem to think that they might derive some sexual satisfaction as a result of participating in the dance:

We'll see the sports, then every man to's tackle;  
 And, sweet companions, let's rehearse, by any means,  
 Before the ladies see us and do sweetly  
 And God knows what may come on't.” (2.3.57-60)

Interestingly, Douglas Bruster comments on the pun on “maid” in the line: “A madwoman? We are made, boys”, noting that the Maid Marian figure was central to the tradition of morris dancing. One alternative for the morris dancers is noted by the Arden editors, using the work of Julian Pilling: “In one with six dancers, a Maid Marian and a fool, the dancers, all dressed differently, compete for the favour of a lady in the centre of a ring.”<sup>242</sup> Once again we are returned to the subversive Robin Hood motif of the Prologue, and the identification of the Jailer's Daughter with that realm as a Maid Marian figure.

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<sup>240</sup> Leah S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defence of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>241</sup> Potter, *TTNK*, appendix 5, p. 357.

<sup>242</sup> Julian Pilling, p. 26 in Potter, *TTNK*, p. 357.

The misrule associations of *The Two Noble Kinsmen's* morris dance are doubled by the fact that it was derived from Beaumont's second anti-masque in *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Grey's Inn*, which was performed before a court audience in February 1630 to celebrate the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Frederick, and which is one of the textual landmarks that has helped to date the play at 1631. Katrina Bachinger notes that:

the second anti-masque might better be called the anti-anti-masque for in an important respect it is a critique of the first, itself an innovation in that it involves figures “not of one kinde or liverie (because that had been so much in use heretofore) but as it were in consort like to broken Musicke [...]”<sup>243</sup>

The Arden editors also comment on this apparently chaotic, differentiated and disorderly group; “much of the delight of the antimasque came from the variety of individual performances within the dance structure.”<sup>244</sup> Bachinger considers that should this anti-masque be the implicit model of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, then a complicated intertextual dynamic would emerge involving not only the second anti-masque, but the original anti-masque that it comments on, and would constitute a “submerged critique of gods and courts”.<sup>245</sup> This is not dissimilar from the dynamic I propose is in play between the ballad genre and revenge tragedy in *Hamlet*; in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* the emergent critique of the courtly romance of ‘The Knight’s Tale’ complete with its gods and its court is carried out by the morris

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<sup>243</sup> Bachinger, ‘Maidenheads and Mayhem’, p. 30, quoting from Ben Jonson, *The Satyr* in William Gifford ed., *The Works* (London: Routledge, 1865), 536-8.

<sup>244</sup> Potter, *TTNK*, p. 356.

<sup>245</sup> Bachinger, ‘Maidenheads and Mayhem’, p. 31.

dance, as Bachinger suggests, but also by the other folk elements that the daughter seems to be the principal expression and exponent of.

Overall, Bruster's reading of the role of the morris dance in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is rather darker than Bachinger's; he considers that the play demonstrates the centrifugal pull of court and city that was a marked feature of the transition from Shakespeare to Fletcher, and that the morris dance features as a kind of commodity, on display for the nobles, demonstrating how subordinated to the city and court the country had become. Bruster considers that the morris dance parallels the mechanics' performance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but is a dark and menacing version of its antecedent, with no dialogue between the Jailer's Daughter, the other performers and the nobles – unlike the very voluble Bottom and his gang. The relationship between the morris and the 'noble' courtly romance world is further complicated by the fact that the anti-masque is itself a courtly product, and is, according to Philip Edwards "a parody of the traditional country dances at the ancient may-games, or summer 'maying' festivals."<sup>246</sup> Bruster sees this as an aggressive act of appropriation in which a traditional celebratory dance is co-opted for a parody in a performance at Whitehall. I think this depends on what or *who* the dance parodies; if this morris takes the form already cited of dancers competing for the favour of the Maid Marian figure then the dance parodies the behaviour of the nobles in the play, specifically Palamon and Arcite warring over the favour of Emilia. It also reflects a stripped bare version of the sexual energy that lies behind their pursuit of Emilia, a raw, aggressive force that depends on the submission of one of the cousins and which the rituals of duelling attempt to tame and disguise as a question of honour. The Jailer's Daughter is the figurehead of a

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<sup>246</sup> Introduction to the text of 'The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn', in *A Book of Masques: In Honour of Allardyce Nicoll* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 127-30, at p.129; cited in Bruster, 'The Jailer's Daughter', p. 291.

subversive folk element that threatens to overturn the master-narrative whose scenes, particularly from act two, scene six to act three scene six, in which her soliloquies alternate with scenes of Palamon and Arcite sparring and eventually fighting, threaten to turn the play upon its head. Indeed, the fact that we stay with the Jailer's Daughter and the rustic environment from act three, scene four to act three, scene five, from the soliloquy to the morris, almost seems to have effected that subversion; the switch back to the courtly story is delayed, and the folk realm appears to be on the ascendant.

Richard Abrams regards the daughter's civil disobedience in releasing Palamon and the contempt for authority that she expresses ("Let all the dukes and all the devils roar", 2.6.1.) as the cue for parallel manifestations of dissident energy. Abrams argues that the dissident energy she unleashes is expressed in the rustics' country revels, in the lawless fighting of Palamon and Arcite, and in Arcite's horse's eventual insurgence, which Abrams discusses as an expression of fears of female, volcanic sexuality. The horse is, for Abrams, "the creation of an oppressor race's bad conscience", and amalgamates and channels "the dissident energies of the play's outsider factions" into this outbreak of violence.<sup>247</sup> While this seems a bit extravagant, it is possible to see the Daughter as a force of *alternatives*, rather than of violence, in the play. As the ballads can manifest alternative endings, and as the Jailer's Daughter's own narrative in fact breaks the Ophelia-mould, the ballad genre of this folk-Daughter subverts the Chaucerian text by insisting on alternative narrative paths. At a very basic level, if the ostensible dilemma at the heart of the original *Knight's Tale* is that there are two knights and only one lady, then the Jailer's

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<sup>247</sup> Richard Abrams, 'The Two Noble Kinsmen as Bourgeois Drama', in Frey ed., *Shakespeare, Fletcher and the Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. 159. Joanna Addison Roberts in the same volume writes of the Jailer's Daughter that: "Her venereal freedom and boldness are welcomed happily by the rustics as part of the May Day saturnalia, but in the sober post festive view of the Jailer and the Wooer such excess is alarming, or 'mad'", 'Crises of Male Self-Definition in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', p. 142.

Daughter improves the ratio and makes a more favourable harmonic outcome available, as indeed Ophelia provides an option out of the inflexibly teleological revenge tragedy formula. If the Daughter were in fact paired with Palamon – and the ballads see cross-class matches as entirely possible – then Emilia and Arcite could also pair off in peace. *The Knight's Tale* would then be converted into an altogether different thing, but rather like the Walt Disney version of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid*, which mercifully adapts its dark original and yet is still a version and not a new tale, so too a new version of the Knight's Tale in which a convenient second mate is found would differ from its source, and yet would still be a version of that source.

This force of alternative that both the Jailer's Daughter and Ophelia represent is expressed in the Jailer's Daughter's case not only by the ballad genre but also her fairytale references and jokes, both similarly flexible, multi-variant genres. The Jailer's Daughter's woodland environment is populated with wolves that have slunk straight out of the ballads and popular fairy tales. These are the scare-wolves of tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood*. Echoes of *The Frog Prince* emerge when the Daughter wishes that she could find a "fine frog". Potter notes that she possibly wants to eat it, but also that she may be thinking "of the animal helpers in fairy-tales".<sup>248</sup> She certainly seems to think the frog will speak to her ("he would tell me / News from all parts o' th' world." 3.4.10-1) and continues in a fairy-tale vein to muse

Then would I make

A carrack of a cockle shell and sail

By east and north-east to the king of pygmies,

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<sup>248</sup> Potter, *TINK*, n. 12, p. 228.

For he tells fortunes rarely. (3.4.13-6)

Fortune-telling is of course a pursuit identified with the folk, and act three scene four finishes with the daughter's wishing "for a prick now, like a nightingale, / To put my breast against. I shall sleep like a top else." (3.4.25-6) As the notes observe, "[t]he nightingale supposedly sang with its breast against a thorn in order to stay awake, symbolizing the ravished Philomel who was metamorphosed into the bird".<sup>249</sup> This is an example of myth-come-country-lore that is entirely appropriate to the Jailer's Daughter as a ballad treatment of the classical predicament of the abandoned heroine. A similar transformation can be seen in the oblique identification of the Daughter with Echo.

As we have already seen, Palamon is identified with Narcissus, and this identification is strengthened again in act four, scene two, in which Emilia contemplates Palamon's sad looks ("an eye as heavy / As if he had lost his mother" 4.2.27-8) and muses that "Narcissus was a sad boy, but a heavenly." (4.2.32) Palamon's approach to wooing confirms the match; he boasts that:

Were I at liberty, I would do things  
Of such a virtuous greatness that this lady,  
This blushing virgin, should take manhood to her  
And seek to ravish me. (2.2.259-62)

His imagery calls to mind the spurned Echo of the Narcissus story, and opens up the question of who the Echo to Palamon's Narcissus actually is.<sup>250</sup> The sexually

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid, n. 25, p. 229.

<sup>250</sup> Neither Abrams nor Jonathan Bate – *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) – discuss this.

eager nymph who goes to considerable trouble to throw herself at Palamon and is, if not exactly spurned then certainly ignored, is of course the Jailer's Daughter, a very folk version of the classical nymph, who nevertheless wanders in a hostile rural environment, repeating ballad fragments in a not un-Echo like fashion. The Jailer's Daughter features as a folk alternative to the male same that has Narcissus rejecting Echo's advances only to dwindle to nothing hanging over his image in the pool, and Palamon losing his mirror image and his other self in a cancellation of desire that has him mourning: "That nought could buy / Dear love, but loss of dear love!" (5.4.111-2) The flexible folk genres that feed into the representation of the Jailer's Daughter also includes jokes. The blue humour of the daughter's dialogue ("– I know you, you're a tinker; sirrah tinker, / Stop no more holes but what you should" 3.5.83-4) and the ballad joke of her relation of the fools disagreeing about an "howlet" ("The one he said it was an owl, / The other he said nay, / The other said it was a hawk, / And her bells were cut away." 3.5.69-72) calls to mind a whole catalogue of jokes that play with alternative endings ("Knock knock", "who's there?") and take a mischievous delight in confounding expectations they have themselves set up ("Your man walks into a bar, an iron bar ... ouch.")<sup>251</sup>

**“[W]hile I live / This day I give to tears.” Marriage as an unhappy ending  
in *The Two Noble Kinsmen***

The Jailer's Daughter embodies a force of folk alternative to the death-bound trajectory of the source text. As *Hamlet* can be read structurally as a collision between the 'male' and 'female' genres of revenge tragedy and the popular ballads,

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<sup>251</sup> Nick Laird, 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Joke', *To A Fault* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 26.

so too *The Two Noble Kinsmen* can be read as a different but similar collision of the ‘male’ genre of the trial-by-combat with the ‘female’ genre of folk practice. The Jailer’s Daughter has usefully been described as a kind of folk playwright in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; Douglas Bruster considers that “[p]laywrightlike”, she imagines a better, more socially equitable world through folk narratives and ballads.<sup>252</sup> What the Jailer’s Daughter’s fairytale ending would have been an alternative *to*, is the narrow, male, duel dynamic which is predicated on the total submission and death of one of the partners. However, where marriage to Ophelia seemed a truly viable alternative to the revenge tragedy trajectory for Hamlet, the Jailer’s Daughter, no matter how unstable or optimistic the folk-genres she moves through are, does not represent a real possibility for Palamon. Her wish to marry Palamon, despite having the full weight of ballads that say she can behind it, never seems anything more than a pipe-dream. The Jailer’s Daughter is almost too radical an alternative; like Emilia’s world of female relations, her folk-space is so ‘other’ to the main narrative that while at times it threatens to throw it over altogether, as when the narrative fails to flip back to the romance narrative in act three, scene five, but stays with the folk and then co-opts the nobles as audience *for* the folk, this folk space never truly interacts with the dominant narrative. The hunting party watch the morris dance, yet do not converse with the participants, unlike the mechanicals and the similar cast of nobles in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

This is a crucial difference between the Daughter and Ophelia. Where Ophelia’s narrative is an integrated part of *Hamlet*, and she is seen in interaction with all the main characters (including, importantly, Hamlet himself), the Jailer’s Daughter’s plot exists in a world apart. This is symptomatic of the play’s deep disillusionment with romance. Rather than existing in an interdependent

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<sup>252</sup> Bruster, ‘The Jailer’s Daughter’, p. 284.

relationship, the world of the court and the labouring world of the Jailer's Daughter are purposefully represented in a state of divorce. The Jailer's Daughter's misrule does not encroach upon the male domain of law-ordering and trial-by-combat, and the two arenas never truly interact. This sense of her separateness from the main plot is increased by the heavy use of soliloquies in her part. She has four (2.4, 2.6, 3.2, 3.4) all ascribed to Fletcher, which alternate firstly with Arcite's narrative as he participates in the country games to win the wrestling and the favour of Emilia, and then with Arcite and Palamon's resumed aggression as they discover one another in the woods. The soliloquies, as Bruster notes, accredit the daughter with a complex subjectivity that we more normally associate with the male aristocrats of late Elizabethan tragedy. In repeatedly focussing audience attention on the Daughter's subjective experience, the play aligns the audience's perspective with the Daughter, and works towards securing the audience's sympathy for her. As M. C. Bradbrook writes, "[i]t is said that in performance the Jailer's Daughter turns out to be the star part."<sup>253</sup>

However, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* presents a deeply damaged world, and is at some structural level a correspondingly fractured play. Charles Frey considers the play "more disconsolate, more pessimistic, darker than its sources in Chaucer, Boccaccio and before."<sup>254</sup> In Frey's terminology, the play is "post-Romance", and: "appears [...] distinctly mordant on subjects of friendship, nobility and love."<sup>255</sup> The harmonizing influence of heterosexual love is treated with particular cynicism, for this is a deeply disabused play that has lost all faith in its conciliatory power. This explains the separateness of the two spheres of the duel plot and the Jailer's

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<sup>253</sup> Muriel C. Bradbrook, 'Shakespeare and His Collaborators', in Clifford Leech and J. M. R. Margeson ed., *Shakespeare 1971: Proceedings of the World Shakespeare Congress – Vancouver, August 1971* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 29, cited in Green, "A Mad Woman?", p. 122.

<sup>254</sup> Frey, *Shakespeare, Fletcher and The Two Noble Kinsmen*, p. 2.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

Daughter's alternative folk space. For Bristol, this cynicism is one of the chief elements that qualifies the play as apocrypha:

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* reveals too explicitly tendencies inherent all along in the canonical "Shakespeare", tendencies that are, however, disciplined by the differentiation of the reconciliatory power of imagination and erotic love. Intermittent disclosures of a pervasive underlying violence are referable, within the deuteronomic programme as a whole, to the plenitude of imaginative sensibility provided by the last plays, and above all by *The Tempest*. What *The Two Noble Kinsmen* portends is that there is something more to be said, and that something more, in effect, cancels the reconciliatory hope.<sup>256</sup>

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* the pervasive, underlying violence Bristol writes of is manifested in the violent ritual by which the erotic insubordination of Palamon and Arcite is channelled and contained, but also, troublingly includes the very brutal erotic love of Palamon and Arcite, often couched in competitive terms of war and force. Jo Carney rightly argues that while the play engages in an age-old work of placing love and war in antithesis, both are represented destructively and negatively in a shared imagery of violence and carnage. Bristol, continuing his argument that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is an apocryphal text that revises the hope vested in reconciliatory, erotic love in the earlier plays, cites Natalie Zemon Davis' thesis that *Hamlet* is "a charivari of the young against a grotesque and unseemly remarriage, a charivari where the effigy of the dead spouse returns, the vicious

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<sup>256</sup> Bristol, 'The Problem of Authority', p. 85. Berggren similarly notes that "the play upsets the pleasant fiction that the late plays represent Shakespeare's optimistic summing-up", "For what we lack", p. 3.

action is replayed.”<sup>257</sup> Bristol suggests that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* turns the tables and is instead a charivari of the old against the young, whose marriage is an “unobjectionable, ideal and exemplary union.”<sup>258</sup> Bristol concludes that “[w]hat this example suggests [...] is that every marriage is in principle an objectionable social event. The charivari objectifies socially diffuse resentments against all marriages.”<sup>259</sup> One can build upon Bristol’s argument at this point to see marriage as socially objectionable from a specifically female perspective. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* translates a vision of that Hamlet-doppelganger, Fortinbras, warring over a “little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name” (4.4.19), to a vision of the two cousins fighting over a woman who perceives that in male eyes she is a kingdom whose title “may be tried / Out of itself.” (5.3.33-4) The romantic idea in plays such as *The Tempest* that the conciliatory power of heterosexual erotic love somehow makes this transaction acceptable does not hold, and the idea that marriage to Ophelia represents a generative alternative to the death-driven impetus of the revenge plot in *Hamlet* becomes a deeply problematised concept in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Both Carney and Philip Edwards comment closely on Palamon’s address to Venus; Carney observes that his invocation concentrates on “The coercive and terrifying powers the goddess of love possesses”, and that the address borrows imagery from the battlefield to create “a vision of love as contentious, corrupt and unnatural”.<sup>260</sup>

Indeed, Palamon figures heterosexual love in his address to Venus as a sustained and corrosive harm; he claims that he bears Venus’ yoke “As ’twere a

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<sup>257</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth Century France,’ *Past and Present* 50 (1975), p. 75, cited in Bristol, ‘The Problem of Authority’, p. 87.

<sup>258</sup> Bristol, ‘The Problem of Authority’, p. 88.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>260</sup> Carney, ‘The Ambiguities’, p. 102. Edwards, similarly commenting on the grotesque transformations Venus renders in her victims cites Kenneth Muir’s observation that: “Shakespeare was in danger of shattering the conventions in which the play was written”, *Shakespeare As Collaborator* (London: Methuen, 1960) in Edwards, ‘The Design’, p. 92.

wreath of roses, yet is heavier / Than lead itself, stings more than nettles.” (5.1.96-7) Yet Palamon’s speech is acutely prescient to the specific losses and harms a woman could experience in marriage. The protagonists of his address are both grotesque and male; emotionally incontinent tyrants who rage and then weep, the “cripple flourish[ing] with his crutch”, and the “stale” old man who, at seventy, croaks out songs of love (5.1.77, 82, 87-9). Palamon avows that he has never boasted of sexual conquests in public, and has challenged those who have done so in his presence by asking if they have mothers. Palamon continues:

I had one [a mother], a woman,  
 And women ’twere they wronged. I knew a man  
 Of eighty winters, this I told them, who  
 A lass of fourteen bridged. ’Twas in thy power  
 To put life into dust: the aged cramp  
 Had screwed his square foot round;  
 The gout had knit his fingers into knots,  
 Torturing convulsions from his globy eyes’  
 Had almost drawn their spheres, that what was life  
 In him seemed torture. This anatomy  
 Had by his young fair fere a boy, and I  
 Believed it was his, for she swore it was –  
 And who would not believe her? (5.1.106-118)

The harm done to women’s reputations in the locker room atmosphere of the gentlemanly gatherings that Palamon describes, is a fore-shadow of the brutal physical and mental harm done to women in forced marriages that he then

portrays. Palamon undercuts the woman's position in the last lines by being overly affirmative that the child belongs to the old man; the character is made to stage his own naivety, with his question "who would not believe her?" Nevertheless what Palamon's speech offers is a deeply sympathetic picture from a female perspective of what in today's society would constitute child abuse. The young wife is fourteen years of age and has been "brided" by a man of eighty. Her position is distinctly passive; the grammar of line 109 makes it clear that the man has married her, and the question of her consent is unresolved.

Palamon's speech then proceeds to describe the man's ancient "anatomy" in grotesque detail. He is contorted with gout and cramp, and his gummy eyes are ready to come out of their sockets. Calling his body an "anatomy" carries the connotation of a corpse laid out on a dissecting table; the man is almost dead. Palamon is surely describing the old man from the young woman's perspective; his account is imbued with the sense of her horrified assessment of the ancient male specimen before her. Beyond the grotesquery is a serious point; this old man, seen from youth's perspective as absolutely revolting, fathers a boy on the fourteen year old child he has married. It is in the lacunae of the text that Palamon's address constitutes that we begin to understand the horror of such unequal alliances from a very female perspective. How appropriate also that it should be Palamon, consistently cast by the aggressive partner Arcite as the passive, effeminate one, who adopts the perspective of the woman in the relationship he describes.

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* ultimately deals with two forced marriages; that of Emilia, whose same-sex preferences have been made clear, and that of the Jailer's Daughter, ambiguously matched with the Wooer in the belief that he is another man. The cousins' violence towards each other, and Theseus' clumsy jurisdiction, compels Emilia to agree to marrying one of them. When Theseus asks her

whether she is content, she answers “Yes, I must sir, / Else both miscarry.”

(4.1.301-2) Emilia’s own prayer goes to Diana, whom she informs:

I am bride-habited

But maiden-hearted; a husband I have ’pointed,

But do not know him. (5.1.150-3)

Emilia is in the position of neither knowing which of the two cousins will be her husband, nor of knowing them in that she has barely interacted with either of them. Her address barely contains an underlying supplication for continued chastity. The poetry of the piece belongs with the virgin Goddess, as Emilia begins her speech:

O sacred, shadowy, cold and constant queen,

Abandoner of revels, mute contemplative.

Sweet, solitary, white as chaste, and pure

As wind-fanned snow ... (5.1.137-40).

Praying that whichever of the kinsmen loves her best and has “the truest title in’t” (5.1.159) may win her, Emilia follows up with the hopeful caveat that Diana otherwise grant: “The file and quality I hold may / Continue in thy band.” (5.1.161-2) Emilia’s final prayer, in other words, is to be left alone and to continue as a chaste follower of the Diana she eulogizes in the poetry of snow. Emilia’s hopefulness is witnessed in her optimistic analysis of the rose tree bearing a single rose that ascends from the altar:

one rose!

If well inspired, this battle shall confound  
 Both these brave knights and I, a virgin flower  
 Must grow alone, unpluck'd. (5.1.165-8)

These hopes are dashed when the flower falls, and Emilia realises “I shall be gathered” (5.1.170); her comment yet again assigns women a passive role in marriage.

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* confirms the argument of the first section of this chapter that women lost their identities to their husbands in marriage, and that the role they were prescribed was one of servitude. It is a position that Emilia has earlier renounced; upon the designation of Arcite as Emilia’s special servant following the wrestling competition in act two, Theseus comments that she has a servant “[t]hat, if I were a woman, would be master. / But you are wise”, to which Emilia replies: “I hope, too wise for that, sir.” (2.5.62-4) Nevertheless she finds herself compelled to submit as wife to one of the cousins, and her words to Arcite as he is presented to her as her husband are desperately sad:

Is this winning?

Oh you heavenly powers, where is your mercy?  
 But that your wills have said it must be so,  
 And charge me live to comfort this unfriended,  
 This miserable prince, that cuts away  
 A life more worthy from him than all women,  
 I should and would die too. (5.3.138-44)

Emilia submits to the outcome of the contest in the full knowledge that the successful cousin will, in winning, lose the most important person in the world to them. Again the text confirms Palamon and Arcite as each other's wife, as Emilia observes that Arcite has lost "A life more worthy from him than all women". Whichever one of them wins her to himself also wins a lifetime of regret and mourning, and Palamon finds himself lamenting:

That we should things desire, which do cost us  
 The loss of our desire! That nought could buy  
 Dear love, but loss of dear love! (5.4.110-2)

Appropriately, Palamon's position is also the female position in an early modern marriage, in which women may desire a marriage alliance that will mean that in theory they must then submit and align their own independent desires with their husbands, thereby losing their own desires. While the realm of affective relations that Ophelia offers is a redemptive dramatic possibility in *Hamlet*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is too cynical a text. It has an excruciatingly pitched awareness of the irreconcilability of its dominant, conquering male, master class, and its subordinate, disempowered subjects. The erotic love 'solution' demands that women disappear into use function, into generation, and be submerged in the world of affective relations. "[W]hile I live", promises Emilia, "This day I give to tears." (5.4.97-8) The day she refers to is of course the anniversary of her betrothal as well as the anniversary of Arcite's death. It seems an appropriate enough response to the forced match.

Nevertheless, the pragmatic solution to the Jailer's Daughter's Ophelia-narrative of the substitution of the Wooer for Palamon allows some ambiguity to

creep into the play's otherwise condemnatory treatment of marriage in early modern England. There is some sense in which this difference in treatment between the Jailer's Daughter and Emilia's marriage is class-inflected, and that the distaste that the play exhibits for Emilia's forced marriage is in part a reflection upon the dynasty-grabbing upper classes. The Jailer's Daughter's alliance, on the other hand, constitutes a folk cure that provides an element of mercy in this generally bleak play. It allows the Ophelia-narrative of the Jailer's Daughter to break the repressive mould discussed in the first chapter, which follows Nicole Loraux's argument that subversive and deviant women are allowed onstage only briefly in order to be returned indoors to die conservatively.<sup>261</sup> The Jailer's Daughter's narrative evades the classical closure of death entirely. She *is* returned indoors, out of her subversive outdoor misrule, but is not suicided, which must be seen as a step in the right direction. Her ending certainly provides a pointed alternative to the foolish waste of the main plot and a pragmatic alternative to the deathly 'honour' that Palamon and Arcite pursue.

It also throws into relief the Ophelia paradigm, which offers death as the only prospect to the love-lorn maiden. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* offers getting on with it, and 'making do', as an alternative route. Indications that the Jailer's Daughter could follow the Ophelia narrative to its end are planted right from the beginning of the play. When we first meet her, she is carrying "strewings" (2.1.22), fresh rushes for the princes' floor, which provides a visual reference almost immediately to Ophelia's flowers and garlands. Interestingly, the Daughter's third soliloquy contains a sudden influx of references to Hamlet's more suicidal soliloquies. She asks abruptly, "How stand I then?" (3.2.20) echoing Hamlet's "How stand I then / That have a father killed, a mother stained, / Excitements of my reason and my

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<sup>261</sup> Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

blood” (*Ham* 4.4.55-7). She uses Hamlet’s phrase as she herself takes stock of her own unenviable position. Later on in the same soliloquy, she exclaims “Alas, / Dissolve, my life!” (3.2.28-9) echoing in simpler terms the sentiment of Hamlet’s “Oh that this too too sallied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew” (1.2.129-30).<sup>262</sup>

The Jailer’s Daughter herself certainly knows the score with regard to the Ophelia type; she follows her petition for her life to dissolve with the lines “Let not my sense unsettle, / Lest I should drown, or stab, or hang myself.” (3.2.29-30) That she knows the routine is further indicated in act four scene three when she imagines a specifically classical Hades. Her description of this Hades is initiated by an allusion to one of the original forsaken women, Dido. The Daughter considers that “in the next world will Dido see Palamon, and then she will be out of love with Aeneas.” (4.3.14-6) This confirms the heredity of the type of the abandoned woman reaching far back into classical literature. This classical allusion is moreover appropriate to the classical, conservative closure of female suicide offstage in the drama. The Jailer’s Daughter imagines bringing silver for Charon in order to be ferried across the Styx (“you must bring a piece of silver on the tip of your tongue, or no ferry.” 4.3.19-21) She then imagines herself among the “blessed spirits” (4.3.22), and specifically with her compatriots:

We maids, that have our livers perished, cracked to pieces with love,  
we shall come there and do nothing all day long but pick flowers with  
Proserpine. Then will I make Palamon a nosegay; then let him mark  
me – then. (4.3.22-7)

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<sup>262</sup> There is a third parallel in this soliloquy; the Jailer’s Daughter’s “I’ll set it down” (3.2.17) echoes Hamlet’s “Meet it is I set it down” (*Ham* 1.5.107).

Her ambition to make Palamon “mark” her is symptomatic of the sense that she barely encroaches upon the peripheries of Palamon’s conscious in the play. It is also true to ballad form in that it imagines a posthumous communion with the beloved. Most of all, it asserts a community and tradition of abandoned women, picking flowers à la Ophelia and Aspatia. The Daughter adds, “sometime we go to barley-break, we of the blessed.”(4.3.30-1) It is an appropriate allusion for the Daughter to make, and contributes to her rural, festive associations, barley-break being a game played in the fields at harvest time, but also doubling as a reference to “sexual coupling” as the notes explain. This is because it was “generally played by three couples, each of which had to keep hand in hand while running; one couple, in the centre of the field, tried to catch the others as they ran past.”<sup>263</sup> However, the Daughter’s use of the term “blessed” also indicates a confused notion of hell, which is an anachronistically Christian one in some ways, and which bears the traces of some knowledge of contemporary theory with regard to the damnation of suicides:

If one be mad, or hang or drown themselves, there they go – Jupiter  
 bless us! – and there shall we be put in a cauldron of lead and usurers’  
 grease, amongst a whole million of cutpurses, and there boil like a  
 gammon of bacon that will never be enough. (4.3.34-41)

There is no doubt as to which way the Ophelia paradigm leads, and nothing makes the Ophelia context clearer than the Wooer’s speech in act four, scene one. The scene he describes is almost exactly that of Ophelia’s suicide; he overhears a voice, “a shrill one” (4.1.56), “A boy or woman” (4.1.59) singing, while fishing at the

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<sup>263</sup> Potter, *TINK*, n. 31, p. 283.

“great lake that lies behind the palace” (4.1.53).<sup>264</sup> This is presumably a comparable locale to Ophelia’s lake within reach of the Danish palace of Elsinore. The lake is “thick set with reeds and sedges” (4.1.54), but the Wooer finally sees the Daughter “Through a small glade cut by the fishermen.” (4.1.62) The Wooer then states that he “laid me down / And listened to the words she sung” (4.1.56). Like Ophelia, the Daughter ballads by the water in her distress. The songs that the Wooer attributes to the Daughter include “‘Palamon is gone, / Is gone to th’wood to gather mulberries’”(4.1.67-8), the Willow song discussed previously, “‘Palamon, fair Palamon’, / And ‘Palamon was a fair young man’” (4.1.81-2). The appendix notes that the latter was probably an adaptation of a traditional song, ‘When Palamon was a tall young man.’ Potter also notes that ‘Robin Hood’s Progress to Nottingham’ begins “Robin Hood was a tall young man.”<sup>265</sup>

The Jailer’s Daughter also offers to sing ‘The Broom’ and ‘Bonny Robin’. Potter notes of the former that “if it is the same as ‘The Bonny Broom’, [it] was also well known – Weber traced it to William Wager’s *The Longer Thou Livest* (1559-68), where it is quoted, and the tune is given in Chappell (2.458-61).”<sup>266</sup> The closest ballad appears to be ‘The Broom of Cowdenknows’ (217); Kittredge and Sargent cite Motherwell’s comment on how widely diffused the ballad was in Scotland: “‘It would be useless,’ says Motherwell, ‘to enumerate the titles of the different versions which are common among reciters.’”<sup>267</sup> Kittredge and Sargent also cite an English “ditty” of a northern lass “who got harm” while milking her father’s ewes, which was printed in the first half of the seventeenth century, and was to be sung

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<sup>264</sup> This confusion between the voice of a boy and of a woman is convenient in a theatre which portrayed the latter with the former.

<sup>265</sup> ‘When Samson’, Chappell, 1.241; ‘Robin Hood’s Progress to Nottingham’ (139), cited in Potter, *TINK*, p. 362.

<sup>266</sup> Potter, *TINK*, p. 362.

<sup>267</sup> Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, edited from the collection of Francis James Child*, (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co, 1905), p. 509.

“to a pleasant Scotch tune called The broom of Cowden Knowes”. The editors cite the burden as:

With, O the brome, the bonny brome,  
                   The brome of Cowden knows!  
 Fain would I be in the North Countrey,  
                   To milk my dadyes ewes

They comment that “The English author seems to have known only the burden of the Scottish ballad and to have built his very slight tale on that.”<sup>268</sup> The tale is entirely appropriate to the Daughter’s aspirations however, documenting a cross-class liaison and a marital outcome. In version A some ‘gentlemen’ are out riding when they hear the voice “of a bonny lass, / In a bught milking her ewes.” One of them dismounts and lead her “into the ew-bught, / Of her friends he speerd na leave.” He then asks to be shown the way, and rather like the Daughter ushering Palamon out of prison the shepherdess does just that:

She shewd to him the king’s hie street,  
                   She shewd to him the way;  
 She shewd him the way that he was to go,  
                   By the fair water of Tay.<sup>269</sup>

The Lord comes back for her after fifteen weeks are past and gone, a document of hope that might well appeal to somebody in the Daughter’s position. The lass is visibly pregnant, but the ballad lightly achieves its fairy-tale ending:

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid, pp. 509-10.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid, p.510.

He lighted off his milk-white steed,  
 And set this fair maid on;  
 ‘Now caw out your ky, good father,’ he said  
 ‘She’ll neer caw them out again.

‘I am the laird of Knottingham,  
 I’ve fifty plows and three;  
 I’ve gotten now the bonniest lass  
 That is in the hale country.’

When the Jailer’s Daughter asks that her gift-horse be admired, one wonders whether it is the milk-white steed of this ballad that she is referring to. The ballad certainly encapsulates the cross-class alliance she is hoping for.

‘Bonny Robin’ is, according to the Arden editors, usually assumed to be “the same song from which Ophelia sings the refrain, ‘For bonnie sweet Robin is all my joy’ (Chappell, 1.234).” They also note evidence that “Robin was probably ‘one of the cant words for penis’; whether by derivation from the French *robinet* (spigot) or from a version of the Robin Hood legend linked to the wilder side of May games.”<sup>270</sup> One wonders about these mounting references to Robin Hood; ‘Robin Hood and Maid Marian’(150) documents the separation of the pair, to the great distress of Maid Marian, who could perhaps be imagined lamenting for “bonnie sweet Robin.”

And Marian, poor soul, was troubled in mind,

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<sup>270</sup> Potter ed., *TINK*, p. 369.

For the absence of her friend;  
 With finger in eye, shee often did cry,  
 And his person did much commend.

Perplexed and vexed, and troubled in mind,  
 She drest herself like a page,  
 And raged the wood to find Robin Hood,  
 The bravest of men in that age.

Both stanzas of course sound uncannily like the Jailer's Daughter wandering through the woods and trying to find Palamon. Maid Marian does in fact find Robin Hood in this ballad, although they at first don't recognise each other, and have a hard fight before Maid Marian recognises Robin Hood's voice. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* it is instead Palamon and Arcite who find each other and fight, without recognition of love, and certainly without the "kind embraces, and jobbing of faces, / [and] Providing of gallant cheer" that Maid Marian and Robin Hood indulge in.<sup>271</sup>

The same preoccupations dominate the Daughter's mad-speech at this point as do Ophelia's: the lost lover and the burial of the father. The Wooer describes her as similarly garlanded and semi-immersed:

The place  
 Was knee-deep where she sat; her careless tresses  
 A wreath of bulrush rounded; about her stuck  
 Thousand fresh water flowers of several colours (4.1.83-5).

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<sup>271</sup> 'Robin Hood and Maid Marian' (150), stanza 14, in Sargent and Kittredge ed., *Popular Ballads*, p. 355.

Like Ophelia then, she is surrounded by flowers, and like the Queen, the Wooer also makes a mythological analogy; not a mermaid, but, according to the wooer,

... methought she appeared like the fair nymph  
 That feeds the lake with waters,  
 Or as Iris  
 Newly dropped from heaven. (4.1.86-8)

We are, of course, back in Echo and Narcissus territory with this allusion, especially as it is coupled with the lake environment, and once more the Daughter features as Echo. However, her collaborative environment saves the Jailer's Daughter. While Ophelia's ballading and drowning is witnessed closely enough for Queen Gertrude to deliver an observantly detailed description of events and yet no intervention is made, the witness in the Daughter's case is not an anonymous onlooker but the Wooer:

She saw me, and straight sought the flood; I saved her,  
 And set her safe to land, when presently  
 She slipped away and to the city made,  
 With such a cry and swiftness that, believe me,  
 She left me far behind her. (4.1.94-9)

Like *Hoffman's* Lucibella, the Daughter speeds across the countryside giving her would-be captors the slip. Hauling the Daughter out of the water, however, the Wooer stops one of the more dangerous ballad narrative models in its tracks. The

lakeside environment he describes echoes that of 'Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow, or, The Water o Gamrie' (215A), as do the Daughter's own tributes to 'Palamon, fair Palamon'. Version A of the ballad runs, in full:

'Willy's rare, and Willy's fair,  
     And Willy's wondrous bony,  
 And Willy height to marry me,  
     Gin eer he marryed ony.

'Yestreen I made my bed fu brade,  
     The night I'll make it narrow,  
 For a' the live-long winter's night  
     I lie twin'd of my marrow.

'O came you by yon water-side?  
     Pu'd you the rose or lilly?  
 Or came you by yon meadow green?  
     Or saw you my sweet Willy?'

She sought him east, she sought him west,  
     She sought him brade and narrow;  
 Sine, in the clifing of a craig,  
     She found him drownd in Yarrow.

Versions D illustrates why this particular ballad model of devastation in loss is so threatening.<sup>272</sup> Willy's bride is told that he has drowned, and proceeds to tear at her hair and search for her groom. The last two lines promise that she will join him in death:

The ribbons they wer on her hare,  
 They wer thik an mony;  
 She rive them a', late them down fau,  
 An is on to the water of Gaamry.

She sought it up, she sought it doun,  
 She sought it braid an narrou,  
 An the deepest pot in a' Gamry,  
 Ther she got Suit Willie.

She has kissed his comly mouth,  
 As she had don befor, O:  
 'Baith our miders sall be alike sory,  
 For we's baith slep soun in Gamry.'

These last two lines are repeated in 'The Mother's Malison, Or, Clyde's Water' (216), in which the male lover is drowned following his own mother's curse on his way to see his sweetheart by the swelling waters of the Clyde. The heroine, May Meggie searches for her drowned lover, kisses his mouth and makes the same

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<sup>272</sup> Version B has interest for its use of the heroine's loose hair; stanza one is the same as stanza four of the above, with the slight variation in line three of "Till in the clintin of a craig". Its second and final stanza continues: "She's taen three links of her yellow hair, / That hung down lang and yellow / And she's tied it about sweet Willie's waist / And drawn him out of Yarrow."

declaration, with a variation of locale: “Baith our madders sall be alike sorry, / For we’s baith slipe soun in Clide’s water.” This ballad makes it seem possible that Ophelia and the Jailer’s Daughter are, in some way, looking for their lovers in the water. In pulling the Daughter out of the lake, the Wooer causes the Jailer’s Daughter’s ballad narrative to change track, and to “tack about,” a redirection that the flexible format of ballad performances can also manifest.

The improvisational scenario of the ship tacking about that follows the Wooer’s narration in this scene is a ballad scenario, and it is one that has been prepared for in the Daughter’s previous mad speeches. In act three, scene four, the Daughter fantasises that:

Yonder’s the sea and there’s a ship; how’t tumbles!  
 And there’s a rock lies watching under water;  
 Now, now, it beats upon it; now, now, now!  
 There’s a leak sprung, a sound one! How they cry!  
 Run her before the wind, you’ll lose all else.  
 Up with a course or two and tack about boys! (3.4.5-10)

There are five maritime ballads in total in the Child collection, all of which have something to offer in the sense that they provide a context to the Daughter’s unfolding maritime delusions in the play. Indeed, the knowledge of naval terminology that the Daughter and her associates display could have been derived entirely from popular song; the genre seems the most likely source of their vocabulary and knowledge of sea scenarios.

Most closely analogous to the Daughter's passage describing the sinking ship is 'The Mermaid' (289), a title that is not at all irrelevant to the Ophelia type. In 'The Mermaid' the ship is "not far from land", perhaps à propos the Daughter's fantasy, even visible from it, when the shipmates spy "a mermaid on the rock, / With comb and glass in hand". The first to succumb to the fatal charms of the mermaid is the first mate "With lead and line in hand, / To sound and see how deep we was / From any rock or sand." Stanza five describes the ruin of the ship:

Our gallant ship is gone to wreck,  
   Which was so lately trimmd;  
 The raging seas has sprung a leak,  
   And the salt water does run in.

Sprung leaks and the danger of submerged rocks are features in common to both the Daughter's scenario and 'The Mermaid'. The Daughter's "How they cry" certainly finds an object in the ballad in which captain, mate and boatswain all bemoan their wives' losses, followed by the final pathos of the "little cabin-boy", who pipes up:

[...]

'I am as sorry for my mother dear  
   As you are for your wives all three.

Last night, when the moon shin'd bright,  
   My mother had sons five,  
 But now she may look in the salt seas

And find but one alive.

In this passage then, the Jailer's Daughter describes a ballad scenario. In the next scene she instead performs one. She sings a fragment of a maritime ballad in act three, scene five, two stanzas which relate to 'The George Aloe and the Sweepstake' (285):

The George Alow came from the South

From the coast of Barbary-a

And there he met with brave gallants of war,

By one, by two, by three-a.

'Well hailed, well hailed, you jolly gallants,

And whither are you bound-a?

O let me have your company

Till we come to the sound-a.' (3.5.60-7)

Sargent and Kittredge believe that the Daughter's fragment derives from another, lost ballad of the George Alow than from that which they record; the Arden editors similarly note Rollins' thought that the Daughter must be quoting from the lost first part of the ballad. However the Arden editors note the similarity between the Jailer's Daughter's stanzas, and the George Alow stanza:

'O hail, o hail, you lusty gallants,

With hey, with ho, for and a nony no,

From whence is your goodship, and whither is she bound'



Daughter:       What kenn'st thou?  
 2 Friend:                               A fair wood.  
 Daughter:                               Bear for it, master;  
   Tack about!                               (4.1.141-152)

There is much that is reminiscent of the five maritime ballads collected by Child in this passage. “[C]ome, weigh, my hearts cheerily!” recalls the encouragement of the boatswain in ‘The Mermaid’: “Stand fast, stand fast, my brave lively lads, / Stand fast my brave hearts of gold!” (st.4) It also recalls the vocabulary of ‘The George Alow’, with the command in the twelfth stanza of that ballad to: “Weigh anchor, weigh anchor, O jolly boatswain”, which goes some way towards explaining what the hearts should be weighing; the anchor. “Out with the mainsail!” utilises a vocabulary similar to the George Alow’s command to the French to “strike your sails”, and also to stanza seven of ‘John Dory’ (284):

They hoist their sailes, both top and top,  
           The messeine and all was tride-a,  
 And euery man stood to his lot,  
           What euer should betide-a.

The sending of a boy up to the top to keep watch is in common to both ‘The George Alow’ and ‘John Dory’, which have “‘To top, to top, thou little ship boy, / And see if this French man-of-war thou canst descry””, and “Run up, my boy, vnto the maine top, / And looke what thou canst spie-a” respectively. In both the second line quoted corresponds to the Daughter’s briefer enactment of “What kenn’st thou?” “Tack about” might itself have been familiar from ‘The Young Earl

of Essex's Victory Over the Emperor of Germany' (288), documenting fairly recent events, and imagining the German Emperor aghast at the Earl of Essex's arrival: "Oh! is that Lord then come to the seas? / Let us tack about and be steering away". 'The George Alow', 'The John Dory' and 'The Young Earl of Essex' are all three notably ebullient tales of bombastic British victory. It is perhaps appropriate that it is a robust enactment of their environment that steers the Jailer's Daughter towards communal care and away from the destructive Ophelia paradigm.

Carol Thomas Neely reads the Jailer's Daughter's cure alongside the case histories of early modern doctors and medical practitioners such as André du Laurens, Grace Mildmay, Reginald Scot and Edward Jorden. Neely describes these case histories as traditional *exempla* of diseases passed down from Galen to the seventeenth century, but still open to reinterpretation and the addition of 'case histories'. Neely cites Basil Clarke's comment that:

This sort of passed-on tale counts as the folk-lore tradition of the profession, a tradition still alive, and it is of more moment which particular tales were circulating than that any of them were inauthentic or old.<sup>273</sup>

Crucially, the Jailer's Daughter's cure is a *folk* cure; contextualised by these case studies that are seen as a kind of collaborative folk-lore in themselves, the Jailer's Daughter's restoration to health, or at least evasion of death, while aided by the doctor is also and perhaps primarily affected by the collaborative and

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<sup>273</sup> Basil Clarke, *Mental Disorder in Early Modern England: Exploratory Studies* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975) in Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender In Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 75.

improvisatory efforts of her entire community. As Neely's doctors cure their sick patients by playing along with their delusions (Du Laurens' woman who think she has swallowed a snake, and is cured by her doctor prescribing an emetic and smuggling a snake into the basin when she vomits, for example) the Jailer's Daughter's relations family, friends and Wooer improvise upon the themes of her fantasies, helping her to change her course ("Tack about!" 4.1.152), and supporting her in her journey towards mental health and away from extinction through suicide. As Neely observes, the Doctor's prescribed remedy "dramatizes the folklore cures of the medical tradition and brings onstage a 'late' case [i.e. the woman who thinks she's swallowed a snake]."<sup>274</sup>

Neely argues that the Jailer's Daughter's community comply with her delusion to end it, with the Wooer pretending to be Palamon, and her maids colluding in confirming his identity, and that the second part of the cure is sexual intercourse. Neely documents that previously the coital cure, like the delusion cure had been applied to men only, and that the tension between the Jailer's Daughter's father who fears for his daughter's honesty and the Doctor who takes a more pragmatic approach to the Daughter's virginity "dramatizes conflicting attitudes towards women and their sexuality in the discourses of medicine, romantic love, and the family and validates the satisfaction of desire over moral prescriptions."<sup>275</sup> Where Ophelia is buried as a virgin with her "maiden crants" etcetera, the Jailer's Daughter instead has her narrative turned around away from death by the coital act itself. It is a radical subversion of the repressive Ophelia type.

The substitution of the Wooer for Palamon nevertheless affects an extremely uneasy, ambiguous closure of the Jailer's Daughter's narrative. The Daughter exits to go and have sexual intercourse with the Wooer, an arrangement that has been

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<sup>274</sup> Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, p. 86.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87.

contrived at by the Doctor, with the reluctant acquiescence of her father and the more enthusiastic participation of the Wooer. Leaving aside audience responses to the Wooer, the daughter is nevertheless exiting to make love to somebody she is convinced is someone else. The Wooer's assumed identity makes this unorthodox bed-trick seem morally suspect. The undertones of violence that run through male erotic love in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are not absent from the conclusion of the Jailer's Daughter's narrative. While the Daughter initiates the idea of the sexual act, she also perceives that there may be some pain in it. The dialogue runs as follows:

Wooer: [*to Daughter*] Come, sweet, we'll go to dinner

And then we'll play at cards.

Daughter: And shall we kiss too?

Wooer: An hundred times.

Daughter: And twenty?

Wooer: Ay, and twenty.

Daughter: And then we'll sleep together.

Doctor: Take her offer.

Wooer: [*to Daughter*] Yes, marry, will we.

Daughter: But you shall not hurt me.

Wooer: I will not, sweet.

Daughter: If you do, love, I'll cry. *Exeunt.* (5.2.107-12)

The development is deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, there is the close dialogue work which has the Daughter and the Wooer collaborating in the shared pentameter lines, the endearments that both characters use, the simple, domestic peace of dinner, cards and lovemaking and the Wooer's tenderness, all of which

make this the most breathtakingly moving scene of the play. On the other hand there is that intimation of pain to be found in the sexual act, that flinching from hurt on the Daughter's part, that gestures towards a radical sexual politics that finds the sexes so 'other' that there can be no common ground of mutual fulfilment, but only a sadistic relationship in which one sex is aggressively subordinated to the other. In this moment the play seems to hang wistfully between a belief in the restorative powers of heterosexual love and a deeply engrained cynicism as to its very existence.

## CHAPTER III:

“[I]LE RUN A LITTLE COURSE / AT BASE, OR BARLEY-BREAKE,  
OR SOME SUCH TOYE, / TO CATCH THE FELLOW”; LUCIBELLA  
AND THE REVENGE DYNAMIC IN HENRY CHETTLE’S *THE  
TRAGEDY OF HOFFMAN, OR, A REVENGE FOR A FATHER*

While 1613’s *Jailer’s Daughter* built radically on the 1601 *Ophelia*, capitalising on the character’s subversive potential, the years between the two plays saw other playwrights take up the *Ophelia* model to both develop and depart from it. Whilst one might hope to find a logical, chronological progression in the development of the *Ophelia* role in revenge tragedy, Henry Chettle’s *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (1602) proves anomalous.<sup>276</sup> Chettle’s *Lucibella* presents an *Ophelia*-figure who is not so much an alternative to the revenge plot as an integrated part of its mechanisms of justice. When her betrothed is killed in one of Hoffman’s intrigues, *Lucibella*, who is originally assumed to be dead herself, revives to a grief-stricken derangement. This derangement draws heavily on many of the motifs of *Ophelia*’s madness, including its preoccupation with burial and its use of flowers and ballad material. However, unlike *Ophelia*’s madness, it does *not* threaten to waylay or divert the revenge tragedy trajectory altogether, by asserting an alternative genre and narrative. Her madness is instead crucial to the revenge tragedy denouement as *Lucibella* demonstrates an uncanny prescience in discerning guilt. This prescience develops *Ophelia*’s disturbing facility to unsettle the King (“You must wear your

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<sup>276</sup> Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman, or A Revenge for a Father* (1631) ed. Harold Jenkins (Oxford: Oxford Malone Society Reprints, 1950). All future references taken from this edition. I have standardised the long s /f/ to a modern /s/. I have also consulted J. D. Jowett’s modernised spelling edition, *The Tragedy of Hoffman* (Nottingham: Nottingham University Press, 1983).

rue with a difference.” 4.5.181) and Queen (“*How should I your true love know / From another one?*” 4.5.23-4), and channels it in Lucibella into an almost supernatural ability to detect both murder and the murderer. Her madness is a vital component of the revenge plot mechanism, compelling the other rulers forward in the discovery of the killer’s lair and the evidence of his crimes. Oppositions such as those set up in *Hamlet* between the female, oral, popular realm of the ballads and the male, literate, elite narrative of revenge are simply not in operation in *Hoffman*. Although Hoffman’s revenge action is resoundingly male, aimed only at men associated with the orchestrator of his father’s execution (as Lorrique informs us: “this Clois [Hoffman] is an honest villaine, ha’s conscience in his killing of men: he kils none but his fathers enemies, and there issue”, 661-3) and while it is desire for a woman that ultimately brings about Hoffman’s downfall, neither Martha nor Lucibella exist as alternatives to the revenge plot; instead they are an integral part of the revenge response. This is particularly true of Lucibella; where Ophelia offers an alternative to revenge, Lucibella is herself part of the retributive process, and a necessary counterfoil to Hoffman’s villainy. While Lucibella’s narrative contains vestigial traces of Ophelia’s ballad space it does not subvert the text in the same way. Instead, she is recruited to the side of the avenging angels, and her role narrows to that of an uncannily prescient sleuth, actively streamlining the plot towards its final reckoning rather than offering a rival discourse.

There seem to be two related reasons for this. Where *Hamlet* makes sophisticated use of the interplay between popular and classical genres, *Hoffman* is itself a genuinely popular product that harks back to the earlier, popular and didactic traditions of the mystery and morality plays, and the Tudor interludes. This is not to say that *Hoffman* does not engage with the classical models that were beginning to influence the Elizabethan drama. As I will discuss, *Hoffman* is very

explicitly interested in classical structures, particularly the five act play; yet the play's approach to its subject is best understood in a medieval context. *Hoffman* offers an almost anachronistically didactic treatment of the revenge tragedy subject, an approach that derives from these mystery, morality and interlude forms of drama. Allied throughout the play with the forces of virtue, Lucibella is herself both worked upon and part of a process of disambiguation that strives to return the play to earlier morality roots. Her wisdom is that of an allegory of virtue; "you cannot miss the path", she instructs, "The way to death and black destruction / Is the wide way;" (5.1.1981-3) Virtue is the proverbially narrow path, and *Hoffman* enacts the battle between good and evil ethical forces that is waged in so many of the morality plays, casting revenge itself as an unambiguous evil. As critics have noted, the trials of mankind in the morality plays foreshadow those of the tragic hero.<sup>277</sup> Yet *Hoffman* is itself a fascinating throwback, taking its characters a retrograde step towards the earlier drama and its allegorical milieu, returning Hoffman himself to a tradition of the Vice rather than furthering the development of a psychologically realised character. The play seeks to disambiguate the increasingly vexed issue of the rights and wrongs of revenge.

Crucially, in both moralities and mysteries, characters are fixed as good or bad. Lucibella frames her wish to pursue Hoffman in terms of a defined conflict between the faithful and the faithless: "Nay, I'll come, my wits are mine agen / Now faith growes firme to punish faithlesse men." (5.1.2253-4) This designation of characters as good or bad, but never both (unlike Hamlet, Ophelia, and the Jailer's Daughter, for example) is a feature of both the moralities, with their casts of vices and virtues, and the mysteries with their biblically defined roles. Some sense of the

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<sup>277</sup> See, for example, Peter Happé ed., *Four Morality Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Magnificence, King Johan, Ane Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1979), pp. 17-8 and Greg Walker ed., *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p.viii.

Mystery plays classification of characters into ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ can be sensed in the inventory of stage properties that constitute *The Mercer’s Pageant Waggon at York* (1433):

Vj develles faces for iij vesernes [masks / visors]  
 array for ij evell saules, that is to say ij sirkes [shirts], ij paire hoses, ij  
 vesenes, and ij chevelers [wigs]  
 array for ij gode saules, that is to say ij sirkes, ij paire hoses, ij vesernes,  
 and ij chevelers  
 ij paire aungell wynges with iren in the endes <sup>278</sup>

If one were to distribute devils faces and angel wings to the characters in *Hoffman* very few of the characters would give cause for hesitation. This is not to say that these definitions are limiting; as Donna Smith Vinter argues, the writer of the mystery plays:

would know his character first of all in a static and morally determined way – as sacred or damned, as a victim or personification of some deadly sin or a hero of some virtue or grace of God. Yet he would also know that character as a participant in an evolving story, and would strive, for didactic purposes, to illustrate the psychological motives and moral choices that finally shaped his soul. <sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Extract from Mercer’s Pageant Documentaries in A. F. Johnston and M. Rogerson eds, *York, Play XLVIII The Judgement Day* (Toronto: Records of Early English Drama, 1979), pp. 55-6. I have regularised thorns to /th/.

<sup>279</sup> Donna Smith Vinter, ‘Didactic Characterisation: the Towneley *Abraham*’, *Comparative Drama* 14 (1980) 117-36, at p. 73.

Likewise the characters in *Hoffman* are known as saved or damned, and yet are portrayed as participants in an evolving story with differing psychological motives and moral choices. Lucibella herself operates as a “gode saule”. Far from providing an alternative ballad space she is part of the fabric of a battle between ethical forces. But to understand her role, some further understanding of the medieval dramatic tradition and its impact on the play, as well as *Hoffman*’s position on the popular-elite spectrum, is required.

**“Thus vycys a-geyns virtues fytyn ful snelle”: *Hoffman* and the popular  
mystery, morality and interlude traditions**

The mystery or cycle plays prove to be a highly influential, popular theatre model for *Hoffman*. Helen Cooper has argued persuasively for the centrality of the cycle plays – in a popular context, as a social practice – as influential models for Elizabethan drama, including Shakespearean drama.<sup>280</sup> They were frequently collaboratively produced, required the mixing of the classes and enacted violence. In particular, Cooper argues for the influence of the cycle plays’ emphasis on action and spectacle rather than the word, an emphasis that exists in Elizabethan drama in contradistinction to both the theodicy of Protestantism and the

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<sup>280</sup> Helen Cooper, ‘Shakespeare and the Mystery Plays’ in Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes ed., *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006), pp. 18-41. For studies in this area see Emrys Jones, *Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). A. H. Tomlan, ‘Hamlet’s “Woo’t Drinke Up Esile?”’, *Modern Language Notes* IX:8 (Dec 1894) 241-4, derives proof from the mystery plays that Hamlet’s “esile” is: “an allusion is intended to the draught of vinegar and gall offered to Christ. This draught was looked upon during the Middle Ages as a bitter, loathsome compound, and the offer of it to Christ as a crowning insult and a crowning torture”, at p. 241.

conventions of classical drama. The audience saw the crucifixion on stage in front of them, as “these plays acted out their action.”<sup>281</sup>

This is clearly relevant to *Hoffman* with its multiple on-stage deaths, particularly its staged executions. The mystery cycles cast a particularly significant light on Hoffman’s execution. Hoffman is almost certainly an antitype of Christ. His execution is freighted with parallels to Christ’s Passion. The first *Passion Play* in the N-town manuscript, for example, has Christ arrested at the “*mount of Olive?*” (s.d.l.900): “*Here Judas kysseyth Jhesus and anon all þe Jenys come abowth hym and ley handys on hym and pullyn hym as þei were wode, and makyn on hym a gret cry all at onys*” (s.d. at l.988).<sup>282</sup> Hoffman is similarly arrested in a wilderness area of forest and caves, beguiled there by the promise of amorous sports with Martha, who plays a sanctified Judas-role. Her assurance that “trust me *Hoffman* th’art so sweet a man, / And so belou’d of me, that I must go” (2552-3) echoes Judas’ assurances and gestures of love.<sup>283</sup> As Christ is surrounded, so too is Hoffman, as Saxony, Lucibella and Mathius emerge to join Martha in arresting, charging and punishing Hoffman.

The binding of Hoffman (“wherefore bind yee me” l. 2569) would almost certainly have recalled the binding of Christ, which is made much of in mystery play staging. In the second *Passion Play* of the N-town manuscript, for example, the *Secundes Judeas* comments:

Fest on a rop and pulle hym long,

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<sup>281</sup> Cooper, ‘Shakespeare and the Mystery Plays’, p. 19.

<sup>282</sup> Peter Meredith ed., *The Passion Play from the N.Town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1990), stage directions at line 1900. All further references to *The Passion Play* are taken from this edition.

<sup>283</sup> In the York Passion, for example, Judas greets Jesus with the words: “I wolde aske you a kysse maistir, and youre willes were, / For all my loue and my liking is holy vpon zou layde”, The Cordwainer’s *The Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal* in Richard Beadle ed., *The York Plays* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1982), ll. 250-2.

And I scal drawe þe ageyn.

Spare we not þese ropys strong,

þow we brest both flesch and veyn (763-6).<sup>284</sup>

Stage directions are given at line 698 directing the soldiers to “*puttyn a krowne of þornys on hese hed with forkys*”. The execution of Hoffman with a burning crown would probably have visually recalled this scene; a similar arrangement of forks to handle the ostensibly burning crown certainly seems possible. While Christ appeals to God on mankind’s behalf from the cross (“O, Fadyr almythy, makere of man, / Forgyff þese Jewys þat done me wo! / Forgeve hem, Fadyr, forgeve hem þan! / For thei wete nowth what þei do.” 799-802)<sup>285</sup> Hoffman explicitly renounces the opportunity for either repentance or forgiveness:

*Saxony:* We pardon thee and pray for thy soules health.

*Hoffman:* So doe not I for yours, nor pardon you;

You killd my father, my most warlike father

Thus as you deale by me, you did by him; (2608-11)

Similarly, while Christ is on his way to hell to overcome the devil (“I xal go sle þe fende, þat freke”) and release the people held there, before being resurrected, Hoffman prepares for hell as a home from home, knowing there will be no return:

But Hell the hope of all dispayring men,

That wring the poore, and eate the people vp,

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<sup>284</sup> See also *Christ’s Passion: Chester Plays XVI* in R. G. Thomas ed., *Ten Miracle Plays* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1966): “Here is a rope will last / For to draw a maste”, ll. 117-8.

<sup>285</sup> See also *Christ’s Passion: Chester Plays XVI*; “Father, if thy will be, / Forgeve them this they have done to me. / They be blynd, and may not see / How foule the do amisse”, ll. 265-8.

As greedy beasts the haruest of their spring:  
 That Hell, where cowards haue their seats prepar'd,  
 And barbarous asses, such as haue rob'd souldiers of  
 Reward, and punish true desert with scorned death. (2613-8)

His increasingly incoherent comments do not anticipate a resurrection but rather a destination; “scorned death” is, for Hoffman, a dead end, not a point of return. He will not harrow hell, but will reside there amongst his peers. The persistent comparisons drawn between Christ’s execution and Hoffman’s unmistakably mark Chettle’s protagonist out as villainous and damned. The textual and visual references to the earlier morality and mystery dramatic aesthetics return the Elizabethan revenge tragedy hero to a kind of moral absolutism that makes it emphatically clear that Hoffman is on the side of the devils, whereas Lucibella and her allies are increasingly quartered with the angels.

Interestingly, Peter Meredith discusses the “patching” of the Mystery plays, with material from different sources (the distinct *Mary Play* and the two part *Passion Play* are inserted into the *N-Town Manuscript*) being wedged in to supplement the script, with no attempt made to achieve integrated staging. John Dennis Hurrel discusses the same structural “patching” from a defensive position, arguing against the analysis of mystery plays by critics such as Homer A. Watt (Hurrel’s example) as:

agglutinative, as though the authors were torn between a responsibility to reproduce the biblical originals and a desire to entertain the audience by odd items of bickering among characters, monologue acts,

and occasional slapstick stuff wedged into the play to provide entertainment but totally unrelated to the main biblical action.<sup>286</sup>

Hurrel objects to the assumption that the mystery play authors felt constrained by their biblical material, and also to the anachronistic emphasis on the “well made” play, which endorses an idea of classical unity that was yet to emerge in English literature. He argues instead for:

An understanding of a form of drama which as a form is not dependent on “unity and economy,” not confined to being either historical or contemporary, serious or comic: a drama which we can call “agglutinative” in its effect without using the term pejoratively; a drama which is like this because its authors saw their world as a place with an organic unity of time and place, body and spirit, and had no need for, perhaps would not have understood, the theory of an artificially imposed artistic unity which has no connection with the true facts of human life.<sup>287</sup>

This “agglutinative”, “patched” drama in part reflects the practical circumstances of mystery play staging; each guild was made responsible for a separate episode of the Christian history, and provided actors, stage properties and a pageant wagon for that episode. As Meredith writes, “the result is a remarkably comprehensive coverage of the history of mankind from Creation to Doomsday, but one which

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<sup>286</sup> Homer A. Watt, ‘The Dramatic Unity of the *Secunda Pastorum*’ in *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown* (1960) p. 158, discussed by John Dennis Hurrel ‘The Figural Approach to Medieval Drama, *College English* 26:8 (1965) 598-604 at p. 598.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, at p. 599.

theatrically veers uneasily between different styles of presentation.”<sup>288</sup> Meredith notes that the physical appearance of the N-town manuscript, with separate booklets bound into the manuscript, reflects this “patching”. Both Meredith and Hurrel’s comments suggest that Shakespeare is employing what is in fact a *popular* strategy or methodology, recreating mystery play-style fault-lines in *Hamlet* and, collaboratively with Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The deliberate fostering of an interplay between popular and classical material in *Hamlet* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is structurally popular, rather than classical. *Hoffman* instead reaches for a classical integrity of form, while returning to a popular treatment of its theme.

*Hoffman*’s popular treatment of its theme almost certainly inherits from other popular theatrical forms such as the morality plays and the medieval interludes. This accounts in part for the greater didacticism of *Hoffman*, and its plain-speaking in moral terms on the subject of revenge. Peter Happé considers that “without doubt [...] the origin of the [morality] plays lay in the didactic impulse found in the sermon and in devotional literature.”<sup>289</sup> Arguing that the mystery plays were “an act of worship”, Happé considers that instead “the moralities moved from theological instruction to polemic, criticism, and satire.”<sup>290</sup> As a whole, *Hoffman* engages in a work of disambiguation, that strives to return revenge tragedy themes to a morality context. Eleanor Prosser discusses *Hoffman*’s villainy as “a further step in a tradition rooted in conventional ethics”; nevertheless, its return to an unambiguously villainous revenger seems to be a response to the moral uncertainties that the sympathetic revengers of the immediately previous revenge plays introduced to the genre.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Meredith ed., *Passion Play, N.Town*, p. 2.

<sup>289</sup> Happé ed., *Four Morality Plays*, p. 10.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>291</sup> Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (California: Stanford University Press, 1967/71).

That Chettle himself understood plays to have a moral function is demonstrated in *Kind-hartes Dreame*:

Every thing hath in itself his virtue and his vice: from oneself flower the bee and the spider suck honey and poison. In plays it fares as in books: vice cannot be reprov'd except it be discovered; neither is it in any play discovered but there follows in the same an example of the punishment. Now he that at a play will be delighted in the one and not warned by the other is like him that reads in a book the description of sin and will not look over the leaf for the reward.<sup>292</sup>

*Hoffman* re-discovers, or discovers more strongly, the “vice” of revenge action in the character of Hoffman. References to *The Jew of Malta* and *Antonio's Revenge* should be understood in this light as intentional rather than accidental. Antonio and Hamlet's words, reframed for the villainous Hoffman, reflect back on the more ambiguous earlier protagonists.

The role of the vice has its origins in the allegorical mode of morality drama, which initially presented a varied cast of evil characters from which one vice, representing the root of evil, emerged to ever-increasing prominence in the interludes. In the early play *The Castle of Perseverance* (1400-1425): “the vices are not so much tempters as ethical forces aiming at man's destruction.”<sup>293</sup> The second standard bearer of *The Castle of Perseverance* summarises the plot in the banns:

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<sup>292</sup> Henry Chettle, *Kind-Hartes Dreame / Conteyning fve Apparitions, with their / Inuectiues against abuses reigning. / Delivered by Seuerall Ghosts vnto him to / be publisht, after Piers Penilesse Post / had refused the carriage* (London: William Wright, 1592) ed. G. B. Harrison (John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd: London 1923), pp. 42-3.

<sup>293</sup> Happé, *Four Morality Plays*, pp. 13 & 32; for further discussions of the vice, see Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), ch.6 ‘Moral Metaphor and Dramatic Image’, esp. pp. 151-4.

Coveytyese Mankynd evere covytyth for to qwell  
 He gaderyth to hym Glotony a-geyns Sobyrenesse,  
 Leccherye with Chastyte fytyn ful fell,  
 And Slawthe in Goddys servyse a-geyns Besynesse.  
 Thus vycys a-geyns virtues fytyn ful snelle. (The Banns, ll.66-70)

The vices war against the virtues as they attempt to guard Mankind in the stronghold of perseverance, in a battle that ends with mankind being lost to Avarice despite the best efforts of Largesse and Mankind's good angel. Like *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Hoffman* ranges virtuous characters against evil characters in a clash of ethical forces, and Chastity in the form of Lucibella is similarly pitted against Lechery in the form of Hoffman himself.

The vices of *The Castle of Perseverance* are prototype Hoffmans. Hoffman's introductory boasting is paralleled by that of Belyal, Caro (Flesh) and Mundus (World). Belyal, for instance, rants from his scaffold:

Now I sytte, Satanas, in my sad synne,  
 As deuyl dowty, in draf as a drake.  
 I champe and I cha[f]e, I choke on my chynne,  
 I am boystows and bold, as Belyal the blake.  
 What folk that I grope thei gapyn and grenne,  
 I-wys fro Carlylle into Kent my carpynge thei take,  
 Both the bak and the buttoke brestyth al on brenne,  
 Wyth werkys of wreche I werke hem mykyl wrake. (Part one, ll.196-8)

Belyal's last boast is that with his works of vengeance he brings his victims great pain, a boast with which Hoffman's first speech certainly resonates. This tradition of villainous boasting is a shared inheritance from the mystery plays, whose evil characters are also characterised by a tendency towards self-promotion. Pilate, for example, in *The York Cutlers The Conspiracy* celebrates his own "rente and renowe", and instructs his audience that "[t]he dubbing of my dingnite may nowth be done downe, / Nowdir with duke nor dugeperes, my dedis are so drete".<sup>294</sup> As the depiction of Hoffman's execution is a response to mystery play depictions of Christ's crucifixion, so vice-like boasting is a response to God's power as it is portrayed in the creation sequences. As Greg Walker notes, these fits of boasting are "blasphemous parodies of God's opening speech in the Creation plays – they also identify the speaker as, like Lucifer, an over-reaching impersonator, seeking to claim divine authority for himself."<sup>295</sup>

Impersonation is also a key characteristic of the morality vice figures and the trickster-like antics of the hero-villain Hoffman and his sidekick Lorrique, who variously don disguises and accents, and fall into a mode of crowd-pleasing that has a strong tang of the early English morality plays. The vices of John Skelton's *Magnifycence* all assume aliases; Clokyd Colusyon, for example, declares himself to be Sober Sadnesse, and Courtly Abusyon disguises himself as Lusty Pleasure (ll.681,965).<sup>296</sup> As Counterfet Countenaunce observes:

This worlde is ful of my foly

I set him not a fly

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<sup>294</sup> York, *The Cutlers, The Conspiracy* in Walker ed., *Medieval Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), ll. 1, 7-8.

<sup>295</sup> Walker, *Medieval Drama*, p. 80.

<sup>296</sup> John Skelton, *Magnifycence* (1515-18) in Happé ed., *Four Morality Plays*; all future references from this edition.

That can not counterfeit a lye,  
 Swere, and stare, and byde therby,  
 And countenance it clenly,  
 And defend it mannerly. (ll.411-6)

Lorrique's impersonation of a French quack-doctor, complete with ludicrous accent ("A vostree seruice Mounsiour most Genereux" 3.2.1347) and Hoffman's successful assumption of the identities of both the hermit-habited Rodorick in act two scene two, and Charles for most of the play, mark them both out as Counterfet Countenance's men.

Between the morality plays and Elizabethan drama stand the medieval interludes. These are generally defined as plays of about one thousand lines, of simple dramatic content, possibly designed as part of banquets and with an emphasis on comedy.<sup>297</sup> Like the moralities, they are often allegorical both in theme and in characterisation; *Thersites*, for example, tells the tale of Thersites "a boster" who brags endlessly of his strength, only to hide behind his mother when an opponent finally emerges in the form of Miles, "a knight"; his chief deed of bravery is to fight a snail.<sup>298</sup> It is in these interludes that the figure of the Vice fully emerges. The early Thersites is himself vice-like, approaching blasphemy in his boast that:

Yf no man wyll with me battayle take

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<sup>297</sup> See T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1958), Happé ed., *Tudor Interludes*, pp. 8-9; David Bevington, 'Popular and Courtly Traditions on the Early Tudor Stage', in Neville Denny ed., *Medieval Drama* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd) 1973. Bevington finally prefers to define the plays in the genre rather as "stage presentations" than interludes, distinguishing between the popular and courtly traditions that Craik saw combined in the interludes; p. 93.

<sup>298</sup> Names of the players, *Thersites* (1561-3) in Mary Axton ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes: Thersites, Jacke Jugeler and Horestes* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982). All future references to this edition.

A vyage to hell quickly I wyll make  
 And there I wyll bete the devyll and his dame  
 And bringe the soules awaye, I fullye entende the same. (ll.176-9)

Thersites' pretended intention to harrow hell identifies him as a kind of imposter-Christ. Indeed the vices are in many ways antitype Christs, a feature that Chettle's presentation of Hoffman retains with particular attention to the cycle plays.<sup>299</sup>

As in the moralities, the vices of the interludes frequently take on aliases; the 'Vyce' of *Horestes*, for example, announces that "Amonge the godes celestiall I Courrage called am" (l.207).<sup>300</sup> *Horestes* provides something of a bridge between *Hamlet* and *Hoffman*. Following the *Oresteia*, the play deals with Orestes' quest to revenge his father by killing his mother. Like *Hamlet*, *Horestes* similarly features a son troubled by his father's death and his mother's sexuality. "Let the adultres dame styll wallow in her sin" (187), states Horestes, in a passage that anticipates Hamlet's "enseamed bed" and "nasty sty" (*Ham.* 3.1.90, 92).<sup>301</sup> Duty to the father is emphasised ("My hart can not agre, / My father slayne in such a sorte and unrevengyd to be" 410-1), but Nature (a virtue) urges Horestes to resist matricide. Horestes is finally goaded into action by the 'Vyce', also identified as "Reveng" (s.d. l.834) a circumstance which clearly defines revenge itself as sinful. There is a clear sense of trajectory as Horestes is finally propelled out of his stasis by the Vice impersonating "Courrage": "I fele corrage provokes my wil for ward againe / For to revenge my fathers death" (214-5). Despite falling in with this "Vyce" and executing his mother, Horestes is absolved by a noble court of law, and married to

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<sup>299</sup> For a discussion of the characteristics of the vice, see *ibid*, p. 14-5.

<sup>300</sup> John Pikeryng, *Horestes* in Axton ed., *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*; all future references to this edition.

<sup>301</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden 3 (London: Thomson Learning, 2006). All future references to this edition.

his main accuser Menelaus' daughter in order to heal strife between the kingdoms. The play's assimilative ending follows classical precedent, while the play uses tools from the contemporary drama to indicate that the revenge action is in itself unacceptable. The "Vyce" is crucial to this process, and Hoffman's own identification with the Vice returns Hamlet's revenge narrative to its morality roots in plays such as *Horestes*.

Hoffman's manipulative behaviour is entirely typical of a vice tradition in which the weak or the gullible are often massaged into sinful behaviour. The Vyce of *Horestes*, for example, turns the heavily accented countrymen Rusticus and Hodge against each other. As Rusticus belligerently vows: "Chyll be no frendes – chad rather be hanged / Tyll iche have that oulde karle wel and thryfteley banged" (ll.126-7) This is immediately resonant with Hoffman and Lorrique's manipulation of Ferdinand's idiot son Ierome and his two servants Stilt and Old Stilt into first an uprising, and then the poisoning of Ferdinand and Ierome himself in the mistaken belief that the French Doctor (otherwise known as Lorrique) has supplied them with an antidote. Like the rustics of *Horestes*, Ierome and the Stilts are linguistically marked out as innocents; Chettle lards their speeches with malapropisms, from Ierome's simple: "harke *Stilt*, dost thou see no noyse?" to Stilt's declaration that: "we haue treason and iniquity to maintayne our quarrell." (3.2.1137-8)

Like Hoffman, the Vices of both moralities and interludes revel in their misdeeds. Ryot's account of his murder of a cart-boy in the interlude *Youth* ("Beside his horse I felled him there [...] Lorde how I was mery" ll. 264, 7) has much in common with Hoffman's glee upon his successful murder of Lodowick and, as he assumes, Lucibella, as well as the Duke of Austria.<sup>302</sup> Hoffman displays

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<sup>302</sup> *The Interlude of Youth* in Happé ed., *Tudor Interludes*; all future references to this edition.

the same sinister merriness when he calls Lorrique to him to celebrate his homicides:

Hoffman:      Helpe me to sing a hymne vnto the fates  
                          Compos'd of laughing interiections.

Lorrique:      Why my good Lord? What accidents  
                          Have chanc't, that tickle so your spleene? (3.1.1091-4)

Chettle's insistent identification of Hoffman with this Vice tradition returns the play to an allegorical mode of drama in which both revenge and the revenger are delineated as morally unacceptable. Chettle reaches for morality tools in order to disambiguate the theme, and this morality approach has a demonstrable impact upon the character of Lucibella and the Ophelia role. Despite this morality approach, *Hoffman* nevertheless has a defined sense of its own place as a literate product, and before discussing Lucibella's role, it is therefore necessary to situate the play further in the oral-literate spectrum and investigate the ambiguities of its position.

**“[T]here is one act done”: *Hoffman's* sense of itself as textual artefact**

As both J. D. Jowett and Harold Jenkins note, our sole authority for the date and authorship of *The Tragedy of Hoffman* issues from a single entry in Henslowe's diary, in which he records lending five shillings on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1602 to the actor Thomas Downton “to geue vnto harey chettle in pte of paymente for a tragedie

called Hawghman".<sup>303</sup> The surviving text of *Hoffman*, Q, is unattributed. Published in 1631, it advertises the play "As it hath bin diuers times acted / with great applause, at the *Phenix* in *Druery-Lane*." This was not in fact Henslowe's theatre; Jowett suggests that original performances would have been by Henslowe's company, The Admiral's Men, and that the play would then have arrived at the Phoenix through Lady Elizabeth's Men, who Henslowe briefly managed and who later became part of Christopher Beeston's company.<sup>304</sup> The title-page certainly situates *Hoffman* in the early modern play-acting world ("As it hath bin diuers times acted"), and offers a text that would seem to align itself with the 'bad' quartos discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the 'plays' rather than the 'poems'. But *Hoffman*'s positioning on the oral-literate spectrum is not so easily definable. The printer Hugh Perry's dedication of the play to Richard Kilvert casts literary production as a homosocial interaction that is similar to that portrayed in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*'s prologue. Perry writes that:

this Tragedy hapning into my hands, I haue now aduentured it vnto the Presse, and wanting both a Parent to owne it, and a Patron to protect it, am fayne to Act the Fathers part, and pray you to be a God-father:

While Perry avoids the more explicitly sexualised generative metaphors of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, his dedication nevertheless locates the play in the male, literate environment of the 1631 printing houses.

This was a world in which Chettle himself, in earlier days, had been very closely involved. As Harold Jenkins demonstrates, while most of the details of

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<sup>303</sup> Greg, *Henslowe's Diary*, i.173 in Jenkins ed., *Hoffman*, p. v; see also Jowett ed., *Hoffman*, p. iii.

<sup>304</sup> Jowett, *Hoffman*, p. ii.

Chettle's life have been lost, his connection with the printing world, as recorded in the Stationers' Register, remain relatively clear. Chettle is first noted in an entry dated 8<sup>th</sup> October 1577 as apprenticed to "Thomas Easte Cytezen and stacioner of London for viij yeres begynnyng at michelmas laste paste."<sup>305</sup> Chettle took up his freedom from the Stationers Company on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1584, and in 1591 is recorded as setting up a press with William Hoskins and John Danter, although by the end of 1591 both Hoskins and Danter appear to be working independently. Chettle appears to have devoted himself to literary work from that point on, but his connection with the printing world was by no means severed. His involvement in the literary milieu can be sensed in his embroilment in the flurry of controversy following the publication of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* which Chettle himself prepared for press, and which delivered unsympathetic portraits of many of his fellow writers. Chettle's response to the resulting antagonism, *Kind-Harts Dreame*, gives a brief description of Shakespeare along with mentions of Marlowe, Nashe and Peele. Chettle apologises to Shakespeare for not sparing him from Greene's invective when he edited the text, adding: "[b]esides, diuers of worship haue reported, his vprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that aprooues his Art."<sup>306</sup> The Shakespeare Chettle describes is one defined by his honest dealings (in the printing world, perhaps?) and his literary skill which, as one might expect from a publisher and writer, values Shakespeare's work as a written rather than an oral phenomenon.

A literary self-consciousness is certainly manifested in the freight of borrowings from *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), *The Jew Of Malta* (c.1590), *Antonio's*

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<sup>305</sup> Stationer's Register, from Arber, *Transcript of the Stationer's Company*, ii. 81 in Harold Jenkins, *The Life and Work of Henry Chettle*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>306</sup> Chettle, *Kind-Harts dreame Conteyning fiue apparitions, with their inuectiues against abuses raining. Deliuered by seuerall ghosts vnto him to be publisht, after Piers Penilesse post had refused the cariage* (London: By J. Wolfe and J. Danter for William Wright, 1593?), sig. A3v.

*Revenge* (1600) and *Hamlet* itself. In fact, given its near-contemporary relationship with *Hamlet*, a connection to the *Ur-Hamlet* might also be posited, in much the same way that John Harrington Smith, Lois D. Pizer and Edward K. Kaufman have argued for greater attention to be given to *Antonio's Revenge* in the light of the *Ur-Hamlet*.<sup>307</sup> Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and the *Ur-Hamlet*, apparently crucial texts to the revenge tragedy genre that *Hoffman* draws on so heavily, were on stage before 1590, with the *Ur-Hamlet* revived on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1594, and the *Spanish Tragedy* resurrected in March 1591/2 and holding the stage until the following January. *The Spanish Tragedy* was staged again in 1597, 1601 and 1602, and both the *Ur-Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* were, Jenkins believes, partly responsible for the “enormous popularity” of the genre, which climaxed at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century before diversifying. *Hoffman's* borrowings from the extant revenge plays are multiple. While Jowett concentrates in his edition on cross-referencing *The Jew Of Malta*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Antonio's Revenge*, I will concentrate on *Hoffman's* debts to *Hamlet*.<sup>308</sup>

There can be little doubt that *Hamlet* is one of the plays that *Hoffman* responds to most strongly. Throughout *Hoffman*, *Hamlet* parallels and similarities are felt. The relationship between the two plays has been played down in modern criticism, but if *Hoffman's* thefts and allusions have, as I argue, a deliberate project of disambiguation, then they deserve closer analysis.<sup>309</sup> A cursory examination of

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<sup>307</sup> ‘*Hamlet, Antonio's Revenge* and the *Ur-Hamlet*’, *SQ* 9:4 (1958) 493-498.

<sup>308</sup> Jowett ed., *Hoffman*, introduction and notes.

<sup>309</sup> In *Chettle*, Jenkins writes that: “If his play is the only other extant tragedy of revenge which likewise has its scene on the shores of the Baltic, if it has one or two verbal echoes of *Hamlet*, it has also various departures from the revenge tradition which Shakespeare does not show.” (p.80) Jenkins goes on to comment on these “verbal echoes” in the footnote that follows:

Jerome echoes Hamlet when he says, “I have bin at *Wittenberg* where wit grows (sig.C1), and both heroines make reference to a song “Down-a-down” (sig.liv; cf *Hamlet*, IV.v); but this was apparently a familiar burden at the time. Ackermann (edn. of *Hoffman*, p.xxii) gives what he considers to be other verbal echoes, but they are all entirely without significance. The use in each play of words like “unhousel'd”,

the first scene alone reveals an astonishing weave of *Hamlet* references and structures. Hoffman's opening promise to avenge his father presents a familiar, melancholy prince steeling himself to revenge by looking on the skeleton (rather than the ghost, or portrait) of his father:

But thou, dear soul, whose nerves and arteries  
 In dead resoundings summon up revenge –  
 And thou shalt ha't, be but appeas'd sweet hearse,  
 The dead remembrance of my living father,  
 And with a hart as aire, swift as thought  
 Ple execute iustly in such a cause. (3-10)

His promise is of course paralleled by Hamlet telling his father's ghost:

Haste me to know't that I with wings as swift  
 As meditation or the thoughts of love  
 May sweep to my revenge. (*Ham.* 1.5.29-30)

However, other *Hamlet* allusions abound. Not only do we have Hamlet's wings / swift / meditation / love combination echoed in Hoffman's air / swift / thought /

“untimely”, “strumpet” can mean nothing. The reader may judge for himself the importance to be attached to such resemblances of diction as are found in the following instances.

A little more than kin, and less than kind (*Hamlet* I, ii).

Thou art euen kitt after kind (*Hoffman*, sig. F1v).

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba? (*Hamlet* II, ii).

What is Lorraine to you, or what to me? (*Hoffman*, sig.LI) (p.80, n.1)

Jowett does not mention *Hamlet* at all in the introduction to his edition, writing instead that: “Two seminal earlier plays are kept firmly in view through a series of echoes and allusions; these are Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*.” Intro, p.iii. I am arguing for a more extensive and deliberate relationship between *Hamlet* and *Hoffman*.

heart, but given the context, it is not inconceivable that we hear in “nerves and arteries” an echo of Hamlet’s response to the ghost’s beckoning:

My fate cries out  
 And makes each petty artery in this body  
 As hardy as the Nemean lions’ nerve. (*Ham.* 1.4.81-3)

Similarly, the “sweet hearse” which directly refers to the clean bones of Hoffman’s father’s skeleton (which, crucially, is visible onstage) begins to recall old Hamlet’s “canonized bones hearsed in death”, which “[h]ave burst their cerements.” (*Ham.* 1.4.47-8)

Hoffman’s soliloquy continues with an expression of the same sense of belated action and interrupted trajectory that Hamlet labours under. The thunder and lightning that Chettle visits on Hoffman closely corresponds with the second appearance of the ghost to Hamlet and Hamlet’s sense that he has come his “tardy son to chide” (*Ham.* 3.4.107).<sup>310</sup> Hoffman comments:

See the power of heaven in apparitions  
 And frightful aspects, as incensed  
 That thus tardy am I to do an act  
 Which justice and a father’s death excites. (*Hof.* 1.1.10-4)

The repeated blasts of thunder, and Hoffman’s reaction to them as some kind of summons, recalls the similar scene of call and response in *Hamlet*, as the ghost enjoins Hamlet’s companions to secrecy. The thunder certainly elicits a similar

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<sup>310</sup> For this sense of interrupted trajectory, see also *Ham.* 2.2.561-6, 579-81.

Hamlet-ian response: “Again. I come, I come, I come” (*Hof.* 1.1.16) echoing Hamlet’s repeatedly voiced resolve to follow the ghost. A similar translation of basic scene dynamic is again evident later in the scene when Hoffman harrows Charles with the recounting of his father’s execution, which was witnessed by Charles and imposed by Charles’ kinsmen. The syntax, vocabulary, and power dynamic of the entire episode closely recalls Hamlet’s interrogation of his mother in the closet scene. Compare the following episodes:

*Hamlet:*

*Hoffman:*

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more.

*Charles.* Prithee speak no more:

Thou turn’st my eyes into my very soul

Thou raisest new doubts in my troubled heart

And there I see such black and griev’d spots

By repetition of thy father’s wrongs.

As will leave there their tinct.

[...]

*Charles.* Hoffman.

*Hamlet.* Nay, but to live

*Hoffman.* Nay hear me patiently kind lord:

In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed [...]

My innocent youth, as guilty of his sin [...]

(3.4.86-90)

(1.1.153-5; 164)

Both Queen and Charles beg the interrogator to be quiet, and follow their plea with an expression of troubled introspection. Hamlet and Hoffman both interrupt their victim’s pleas with a “nay” and a further rehearsal of their victim’s crimes, which in both cases do not in fact constitute the murder of the father but lie in the role of accessory, or witness to the crime (or rather their deliberate blindness to the wrong committed) and their subsequent failure to intervene. Hoffman then produces his father’s bare skeleton in a reflection of the state Charles himself is soon to arrive at, in much the same way that Hamlet offers to “set you up a glass /

Where you may see the inmost part of you.” (3.4.18-19) Both actions result in a similar sense of ensuing danger in the victim. Charles’ reaction is: “O horrible aspect! Murderer, stand off; / I know thou meanst me wrong.” (*Hoff.* 1.1.180-1), Gertrude’s: “What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?” (*Ham.* 3.4.20) Again, Hoffman’s demand that Charles: “behold these precious twins of light / Burnt out by day, eclipsed when as the sun / For shame obscured himself;” (*Hoff.* 1.1.182-4) parallels Hamlet’s “Look here upon this picture, and on this, / The counterfeit presentment of two brothers” (3.4.51-2), and his subsequent description of his father’s “eye like Mars to threaten and command” (3.4.55). This is not the place for a scene-by-scene analysis of the similarities between *Hoffman* and *Hamlet*, but this cursory examination of act one indicates the weight of *Hamlet* references that exist in the play as a whole.

*Hoffman*’s sense of itself as a textual artefact can be differently sensed in the weight of Hoffman’s own self-reflexively literary, running commentary on the play itself. Hoffman’s execution of Charles is, according to Hoffman: “But the prologue to the ensuing play.” (237) Hoffman again comments with regard to Charles’ death:

He was the prologue to a Tragedy,  
 That if my destinies deny me not,  
 Shall passe those of Thyestes, Tereus,  
 Iocasta, or Duke Iasons ielous wife;  
 So shut our stage vp, there is one act done  
 Ended in *Othos* death; ’twas somewhat single;  
 I’ll fill the other fuller. (407-13)

So while Hoffman's comments situate the play canonically in the revenge tragedy tradition, they also mark time structurally, explicitly acknowledging the play's dramatic structure, the prologue that is constituted by its first act and the promise of fuller acts to come. Aligning himself with the classical revenger-villains, Thyestes, Tereus, Jocasta and Medea, Hoffman also aligns himself with the authors of these plays by assuming an authorial overview. The revenge dynamic of *scelus*, or competitive awesome crime discussed by Robert Miola, is here a project of both vengeance and literary outdoing.<sup>311</sup> Hoffman's wish to excel the deeds of his vengeance forebears is framed in the context of a literary inheritance *and* an authorial ambition, a move that somewhat elides the hero-villain and the play's author.

This is a move that is repeated in the approach to the poisoning of the hapless Ierome and his followers, as Hoffman (now labelled 'Sarlois') comments "*Lorrique*, now or neuer play thy part: / This Act is euen our Tragedies best hart." Lorrique replies: "Let me alone for plots, and villainy" (1341-3). The elision of the authorial project with the revenge project is again demonstrated, with the climax of villainy identified as the act that is the tragedy's heart. Hoffman's sense of the play's shape, its plot trajectory and structure, is evident throughout; finally he directs his attentions to "Next plot for Mathias and old Saxony, / There ends shall finish our blacke tragedy." (2432-3)

Yet in some sense, these structural markers are a curiously oral phenomenon, marking time in the way a person giving a speech might do in order to situate their listeners. The instability of Hoffman's name is similarly symptomatic of an oral text. The character directing Lorrique to play his part at lines 1341-2 is not 'Hoffman' but 'Sarlois', an alternative character name that appears in acts three and

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<sup>311</sup> Robert Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 10.

four. In fact, Hoffman is known by three names in total: Hoffman, abbreviated to *Hoff*, Clois Hoffman, abbreviated to *Clois* and sometimes *Clo*, and Sarlois, abbreviated to *Sarl*. Furthermore, Hoffman is also addressed by the names of his first victim Otho of Luningberg, known as Otho, Luningberg, and occasionally Charles, whose identity/ies he has stolen. That the character *is* Hoffman is known through his behaviour, the way in which he interacts with other characters and with the audience. On stage, with the actor before the audience, the shifting name designations would barely register; on the page, they make for the kind of confusion that textual artefacts increasingly sought to eradicate.

#### **“[D]iuiest *Lucibell*”: the chastening of Ophelia**

Chettle’s Ophelia-version *Lucibella* exists therefore in a play that returns to popular theatrical forms while utilising developing classical structures to frame its tale. Recruited to the ranks of the virtuous, *Lucibella* is an Ophelia chastened and purified of all ambiguity. The text takes great pains to stage her innocence and chastity, and render her relationship with her male lover as a devoted and uncomplicated love, albeit one that exists between the offspring of two rival families. Something like *Romeo and Juliet*, their respective families have “between them some dissension” (1.2.246), that Lodowick and *Lucibella*’s union promises to heal, and they have come to Ferdinand’s court from *Lucibella*’s father’s court in order to marry. Their elopement provokes a minor conflict; Saxony holds *Lucibella*’s charms (“peradventure painted” 2.2.567) responsible for his sons’ defection while *Lucibella*’s father Austria is also distressed: “Oh God! that girle, which fled my Court and loue, / Making loue colour for her heedles flight.”

(2.2.539-40) Austria frames the elopement classically, complaining that he entertained Saxony's sons "like Priam's firebrand [Paris] / At Sparta" (2.2.543-4), and that the young men "Bewitch't my Lucibells, my Helen's eares." (2.2.548) This classical framing is in many ways appropriate. While elopement, as discussed in chapter two, is a typical ballad scenario, Lucibella's elopement is like no other ballad elopement. The typical ballad scenario is a manifestation of transgressive female desire, but Lucibella's chastity is only momentarily, and only in her protective father's reckoning, in doubt. The couple have a chaperone in the shape of Lodowick's brother, Mathias. Indeed, there is some initial confusion over which brother is Lucibella's intended. Both mean to joust for her in a "tilt and turnament" (2.2.724) which is proposed to "[m]aintayne [Lucibella's] honor" (2.2.725); and Lucibella's father makes no distinction between the culpabilities of the two "lasciuious sonnes, / That haue made *Austria* childles." (2.2.561-2). It is the foolish Jerome who clarifies the matter for the audience, volunteering for the joust and asserting: "I defie you both, for her; euen you *Lodowick*, that loues her, and your brother that loues you." (1.2.294-5).

In case Mathias' chaperoning were not reassurance enough, Lucibella's chastity is always firmly emphasised; not for her the questionable sexual status of Ophelia. To Lodowick, she is "chaste, faire" (2.2.723), and the text convincingly disproves Hamlet's theory that honesty may have no discourse with beauty simply by placing the same sentiment in a villain's mouth. Hoffman (*Clo*) asks why the fields are being prepared for tournament, and Mathias replies:

*Mat.* For honor and fair *Lucibell* [sic].

*Clo.* Oh Prince *Mathias*! it is ill combin'd

When honor is with fickle beautie ioynd. (2.3.776-8)

Chettle gives the lie to the line by giving the line to a liar. Later in act two, Chettle engages in a neat sanitization and disambiguation of the excruciatingly sexualised and, for Ophelia, publicly humiliating “Lady, shall I lie in your lap? [...] I mean, my head upon your lap?” (Q2 3.2.108, F 3.2.113) scene in *Hamlet*.<sup>312</sup> Lodowick frames his request in the language of chivalry, excusing his action with the words: “Pardon, chaste Queene of beauty, make me proude / To rest my toild head on your tender knee” (3.1.870-1) Lucibella is again denoted “chaste”, Lodowick will be “made proud” by the contact, his pretext is exhaustion, and the location is moved from the sexualised lap to the fairly asexual “knee” (although given the boniness of that particular part of the anatomy it seems that Lodowick may well be couched elsewhere when he remarks “oh! I am blest / By this soft pillow where my head doth rest” 3.1.882-3). The couple lie on a bed of violets which, like Ophelia’s violets in *Hamlet* (“they withered all when my father died”, *Ham.* 4.5.182-3) signify faithfulness in love and validate the couple’s relations. To dispel any lingering doubt regarding the modesty of the pair’s relations, Lucibella offers up a reassuring encomium:

Blush not chaste Moone to see a virgin lie  
 So neere a prince, ’tis noe immodestie:  
 For when the thoughts are pure, noe time, noe place  
 Hath power to worke faire chastities disgrace (3.1.889-92).

Lucibella is by this point further defended by the fact that, unknown to her, the reconciliation between the two fathers has confirmed Lodowick as her betrothed.

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<sup>312</sup> Parallel noted by Jowett, notes p. 28.

Ferdinand had previously detained them in his court, and delayed their marriage “till we had notice how the businesse stood.” (1.2.248) However, parental objections are soothed in a chance meeting between Austria, Lucibella’s father, and Saxony, Lodowick’s father, in the hermit’s cell. The hermit Roderick prevents the two Dukes coming to blows and then reveals himself to be Austria’s estranged brother, who had once tried to kill Austria because he “aspir’d your throne” (2.2.601), strongly recalling both *Hamlet* and Seneca’s *Thyestes*. In a flush of magnanimity and general reconciliation, Saxony asks for Austria’s “Princely hand” (2.2.618), and proposes regarding their offspring that:

if as I beleeeue they meane, but honor,  
As it appeareth by these iusts proclaim’d.  
Then thou shalt be content to name him thine,  
And thy faire daughter ile account as mine. (2.2.622-5)

Lucibella’s choice of suitor is thereby rendered utterly harmless. The social transgressiveness of the match derives entirely from the mild dissension between the two fathers. From all other perspectives, this union promises to be socially conservative, perpetuating and indeed strengthening the patriarchal power hegemonies already in existence. Lodowick is not only of the same class as Lucibella, but the blessing of their fathers appears to promise a union that will create a doubly powerful dynasty.

Furthermore, where Hamlet and Ophelia’s love relationship was messy – ambiguous and elusive – relations between Lodowick and Lucibella are hyperbolically loving. Lodowick lavishes Lucibella with compliments that even she finally reproaches for their flagrant flattery.

Lodowick:       [...] the fresh flowers, beguiled by the light  
                           Of your celestiall eyes, open there leaues,  
                           And when they entertaine the lord of day:  
                           You bring them comfort, like the Sunne in May.

Lucibella:       Come, come, you men will flatter beyond meane: (3.1.851-5)

Essentially, Lucibella is held in the high esteem that Ophelia only achieves once her sexualised body is safely lifeless. It is this repressive conclusion that the Jailer's Daughter's narrative actively resists, and Ophelia's death is the only step capable of rendering her the ministering angel of her brother's graveside orations, but Lucibella elicits epithets like "divinest", "celestiall", "heauenly" and "chast" while still alive (3.1.836, 852, 865, 870). Chettle leaves no margin for the kind of critical prurience that Ophelia's more ambiguous sexual status has given rise to. We even have Lucibella's own word that she is a virgin, as in act five she swears "by my troth [...] by my maidenhead" that she will not run away (5.1.1996). In fact, Lucibella is almost allegorically virtuous. She conforms to the high standards of chastity demanded of her by the patriarchal society she moves in, and is one of the "gode saules", one of the saved.

A consequence of this emphasis on Lucibella's essential virtue is that her ballad style reconciliation with her father later on in the scene suffers from a lack of contrast. Lucibella has never fallen far enough out of grace for the audience to truly fear her father's continued wrath, and has been securely integrated into a patriarchal framework throughout the play, recognised by Ferdinand and championed by the two brothers. This is a far cry from the ballad heroines who leave father and hearth for their lovers, and are then as often as not abandoned by

those lovers to find themselves completely locked out of the symbolic order, standing naked on their father's doorsteps in a literal figuration of their ostracised position.<sup>313</sup> The reconciliation of Lucibella with her father is both true to ballad, and fairly redundant, as the audience already knows that Austria is well on the way to appeasement. Nevertheless Austria's benediction remains moving.

Austria: Why speakes my dukedomes hope in hollow sounds?

Looke vp, fayre child heer's *Saxony* and I

Thy father, *Lucibella* looke on me;

I am not angry that thou fled'st away,

But come to grace your nuptials; prithee speake.

Lucibella: Father I thanke you: *Lodowick* reach me thy hand. (3.1.985-90)

This reconciliation goes some way towards reversing the dynamic of the paternal reconciliation in 'Young Andrew' (48) in which the father only forgives his daughter after refusing her entry to his homestead and leaving her to die on his doorstep. Austria's forgiveness predates Lucibella's death, and is part of the mechanism of integration and validation that insists on Lucibella's virtue.

While Chettle's use of ballad material does not aim to subvert the text in the same way as the use of similar material in *Hamlet* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* appears to, it is nevertheless very much in evidence. Following Lucibella's ballad-style reconciliation with her father, Chettle stages a double ballad death, using familiar ballad material as Lucibella asks: "My Lodowick, alas, what means / Your

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<sup>313</sup> See for example the outlaw daughters of 'Earl Brand' (7), 'Erlinton' (8), 'The Fair Flower of Northumberland' (9) (an exception in that the family forgive their daughter and welcome her home after she has been abandoned by her suitor), 'Leesome Brand' (15), 'Bonnie Annie' (24), 'Hind Etin' (41), and 'Young Andrew' (48); F. J. Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* vol.1 (New York: The Folklore Press in association with Paganet Book Company, 1956) All further references to ballads are from this edition.

breast to be thus wet? Is't blood or sweat?" (2.3.840-1) The confusion of a lover's blood for sweat is a frequently recurring scenario in the popular ballads. The heroine of 'Clark Saunders' (69A) sleeps through his death:

She thought it had been a loathsome sweat  
 A wat it had fallen this twa between;  
 But it was the blood of his fair body,  
 A wat his life days wair na lang

'Willy and Lady Maisry' (70A) develops the blood-for-sweat confusion to have the heroine complaining about her lover's perspiration:

'Lye yont, lye yont, Willie,' she says,  
 'Your sweat weets a' my side;  
 Lye yont, lye yont, Willie,' she says,  
 'For your sweat I downa bide.'

Before becoming unconscious, Lucibella requests a ballad burial that lacks only the sympathetic flowers: "Let him and me lie in one bed and grave" (3.1.996). However, before she does so, she makes explicit reference to the couple's meeting again in heaven, a move that is uncharacteristic of the ballads. For while the ballads frequently feature ghosts, fairies, religious figures such as the Virgin Mary, and hell, references to heaven are atypical.<sup>314</sup> As a general rule, death is figured in terms of

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<sup>314</sup> Almost none of the lovers' ballads in volume one or two of the Child ballads make reference to an afterlife. The three exceptions are: 'The Clerk's Twa Sons O Owsenford' (72), 'The Lass of Roch Royale' (version D only) and 'Bonny Bee Hom' (92, version A only. Version A of 'The Clerk's Twa Sons' (72) has the mayor condemn the two brothers to death, boasting to their father that "16. 'It's I've putten them to a deeper lair, / An to a higher schule; / Yere ain twa sons ill no be here / Till

the world, not of the afterlife; the circumstances of departing, and the manner of burial root death in the world rather than as a passage to heaven. A typical ballad ending for star-crossed lovers is therefore:

Sir William he died in the middle o the night,  
 Lady Margaret died on the morrow;  
 Sir William he died of pure pure love,  
 Lady Margaret of grief and sorrow. ('Earl Brand' 7D)

The morrow / sorrow ending is idiomatic in the ballads, and is often followed by growth of intertwining sympathetic flowers out of the lovers' graves, frequently birks and briars. Lucibella's conviction that "we die but part, to meete / Where ioyes are certaine, pleasures endlesse, sweet" (3.1.993-4) reinscribes her in the didactic framework of the play, rather than a ballad context, and the play returns to its literary inheritance as Lodowick hymns his own and Lucibella's passing with a version of Horatio's tribute to Hamlet. "Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." (5.2.364-5) finds itself redressed as:

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the hallow days o Yule." Version C is more explicit; both mother and father *and* the mayor's two daughters die upon the sons' hanging and: "41. These six souls went up to heaven, / I wish sae may we a' / The mighty mayor went down to hell, / For wrong justice and law." Version D of 'The Lass of Loch Royale' has the hero mourn: "32. [...] oer Fair Anny / Till the sun was gaing down, / Then wi a sigh his heart it brast, / An his soul to heaven has flown". And version A of 'Bonny Bee Hom' (92) has: "11. So their twa souls flew up to heaven, / And there shall ever remain."

References to heaven occur proportionally more frequently in the religious, didactic ballads. In 'The Cruel Mother' (20), the mother's murdered children inform her that "heaven's high, / And that's where thou will neer win nigh // 'O cursed mother, hell is deep, / And there thou'll enter step by step." (C10-1) and in version D "now we're in the heavens hie, / And ye've the pains o hell to drie." (11) In 'The Maid and the Palmer' (21) the palmer tells the promiscuous maid: (A13-5) "'Penaunce I can giue thee none, / But 7 yeere to be a stepping-stone. // 'Othere seeaven a clapper ina bell, / Other 7 to lead an ape in hell. // 'When thou hast thy penance done, / The thoust come a mayden home.'" 'Dives and Lazarus' (56) tells the story of the beggar who enters heaven and the rich man who goes to hell. Hell itself is a rather more popular concept. In 'Lord Randall' (12) the hero condemns his true love to "hell and fire" for poisoning him (A10); the hero of 'Edward' (13) similarly condemns his mother: "The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir, / Sic counseils ye gave to me O."

In total therefore, references to heaven occur in only eight of the one hundred and thirteen ballads that comprise the first two volumes of the ballads, and only in some versions of those ballads.

Hover a little longer, blessed soul;  
 Glide not away too fast: mine now forsakes  
 His earthly mansion, and on hope's gilt wings  
 Will gladly mount with thine, where angels sing  
 Celestial ditties to the King of Kings. (2.3.924-8)

Interestingly, the classical conflation of death and marriage is also present; the dead-but-not-really Lucibella is, in Lodowick's words, "a bride for death" (2.3.931) and in Hoffman's mouth (a circumstance that in some way explains the explicit sexual emphasis) she is "new-deflowered by death" (2.3.1039).

However, in resurrecting Lucibella *Hoffman* itself seems to recognise the repressive closure of this classical model of ending. Far from being silenced in death, Lucibella is quickly revived from her *trompe-d'oeuil* "*moritur*" to hasten the story on towards its conclusion, the punishment of vice that Chettle argues is so necessary in *Kind-hart's Dreame*. I have previously argued that ballad-orality and disregard for textual authority allows flexibility with regard to closures, and Lucibella's return from death enacts exactly such a folk-style twist-in-the-tale/tail. Interestingly Meredith comments on just such a phenomenon in the mystery plays, writing of "the retention of what are almost multiple endings for the Mary Play", which suggest that the script was leant out for performance and adaptation.<sup>315</sup> Lucibella's revival is perhaps doubly appropriate in a play that owes so much to a popular genre in which resurrection is central. While Lucibella's narrative fails to offer an alternative discourse to that of Hoffman's revenge tragedy, the play nevertheless resists the conservative ending of killing her. Austria, like many of the

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<sup>315</sup> Meredith ed., *The Passion Play*, p. 3.

ballad fathers, dies upon Lucibella's death, not of a broken heart as with the ballads, but as a victim instead of Hoffman: "*Hoffman stabs him unobserved.*" (s.d.2.3.957)

Resisting the classical conclusion of death, Lucibella emerges from her convalescence into a madness that repeatedly alludes to Ophelia's, and which elaborates on the developing stage-language of female madness which Carol Thomas Neely has argued began to define stage representations of female insanity.<sup>316</sup> This is not a matter of reminiscence, but in some cases of direct reference. Perhaps as the most obvious example, Lucibella's first exit parallels Ophelia's first exit so clearly that it might as well be in quotation marks, despite its comparable verbosity.

*Hamlet:*

*Hoffman:*

*Ophelia:* Good night, ladies, good night.    *Lucibella:* Soe now god-buye, now god-night indeede:

Sweet Ladies, good night, good night.

Lie further *Lodowick*, take not all the roome,

Be not a churle; thy *Lucibell* doth come.

*Exit.*

*(Exit.)*

*King:* Follow her close; give her good    *Saxony:* Follow her, brother; follow, son *Mathias*

watch, I pray you.

Be carefull guardians of the troubled mayd;

*[Exit Horatio.]*

Whiie I conferre with princely *Ferdinand* [sic]

(4.5.72-4)

(4.1.1499-504)

Other close textual parallels abound. Ophelia's "I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i' th' cold ground" (4.5.68-70) is echoed in an exchange between Roderick and Lucibella:

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<sup>316</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, "Documents in Madness": Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture' in Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon Sprengnether eds., *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 80.

Roderick: Yes louely madam, pray be patient.

Lucibella: I so I am, but pray tell me true,

Could you be patient, or you, or you, or you,

To loose a father and a husband too (4.1.1447-50).

In a dynamic similar to Ophelia's the text moves from patience to a remembrance of the dead. Lucibella elides an exchange between Claudius and Ophelia ("King: How do you, pretty lady? / Ophelia: Well, good dild you." 4.5.41-2) to "Lord how dee, well I thanke god" (4.1.1479), and echoes Ophelia's preoccupation with incomplete burial with her own preoccupation with Lodowick and her father's passing. Ophelia's brook and fantastic garlands are paralleled by Lucibella's declaration that she is

going to the riuers side

To fetch white lillies and blew daffadils

To sticke in Lodowicks bosome where it bled (4.1.143-5).

The river-side is an important signifier. Death by accidental drowning remains a constant concern for those that keep Lucibella under surveillance. Mathias fears in act four that

[...] borne by her fits of rage,

She has done violence to her bright frame,

And fall'n upon the bosom of the Balt (4.2.1741-3).

His fear recalls the ballad of 'Fair Annie'(62). One of Fair Annie's children calls his mother away from a wall overlooking the sea strand:

'Come down, come down, my mother dear,  
 Come frae the castle wa!  
 I fear if langer ye stand there,  
 Ye'll let yoursell down fa.

While I have suggested that both Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter follow the ballads of 'Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow, or, The Water o Gamrie' (215) and 'The Mother's Malison, Or, Clyde's Water' (216) in going to the water to seek their missing lovers, Lucibella explicitly states that her aim is to gather flowers. These flowers conflate both Ophelia's flower gathering and the sympathetic flowers of ballad tradition; she aims to stick them in Lodowick's bosom, an idea that recalls the birks and briars growing out of the graves of buried ballad lovers. This recollection of sympathetic flowers is confirmed when Lucibella voices an intention to stick the flowers in her own bosom too, perhaps to confirm that they were "twa lovers dear".

The specific flowers that Lucibella suggests she will gather are themselves interesting. Ophelia's flowers are signs, and are literally significant: "There's rosemary: that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember." (4.5.169-70) Ophelia's flowers are in some ways a distribution of guilt, and often have dual significance. For example, the violets signifying faithfulness in love that "withered all when my father died" could refer either to Ophelia's lapsed faithfulness to her father, or to Hamlet, or indeed Hamlet's lapsed faithfulness to her. Her flowers are loaded with significance and create webs of meaning. Lucibella's flowers sidestep

this ambiguous language and the loaded significance of the flower's that Ophelia both gathers and distributes. As a disambiguated Ophelia, Lucibella's flowers are a sanitised version of Ophelia's controversial "long purples" (4.7.167). The blue daffodils are a fabrication of Lucibella's madness. They fail to engage in the language of flowers that was so suggestive in *Hamlet*, yet perform the work of identifying Lucibella as mad according to developing stage conventions. Lucibella's "white lillies" are noted by Jowett as "i.e. lilies of the valley. A traditional symbol of the Virgin Mary, and hence of purity and innocence."<sup>317</sup> If the flowers work towards any meaning, therefore, it is the chastity of Lucibella; Lucibella's ballad features identify her as virtuous and correspondingly bound up in the overarching moral narrative of vice punished, rather than opening an alternative romance space within that narrative.

Lucibella's prescience with regard to Hoffman's villainy is true to the popular genre of the play as a whole; it is cut from the same cloth as the caretaker's instinctive distrust of Judas in the Cutlers' *Conspiracy* of the York cycle.

Janitor: Say, bittilbrowed bribour, why blowes thou such boste?

Full false in thy face in faith can I fynde.

Thou arte combered in curstnesse and caris to this coste,

To marre men of might haste thou marked in thy minde. (ll.169-72)<sup>318</sup>

Hoffman (*Sart*) impersonating Otho / Luningberg / Charles tells her in her madness that: "Your selfe to kill you selfe were such a sinne / As most diuines hold deadly." (4.1.1468-9) Lucibella responds with uncanny perceptiveness:

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<sup>317</sup> Jowett ed., *Hoffman*, notes p. 42.

<sup>318</sup> York, The Cutler's *Conspiracy* in Walker ed., *Medieval Drama*.

I but a knave may kill one by a trick,  
 Or lay a plot, or soe, or cog, or prate,  
 Make strife, make a mans father hang him,  
 Or his brother, how thinke you goodly Prince,  
 God give you ioy of your adoption;  
 May nor trickes be vsd? (4.1.1470-5)

Lucibella's sense of Hoffman's vice-like, deadly mischief making in tricking one brother into killing another, is compounded by her uncanny foresight. Her reference to adoption refers not only to the mistaken acceptance of Hoffman for Otho but also directly anticipates Martha's later acceptance of Hoffman as a substitute for her son Charles, using the language of christening and adoption.

I here adopt thee myn:e christen thee *Otho*,  
 Mine eyes are now the font, the water teares,  
 That doe baptize thee in thy borrowed name. (4.2.1895-7)

Hoffman maintains his sympathetic front, commenting, "Alas, poor lady" and Lucibella retorts with her first ballad quotation: "Ay that's true, I am poor, and yet haue things, / And gold rings, and amidst the leaves greenea " (4.1.1477-8) Lucibella's treasure again refers with uncanny prescience to the dead Otho's raiment, stashed away in the woods, which Lucibella discovers later.

The movement of this first mad scene as a whole is from a demonstration of Lucibella's pathetic madness, to her own and the audience's realisation of her role as avenging angel and virtuous sleuth. Chettle moves the character from her self-annihilating desire to join Lodowick in heaven ("Open the dore, I must come in,

and will, / I'll beate my selfe to ayre, but Ile come in" 4.1.1455-6) to a vocational sense of her role on earth. Responding to Ferdinand's fear that "she doe violence vpon herselfe", Lucibella reassures him: "O neuer feare me, there is somewhat cries / Within menoe: tels me there's knaues abroad / Bids mee be quiet" (4.1.1489-91). The cries within her recall the belling of hounds on the scent of their prey, an idea that is reintroduced later in the scene when Rodorigo comments that "*Lucibella* like a chafed hinde / Flies through the thickets, and neglects the bryers", pursued by Mathias striving to "[d]efend her from despairing actions." (4.1.1643-4, 1648) Here it is Lucibella that is the subject of the hunt, driven by her madness into the wilderness in a powerfully evoked manifestation of kinetic ballad madness. However, the text also suggests that Rodorigo may be mistaken in his assumption that Lucibella is hunted rather than the hunter. Lucibella seems rather to be quarrying her criminal. She is driven to scale rocks and gains so much distance ahead from Mathias that he cannot guess whether she is climbing up or down "By reason of the distance" (5.1.1929).

The sense that she may be in pursuit rather than pursued is later confirmed when she finds what she is looking for: evidence of wrongdoing in Hoffman's lair. The integrity of Lucibella's madness is destabilized in act four scene one by the idea that is then introduced that she is preparing to use subterfuge to inveigle Hoffman. The "somewhat" that cries within her, bidding her to be quiet, appears also to warn her not to give the game away too soon. She instructs Lodowick's father and brother "Doe but stand here, I'le run a little course / At base, or barley-breake, or some such toye, / To catch the fellow, and come backe againe" (4.1.1494-6). "Barley-breake" occurs in the Jailer's Daughter's mad speech in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; Lois Potter notes that this was:

a country game generally played by three couples, each of which had to keep hand in hand while running; one couple, in the centre of the field, tried to catch the others as they ran past. Like other games of this kind, it was also used metaphorically for sexual coupling (Proudfoot). Because the central space was called 'hell', it can have a double meaning (as, e.g., in Middleton and Rowley, *The Changeling*, 5.3.162-4). The Daughter seems to be explaining that she knows about hell through visiting it during this game.<sup>319</sup>

The game is vividly descriptive of Lucibella's strategy, as she runs wild throughout the latter half of the play trying to catch out Hoffman. Her hell is the liminal wilderness areas she travels through finding evidence of Hoffman's misdeeds, like the gruesome "two leane porters staru'd for lacke of meat" that she finds in act five (5.1.1948). Strict mystery / morality definitions are invoked, as this hell is also indubitably Hoffman's realm. Lucibella's resumption of her mad concerns for the buried Lodowick is subsequently destabilised by her threat to use a toy "[t]o catch the fellow". It is no longer clear whether Lucibella is truly mad or maintaining the appearance of madness in order to protect herself from suspicion. Her role narrows to that of a police-dog on a revenge-tragedy leash, as she sniffs out Hoffman's crimes and the incriminating evidence stashed in the woods, leading the play to its conclusion whilst maintaining the appearance of insanity.

This instability has repercussions for the ballad features of Lucibella's madness. Like Ophelia, Lucibella is given an isolated ballad refrain. However, when Ophelia sings "*A-down a-down, [...] Call him a-down-a*" (4.5.169-70) we are given a ballad context, which is thematically significant. It is Ophelia herself who

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<sup>319</sup> Lois Potter ed., *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, Arden 3 (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1997), notes p. 283.

contextualises it for us: “O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward that stole his master’s daughter.” (4.5.170-1) “The false steward’ may well have been a recognised ballad, and the plot outline of a false steward stealing his master’s daughter suggests a whole group of ballad scenarios in which lower class men make away with upper class maidens. Furthermore, Ophelia’s identification of the ballad may well have suggested a particular melody, building in a whole other musical dimension of referentiality. Lucibella is given the same refrain, building it in to her identification of the path leading down “to death and black destruction” (5.1.1982) or, in other words, Hoffman. The ballad fragment is again of a piece with her pursuit of Hoffman, and does not carry the same discursive force-field as Ophelia’s ballad quotation. It lifts the refrain quite possibly directly from the earlier play, but uses it as a mad embellishment of Lucibella’s pursuit, rather than as part of the fabric of a specific ballad space.

Lucibella’s version of Ophelia’s *‘Tomorrow is Saint Valentine’s Day’* ballad is again integrated into her discovery of the crime and the criminals. She approaches Martha, wearing the apparel her son Otho of Luningberg was murdered in.

A Poore mayden mistris, ha’s a suite to you,

And ’tis a good suite, very good apparel.

*Lo, here I come a-wooing, my ding-ding,*

*Lo, here we come a-suing, my darling,*

*Lo, here I come a-praying, to bide-a, bide-a –*

How doe you Lady, well I thanke God, will you buy

a barganei pray, i’ts fine apparel. (5.1.2048-54)

Like Ophelia's ballad, Lucibella's lyrics introduce a desiring female who pursues the addressee of the song. But Lucibella is acting the travelling tinker, and the ballad fragment is incorporated into this charade rather than opening into a different genre. The ballad fails to reach the same conclusion of intercourse and betrayal as Ophelia's valentine's day song, and therefore fails to make the same wide-reaching implications with regard to sexual double standards. This is both because Lucibella herself is far less a ballad heroine – she has *not* been abandoned by a fickle lover – and because Chettle is not working to build the same subversive ballad space around his female protagonist. It is more that in singing these ballads his character is speaking the language of stage-madness. Nevertheless, this fragment restates the popular, labouring context of the ballad genre; Lucibella, the daughter of a Duke, plays the part of a “[p]oore mayden” trying to sell her wares.

In fact Chettle's failure to capitalise on Ophelia's subversive ballad space in *Hoffman* may reflect Chettle's own personal distaste for both popular and street ballads. In *Kind-harts dreame* he disparages “peddlers [who] brag themselues to be printers because they haue a bundle of ballads in their packe”, and writes that:

I am given to vnderstand, that there be a company of idle youths, loathing honest labour and dispising lawfull trades, betake them to a vagrant and vicious life, in euery corner of Cities & Market Townes of the Realme singing and selling of ballads and pamphletes full of ribaudrie, and all scurrilous vanity, to the prophanation of God's

name, and with-drawing people from Christian exercises, especially at  
 faires markets and such publike meetings [...] <sup>320</sup>

Chettle's antithesis between the singing of ballads and Christian exercise accounts for his reluctance to explore the potential of Ophelia's balladry. If Lucibella were to sing profane or ribald ballads, her status among the ranks of the virtuous would become less secure.

From this point on, Lucibella is increasingly sane. She is Lorrique's most successful interrogator by far, bidding the other nobles to be quiet with the words: "Pray let him tell the rest" and "Nay, I pray you peace" (5.1.2131, 2139). She finishes off his tale of the intrigue behind Lodowick's murder, effectively supplying the punch-line: "To me a sleepe, / And to my harmesleesse Lodowicke in my armes." (5.1.2145-6) Lucibella is also the only member of the group of nobles to question Lorrique's trustworthiness when they employ him as the early modern equivalent of a double agent, asking slyly:

what if

This knaue that has bin, play the knaue still,  
 And tell tales out of schoole; how then? (5.1.2237-9)

Lucibella herself attributes her increasingly steady wits to the quarrying of her victim, explaining that "my wits are mine agen / Now faith growes firme to punish faithlesse men." (5.1.2254-5) In some sense it is her vocation that saves her; her role as an angel of justice provides her with the *raison d'être* that Ophelia lacks. She continues to demonstrate an uncanny prescience that amounts to an otherworldly

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<sup>320</sup> Chettle, *Kind-harts dreame*, sigs. B1r & C1r.

clairvoyance, claiming as she and Rodorick enter, supporting the wounded  
Lorrique:

Looke you here, you maruai'd why I went,  
Why this man drew me vnto him, can you helpe  
Him now. *Hoffman* has hought him too. (5.3.2446-8)

Her sentence upon Lorrique's decease is appropriate to her role as minister of justice; "Well, farewell fellow, thou art now paid home / For all thy counselling in knauery" (5.3.2462-3).

Lucibella's reference to payment recalls Chettle's statement in *Kind-hart's Dreame* that: "vice cannot be reprov'd except it be discovered; neither is it in any play discovered but there follows in the same an example of the punishment." Lucibella's role is deeply implicated in the discovery of the crime; having done so, punishment follows, and the villains are "paid home". Before Hoffman's crowning, she joins his accusers to add her voice to his charges:

Martha: O mercillesse and cruell murtherer

To leaue me childlesse.

Lucibella: And mee husbandlesse.

Mathius: Me brotherlesse. (5.3.2575-8)

At this point the text is corrupt, and finishes with Hoffman's increasingly incoherent curses, which appropriately terminate on the line "and punish true desert with scorn'd death", which again reproduces Chettle's views regarding just deserts (5.3.2618). This play begins in crime and ends in retribution. Revenge, in

the shape of Hoffman, is tried and punished. What we have lost with the ending is a sense of Lucibella and the other nobles' fates. The execution resembles that of *Antonio's Revenge* in which the nobles, including Antonio's mother Maria (who is similarly the object of the villain's desire), all participate in the stabbing of Piero. The charging of Piero's reads like that of Hoffman:

Antonio: My father found no pity in thy blood.

Pandulfo: Remorse was banish'd, when thou slew'st my son.

Maria: When thou empoisoned'st my loving lord,  
Exiled was piety.

Antonio: Now therefore pity, piety, remorse,  
Be alien to our thoughts; grim fire-ey'd rage  
Possess us holy. (5.2.86-92)<sup>321</sup>

*Antonio's Revenge* ends with the nobles vowing to join religious orders and Antonio himself committing to a virgin bed. A similar ending to *Hoffman*, which already has one hermit figure in the shape of Rodorick, seems probable, reintegrating the nobles in the same manner as *Antonio's Revenge* and the earlier *Horestes*. Lucibella's commitment to the same fate as Antonio would certainly provide a neat conclusion to her plot trajectory and her role as a Virtue in the undifferentiated, popular medium of *Hoffman*.

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<sup>321</sup> John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge* (1602) in A. H. Bullen ed., *The Works of John Marston* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887).

## CHAPTER IV:

REVISING OPHELIA; *THE MAID'S TRAGEDY* AND ASPATIA'S

## "UNPRACTICED WAY TO GRIEVE AND DIE."

*The Maid's Tragedy's* Aspatia represents a significant development of the Ophelia type in early modern drama. Both play and heroine are markedly 'literary', and the play is a far cry from the popular romp of *Hoffman*. Indeed, Aspatia marks a departure from popular tradition; where *Hamlet* instates a popular ballad heroine who to a certain extent – less deliberately and certainly less distinctly – also prevails in *Hoffman*, itself a popular play, Beaumont and Fletcher's representation of Aspatia pursues not Ophelia's ballad allegiances but the classical associations of the character. This is a play that insists on a tradition of abandoned women continuous with classical myth and legend: Oenone, Dido and Ariadne are all summoned by the heroine as expressions of her own story. Where the slightly later *Two Noble Kinsmen* amplifies the folk associations of its heroine to ultimately save her from the repressively conservative classical ending of death, *The Maid's Tragedy* and subsequently John Ford's *The Broken Heart* diverge to follow the classical aspects of the tradition through to their damaging conclusions.

This is not to say that *The Maid's Tragedy* is uncritical of this classical paradigm; the play is, throughout, deeply engaged with issues of literary precedent and revision. Its textual relationship with *Hamlet* is an uneasy and agonistic one, as the play competitively strives to outdo and expose its Shakespearean precedent.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> In contrast to *Hoffman*, *The Maid's Tragedy's* textual relationship with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has attracted considerable attention. Daniel M. McKeithan and Donald J. McGinn both published books in 1938 that assembled parallels between the two plays. McKeithan lists fifteen specific

H. Neville Davies hints at this competitive dynamic in ‘Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Hamlet*’:

The sheer pervasiveness of the *Hamlet* presence provokes a lively relationship, one that appeals to a sophisticated literary response, to develop between the two plays [...] The dramatists do not idly “fall back” on Shakespeare’s play – they rewrite it as Aspatia would the Ariadne story, since they are revisionists not plagiarists, and the new scene outrageously develops its original.<sup>323</sup>

As Davies’ comments imply, Aspatia herself is both symptom and symbol of this competitive intertextual relationship, and is emblematic of an agonistic project of revision. Like the playwrights, she engages in a work of retelling as she seeks “Some yet unpracticed way to grieve and die.” (2.1.101) Her imperative to find an original way to die simultaneously expresses an imperative towards literary originality on the part of the authors; her quest figures their own work of literary revision, and it is through Aspatia that the strangely painful nature of this relationship is felt. The perceived constraints imposed on the tale are figured in the case of Aspatia as a masochistic relationship in which the price for originality is

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points of comparison between the closet scene in *Hamlet* and the confrontation between Melantius and Evadne in *The Maid’s Tragedy* alone; Daniel M. McKeithan, *The Debt to Shakespeare in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays* (New York: AMS Press, 1938, rept. 1970), pp. 44-8; see also Donald J McGinn, *Shakespeare’s Influence on the Drama of his Age Studied in Hamlet* (New York: Octagon, 1938 rept. 1965). More recently, H. Neville Davies has written on the parallels between the two plays. He notes the consonance between ‘The Mousetrap’ in *Hamlet* and the masque in *The Maid’s Tragedy*, and recognises character correspondences between Claudius and the King, Hamlet and Evadne, and Ophelia and Aspatia. H. Neville Davies, ‘Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Hamlet*’, in Kenneth Muir, Jay L. Halio and D. J. Palmer eds., *Shakespeare: Man of the Theatre* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983) Lisa Hopkins has also written on the Hamlet / Evadne, Ophelia / Aspatia alignment in “‘A place privileged to do men wrong’: The Anxious Masculinity of *The Maid’s Tragedy*’ in Andrew P. Williams ed., *The Image of Manhood in Early Modern Literature: Viewing the Male* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999) 55-72, at p. 69.

<sup>323</sup> Davies, ‘Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Hamlet*’, p. 178. Davies does not comment further on the connection between Aspatia and the dramatists as revisionists.

inscribed on her flesh with sword-wounds when she ultimately finds her “unpracticed way” to take her life.<sup>324</sup>

The immediate implications of this masochistic relationship for the Ophelia / Aspatia narrative are fairly clear. Aspatia’s awareness of the trajectory of the Ophelia narrative that she has been placed upon by Amintor’s rejection and also by her own desperate attempts to conform to and outdo that narrative lay bare the very structure of the inherited role, inviting both comment on and dialogue with the Ophelia-type. It is the gap that exists between her understanding of the role and the enaction of it that she is able to achieve which subverts the Ophelia-type, as the tension generated by Aspatia’s struggle to meet what she knows to be required of her exposes the cruelties and the dead end of the type. This dead-end becomes the central preoccupation of the Aspatia narrative, and one of the main points of contention between the two plays. Aspatia pursues death, because she knows it to be the teleological goal of the forsaken woman narrative. But this imperative to quarry death exposes the fact that death itself is not inevitable, and highlights the paucity of alternative endings for this literary character. A close intertextual reading of Aspatia’s character with Ophelia is a two-way revelation with regard to the character-type, illuminating the oppressive structures of the one with the struggles of the other.

The implications of Aspatia’s experience of the revisionist project as a masochistic enterprise are more difficult to identify when it comes to the Shakespeare / Beaumont and Fletcher relationship, and I think it would take a different type of study than the one I am engaged in here to fully understand them. Nevertheless, perhaps the emphasis on women’s position as *commodity*, overtly

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<sup>324</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1622?) ed. Howard B. Norland (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1968). All further references are to this edition. I have also consulted Martin Wiggins ed., *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies: The Insatiate Countess, The Maid’s Tragedy, The Maiden’s Tragedy and The Tragedy of Valentinian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

demonstrated in this play by both Evadne and Aspatia, goes some way towards explaining the correspondence. Cristina Leon Alfar has argued with regard to Evadne that women are represented in the theatre as capable of making choices that are irrevocably masochistic because, as non-agents and merchandise, they only fulfil the desire of another. Evadne's choices, Alfar argues, are made from within the position of property, the position of not being for herself but for another.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, I would argue that Aspatia makes decisions and identifications from within the position of property. The death she forces Amintor to inflict upon her is in many ways a literalisation of the social death he has already inflicted by breaking his engagement with her. Her value as a marketable / marriageable good has been nullified, and her death-wish is complicit with a social structure that perceives an unmarried woman to be without worth. There is no other destiny available to her. This is mimetic of early modern women's social position, perhaps particularly in the upper echelons of society. As Retha Warnicke writes: "young Protestant females had their future mapped out for them in the words, 'women to be married,' for no other occupation was possible for them, the last of the English nunneries having been dissolved at the accession of Elizabeth."<sup>326</sup> The convent ending that I posited in chapter three as a possible fate for Lucibella was no longer available to early modern women. The suicide ending of the Ophelia type serves the convenience of a patriarchal social world. Precluded from marriage by failed engagements, formal or otherwise, Ophelia and Aspatia's deaths can be read as ridding society of a commodity that has lost its use-value. What originally appears to be Aspatia's own project of literary outdoing is ultimately revealed as

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<sup>325</sup> Cristina Leon Alfar, 'Staging the feminine performance of desire: Masochism in *The Maid's Tragedy*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, vol. 31:3 (1995). Alfar does not extend her discussion to a consideration of Aspatia.

<sup>326</sup> Retha Warnicke, 'Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in Early Stuart England', in Jean R. Brink ed. *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, vol. 23 (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1993), p. 133.

emphatically non-authorial, directed as it is by the mores of a patriarchal society and a patriarchal plot in which the true authors, Beaumont and Fletcher are complicit.

Is it possible to extend this analysis to a consideration of the position of the play itself as a commodity within the marketplace, presumably worked upon by market demands and imperatives? If we can conceive of the play as a response to an external demand for plays 'like *Hamlet*' then this sense of frustration at working to template and the experience of this relationship with *Hamlet* as predecessor as a harmfully masochistic process may perhaps be more readily understood. This is not to suggest that *The Maid's Tragedy* is in some way a joyless play; its developments are exuberantly wicked ("A maidenhead, Amintor, at my years!" 2.1.173). Yet the representation of Aspatia is an inexplicably uneasy one, that has riled twentieth century critics to a level of frustration that does not seem entirely consonant with their subject. Davies writes, for example, that "[i]t is as though *The Maid's Tragedy* were subversively inviting us to consider unsentimentally what it would really have been like at Elsinore to have had the jilted Ophelia continuously making a show of herself"; critics such as Alexander Leggatt, William Shullenberger and Ronald Huebert have voiced a similar exasperation.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Davies, 'Beaumont and Fletcher's *Hamlet*', p. 179. Other examples include William W. Appleton who writes that: "Aspatia's grief is genuine, but its profundity is open to question. Dr. Johnson's historic doubt on the validity of Milton's lament for *Lycidas* ("where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief") apply even more aptly to Aspatia's preoccupation with the accessories of sorrow." *Beaumont and Fletcher: A Critical Study* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1956), pp. 40-1. Ronald Huebert comments, "[o]f course Aspatia is guilty of obsessive preoccupation with the past, of self-conscious posturing, of deliberate flirtation with death." "An Artificial Way to Grieve": The Forsaken Woman in Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford, *ELH* 44:4 (1977) 601-621, at p. 609. William Shullenberger considers that Aspatia's scene-setting short-circuits the "cathartic flow of tragedy. Whereas tragedy produces pleasure for its audience through the grief of its protagonist, Aspatia wishes to please herself by producing grief in her audience"; "This For the Most Wrong'd of Women": A Re-appraisal of *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Renaissance Drama* n.s.13 (1982) 131-156, at p. 153. Alexander Leggatt identifies Aspatia as the title character, but describes her as suffering a "decent into bathos". He writes that her grief is "consciously artificial", and adds that "[s]he is an artist in grief, and knows it." *English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration 1590-1660* (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1988), p. 205.

What this body of criticism is responding to is, I believe, Aspatia's failed role as revisionist. Alice Ostriker discusses the feminist conviction that women writers need to be *voleuses de langue*, to "[s]eize speech' and make it say what we mean." She writes of the potentially transformative influence of reclaimed myths:

Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist. That is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends: the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible.<sup>328</sup>

In *The Maid's Tragedy* the potential to revise myth, specifically what has become the Ophelia myth, is emphatically *not* realised. Aspatia attempts to revise her role, yet her experience of it is ultimately one of circumscription. She revises the details whilst remaining a slave to the narrative's suicidal outcome. Cultural change, if it occurs at all, works towards repressive ends in *The Maid's Tragedy*, reinforcing the suicide ending where the later *Two Noble Kinsmen* overcomes it.

This circumscription is undoubtedly a literary phenomenon. As I have shown earlier, the popular ballads and tales can alter the story in the direction of cultural change. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* reforms the Ophelia-narrative through the robust popular ballad medium, and releases its Ophelia-type from suicide. For Aspatia,

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<sup>328</sup> Alice Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking' in Elaine Showalter ed., *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1989), p. 315, quoting Adrienne Rich, 'The Burning of Paper Instead of Children', in *Poems: Selected and New 1950-1974* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974) p. 151, and Ostriker, 'Thieves', p. 317.

however, it replays as it has been written. She is in the same position as Circe in Margaret Atwood's *Circe / Mud Poems*, cited by Ostriker:

It's the story that counts. No use telling me this isn't a story, or not the same story ... Don't evade, don't pretend you won't leave after all: you leave in the story and the story is ruthless.<sup>329</sup>

This is a consummately literate understanding of 'story', and one which is encoded by Antiphila when, asked by Aspatia to rework her embroidery of the Theseus and Ariadne narrative to accommodate a different ending, she objects: "I will wrong the story" (2.2.45).

Of course, at a very basic level of explanation, Aspatia is not a writer but is *written*, and this position is mimetic of social circumstances. Literary achievement in the early modern period was, with few exceptions, a masculine preserve. While women were indeed written about, they were very rarely writers and ultimately Aspatia is merely a pawn in a male-authored plot. Nevertheless, the fact that Beaumont and Fletcher chose to figure the process of revision itself through the female Aspatia perhaps indicates how Beaumont and Fletcher conceived of their own process of revision. In *Textual Intercourse* Jeffrey Masten discusses how contemporary discourse concerning what we now term "authorship" was engaged in a complex negotiation between notions of a "patriarchal-absolutist paradigm of agonistic authorship" and a model of collaboration that was often expressed in the sexually valenced language of male friendship literature. This is exemplified most clearly by Masten's study of the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio which, while attributing dual authorship was published within a: "regime of textuality

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<sup>329</sup>Ibid, p. 316.

increasingly focussed on a fathering single author.” As Masten demonstrates, the Folio’s preliminary materials such as its prefatory poems posit problematic formulations of collaboration which frequently collapse into a rhetoric of the mysterious and incomprehensible (Jo Pettus’ “strange initimable Intercourse” which “Transcends all Rules”, for example), and which often simultaneously express the eulogising poet’s own authorial endeavours in terms of a singular poetics. This negotiation of models of authorship is further complicated by the introduction of a third party. Masten cites Aston Cokain’s objection that Massinger was not acknowledged as the third collaborator in the Folio’s plays. Yet, as Masten notes: “three masculines may be [...] unrepresentable in the available languages of textual intercourse and reproduction.”<sup>330</sup>

In fact, a later paradigm of three-way interaction has already been discussed in this thesis. *The Two Noble Kinsmen’s* prologue engages in a sexualised narrative of three-way masculine interaction between an inseminating Chaucer and the inseminated Shakespeare-Fletcher (female) matrix.<sup>331</sup> The prologue’s protestation of inadequacy (“it were an endlesse thing, / And too ambitious to aspire to him; / Weak as we are”) occurs within a gendered context, an association that is repeated in John Harris’ prefatory poem to the collaboratively authored Beaumont and Fletcher folio also cited by Masten. It is addressed to Fletcher and attributes to the deceased author the masculinely-imagined inspiration for the poem:

And but thy Male wit like the youthfull Sun

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<sup>330</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 140, 131, 153-4.

<sup>331</sup> Masten argues that the spelling of “wrighter” in this prologue reminds us of the playwrights’ status as artisan collaborators in the playhouse and that the all-male theatrical company of craftsmen that “collaboratively husbands the play” is foregrounded. Nevertheless, I think there is still a place for considering the prologue of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as a response to a three-way collaboration. Masten does not discuss the prologue in this context. Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, p. 57.

Strangely begets upon our passion,  
 Making our sorrow teeme with Elegie,  
 Thou yet unwept, and yet unprais'd might'st be.

He associates his dependence on Fletcher's inseminating influence with a female generativity that begets:

imperfect births; and such are all  
 Produc'd by causes not univocall,  
 The scapes of Nature, Passives being unfit  
 And hence our verse speakes only Mother wit.

Harris genders his own activity in the writing as feminine; he is passively responsive to the engendering male wit. As Masten notes, Harris is not content with this feminine position of subordination and longs "for a fit o' the Father! for a Spirit / That might but parcel of thy worth inherit". Yet as Masten observes, this longing for a fit of masculine productivity is founded by its construction as a response to an inseminating male genius, again invoking the dull female matrix of the persona's own wit.<sup>332</sup>

Notably, then, inadequacy as a response to literary predecessors is figured as a feminine passivity in these paradigms of authorial influence. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that *Aspatia* is an expression of the playwright's own perceived position as the passive feminine term in the generation of the text of *The Maid's Tragedy*. *Aspatia* expresses an urge to outdo her literary forebears that gestures towards the emergent models of agonistic, competitive authorship, whilst

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid, pp. 140-1.

simultaneously requiring a collaborator to achieve her aim. Ultimately her death is an assisted suicide, as she tricks Amintor into the position of accomplice. If Amintor and Aspatia at this moment in some sense figure the collaborative work of the play, the third term of Shakespearean precedent is perhaps witnessed in the frustrated sense of circumscription and limitation. The dictated boundaries of the piece are most explicitly registered by Aspatia's narrative, but are perhaps latent in the play as a whole. It is within this framework then that Aspatia's significance is best understood. Her position as revisionist certainly compounds our sense of her as a literary Ophelia moving beyond the protective potential of the ballad medium. She is increasingly aligned with a masochistic male project of revision that sets her on her fatal trajectory as if to do otherwise would "wrong the story". And yet, it is her very conformism to the Ophelia role, and the masochism that that conformism reveals, that is ultimately most radical. Like *The Broken Heart's* Penthea, her radical conformism troubles our acceptance of the Ophelia role as a legitimate model for women, and simultaneously challenges the wider social framework of biological determinism that offers women only one role: that of wife and mother.

**“[S]trive to make me look / Like Sorrow's Monument”: Aspatia's artistry of  
grief**

Like Ophelia's position in *Hamlet*, this play begins with the interdiction of love for Aspatia, rather than the initiation of the love affair. Aspatia is described in the list of 'Speakers' as "*troth-plight wife to Amintor*"; the strength of the word 'wife' here indicates the perceived hold of such commitments in Renaissance England. Florence Ali discusses this in relationship to Penthea in *The Broken Heart*, arguing

that the Jacobean regarded betrothal as being a contract that was as binding as marriage.<sup>333</sup> Aspatia's engagement to Amintor has been broken off by the King, who has instead commanded that Amintor marry Evadne. Amintor himself seems to have raised little objection; on his way to his new bride's bed, he confesses his own complicity:

I did that lady wrong; methinks I feel  
 Her grief shoot suddenly through all my veins.  
 [He weeps]  
 Mine eyes run: this is strange at such a time.  
 It was the King first moved me to't, but he  
 Has not my will in keeping. (2.1.104-8)

With the additional innuendo of both genitalia and sexual appetite that dogs the word "will", Amintor's "will" takes on the double meaning of desire as well as determination or purpose. The text is keen to emphasise Evadne's compelling sexual charms.<sup>334</sup> She is a

lady, [...]

That bears the light above her, and strikes dead  
 With flashes of her eye (1.1.74-6).

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<sup>333</sup> Florence Ali, *Opposing Absolutes: Conviction and Convention in John Ford's Plays*, *Jacobean Drama Studies* 44 (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und literature, Universität Salzburg, 1974); Ali cites G. H. Blayney, 'Convention, Plot and Structure in *The Broken Heart*', *Modern Philology* 56:1 (1958) 1-9; A. Brissenden, 'Impediments to Love': A Theme in John Ford', *Renaissance Drama* 7 (1964), 95-102; D. P. Harding, 'Elizabethan Betrothals and *Measure for Measure*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 49 (1950) 139-158; R. Ornstein and P. Ure, 'Marriage and the Domestic Drama in Heywood and Ford', *English Studies* 32 (1951) 200-216.

<sup>334</sup> As Masten writes: "'Will' was a capacious signifier in early modern English, referring to '(a) 'one's will,' what one wishes to have or do ... (b) the auxiliary verb indicating futurity and / or purpose ... (c) lust, carnal desire ... (d) the male sex organ ... (e) the female sex organ'"; *Textual Intercourse*, p. 35, citing Stephen Booth ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 466.

Aspatia's broken engagement is attributed not least in part to Amintor's unfaithfulness. She has in a very real sense been forsaken by her lover and has not simply fallen foul of regal policy.

The text re-enacts the public nature of the wrong done to Aspatia at every available opportunity. The first scene depicts the newly-returned Melantius walking straight into the tremendous faux-pas of supposing Aspatia to be the bride of the day. Not having heard of the broken engagement, and the new pairing of Amintor and Evadne, he greets Aspatia as: "maid and wife!" and wishes that

the holy knot

That thou hast tied today last till the hand  
Of age undo't. (1.1.56-8)

To add insult to injury he ends with the hope that their marriage will be fruitful enough to people an army:

mayst thou bring a race

Unto Amintor that may fill the world  
Successively with soldiers. (1.1.59-64)

This humiliating misrecognition is the first in a number of hurtful ironies. Aspatia's father, for example, has to steward Amintor and Evadne's wedding feast. As he himself comments:

I might have made room at my daughter's wedding; they ha' near killed  
 her amongst them. And now I must do service for him that hath  
 forsaken her. Serve that will! (1.2.16-8)

Stewarding a wedding feast that should have been his daughter's, Calianax's sense of conspiracy ("they ha' near killed her amongst them") witnesses to the public nature of the slight. The broken engagement, prompted and abetted by the King, creates an 'us' and a 'them', a vulnerable father as well as daughter, whose broken betrothal also signifies a failure to secure homosocial kinship bonds on the increasingly disempowered father's part. Lisa Hopkins argues that Calianax's failing potency reveals male networks in this society to be structured and underpinned by the possessing and "othering" of women. Having failed to secure kinship bonds to another family through his daughter's marriage, Calianax is rendered an increasingly impotent and undermined old man, who is finally dismissed as senile by court and king.<sup>335</sup>

This sense of public humiliation for Aspatia in particular is next encountered helping to undress Evadne for Amintor's bed. When Evadne and Dula draw attention to Aspatia's lack of mirth, she answers:

It were a timeless smile should prove my cheek:  
 It were a fitter hour for me to laugh  
 When at the altar the religious priest  
 Were pacifying the offended powers  
 With sacrifice, than now. This should have been

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<sup>335</sup>Hopkins, 'Anxious Masculinity', p. 63. Davies usefully notes the resemblance between Calianax and Polonius in this respect: "Like Polonius he has a daughter, rejected by the man who has offered her marriage, the Hamlet figure of the play, and who reacts, like Ophelia, with behaviour that embarrasses the court"; Beaumont and Fletcher's *Hamlet*, p. 179.

My rite, and all your hands have been employ'd

In giving me a spotless offering

To young Amintor's bed. (2.1.41-47)

Dramatically, this disrobing scene says the same thing twice. The situation in which Aspatia helps to prepare Evadne for her own ex-fiancé's bed is already a painfully charged scenario. Were pathos all that were required, the dramatists need have done no more. However, while the situation in the disrobing scene in *The Maid's Tragedy* is intrinsically excruciating, Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate that Aspatia is subjectively aware that it is excruciating and so affirm the consciousness of harm that is central to their portrayal of Aspatia. When she is wounded, it is always in the full knowledge that she is wounded, a dynamic that her reaction to Melantius' misrecognition of her as Amintor's bride in the first scene ("My hard fortunes / Deserve not scorn, for I was never proud / When they were good." 1.1.63-5) sets up perfectly.

Crucially, from the very first scene's identification of Aspatia as a forsaken woman, the parameters of that role are clearly marked out. She is described with absolute clarity as one who is pining to death, and the conservative ending of the Ophelia type is always kept in view. Melantius calls her Calianax's "neglected daughter", and despite the fact that the account of Aspatia's behaviour that Melantius has received does not suggest that Aspatia *will* die, only that she is given to *enacting* death, Melantius later tells Amintor that "A lady mourns for thee, men say to death, / Forsaken of thee, on what terms I know not." (1.1.89, 1.1.136-7) Melantius' understanding of what the Ophelia role entails is echoed by Calianax who, in his complaint that he must officiate at Amintor and Evadne's wedding feast, not only describes the young people as killing his daughter amongst them (as

discussed above), but describes Evadne herself as one “That brings mine own child to timeless death.” (1.2.53-4) The teleology of the role is clearly public knowledge.

That Aspatia is identified both by the text and herself as Ophelia-esque is left in no doubt by Lysippus’ description. His speech is saturated in references to the Ophelia paradigm, and is worth quoting in full for its comprehensive delineation of behaviours expected of the Ophelia type.

[...] this lady

Walks discontented with her wat’ry eyes  
 Bent on the earth. The unfrequented woods  
 Are her delight, and when she sees a bank  
 Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh  
 Will tell her servants what a pretty place  
 It were to bury lovers in, and make her maids  
 Pluck ‘em and strow her over like a corse.  
 She carries with her an infectious grief  
 That strikes all her beholders; she will sing  
 The mournful’st things that ever ear hath heard,  
 And sigh, and sing again, and when the rest  
 Of our young ladies in their wanton blood  
 Tell mirthful tales in course that fill the room  
 With laughter, she will with so sad a look  
 Bring forth a story of the silent death  
 Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief  
 Will put in such a phrase, that ere she end,  
 She’ll send them weeping one by one away. (1.1.89-107)

A very clear picture of the Ophelia role emerges here. Aspatia's watery eye recalls Ophelia's own "I cannot choose but weep" (4.5.68-9). Aspatia is, like Ophelia, the Jailer's Daughter and Lucibella, drawn to pastoral and isolated settings, liminal areas of bank and woodland. Beaumont and Fletcher also replay Ophelia's association with flowers. A difference lies in the class status of the two heroines. Aspatia is attended by servants (who, tellingly, she frequently addresses as "wenches") whereas Ophelia is consistently seen in power relationships that place her at a disadvantage, a social status that is exaggerated in the later Jailer's Daughter.<sup>336</sup> Nevertheless, Aspatia is socially disruptive in the same way as Ophelia and the Jailer's Daughter. Her "infectious grief" carries with it a semi-echo of the "dangerous conjectures" Horatio fears that Ophelia will strew in "ill-breeding minds" (*Ham* 4.5.15), and both characters are regarded as contaminating.

Like Ophelia, Lucibella and the Jailer's Daughter, Aspatia is credited with singing pathetic songs, but is additionally identified as a story-teller. This is crucial. Aspatia engages in narrating fictions, original or otherwise, that both gesture towards a literary community of "forsaken virgin[s]" like herself and simultaneously frame and locate her in this literary paradigm. Like her authors, she is a story-teller working self-consciously with(in) an established 'type'. Aspatia's sanity, the one deviation from the Ophelia-type that her authors make, is significant. Aspatia is alert to each and every cruelty of her position. This consciousness of harm is symptomatic of the play's sophisticated response to literary precedent; its knowingness is embodied in its anguished but clear-eyed protagonists. Aspatia's sanity parallels that of Amintor, who considers "I should be glad, / If all this tide of grief would make me mad." (3.2.289-90) Aspatia's right

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<sup>336</sup> Aspatia refers to her attendants as "wenches" at 2.2.5, 2.2.10, 2.2.26, 2.2.28, 2.2.45, 2.2.50 and 2.2.64.

mind is an alert, intelligent and fully conscious one, and she knows exactly which part she has been given; she is just searching for the right way to play it.

Her understanding of her role is, moreover, one that insists on death as its objective. It is not only the other characters who identify her as one who mourns to death, but Aspatia herself who frames her narrative in this way. As she leaves the bedroom of Evadne and Amintor, her valediction is final:

Ladies, farewell; as soon as I am dead,  
 Come all and watch one night about my hearse;  
 Bring each a mournful story and a tear  
 To offer at it when I go to earth;  
 With flattering ivy clasp my coffin round;  
 Write on my brow my fortune; let my bier  
 Be borne by virgins that shall sing by course  
 The truth of maids, and perjuries of men. (2.1.77-84)

Aspatia's farewell not only harks back to many elements of Shakespeare's representations of Ophelia, but also looks forward to some of the additional material in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Her description gestures towards a female, oral community of story tellers and ballad singers; the virgins that will sing "by course" (by heart) stories of other faithful women and unfaithful men recall the countless ballad narratives of forsaken women discussed in chapters one and two, and anticipate the Jailer's Daughter's "bevy [of] / A hundred black-eyed maids that love as I do" (*TINK* 4.1.71-2). And yet Aspatia is very much in control of the production of *her* story; there will be no collaborative, community cure. Rather, Aspatia's valediction to the women prescribes the terms of her burial, specifically

asking that her fortune be written on her brow. It is a striking image of her role being written on her flesh, and gestures towards the peculiar understanding that Beaumont and Fletcher attribute to this character of herself as written upon, both in the sense of written about as one fiction in a long line of fictions, and as somehow receiving Beaumont and Fletcher's narrative itself scored upon her body.

Although she is a would-be revisionist, Aspatia is formidably committed to the deadly ending of the forsaken woman narrative. Her demands that the women come and keep wake at her hearse are not structured conditionally; her future death is a grammatical certainty. It is a syntactical move that Aspatia repeats when she encounters Amintor, and greets him with the imperative:

You'll come, my lord, and see the virgins weep  
 When I am laid in earth, though you yourself  
 Can know no pity. (2.1.94-5)

She does not allow her story to have any other possible outcome, even though her comment that Amintor will know no pity seems to be angling at another effect. As countless ballad narratives as well as the antics of a certain Danish prince demonstrate, the graveside is exactly the place at which recalcitrant lovers *do* show pity, and indeed *The Maid's Tragedy* follows close suit with the deathbed reconciliation of Amintor and Aspatia. However, Aspatia has to get there first, and death does not come automatically in this play. Even the mighty Melantius is unable to die at will: "I never did / Repent the greatness of my heart till now;" he laments, "it will not burst at need." (5.3.273-5) His comments resonate with an age of dramatic innocence in which the heart of a character such as King Lear literally breaks with grief. *The Maid's Tragedy* does not exist in such an age, and its characters

have to work at death. Aspatia leaves Amintor on his way to his marriage bed with prayers and the statement that “I [...] must try / Some yet unpractised way to grieve and die.” (2.1.100-1) It is the trying, the process, that is the problem.

Kathleen McLuskie writes that Aspatia’s “mournful presence on stage places her in the long line of [...] victims, from ‘the nymph Oenone / When Paris brought home Helen’ to Dido and Ariadne.”<sup>337</sup> However, it is Aspatia herself who invokes this literary heritage, summoning the presences of all three classical heroines. Chastening her attendants to be sad, she critiques and directs their grieving looks according to these literary precedents:

That downcast of thine eye, Olympias,  
Shows a fine sorrow; mark, Antiphila,  
Just such another was the nymph Oenone’s  
When Paris brought home Helen. Now a tear,  
And then thou art a piece expressing fully  
The Carthage Queen when from a cold sea rock,  
Full with her sorrow, she tied fast her eyes  
To the fair Trojan ships, and, having lost them,  
Just as thine does, down stole a tear. (2.2.17-25)

Aspatia’s understanding of her own situation as a forsaken woman is emphatically literate. Her examples create a continuum of literary abandoned women that reaches from the classics to early modern literature; Marlowe’s *Dido, Queene of Carthage* is very much in view, as well as Ovid’s *Heroides* and Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Our interpretive framework is preordained by Aspatia’s own work of framing. Her

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<sup>337</sup> Kathleen McLuskie, *Renaissance Dramatists* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 197.

behaviour is strangely coercive, as she models or sculpts her waiting women into appropriate postures of grief. She commands Antiphila to “mark” Olympias’ “fine sorrow” like an art historian or literary critic directing a student’s attention, and her prompting of Olympias’ tears, her urge to adjust the tableau before her as one might touch up a painting, betrays a restless, revisionist instinct that is highly pertinent to Beaumont and Fletcher’s own project. When Aspatia tells Evadne that should she find herself forsaken, she should come to Aspatia who will teach her “an artificial way to grieve / To keep your sorrow waking” (2.1.72-4) we get some sense of the way in which Aspatia regards the fulfilment of her own role as a work of artifice, a project of great skill.

Aspatia’s revisionist urges are more explicitly realised in her direction of Antiphila’s needlework. Aspatia’s commission is a needlework portrayal of Ariadne and Theseus, and again her attitude to the piece gestures towards the revisionist work of Beaumont and Fletcher. Angered by the “cozening face” (2.2.42) of Theseus, Aspatia asks first:

Does not the story say his keel was split,  
 Or his masts spent, or some kind rock or other  
 Met with his vessel? (2.2.35-7)

Finding that the story denies her a suitably satisfactory ending, she charges Antiphila to embroider

a quicksand,  
 And over it a shallow smiling water,  
 And his ship plowing it, and then a Fear:

Do that Fear to the life, wench. (2.2.54)

Antiphila's objection to Aspatia's demands is a literate one. She understands that the story should have a particular end, and considers that to change the ending will "wrong the story" (2.2.57). Aspatia's answer returns us to the idea of the different relationships to authority that oral and literate traditions inhabit. Aspatia insists that her new ending "will make the story, wrong'd by wanton poets, / Live long and be believ'd." (2.2.59) As Antiphila is not in fact writing anything down, but is embroidering the story in a visual representation, Aspatia's comment at first seem to lift the tale entirely out of the literate realm. The idea that this embroidered version will secure both the story's longevity and its credibility gestures towards a female-governed oral story-telling heritage, reminiscent of the ballad corpus, in which endings may change, and in which men may receive supernatural punishment for their infidelities, as in the ballad of 'Burd Isabel and Earl Patrick' (257). And yet this embroidered version is visual and fixed, not oral and flexible, and Aspatia would not, apparently, condone subsequent alteration. Her version is the right, true version that has been wronged by wanton poets, and therein lies its restored credibility. Her new, authorized version, like a truly literate printed artefact, is to be the last of the story's mutations, an Aspatia production, perhaps renamed *Theseus Must Die*. Aspatia is a long way from notions of Ophelia's flexible, oral, popular ballad context.

This fixedness of narrative intent is reflected in the emphasis on statues that occurs in this scene. Aspatia's direction and critique of Antiphila's posture betrays the attitude of a sculptor, and this theme literally solidifies around Aspatia as she poses the rhetorical question of what Dido would do if she were Aspatia: "Here she would stand till some more pitying god / Turned her to marble." (2.2.27-8)

This metamorphosis is, in Aspatia's case, a dangerous one; the mutation of revising sculptor to revised statue is lethal, and this is the contradiction at the heart of Aspatia's character. The story she attempts to direct closes round her. It is a move that is repeated as Aspatia comments on Antiphila's embroidery. Having commissioned an alternative ending that involves Theseus ploughing into quicksand facing a personification of "Fear", Aspatia turns to Ariadne, and tells Antiphila to rework the embroidery.

Do it by me,

Do it again, by me, the lost Aspatia,  
 And you shall find all true but the wild island.  
 Suppose I stand upon the sea beach now,  
 Mine arms thus, and mine hair blown with the wind,  
 Wild as that desert. And let all about me  
 Tell that I am forsaken. Do my face,  
 If thou hadst ever feeling of a sorrow,  
 Thus, thus, Antiphila; strive to make me look  
 Like sorrow's monument. And the trees about me,  
 Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks  
 Groan with continual surges; and behind me  
 Make all a desolation. Look, look, wench,  
 A miserable life of this poor picture.      (2.2.52-65)

The passage begins in Aspatia's forwarding of herself as a model for the revised embroidery of Ariadne. She moves, then, from a description of herself re-imagined and reconceived as Ariadne with her hair being blown around on the beach (a

notably mobile image, and one that recalls the “*hair downe*” of Ophelia) to a work of definition. Her surroundings must visually “tell” in a kind of emblematic writing that she is forsaken, and Aspatia herself becomes a personification of sorrow in much the same style as the embroidered personification of “Fear” is rendered in Theseus’ tableau. The identities of Ariadne and Aspatia are, furthermore, no longer distinct. Aspatia moves from a command that Antiphila “do” the embroidery of Ariadne “by me”, to commands to simply embroider Aspatia herself: “let all about *me* / Tell that *I* [not Ariadne] am forsaken” (italics mine), she commands. Aspatia’s identification with previous suicidal heroines petrifies around her. Aspatia’s command that Antiphila make *her* (not, by this point, Ariadne) “look / Like sorrow’s monument” replicates the earlier transition whereby the artist or revisionist herself becomes the statue. Figuratively, Aspatia wishes to be rendered as a sculpted personification of sorrow. Aspatia’s final invocation to her maids to look at her as: “[a] miserable life of this poor picture” collapses the boundaries between life and art, artist and picture altogether.

Aspatia’s final command in the scene is that she and her maids sit down, and:

[...] let us

Upon that point fix all our eyes, that point there.

*[They sit on the ground]*

Make a dumb silence till you feel a sudden sadness

Give us new souls. (2.2.66-9)

Aspatia’s tableau of statue-like women is broken up by her father Calianax’s furious interruption. Interestingly, Calianax proposes exactly the same cure for the melancholy girls that Carol Thomas Neely discusses in reference to the Jailer’s

Daughter: the coital cure: “What,” asks Calianax, “are you grown so resty? You want heats. / We shall have some of the court boys do that office” (2.2.76-7).<sup>338</sup>

But although the maids defend themselves against Calianax’s accusations of sluttish laziness, Aspatia herself is, on the page, nowhere to be heard. It is as if she had already sublimated herself into that silent monument of sorrow.

**“[T]he name of friend is more than family, / Or all the world besides”: the  
dynamics of revenge and male friendship**

Aspatia’s stationary tableaux of grief seem increasingly isolated from the revenge plot that comes to dominate the play as Melantius seeks vengeance for the injustice done to Amintor. In previous chapters I have developed the idea that the masculine, literate genre of revenge tragedy in *Hamlet*, or of the duel in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is challenged by the feminine, oral genre of the popular ballad. This engagement of the oral with the literate is no longer at play in *The Maid’s Tragedy*. Aspatia, as we have seen, is a strikingly literate heroine whose narrative draws on the literate, classical strains of Shakespeare’s Ophelia rather than her folk associations. She embodies the project of revision and is aligned by this project with Beaumont and Fletcher themselves. She does not occupy a distinct, oral realm. Nevertheless, *The Maid’s Tragedy* inscribes gendered worlds, and Aspatia’s

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<sup>338</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender In Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). Neely’s analysis of the coital cure concentrates on the case studies of Edward Jorden in *A briefe discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603). Robert Burton’s advice is slightly more decorous: “But the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well-placed and married to good husbands in due time; hence these tears, that’s the primary cause, and this the ready cure, to give them content to their desires”, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1948), p. 355.

tableaux increasingly fail to intersect with the revenge tragedy narrative of Amintor and Melantius. William Shullenberger writes that:

Aspatia's pathetic story does not frame the play [...] it runs alongside the play, irrelevant to the rest of the story [...] She is the self-conscious artist who weaves out her history as an emblem of the forsaken woman.<sup>339</sup>

Shullenberger's comments are, in many ways, correct; there is a widening gulf between Aspatia's tableaux and the fast-moving, linear, male revenge narrative. But this gap is far from irrelevant. Rather it enacts the widening division between the male realm of revenge and Aspatia's female realm of emotional relations and wounded passivity. The male revenge plot shears off from any interaction with Aspatia's scenes of neglected grief as Amintor discovers Evadne's lack of chastity and the identity of her lover and as the plot trains itself upon revenge. Interestingly, the revenge tragedy plot continues to be gendered male. It retains the same sense of an ineluctable trajectory that pertains to Hamlet's understanding of revenge and hastens its way through the three logically linear stages of revenge tragedy identified in chapter one; the discovery of wrong, the struggle to enact revenge, and the consummation of revenge.

Like *Hamlet*, *The Maid's Tragedy* is preoccupied with issues of male authority. Paternal jurisdiction is again thrown into question, and anxieties regarding the system of monarchy and the authority of the king reach an alarming pitch. Arguably there are ramifications for the literary authority of Beaumont and Fletcher's Shakespearean precedent. At the heart of *The Maid's Tragedy* lies the

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<sup>339</sup> Shullenberger, 'Reappraisal', pp. 152-3.

vexed question of royal prerogative, and anxieties about the abuse of this prerogative. Tellingly the troubling, alternative genre in this play is the masque, a genre indelibly associated with Ben Jonson, that most authoritarian of authors, and one that colludes with revenge tragedy in its thematic concentration on and support of conservative themes of royal supremacy and rule.<sup>340</sup> The masque's function in upholding regal hegemony is well demonstrated by the discussion of the masque that takes place at the beginning of the play.

Lyssipus:           Strato, thou hast some skill in poetry.  
                           What think'st thou of a masque? Will it be well?  
 Strato:               As well as masques can be.  
 Lyssipus:                               As masques can be?  
 Strato:               Yes, they must commend their King, and speak in praise  
                           Of the assembly, bless the bride and groom,  
                           In person of some god; they're tied to rules  
                           Of flattery.   (1.1.5-11)<sup>341</sup>

Beaumont and Fletcher's masque, however, fails to obey these rules of flattery. Shullenberger notes that in a conventional masque, the anti-masque's chaotic energy of figures of disorder is symbolically mastered through the triumph of a hierarchy that is at once mythic, political and psychological. The masque in *The Maid's Tragedy* nominally follows this pattern of mastery as Cynthia and Night

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<sup>340</sup> See, for example, Sarah P. Sutherland, *Masques in Jacobean Tragedy* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1983), who writes that the: "celebration of the sovereign is reflected in every component of the masque: in the songs and the dialogue, in the scenery and the subject matter, in the elaborate preparations for performance and in the physical arrangement of the hall where the masque is given"; p. 16.

<sup>341</sup> Shullenberger notes regarding this passage that: "If it does not represent Beaumont's own attitude towards the masque, the remark at least indicates that the courtly audience may have held the genre in less reverence than its modern interpreters have accounted for"; 'Reappraisal', p. 135.

divest their selves of authority in the presence of “a greater light”, the Rhodian king. But the masque ends abruptly and “fails to confirm in dance and song the moral order of which the king is the keystone.”<sup>342</sup> Furthermore, Hymen does not appear to culminate the rites. Both the stabilising central authority of the king, and the foundation of the nuclear family unit, are disturbingly out of whack.

In particular, *The Maid's Tragedy* registers anxiety about paternity and patrilineal descent. “I denie not”, writes William Gouge, “but that more inconueniences may follow upon the womans default then vpon the mans: as, greater infamy before men, worse disturbance of the family, more mistaking of legitimate or illegitimate children, with the like.”<sup>343</sup> Evadne explains that she has married Amintor because:

Alas, I must have one  
To father children and to bear the name  
Of husband to me, that my sin may be  
More honourable. (2.1.295-8)

The king's behaviour destabilizes the entire system of patrilineal inheritance to the extent that Amintor considers abolishing it altogether: “We will adopt us sons; / Then virtue shall inherit, and not blood” (2.1.223).<sup>344</sup> Furthermore, issues of specifically male familial honour – Gouge's “infamy before men” – are at stake.

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<sup>342</sup> Shullenberger, ‘Reappraisal’, p. 137.

<sup>343</sup> William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), p. 219.

<sup>344</sup> Hopkins discusses Amintor's comment as a contemplation of: “no less than the abolition of the entire system of primogeniture and descent – the very system which, indeed, has produced the king's power”; “[I]o do men wrong”, p. 65.

Evadne's affair with the King is seen to shame not Evadne herself but her male family. As Melantius states: "The credit of our house is thrown away" (3.2.190).<sup>345</sup>

Criticism on *The Maid's Tragedy* has most commonly taken the corruption of the King and the conflict it produces in the subject (Amintor, for example) as its focal point, examining the play's frank treatment of the common revenge tragedy tension between pursuing private justice or knuckling under in obeisance to the king's will, however just or unjust that decree might be.<sup>346</sup> Amintor's reaction to the name of the man who has cuckolded him even before his marriage night underlines the sacred authority that political discourse of the day insisted rested in the King:

O thou hast named a word that wipes away  
 All thoughts revengeful. In that sacred name,  
 The King, there lies a terror; what frail man  
 Dares lift his hand against it? Let the gods  
 Speak to him when they please, till then let us  
 Suffer, and wait. (2.1.286-91)

Reconciling himself to early modern religious and political advice, Amintor resolves to leave revenge to the gods.

Nevertheless, it emerges that revenge is not divinely enacted, but receives a very human agent in the shape of Evadne. Revenge remains, however, a curiously masculine prerogative and the resolution of the play is, in a sense, doubly, conservatively patriarchal. While Melantius orchestrates the play's denouement,

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<sup>345</sup> On this issue, see Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 106.

<sup>346</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 106.

revenge is achieved without any of the men in the play having to dirty their hands and break the taboo of regicide. As Lisa Hopkins notes, Evadne's actions are "identical with patriarchal imperatives"; in killing the king, Evadne takes on the taint of regicide, as opposed to Melantius or Amintor doing so, and in a strange sleight of hand the murder becomes, as Janet Clare observes, "a crime of passion rather than, as in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, a political act against a tyrannical and dissolute ruler."<sup>347</sup> The subversive focus on the abuse of regal power is diverted by the passionate and sexualised murder (the king initially interprets Evadne tying him down as a bondage game) by the staging of a spectacular *crime passionnel*. However, despite this politic textual refocusing (or perhaps because of it), the play significantly demystifies kingship. The King himself places considerable faith in the mystical powers of kingship, commanding Amintor "Draw not thy sword. Thou know'st I cannot fear / A subject's hand." (3.1.228-9)<sup>348</sup> Yet the King's sexual appetite is a social leveller; when Evadne rushes from the King's bedchamber having killed him, the guards assume instead that their lovemaking has come to a premature climax: "How quickly he had done with her. I see kings can do no more that way than other mortal people." (5.1.113-4) Their locker-room surmising, while providing a moment of released tension immediately after the homicide, also demonstrates one of the more subversive truths of the play. The king's mortal body is exactly that: mortal, and vulnerable to both appetites and fatal wounds.<sup>349</sup> Like Richard II, he discovers that there are in fact no "glorious angel[s]" "in

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<sup>347</sup> Hopkins, "[T]o do men wrong", p. 69; Janet Clare, 'Art made tongue-tied by authority', n. 10, p. 69, cited in Clark, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 113.

<sup>348</sup> The Rhodian king's belief in his invulnerability echoes that of *Richard II's* eponymous king: "Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off from an anointed king. / The breath of worldly men cannot depose / The deputy elected by the lord." 3.2.54-7

<sup>349</sup> The dialogue immediately prior to the murder puts both into emphasis. When the King wakes to find Evadne tying him up, his assumption is that it is a new sexual game ("What pretty new device is this, Evadne?" 5.1.45). Evadne's response focuses on both his sensual nature and his mortal body: "Stay, sir, stay. / You are too hot, and I have brought you physic / To temper your high veins." (5.1.50-2) When the King invites her to discover the state of his body, her reply repeats this dual emphasis: "I know you have a surfeited foul body, / And you must bleed." (5.1.55-6)

heavenly pay” appointed to protect him, and his mortal bodyguard is out of hearing.<sup>350</sup> As Evadne tells him,

Lie still; there’s none about you  
 Within your cries; all promises of safety  
 Are but deluding dreams. (5.1.97-9)

Without his bodyguards, the king is reduced to a figure of Evadne’s sexual downfall, a guilty secret that she sets out to annihilate. The text nevertheless insists on a defeminization and corresponding masculination of Evadne. The literary predecessor she is most closely identified with is Hamlet himself.<sup>351</sup> She rewords his hesitation to kill Claudius at prayer, and is depicted in both her sexual and homicidal behaviours as transgressively masculine.<sup>352</sup>

This masculine revenge tragedy world is a realm apart from Aspatia’s scenes of crafted grief and the division seems to reinstate the gendered allocation of men to public and women to private spheres that I discussed as a defining concept of early modern constructions of male and female identity in chapter two. The overthrowing of the king is of public significance and belongs to a male world which momentarily appropriates Evadne as its instrument to then dispose of her. Aspatia’s very female experience of a broken engagement with no foreseeable opportunity for the only role available to her as someone’s wife belongs to the private realm. *The Maid’s Tragedy* anticipates the divisive structure of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with the setting up of a masculine world of male friendship which, in conjunction with the masculine emphasis of the revenge dynamic, serves to

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<sup>350</sup> William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure, Arden 2 (London: Methuen, 1961), 3.2.61, 60.

<sup>351</sup> Also noted by Hopkins, “[T]o do men wrong”, p. 69, who discusses Evadne’s transgressive masculinity.

<sup>352</sup> Compare *Hamlet* 3.3.73-95 with *The Maid’s Tragedy* 5.1.23-34.

alienate Aspatia's female – if literate – realm of affective relations. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* the exclusive dynamic of the male friendship between Palamon and Arcite and the homoerotic dynamics of the duel work to the exclusion of the women of the play. In the final assessment, Palamon and Arcite become “one another's wife”, and the death of Arcite is for Palamon “[t]he loss of our desire” (*TINK* 5.4.111). The Jailer's Daughter's narrative interrupts the narrative of their duel, but there is never really any interaction between the characters of the two plot lines and Emilia is only relevant as a prize to the cousins' duel, a prize that is rendered worthless when Arcite dies.

The friendship of Melantius and Amintor prefigures that of Palamon and Arcite, perhaps especially in its emphasis on the womanly Amintor and the more phallic Melantius. The gender dynamics of their relationship are complicated by the association of both with ready tears (we can recall Laertes' “the woman will be out” for the association of tears with the feminine), but ultimately Melantius seems to assume a virile role while Amintor is cast as the effeminate and less mature partner in the relationship.<sup>353</sup> Melantius remembers how the boy Amintor would greet his returns from the wars:

[...] he would gaze upon me  
 And view me round, to find in what one limb  
 The virtue lay to do those things he heard;  
 Then would he wish to see my sword, and feel  
 The quickness of the edge, and in his hand

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<sup>353</sup> Amintor and Melantius' tears are mutual when they greet each other in act one, scene one, and again in act three, scene two, when Melantius seeks the reason for Amintor's sadness: “[weeping] Thou seest my love, that will keep company / With thee in tears; hide nothing then from me, / For when I know the cause of thy distemper, / With mine old armour I'll adorn myself, / My resolution, and cut through thy foes / Unto thy quiet, till I place thy heart / As peaceable as spotless innocence.” (3.2.109-15)

Weigh it (1.1.50-6).

It has become almost a critical commonplace to note the homoeroticism of the passage, and both the phallic associations of the “one limb” in which virtue lies and of course, the sword.<sup>354</sup> Indeed, once he has recovered from misrecognising Aspatia as the bride of the day, Melantius greets Evadne with the words:

Sister, I joy to see you and your choice.

You looked with my eyes when you took that man.

Be happy in him. (1.2.107-9)

Melantius credits his sister with the masculine prerogative of choosing a spouse, and the union of Evadne and Amintor, for Melantius at least, is an embodiment of his own love for Amintor.

This is arguably the principal emotional attachment of the play. Ultimately, Melantius privileges Amintor’s friendship over that of family. Having finally persuaded Amintor to draw his sword so that he may defend his sister’s honour, in a contest that he frames as a judicial duel (“Then I draw” Amintor concedes: “As justly as our magistrates their swords / To cut offenders off.” 3.2.157-9) Melantius withdraws:

Stay awhile.

The name of friend is more than family,

Or all the world besides. (3.2.164-6)

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<sup>354</sup> Hopkins, “[T]o do men wrong”, p. 57; Shullenberger, “Most wronged of women”, p. 144.

Their linking of arms following Melantius' promise to revenge Amintor is a touching manifestation of what is perhaps the play's most functional partnership:

Melantius: I warrant you, look up. We'll walk together;

Put thine arm here. All shall be well again.

*[They link arms]*

Amintor: Thy love – O wretched I! – thy love, Melantius

Why, I have nothing else. (3.2.252-3)

The relationship between the pair again falls into a gendered dynamic whereby the virile Melantius supports the failing Amintor. Melantius reaffirms the prestige of the allegiance in the final scene. Holding the dying Amintor in his arms, he is chastised by his brother Diphilus;

O brother,

Here lies your sister slain. You lose yourself

In sorrow there. (5.3.260-2)

Melantius responds:

Why, Diphilus, it is

A thing to laugh at in respect of this.

Here was my sister, father, brother, son,

All that I had. (5.3.262-5)

It is a sentiment that finds itself fatally echoed in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

This is accompanied by a foretaste of the divisive gender politics that come to mark *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Aspatia's advice to her waiting women allows of little hope for a productive union between men and women.

If you needs must love,  
 Forc'd by ill fate, take to your maiden bosoms  
 Two dead-cold aspics, and of them make lovers;  
 They cannot flatter or forswear: one kiss  
 Makes a long peace for all. But man –  
 Oh, that beast, man! (2.2.22-27)

As Hopkins notes, there are “clear echoes of the gender-bending Cleopatra here”, and it is entirely typical of Aspatia's characterisation that she should use a revised literary paradigm to express her bitterness.<sup>355</sup> However, Aspatia's words return not only to *Anthony and Cleopatra* but to Genesis, as she revises a gender dynamic whereby women are made responsible for the control of masculine phallic desire as well as their own sexuality. Julia Kristeva has interpreted the snake in the Genesis narrative as a sublimation of male phallic desire that makes Eve responsible for Adam's transgressive desire as well as her own. God's punishment for Eve's transgression then makes her responsible for the management of a masochistic relationship between the woman and the snake of masculine desire whereby she will bruise its head, and it shall bruise her heel.<sup>356</sup> Essentially, Eve becomes responsible for babysitting the snake of male phallic desire.

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<sup>355</sup> Hopkins, “[T]o do men wrong”, p. 63.

<sup>356</sup> Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 1977), p. 21.

This gender dynamic is explicitly recognised in the popular ballad corpus, which repeatedly characterizes men as taking sexual pleasure with women whenever and wherever they can, and which repeatedly insists that men will not legitimate pre-marital sexual relations with marriage. The distinction made between male phallic sexuality and the male public persona results in a divorce between sexual behaviour and social standing. It is possible, therefore, that male sexual behaviour (the snake) is separable from the male public persona. Women, on the other hand, are defined by their sexual status as virgins, wives or whores. In this passage, Aspatia suggests this separation of masculine public persona and sexual behaviour, and seems to have come to the conclusion that if one has to love, one might as well settle for a sadistic relationship with the snake / male phallus, and dispense with the lying, cheating (flattering or forswearing) “beast” of a man who is attached to the phallus altogether. The masochism of the relationship is paramount in Aspatia’s description; the aspics are “dead cold”, and one kiss will kill you.

This corresponds to the earlier opposition of Aspatia with the irrepressible Dula in Evadne’s disrobing scene, whose sexual ribaldry draws bored and unconvincing disapproval from Evadne. Dula is relentlessly celebratory of sexual pleasure itself, wishing “That I might go / To bed with him with credit that you do” (2.1.5-6), commenting that Evadne will be “as soon done” (2.1.8) as her clothes are undone, and that “Good store of clothes will trouble you both”. (2.1.9) Dula’s exuberance is more in tune with ballad ribaldry and its celebration of female sexuality than Aspatia can ever be. The contrast between Dula and Aspatia is explicitly noted by Evadne, who wishes that Dula could “instill / Some of thy mirth into Aspatia” (2.1.34-5) and adds “[m]ethinks a mean betwixt you would do well” (2.1.37). Dula and Aspatia are again set up in direct contrast when Dula

follows Aspatia's willow song with: "*I could never have the power / To love one above an hour*". Dula appears to have settled for a relationship with indiscriminate phallic sexuality, and is disparaging of Aspatia's woe, commenting:

She is in love; hang me if I were so,  
 But I could run my country. I love too  
 To do those things that people in love do. (2.1.38-40)

There is of course a Hamlet-style pun; Dula is referring to "country matters".<sup>357</sup> Dula has, however, arrived at the same conclusion as Aspatia, albeit by different means and with different feelings about it. This conclusion is that one does not need to love to have sexual intercourse. In contrast to Aspatia however, Dula sees sexual intercourse without love, and potentially with love too, as a pleasurable pursuit, whereas Aspatia associates sexual intercourse with pain and death, as her images of both the poisonous snakes and the sacrificial altar demonstrate.

Aspatia's understanding of her own betrayal, as well as that of her forsaken predecessors, increasingly rests on a conviction that men themselves are fundamentally insincere, whilst women are hopelessly credulous. As she tells her maids in act two, scene two:

Alas, poor wenches,  
 Go learn to love first, learn to lose yourselves,  
 Learn to be flattered, and believe and bless  
 The double tongue that did it; make a faith  
 Out of the miracles of ancient lovers,

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<sup>357</sup> Howard B. Norland notes for this line: "I could control myself. (For the sexual pun, see Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bandy* [New York, 1948], s.v. "country")", *The Maid's Tragedy*, p. 25.

Such as speak truth and died in't; and, like me,  
Believe all faithful and be miserable. (2.2.4-10)

She consistently characterises Amintor himself as double-tongued, and her tight-lipped attempt at an exonerative prayer for Amintor in act two, scene one, is more truthfully an accusation of falsehood:

Perhaps he found me worthless,  
But till he did so, in these ears of mine,  
These credulous ears, he poured the sweetest words  
That art or love could frame. If he were false,  
Pardon it, Heaven; and if I did want  
Virtue, you safely may forgive that too,  
For I have lost none that I had from you. (2.1.51-57)<sup>358</sup>

This speech revises Ophelia's soliloquy in act three, scene one ("And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, / That suck'd the honey of his music vows" 3.1.158-60) with spectacularly accusatory results. The credibility of Amintor's: "sweetest words" to the gullible ears of Aspatia parallel Hamlet's promises of love, received: "with almost all the holy vows of heaven." (*Ham* 1.3.114)

However, Aspatia transforms Ophelia's later image of sucking the honey from Hamlet's words into an allocation of guilt in an incredible referential coup that amply demonstrates her revisionist skills. Figuring herself as a passive receiver of Amintor's falsities, Aspatia recalls not only Hamlet's "music vows", but also

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<sup>358</sup> See also Aspatia in act five, when disguised as her brother she replies to Amintor's attempts to avoid a duel with the words "Thus she swore / Thou wouldst behave thyself, and give me words / That would fetch tears into my eyes, and so / Thou dost indeed; but yet she bade me watch / Lest I were cozen'd, and be sure to fight / Ere I returned." (5.3.78-83)

Claudius' poisoning of the old King Hamlet. Claudius is identified by the ghost as the "serpent" who "in the porches of my ears did pour / The leperous distilment." (1.5.63-4) Descriptions of Claudius emphasise his persuasive tongue. The ghost accuses him of: "wicked wit, and gifts that have the power / So to seduce" (1.5.44-5). Hamlet himself has a sense of Claudius as one who is devilishly skilled in deception, asking his mother: "What devil was't / That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?" (3.4.76-7) Aspatia's speech encodes not Ophelia's dismay at Hamlet's overthrown mind, but rather a distrust of the male-tongue doing service for the snake-like male phallus. Perpetually one step ahead, Aspatia has already incorporated Ophelia's later insane insight that male vows are not to be trusted in her "*Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day*" folk-song, into her lament for Aspatia's lost words. "Pardon it, Heaven" (2.1.54) is Aspatia's reluctant gesture towards Ophelia's repeated petitions for heavenly intercession, but her thinly veiled murder accusation is undoubtedly more powerful. Indeed, Amintor's broken vows represent the narrowing down of Aspatia's destiny to that of the death-bound, forsaken woman. Aspatia's implied accusation has some truth in it.

This growing sense of an essential male-female incompatibility, underpinned by male unfaithfulness, culminates in Aspatia's soliloquy as she waits for Amintor to attend her summons in act five, scene three. Commenting on the rudeness of Amintor's servant, she considers:

All the men I meet  
 Appear thus to me, are harsh and rude,  
 And have a subtlety in everything,  
 Which love could never know; but we fond women  
 Harbor the easiest and smoothest thoughts,

And think all shall go so. It is unjust

That men and women should be match'd together. (5.3.25-31)

Aspatia's sense of male-female incompatibility again takes as its focal point the insincerity of male vows ("There is a vild dishonest trick in man" 5.3.24) and the contrasting credulity of female faith. Ronald Huebert writes that while Aspatia's judgement that men and women cannot justly be matched together "contains all the bitterness of Aspatia's primal experience, [...] it also implies a shrewd understanding of the rules which govern sexual conduct at the court of Rhodes."<sup>359</sup>

Aspatia's concerns are mimetic of the larger concerns of her authors; hypocrisy is the central preoccupation of *The Maid's Tragedy*. The king has Evadne married in order to provide a cover for their affair; Evadne seems chaste but is in fact the king's mistress, and even Amintor swiftly learns the ways of the court and the high premium placed on appearances, ultimately telling Evadne "Be careful of thy credit, and sin close" (2.1.346-353) She must not be seen to sin. Amintor comes to a radical distrust of male behaviour that parallels Aspatia's own, soliloquizing that

For aught I know all husbands are like me,

And everyone I talk with of his wife

Is but a well dissembler of his woes

As I am. (3.2.48-51)

Amintor ends with a sincere if unhopeful plea for honesty "Would I knew it, for the rareness / Afflicts me now." (3.2.51-56) While undermining the sense of

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<sup>359</sup> Huebert, "An Artificial Way to Grieve", p. 609.

Ophelia as a generative alternative to the bloody revenge trajectory, Aspatia's radical sense of gender incompatibility looks forward to the crisis of gender relations in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in which the comic ending of marriage fails to contain the preceding tragedy, and in which the idea of productive gender relations is revealed as almost impossible. Aspatia's sense of the impossibility of union between man and woman within the terms of her society is an embryonic version of the later play's radical sexual politics, and is a pervasive feature of her dialogue.

**“I would fain live now / If I could. Would thou have loved'st me then?”**

#### **Aspatia's death and the dynamics of revision**

The conclusion of the play nevertheless reinstates loving relations between Amintor and Aspatia. Aspatia's disguise as her absent soldier-brother in act five, scene three gestures towards the productive possibilities of the Shakespearian page girl role in *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Cymbeline* as well as of disguised ballad heroines such as Burd Helen of 'Child Waters' (63) and 'The Famous Flower of Serving-Men' (106). The young women's disguises afford them a new freedom as they use their new identities as a way to get close to the men they desire. This sense of liberty is often literalised in the geographical terrain that these women cover. Burd Helen, for example, cuts off her gown and her hair to traverse the hills, dales and rivers barefoot in pursuit of Child Waters. Aspatia diverts from the Ophelia type, to assume the convention of another 'type'; she re-casts herself as the epicene page girl. Sandra Clark comments on Beaumont and Fletcher's use of the epicene page girl in relation to Aspatia, writing that for Aspatia, "sexual desire is

rechannelled into desire for death” and “the romantic convention of the epicene page girl who devotes her life to the quasi-chivalric service of her lover / master is reinterpreted through a reading of chastity as self-denial, even frustration.”<sup>360</sup> While Aspatia’s action certainly encompasses sexual frustration, and literalises the masochism that she perceives in male-female relationships, her disguise also threatens the closure of the abandoned woman narrative by suggesting that she might escape: to the forests of Arden, the beaches of Ilyria, the Northumberland moors.

Furthermore, Aspatia’s disguise poses a challenge to a society that aligns itself along a traditional, essentialist understanding of gender and the way in which women are confined to the specific role of wife and mother because of their biological sex. Not only can Aspatia disguise herself as a man, she can *pass* as a man. Neither Amintor’s servant nor Amintor himself doubt her masculinity, and Aspatia assumes a male directness of address that appears to ensure that her true identity goes undetected. For example, she gruffly ends her challenge to Amintor with the words:

If you like your sword,  
Use it; if mine appear a better to you,  
Change; for the ground is this, and this the time  
To end our difference. (5.3.66-9)

Difference is indeed confounded, as Aspatia demonstrates that men can successfully be imitated, and that difference itself is not a matter of inherent characteristics but of performed behaviours. In doing so, she steps out of the

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<sup>360</sup> Clark, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 34.

textual role that has been reiteratively defined as hers throughout the play, and has reiteratively defined *her* throughout the play. Her definition as forsaken woman falters. Masquerading as her own brother, the person who would have been expected to defend her honour on her elderly father's behalf, Aspatia steps outside of and beyond a position of feminine, familial dependency. She also steps beyond the Ophelia precedent. She is, at last, off-book or, more accurately, out of the book and improvising wildly.

This newly found, improvisatory independence is frustrated on two levels. Firstly, although she can pass as a man, Aspatia lacks a masculine education. She cannot fight, and her lack of skill betrays her. She can certainly perform the initiating rituals of single combat; she sets the terms, offers the weapons and provokes the fight itself with some success, but cannot enact the thing itself. She does not have the training, and Amintor calls her bluff.

What dost thou mean?

Thou canst not fight; the blows thou mak'st at me

Are quite besides, and those I offer at thee,

Thou spread'st thine arms and tak'st upon thy breast,

Alas, defenceless! (5.3.101-5)

Secondly, and as Amintor's observations about Aspatia's lack of defence indicate, Aspatia has donned the epicene page-girl role in a spirit of self-harm. Aspatia has broken with type in order to be obedient to type, a fact that she reveals in an early aside, commenting with regard to Amintor's reluctance to fight her: "Why should he be so slow / In giving me my death?" (5.3.96-7) This, finally, is Aspatia's election of an "unpractic'd way to grieve and die." As Jennifer Low comments: "By

forcing Amintor to kill her, Aspatia literalizes the plight in which his faithlessness has placed her.”<sup>361</sup>

Aspatia’s very real struggle to die exposes the received finale of the forsaken woman narrative as an all-too convenient myth. Suicide is not an easy thing, and the effort that Aspatia invests in achieving it deconstructs any sense of it as an inevitable consequence of being forsaken by a fiancé. It is denaturalized as a narrative ending. This debunking of the Ophelia-death, is dramatically heightened by the *Romeo and Juliet* style, near-miss denouement of Amintor and Aspatia’s reconciliation in *The Maid’s Tragedy*. Overhearing Amintor vowing to clear his conscience in respect of Aspatia before he dies, she revives from her wounded stupor to rouse the “hope of recovery” (5.3.201). The ensuing reconciliation scene is excruciating. Amintor’s renewed affections raises a momentary optimism in both Aspatia and the audience that Aspatia may in fact recover. Both Aspatia and her writers are off the Ophelia script here, and for a moment it looks as if the play might be approaching something of a happy ending.

Amintor’s resolve to find Aspatia stays his own intentions to commit suicide, and contends with the “call” of the dead King and Evadne. He states that there is “some hidden power in these dead things / That calls my flesh unto ‘em.” (5.3.181-2) The call of the dead is very much the call of the revenge tragedy genre and its climactic multiple homicides. Here, however, this “cold” prospect is immediately contrasted with the living. (5.3.182) Amintor’s love for Aspatia is momentarily set up as a productive alternative and a redemptive possible ending to Amintor’s death. Furthermore, the touching concord between Amintor and Aspatia questions Aspatia’s prior, proto-*Two Noble Kinsmen* philosophy as to the impossibility of overcoming the discord between men and women. But, in ballad

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<sup>361</sup> Low, “Women are wordes”, p. 280.

fashion, it is already too late. Aspatia's sense of revival swiftly converts into a faintness, and the hope of a renewed and living love is turned instead into a deathbed reconciliation.

Amintor's regret and realisation of loss is exactly what Aspatia had been aiming for earlier when she asked him to come and attend her burial. The surprise of it all for Aspatia is that she finds she wishes to live. This is an entirely new and painful angle on the type. Instead of having an Ophelia who dies off stage, out of her mind, and according to the Queen's account, oblivious, we have a painfully conscious Aspatia, who is desperate to live, and even asserts: "I shall sure live, Amintor, I am well; / A kind of healthful joy wanders within me." (5.3.211-2) What follows is a virtuoso writing performance, which has the entire audience as well as the characters straining against the Ophelia type in their mutual desire that Aspatia should live. The possibility of another, better ending almost unfolds before our eyes with Aspatia's optimism, but is then shut down as her strength begins to fail. The tension on the type is extraordinary. The dialogue following Aspatia's hope of recovery continues:

Amintor:           The world wants lives to excuse thy loss;

                          Come, let me bear thee to some place of help.

Aspatia:           Amintor, thou must stay; I must rest here:

                          My strength begins to disobey my will.

                          How dost thou, my best soul? I would fain live

                          Now, if I could. Wouldst thou have loved me then?

Amintor:           Alas, all that I am's not worth a hair

                          From thee.

Aspatia:           Give me thine hand: mine hands grope up and down,

And cannot find thee; I am wondrous sick.

Have I thy hand, Amintor?

Amintor: Thou greatest blessing of the world, thou hast.

Aspatia: I do believe thee better than my sense.

Oh, I must go; farewell. [Dies.] (5.3.213-226)

Aspatia's strength finally disobeys her will in that she cannot live, rather than that she cannot die. Amintor's sentiment that the "world wants lives" recollects the sense in *Hamlet* that Ophelia's death is a death too many, and one which renders the entire revenge project questionable. Like Ophelia, Aspatia's death is seen to represent the inexcusable civilian fall-out, the death that is anomalous and fails to be accounted for in any of the revenge repercussions. This compounds the early sense that she is an unaccommodated victim of the king's tyranny, and a visible and voluble casualty of his abuse of privilege. Most notably, Aspatia abandons her cynicism with regard to male integrity to believe Amintor's assertion better than her own sense perceptions, and trusts that she is holding his hand. The theory of male and female incompatibility propounded earlier on in the play is overcome by the gentle regard that unfolds between Aspatia and Amintor. The scene shows the possibility of a warm, mutual and companionate affection, in order to then aggravate the audience's sense of the loss of it when Aspatia dies.

It is perhaps significant that the willow song Aspatia sings in act two anticipating her death appears only in the second Quarto. Martin Wiggins suggests that some of the five additional passages that appear in the second quarto: "were cut from the text before the first performance, while others were added in a revision, possibly by Francis Beaumont, working from the author's pre-theatrical

draft.”<sup>362</sup> The song is a deliberate insertion in a written text. The import of a live, oral medium of Ophelia’s ballads in *Hamlet* is here deliberately inserted as an authorial, literary revision.

*Lay a garland on my bearse*

*Of the dismal yew;*

*Maidens, willow branches bear;*

*Say I dièd true.*

*My love was false, but I was firm*

*From my hour of birth;*

*Upon my buried body lay*

*Lightly, gentle earth.* (lines 5-12, after 2.1.66)

Aspatia has always known where she was going. Her song is itself, quite apart from being a literary revision, a quotation, recalling Desdemona’s willow song before her death. For Aspatia, the song repeats the story, and her story repeats the song; the songs certainly do not save her. Yet the audience senses the trap, and it is this new knowledge of the cruelties of the type as well as its formative, repressive social context that begins a process of subversion through Aspatia’s radical conformism. It is a process that Penthea’s narrative in *The Broken Heart* will continue.

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<sup>362</sup> Martin Wiggins, *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*, p. 157.

## CHAPTER V:

**“FEEDING THE HUNGRY APPETITE WITH STEAM / AND SIGHT  
OF BANQUET” PENTHEA AND THE RADICAL CONFORMISM OF  
THE ANOREXIC HUNGER STRIKE**

So much of my analysis of the Ophelia type has been about space. Ophelia’s ballad genre, I have argued, contends for space with Hamlet’s revenge tragedy narrative; Lucibella is recuperated to the revenge plot entirely in the undifferentiated popular tradition of *Hoffman*; the Jailer’s Daughter’s robust popular medium is a space apart, one that never fully interacts with the narrative of the upper-class cousins’ duel, although it threatens, at moments, to topple it; and Aspatia’s frozen tableaux enact a widening distinction between the male, public sphere of homosocial relations and the private domestic realm that was increasingly ascribed to women in the early modern period. In *The Broken Heart* (1633), this preoccupation with space is not enacted at plot level; Penthea’s Ophelia-type story-line is not generically differentiated, and the revenge element of the play interacts seamlessly with elements concerning affective relations. The dynamic of alternating narratives that seems to hold true for *Hamlet* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* cannot be located in Ford’s play. Indeed, it is the broken engagement at the root of Penthea’s despair that precipitates the revenge, and the two are mutually sustaining.<sup>363</sup>

Instead, this marginalisation and narrowing down of female space is enacted on the increasingly emaciated female protagonist’s body. Throughout the play

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<sup>363</sup> Fredson Bowers categorises *The Broken Heart* as an anti-revenge play, identifying its moral as “the cruelty of the duty to revenge” and arguing that the play displays a lack of interest in the workings of the revenge plot; *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 211, 213.

Pentheia is figured as a sacred space, a “shrine” and “temple”. This emphasis replays Polonius’ formulation of Ophelia as a site that Hamlet might gain access to, and Ford’s imagery of Penthea as architectural construct reaches its apotheosis in her husband Bassanes’ prayer for forgiveness: “Divine and best of ladies”, he pleads, “Please to forget my outrage. Mercy ever / Cannot but lodge under a roof so excellent” (1.1.64, 4.2.31, 4.2.63-5).<sup>364</sup> Instead of the Ophelia-space being narrowed by the increasingly centrifugal pull of revenge, Penthea narrows the space of herself, as the play tracks her progress from flesh to spirit. She comes to occupy minimal space and then, with her death, no space at all, and it is the teleology of her starvation rather than the teleology of revenge that defines this play. Like Aspatia’s radical masochism, Penthea’s self-starvation proves subversive in its very conformism. She simultaneously demonstrates an absolute wifely obedience and an extreme assertion of her will. Literalising the legal disappearance of the feme covert – the common law definition of a married woman in early modern society discussed in chapter two – Penthea moves herself beyond the reach of any husbandry. Embodying the perfect wife, Penthea disembodies herself, leaving nothing for her husband to govern.

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* problematised the idea of a romance ending as a productive, generative alternative to the revenge dynamic in *Hamlet* with a particular apperception of female losses in marriage. Ford’s representation of Penthea takes this analysis one step further. While Penthea, like all the other Ophelia-types, suffers from a broken engagement, she is also a wife. It is from this vantage point that Ford critiques the position of the feme covert and the kind of

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<sup>364</sup> The idea of the female as a space is one that Penthea herself reinforces in her mad scene, with a rather more intimate image of Ithocles’ heart sidling into the princess: “Alas, his heart / Is crept into the cabinet of the princess; / We shall have points and bride-laces” (4.2.117-9). John Ford, *The Broken Heart*, ed. Donald K Anderson Jr (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1968). All future references to this edition.

conduct that was expected of her, as classical ideals regarding women's place and role were revived in early modern conduct literature. The Ophelia-types have all had far-reaching implications for the socio-political inequalities that create the conditions of the role, but Ford's Penthea is particularly and specifically socially located in the early modern period, despite the ostensibly Spartan setting. Indeed, the Spartan context may well work to underline the classical influence on early modern conduct theory. The stoicism exhibited in *The Broken Heart* gestures towards the complicity between classical definitions of male and female roles and early modern conduct theory. As Mary Ellen Lamb notes with reference to the Countess of Pembroke, even the most rigid educators encouraged women to read Seneca's stoic works, which encouraged a detachment from worldly desires. As Lamb writes,

[t]his Senecan ideal, which emphasizes passive endurance rather than heroic action, which honours withdrawal and inner composure as positive values, ennobles the behaviour that was expected of women anyway; to refrain from entering public life which is here devalued and to endure whatever fortune sends without resistance or discontent.<sup>365</sup>

The use of stoicism, in other words, conspires with conduct theory to reconcile women to their position as commodity and the constraint of their sphere of activities to the private realm.

While conduct theory increasingly confined women to the private, domestic sphere, critics such as Lloyd Bonfield and Amy Louise Erickson have

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<sup>365</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, 'The Countess of Pembroke and the Art of Dying', in Mary Beth Rose ed., *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Chicago: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 213.

demonstrated that, on further examination, actual practice rarely computes with legal or conduct theory and, as Erickson explains, common law did *not* agree with common practice. Women frequently protected their property in marriage, for example, with informal settlements, and these arrangements, by extension, undermine “any simple idea of women’s legal annihilation within marriage.”<sup>366</sup> The same discrepancy between theory and practice is clearly true of conduct literature. Doctrines of silent, passive obedience were *ideals* not realities, and in effect gaps existed between the doctrines and their performance. Indeed the slippage between the ideal and the reality is something that insinuates itself into many of the conduct books themselves, as William Gouge’s consideration of: “the usual vices and aberrations contrary to those [a wife’s] duties” illustrates. His wanton wife takes her husband’s money and property, dictates her own allowance, brings the children up badly, has her own will with the servants, lends out her husband’s property, “frolicke[s] and iolly[s]” when her husband is away, will not stay in the home and pursues her own religious convictions. While women were conjured to stay in the private domestic sphere, it is clear from Gouge’s account that some rebelled. There are such, warns Gouge:

[...] as thinke their houses a prison vnto them that cannot long tarrie at home: they thinke they haue power to goe when and whither they will, and to tarrie out as long as they list, thinke their husbands of it what they will.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Lloyd Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements, 1601-1740: the Adoption of the Strict Settlement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Amy Louise Erickson, ‘Common Law Versus Common Practice: The Use of Marriage Settlements in Early Modern England’, *The Economic History Review*, n.s. 43:1 (1990); Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 151.

<sup>367</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties, Eight Treatises* (London: Printed by Iohn Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), pp. 313-4.

Although some women clearly defied the precepts of Gouge et al., Penthea enacts an absolute obedience. She takes the directives of conduct literature to their logical extremes. As her brother tells her,

– Sister, wedlock

Holds too severe a passion in your nature,

Which can engross all duty to your husband (2.2.65-8).

And yet Penthea's manifestation of the conduct-book good wife is word perfect; for: "Subiection is that marke which wiues are directed to aime in their thoughts, words, deeds and whole conuersation towards their husband."<sup>368</sup> Penthea's self-starvation is both the force-field in which she enacts this extreme obedience and the means by which she pursues her own will, rejecting this obedience. It both performs the ideological annihilation of the feme covert and wilfully refuses it, preferring death to life as a married woman.

Penthea's self-starvation reads productively with contemporary accounts of anorexia on several levels. In the first instance, anorexia is read as an expression of confusion regarding *space*, and the right to subjective needs and desires. For Susie Orbach food is central to this confusion. Food is something that in many situations women control and distribute, yet our culture is still one that asks women to efface their own needs, especially their appetites. Women are taught that food is somehow dangerous *to* them, as the health and fashion industries urge them to restrain their appetites and diminish their size. Women are encouraged to see their bodies from *outside*, to judge them aesthetically, not dwell in them

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid, p. 284.

physically, and according to Orbach: “[f]or women themselves, the body has become a commodity within the marketplace or [...] their own commodity, the object with which they negotiate the world.” For women in early modern kinship structures, the body is even more clearly a commodity, one that is owned and distributed by male relatives. Anorexia is, Orbach argues, a response to and internalisation of these contradictory cultural dictates:

On the one hand, anorexia is about being thin – very, very thin. It is an expression of a woman’s confusion about how much space she may take up in the world. On the other hand, her food denial is driven by the need to control her body which is, for her, a symbol of emotional needs. If she can get control over her body, then perhaps she can control her emotional neediness.

Clearly this analysis reads productively with Ford’s presentation of the self-effacing, self-annihilating figure of Penhea, who actualizes the legal disappearing act of the feme covert with such devastating efficiency. Where Ophelia professes to “think nothing”, Penhea comes to defeat her own persisting desires, as well as patriarchal control of her body, by becoming “nothing”.<sup>369</sup>

Secondly, anorexia is an act of *resistance*. In her study of twentieth century anorexia, Hilde Bruch writes that: “Anorexics struggle against feeling enslaved, exploited, and not permitted to lead a life of their own. They would rather starve

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<sup>369</sup> Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike: Starving Amidst Plenty* (New York: Other Press, 2001) pp. 16, xii, 16. In her study of medieval religious fasters, Caroline Walker Bynum argues that both sexes gave up what they were most able to control in the pursuit of holiness. For men this was money and property, while for women this was food; *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 189-94.

than lead a life of accommodation.”<sup>370</sup> *Holy Anorexia*, Rudolph Bell’s analysis of twelfth to fifteenth century anorectics, finds that self-starvation in this period insists on a privileged relationship with God that bypasses the mediation of priests, the intercession of saints, or the more secular constraints of parental and spousal authority.<sup>371</sup> In this formulation self-starvation is in some sense about taking the self back and contesting patriarchal control of the individual’s body. Penthea’s self-starvation is comparably a refusal of her place as pawn in the male-directed property market, as she essentially bankrupts her husband by removing her body from the equation.

On a third, related level, recent critics such as Orbach and Maud Ellman have challenged the distinction made between anorexia and hunger strike, and have demanded that we read the symptom *politically*. Orbach for example, writes that the anorectic’s hunger-fast “is an inchoate political protest, her *gestalt* the indictment of a world which squanders that richest of all resources – the capacities, passions and nobility of both sexes.”<sup>372</sup> Penthea’s self-starvation has extensive implications; it challenges the entire system of masculine dominance and the commodification of women within that system. Her suicide illuminates the conservative structure of the Ophelia role by removing from society not the anomalous, grieving woman, but the woman who has use-function within the system – the wife. Furthermore, like Aspatia’s death the emphasis of this self-starvation is on process. This is not an easy exit for Penthea, but like Aspatia’s death is something she has to enact and endure in a work of radical conformism that again questions the suicide ending of the dramatic type. It is a work of will and a process of suffering; the other characters are haunted by her: “groans and

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<sup>370</sup> Hilde Bruch, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa and the Person Within* (New York: Routledge, 1973), p. 17.

<sup>371</sup> Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)

<sup>372</sup> Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. 96.

tortures, / Her agonies, her miseries, afflictions” (4.4.34-5). In staging the process of death if not death itself (Penthea dies offstage) this play, like its *Maid's Tragedy* forebear, delivers a fierce interrogation of the classically influenced suicide of its Ophelia precedent.

The classical influence on the Ophelia type is, in *The Broken Heart* contiguous with the classically-inspired, repressive ideologies of early modern conduct books. Interestingly, the classical influence in the disciplines of both drama and conduct literature come under scrutiny in the play. Classical precedence is extraordinarily stressed. Dorothy Farr notes the relationship of *The Broken Heart* to *The Oresteia*, commenting on the resemblances between Ithocles' return to Sparta with Agamemnon's triumphant entrance to his palace, between Tecnicus and Cassandra or Tiresius, Orgilus and Clytemnestra, and Calantha with Athena in her final role as appeaser. Indeed, the princess Calantha is clearly a creature of classicism, expressing her sense of manifold sorrows with a resurrection of the well worn classical formula, “one news straight came huddling on another, / Of death, and death, and death”.<sup>373</sup> This final scene also sees Calantha literalizing classical tradition by actually marrying death. She weds a shade, the “shadow / Of [her] contracted lord” (5.3.69-70, 62-3). It is an absolute figuration of the dramatic convention of virgins marrying death on the Caroline stage; she embodies the classical tradition. Penthea's suicide ending similarly follows classical precedent. Unlike Aspatia, her narrative reverts to the classical paradigm of dying offstage, and it is relayed in a messenger speech that frames it picturesquely and pathetically. It is a tradition that Ford makes Orgilus himself recognise; he dismisses Penthea's attendants as “messengers of death” and orders them to “go from us; / Here's woe enough to court without a prompter.” (4.4.11-12)

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<sup>373</sup> Discussed in chapter one, at p. 93.

This increased emphasis on classical precedent can perhaps be associated with an increasingly elite (and presumably literary) courtly audience. Critical perspectives on Ford have been influenced by the growing importance of indoor venues in the Renaissance theatre-going world as indoor theatre spaces began to be more widely used.<sup>374</sup> It is argued that there ensued an increasing division between the repertoires of the private / indoor, and the public / outdoor theatres, and that this reached a climax in the reign of Charles as the indoor theatres became increasingly court-centred. Clifford Leech is exemplary of this school of criticism, arguing that from about 1610, two “theatrical publics” developed, the private versus the public, and that Ford was firmly aligned with the private theatre. Leech’s analysis is supported by records of royal intervention; King and Queen sponsored, and even participated in theatrical enterprises (Charles censoring plays, and suggesting plot ideas, the Queen acting), and as a consequence, criticism has often perceived that the theatre was essentially in the royal pocket, bound up in rarefied coterie interests and monopolised by this exclusive audience. In Wymer’s words, this theatre has been seen as “incapable of biting the courtly hand which fed it.”<sup>375</sup>

The critical response has most often been one of disapproval, and Caroline theatre has been perceived as clique-driven and court-pandering. Moral and aesthetic judgements of Ford’s work have attended this sense of Ford as playwright to the elite and as a result, Ford has been regularly and resoundingly condemned for a general theatrical decadence which dates the start of its decline from a

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<sup>374</sup> The King’s Men transferred to the indoor Blackfriars in the winter months, but continued to play in the outdoor Globe during the summer. The Queen’s Men similarly divided their time between the indoor Cockpit (later known as the Phoenix) in Drury Lane from 1616 and the open air Red Bull. See Rowland Wymer, *Webster and Ford* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995) p. 27. Both Webster and Andrew Gurr question the idea that these theatres played distinct repertoires. See Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 169.

<sup>375</sup> Clifford Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of his Time*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 13; see Michael Neill’s discussion of this critical perception, in Neill ed., *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 4; Wymer, *Webster and Ford*, p. 87.

“Shakespearean high point”.<sup>376</sup> Recent writers such as Michael Neill and Richard Madelaine have challenged this critical tradition and it has become unfashionable to read Ford’s plays in this way.<sup>377</sup> Yet *The Broken Heart* certainly seems to conform to the idea of Ford as playwright to the elite. Its classical setting and high-class characters and dilemmas confirm an upper-class allegiance. The working class world is a fringe presence, and ballading is certainly contraband. The Prologue admonishes that:

The title lends no expectation here  
 Of apish laughter or of some lame jeer  
 At place or persons; no pretended clause  
 Of jests fit for a brothel courts applause  
 From vulgar admiration. Such low songs  
 Tun’d to unchaste ears, suit not modest tongues. (Pro. 3-8)

Immodest songs such as Ophelia’s are aligned with brothel humour and both are off-limits. As the Epilogue restates: “Our writer’s aim was in the whole address’d / Well to deserve of all, but please the best” (Epi. 11-2). Accordingly, Penthea never sings, although she both speaks of singing (“if we were all sirens we should sing pitifully”) and is sung to (4.2.69, 4.3.140). Ophelia’s subversive ballad-space is simply not available to Penthea. Crucially, Ford’s play is critical of the society he both depicts and addresses; it develops the masochism of a character such as

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid, p. 86; for discussions of Ford’s decadence see also Neill, *Re-Visions*, p. 3, Ashley H. Thorndike, *Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1908), p. 229, Tucker Orbison, *The Tragic Vision of John Ford, Jacobean Drama Studies 21* (Salzburg: Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1974), p. 7; Stuart P. Sherman, ‘Ford’s Contribution to the Decadence of the Drama’, in W. Bang ed. *John Fordes Dramatische Werke* (Louvaine: A. Uystpruyst, 1908) p. vii. Ronald Huebert, *John Ford: Baroque English Dramatist* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press: 1977), p. 28.

<sup>377</sup> Neill, *Re-Visions*, Introduction; Richard Madelaine ‘Sensationalism’ and ‘Melodrama’ in Ford’s plays’ in Neill ed., *Re-Visions*. Madelaine explores Ford’s use of melodrama as a formal tool.

Aspatia to produce a direct commentary, through Penthea's self-harm, on the masochistic, self-denying position that the patriarchal society he depicts imposes on women.

These social demands, Ford's play appears to suggest, are class-inflected. The agrarian, labouring world that conducts the Jailer's Daughter to her collaborative cure is wistfully summoned in Penthea and Ithocles' descriptions of happiness in act three, scene two.

Penthea:           The hand maid to the wages  
                           Of country toil drinks the untroubl'd streams  
                           With leaping kids and with the bleating lambs,  
                           And so allays her thirst secure, whiles I  
                           Quench my hot sighs with fleetings of my tears.

Ithocles:          The labourer doth eat his coursest bread,  
                           Earn'd with his sweat, and lies him down to sleep,  
                           Whiles every bit I touch turns in digestion  
                           To gall, as bitter as Penthea's curse. (3.2.54-62)

Both Penthea and Ithocles describe an idealised pastoral world which they imagine as remote from the social machinations of their own and both associate their inability to find sustenance with their social position. This is an upper-class hunger. Their pastoral scene is one of physical labour and gratified appetite, that conjures the "real, visible, material happiness" that Ithocles calls for in act four, yet this world of solid, physical satisfaction is overwhelmingly absent from the play (4.1.48-50).

Instead, the tragedy's language manifests a movement further and further away from the body and material sustenance, coming to reside in abstracts and the play is increasingly populated with wraiths and spooks. Ithocles is "like the ghost of what he late appear'd", prevented from pursuing his love for Calantha by his inferior class status (3.5.83). Penthea comes to inhabit an abstract realm of shadows, renouncing the world entirely with the words:

Glories

Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams,  
And shadows soon decaying. (3.5.13-15)

Her language exhibits the same lexis of the metaphysical as the lyrics of the song in act three, which collapse into insubstantiality; "*Can you paint a thought?*" (3.2.1) and "*Can you grasp a sigh? Or lastly, / Rob a virgin's honour chastely?*" (3.2.5-6). Bassanes stumbles off to try and find sustenance for his increasingly transparent wife in an abstract realm of alchemised nothings that would be incapable of nourishing anybody:

There is a mastery  
In art to fatten and keep smooth the outside;  
Yes, and to comfort up the vital spirits  
Without the help of food, fumes or perfumes,  
Perfumes or fumes. (4.2.162-6)

Bassanes is searching for incense to offer to a wraith.

The realm of gratified appetite evoked in Ithocles' and Penthea's pastoral daydream resides in a working class world to which the high-class protagonists and indeed, this high-class play, ultimately have no access. This labouring world is instead manifested on the periphery of the play, beyond the main action, as the waiting women Christalla and Philema taunt Hemophil and Groneas ("hobgoblins"), ordering them to:

drill hogs, in hope

To share the acorns. Soldiers? Corn-cutters,

But not so valiant [...] (1.2.136-8)

This working-class, flirtatious world fails to re-emerge. Hemophil and Groneas, whose names are glossed in the list of speakers as (appropriately) "Glutton" and "Tavern-Haunter", disappear. Christalla ("Crystal") and Philema ("a kiss") serve as attendants to the main personages and plot; they do not resume the language of their robust retorts to the returning soldiers, although it is notably their role to urge Penthea to take sustenance (4.2.136-7). Instead we are locked within the increasingly rarefied language of the nobles, as starvation itself becomes the rhetorical mode of the paradoxically disempowered upper class of the play.

#### **"Buried in a bride-bed"; Penthea's self-starvation and the feme covert**

Whilst Susie Orbach sees anorexia as specifically contemporary, "a metaphor for our time" symptomatic of the pressures exerted on modern-day women, her analysis translates all too acutely to both Jacobean culture and the social world of

*The Broken Heart*.<sup>378</sup> The female body, particularly in the upper-class kinship networks of early modern society depicted in Ford's play, is very much a commodity. Passed between men to support their social alliances and ambitions, this female body becomes a valuable, an item of currency; the Ophelia-type is emphatically a daughter, "tendered" and located within this early modern system of transaction. Penthea's first engagement to Orgilus, arranged by her father, is a *Romeo and Juliet* inflected attempt to achieve peace between their two, previously warring families. It is retrospectively depicted in the play as "[a] resolution for a lasting league / Betwixt [the] families" (1.1.24-5).<sup>379</sup> This engagement, whilst manipulating affective relations for political ends, nevertheless resulted in mutual affection, facilitated by "[a] freedom of converse, an interchange / Of holy and chaste love" (1.1.31-2). But this engagement was then broken off by Penthea's brother Ithocles who wished to spend the dynastic currency of Penthea otherwise and, upon the demise of their father, married her off instead to the elderly nobleman Bassanes. It is a match he later regrets, attributing it to "the heat / Of an unsteady youth" and "flattery of greatness". His acknowledgement of it as a "capital fault" implicitly acknowledges the financial motivation for the forced match; it was a "capital" (monetary) investment and Penthea's extreme grief renders it a failed transaction (2.2.44-5, 46, 50). As Ithocles tells his uncle,

I now repent it;

Now, uncle, now. This "now" is now too late

So provident is folly in sad issue

That after-wit, like bankrupts' debts, stand tallied

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<sup>378</sup> Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, chapter title, chapter one.

<sup>379</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Edward Dowden, Arden 1 (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1935); the Friar hopes that: "this alliance may so happy prove / To turn your households' rancour to pure love." (2.3.91-2)

Without all possibilities of payment. (4.1.9-13)

Penthea's grief renders her a misspent commodity, and Ithocles' language regarding the match resonates with Bassanes' own, as he comments that

The way to poverty is to be rich;  
 As I in her am wealthy, but for her  
 In all contents a bankrupt. (2.1.70-2)

Penthea becomes his only source of wealth, the one, insecurely held jewel. It is a prize that Penthea herself will rob him of.

Penthea's position as commodity is replicated by that of Orgilus' sister, Euphrania. Before he 'leaves' Sparta, Orgilus (Penthea's original fiancé) extracts a promise from Euphrania that she will not accept any man in marriage before he gives his consent. While Orgilus assures his sister that "[i]t shall be my first care to see thee match'd / As may become thy choice and our contents", this is a clear perpetuation of a power structure policed by fathers and brothers that relies on using women as commodities to forge kinship bonds, and which has already irrevocably damaged Orgilus' own happiness (1.1.108-9). Orgilus does not consider that the fault might lie in the power structure itself, but conservatively blames its misapplication. There seems to be no progress, but simply a restoration of what has already proved a cruel custom. When Orgilus asks her for this "suit", she responds: "[y]ou may style it, / My brother, a command" (1.1.91-2). Female independence is limited, and while Euphrania confesses to having subjective desires to Prophilus ("[t]he law of my desires kept equal pace / With yours") she

nevertheless consistently observes her male relatives' dominance (1.3.75-6). She tells Prophilus that

whatever choice

Lives nearest in my heart must first procure

Consent from both my father and my brother

Ere he can own mee his. (1.3.77-80)

Semantically, the sentence is rather muddled, and an alternative reading that the lover must obtain permission from father and brother before obtaining that coveted place in Euphrania's heart jostles for space with the more orthodox reading that the lover must obtain this permission before owning her in a marital or sexual act of possession. Either way, Euphrania's expressed desires are subservient, and her lack of agency is something that Orgilus' weirdly coercive assent to her choice of marriage partner again asserts:

Sister,

Thou pawn'dst to me an oath, of which engagement

I never will release thee if thou aim'st

At any other choice than this. (3.4.60-2)

Orgilus' insistence on his sister's oath occurs as he takes leave of both father and sister in act one, scene one, and both scenario and subject matter are reminiscent of Laertes' taking leave of Polonius and Ophelia. The repetition of the scenario increases the sense of perpetuated tradition, enacting in this textual reprise a feature that the play shows to be repeated in its own plot. This sense of damning

repetition is given a social texture or dimension by the fact that the story of Penelope Devereux has been identified as a possible source for Penthea's narrative. Devereux's father sought to heal a breach that had arisen between himself and his deputy in Ireland, Henry Sidney, and suggested a marriage between Henry Sidney's eldest son Philip and his own eldest daughter Penelope. He repeated his wish that they should marry on his deathbed. However, Devereux's guardians, the Earl and Countess of Huntingdon together with her brother, the new Earl of Essex, soon married her off to Robert Rich instead. Gibson notes that the marriage was "endorsed (if not arranged) by her brother". This appears to have been greatly against Devereux's own wishes; G. B. Harrison describes her as "carried, protesting, to the altar". Devereux nevertheless refused to embark on an adulterous affair with Sir Philip Sidney, a refusal which, according to literary legend, generated *Astrophil and Stella*.<sup>380</sup>

Later in life Devereux did participate in an adulterous affair with Charles Blount (later to become Lord Mountjoy), which allegedly began in the 1590s, and it is in this context that the biographies of Devereux and John Ford collide. Devereux bore Blount several children, but after her brother the Earl of Essex fell from favour and connection with her became a liability rather than a political asset to her husband, Lord Rich divorced her. Her consequent marriage to Blount caused uproar, as it was generally assumed that a divorced spouse could not remarry in their first spouse's lifetime and James I banished them from court. Blount died in the first year of their exile, and Penelope died a little while after him, having first received three elegies for Blount from prominent writers, including

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<sup>380</sup> See Gibson, intro, *Selected Plays*, p. 3; Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) pp. 7-11; G. B. Harrison, introduction to *Webster and Ford: Selected Plays* (London: Dent, 1974) p. xii, cited in Harriet Hawkins, 'Mortality, Morality and Modernity in *The Broken Heart*: Some Dramatic and Critical Counter – Arguments,' in Neill ed. *Re-Visions*, p. 133.

John Ford's *Fame's Memorial*.<sup>381</sup> Penthea's position obviously corresponds closely with that of Devereux, and Ford's knowledge of her personal history makes this an alluring connection. Yet the arranged marriages of reluctant young women were by no means a novelty. As Thomas Becon, an early advocate of companionate marriage, writes:

First as touching men of nobilitie, wee see dayly by experyence that they for the moste parte marrye their chyldren at theyre pleasure whan they are verye yonge, euen to suche as wylle geue them most mony for them, as men use to sel their horses, oxen, sheepe or any other cattel<sup>382</sup>

Petruchio's enumeration of Kate among his "household stuff" with his horse, ox and ass that I discussed in chapter two clearly corresponds to Becon's disgusted depiction of financially-motivated marital alliances amongst the upper classes and parents "whyche for lucre's sake" trade their children like livestock.<sup>383</sup>

This model of patriarchally-orchestrated, socially advantageous marriage is challenged in the play by the princess Calantha's ability to exercise her own free choice. The King Amyclas has "ever vow'd / Not to enforce affection by our will, / But by her own choice to confirm it gladly" (3.3.10-12) One of Calantha's suitors, the king's cousin Nearchus, sees the history of Orgilus and Penthea as a

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<sup>381</sup> See Hopkins, *Political Theatre*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>382</sup> Thomas Becon, *The Booke of Matrimony both profitable and comfortable for all them, that entende quietly and godly to lye in the holy state of honorable wedlocke* in *The worckes of Thomas Becon*, London: By John Day, dwelling ouer Aldersgate, 1564, fols. cccclxiiiij & cccclib / sigs. Ggg.iii (3) & Hhh.i. See also the accounts of forced marriage in Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Women's Lot in Seventeenth Century England* (London: Methuen, 1985).

<sup>383</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Arden Shakespeare Second Series, 1981, rept. 2002) 3.2.228-32.

cautionary tale. He bows out of the contest for Calantha's affections in favour of the lesser born Ithocles, considering that:

Affections injur'd

By tyranny, or rigor of compulsion,  
 Like tempest-threatened trees unfirmly rooted,  
 Ne'er spring to timely growth. Observe, for instance,  
 Life spent Penthea and unhappy Orgilus. (4.2.204-9)

Nearchus' comments may well encapsulate the moral of the play, which in some ways attempts to rehabilitate female choice in marriage. Calantha's choice of Ithocles over Nearchus, while dynastically unorthodox, in fact promises to prove a restorative to a society that has been harmed by the broken engagement between Orgilus and Penthea. Orgilus' sister wishes to marry Ithocles' friend, and Calantha wishes to marry Ithocles, thus forgiving and reintegrating Ithocles and achieving a harmony among the younger generation that has been disturbed by Penthea's harmful marriage. Female choice in marriage is not represented as disastrous but rather as restitutive.

Calantha's harmonious free choice and the prominence given to the harmful results of forced marriage in this play reflect an early seventeenth century emphasis on companionate marriage. Lawrence Stone argues that, with the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism this period saw a move from an idea of familial duty rooted in the extended family group to an emphasis on the nuclear family and a mutually loving marital relationship. Margaret Lael Mikesell similarly argues that marital theory had hitherto defined marriage as having three functions; propagation, prevention of fornication and mutual aid and comfort. Mikesell

writes that: “[e]mphasis on the first two was common when fiscal and dynastic considerations were paramount. In post-Reformation England, the companionship function gained popularity.”<sup>384</sup> Writers such as William Gouge correspondingly counselled that:

[a] louing mutuall affection must passe betwixt husband and wife, or else no dutie will be well performed [...] In some respects *Loue* is proper and peculiar to an husband [...] But *Loue* is also required of wiues, and they are commanded to be *louers of their husbands*, as well as husbands *to love their wives* ....<sup>385</sup>

Yet even within this new, loving, marital model, the daughter or wife is still a commodity; it is simply that the emphasis falls more squarely upon her use-value in marriage as supporter of the husband. Love and desire become the sugar to sweeten the pill of female duty and subjection. In this model, it is culturally imperative that women serve and fulfil the needs of others, and it is telling that Gouge elaborates that the “*Summe of husbands and wiues duties*” are “[l]oue” and “[f]eare”, “*Loue* as sugar to sweeten the duties of authoritie, which appertaine to an husband. *Feare* as salt to season all the duties of subiection which appertaine to a wife.”<sup>386</sup> While Ford’s play supports and promotes female choice in marriage in its condemnatory depiction of an older, dynastic marriage system, it is also alive to this other, more insidious form of exploitation. Even in companionate models of

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<sup>384</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977); Margaret Lael Mikesell, ‘The Formative Power of Marriage in Stuart Tragedy’ in Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker ed., *In Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama* (London: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1991), p. 235. Mikesell analyses the concentration on matrimony in the drama of Webster, Ford and Middleton as reflective of this shift in attitudes towards marriage as the “growing hegemony of middle-class views of the family brought an emphasis to its nuclear rather than its lineal functions”, p. 234.

<sup>385</sup> Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, p. 225.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

marriage, the female body still functions as commodity, and her affections are manipulated to sustain an unequal hierarchy of male over female. Ultimately, conduct literature insists that a wife's subjective desires should be ruled by her husband.

"Life-spent Penthea" therefore represents a cautionary example of the effects of forced marriage. Yet she is more than this; she is also an ideal embodiment of the early modern wife, enacting to perfection all "the duties of subjection" that William Gouge and other conduct writers allotted to the female sphere. Like Aspatia's complete conformism to the suicide ending of the Ophelia role, Penthea's absolute compliance to the rules of wifely obedience radically questions the demands that this role imposes. Both characters appear to receive the masochism of these received roles upon their flesh; as Aspatia is cut, so Penthea is starved. She enacts the conduct demand that women have no subjective needs with a deadly literalism. According to Orbach, the anorexic experience is that: "[t]he self that one has put forward, a self with needs and wants, has been rejected. Thus a self without such problematic needs must be created." In some sense Euphrania is in the process of putting forward this desiring self, and ultimately her subjective desires will be legitimized and sanctioned by her brother and father. Her desire is ratified because her choice of suitor concords with her father and brother's own dynastic wishes. Penthea, on the other hand, is very much in the position of one who has put forward this desiring self and has had her needs rejected. Orbach writes that the anorectic, in response to such rejection, creates out of herself: "a new persona, a new self that, stripped of needs and desires, will find more acceptance in the world".<sup>387</sup> It is this new self, divested of all need, who we meet in

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

Penthea. It is also, crucially, a new self that would gain approval from the most rigorous of conduct manuals.

Offered jewels, recreations and the privilege to command her pleasures by her husband (“Choose thine own recreations. Be a queen / Of what delights thou fanciest best, what company, / What place, what times;”) as well as: “jewels above value” that she might outshine the other women of the court in: “ravishing luster”, Penthea responds:

Alas my lord, this language to your handmaid  
 Sounds as would music to the deaf. I need  
 No braveries nor cost of art to draw  
 The whiteness of my name into offense.  
 Let such, if any such there are, who covet  
 A curiosity of admiration,  
 By laying out their plenty to full view,  
 Appear in gaudy outsides; my attires  
 Shall suit the inward fashion of my mind,  
 From which, if your opinion nobly plac'd  
 Change not the livery your words bestow,  
 My fortunes with my hopes are at the highest. (2.1.84-6, 79, 78, 91-102)

These are Penthea's first lines in the play. Beginning in lament, her speech advances a servant-self that professes to be deaf to the sensual, material world. She admits to no “delights” and refuses the opportunity to exercise choice of pleasure. Like the modern-day anorectic in Orbach's formulation, Penthea professes to have no needs.

However, this rejection of luxury is also in marked accordance with conduct book literature, which repeatedly counselled against luxurious dress. The words of William Vaughan resonate particularly closely with Penthea's rejection of Bassanes' offers. Having instructed that a wife "must esteeme the maners of her husband to be the legall rules of her life", Vaughan advises that she must also:

not be too sumptuous & superfluous in her attire, as decked with frizled haire, embroidery, pretious stones, gaudy raiments and gold put about, for they are the forerunners of adultery: *But let her haue the inward man in her heart, which consisteth in the incorruption of a mecke and quiet Spirit, that is before God a thing much set by.*<sup>388</sup>

Vaughan's words feature both Bassanes' jewels and Penthea's "gaudy outsides", or in Vaughan's term, "raiments". The "inward fashion" of Penthea's "mind", dressed by Bassanes' good opinion, follows the "inward man" in the good wife's "heart" that Vaughn describes. While it is tempting to suggest a direct correspondence between the two texts, sumptuary advice condemning outward luxury was commonplace. As Robert Dod and John Cleaver chastised in the earlier *A godly form of household government*, a wife should not wear: "gorgious apparell, beyond her degree and place, but [...] her attire [should] bee comely and sober, according to her calling."<sup>389</sup> Henry Smith warns that "garish apparrell hath taught manie gossips to disdain their husbands", and Gouge that "[a] wiues modestie therefore

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<sup>388</sup> William Vaughan, *The golden-groue moralized in three booke: a worke very necessary for all such, as would know how to governe themselues, their houses, or their countrey*, Printed at London by Simon Stafford, dwelling on Adling Hill, 1600, sig. N5r-v.

<sup>389</sup> Robert Dod and John Cleaver, *A godly form of household government: for the ordering of priuate Families, according to the direction of Gods word*, London, Printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas Man, 1603, pp. 218-9.

requireth that her apparel be neither for costlinesse aboute her husbands abilitie, nor for curiousnesse vnbeseeing his calling.”<sup>390</sup>

Furthermore, Penthea’s wish for modest dress is in direct agreement with her husband’s true wishes. Vaughn’s concern that sumptuous attire was the “forerunner[...] of adultery” is clearly shared by Bassanes, who follows his description of “city housewives” who “stroke the head / Which they have branched” with a portrait of “Dames at court, / Who flaunt in riots [profligate or extravagant living]”, whose “pleasure heaves the patient ass that suffers / Upon the stilts of office, titles, incomes” (2.1.23, 26-7, 30-3). For Bassanes, sumptuary luxury goes hand in hand with adultery and a frightening need for an increased income to support a wife’s fashion and leisure habits. His fear is of a topsy-turvy world in which male labour services female desire, as in William Gouge’s description of an aberrant wife. His imagery directly inverts William Whateley’s description of desired marital relations in *A Bride-Bush*:

it is laudable, commendable, a note of a vertuous woman, a dutifull wife, when she submits her-selfe with quietnesse, cheerefully, euen as a wel-broken horse turnes at the least turning, stands at the least check of the riders bridle, readily going and standing as he wishes that sits upon his back.<sup>391</sup>

Penthea’s behaviour, in inverse proportion to her husband’s anxieties, conforms with absolute rigidity to this hierarchy of male desire over female behaviour, and

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<sup>390</sup> Henry Smith, *A preparatiue to marriage. The summe wherof was spoken at a Contract, and enlarged after. Imprinted at London by Thomas Orwin for Thomas Man, dwelling in Paternoster row at the signe of the Talbot*, 1591, sig. G2r; Gouge, *Domestical Duties*, p. 280.

<sup>391</sup> William Whateley, *A Bride-Bush or A Wedding Sermon: Compendiously describing the duties of Married Persons, [...] Printed at London by William Iaggard, for Nicholas Bourne, and are to be sold at his shop at the entrance into the Royall Exchange* (1617), p. 43.

crucially the sensitive responsiveness of female behaviour to male desire, that Whateley and the authors of other conduct books of the time insisted upon so rigorously. Her denotation of herself as a servant (“handmaid”) enacts at one and the same time the analogy of the husband to God that conduct manuals set up (consider Mary’s response to Gabriel at the annunciation: “I am a handmaiden of the Lord” Luke 1.38) and the Whateley-an understanding that “[t]he whole duty of the wife is referred to two heads. The first is, to acknowledge her inferiority: the next, to carry her selfe as inferiour.”<sup>392</sup>

Ford perhaps calls the greatest attention to the anticipatory, predictive nature of Penthea’s desires, her “active obedience” in conduct book terminology. “[T]here is a certain discretion and desire required of women” write Robert Dod and John Cleaver:

to please the nature, inclinations & maners of their husbands, so long as the same import no wickednesse. For as the looking-glasse, howsoever faire and beautifully adorned, is nothing woorth if it shew that countenance sad, which is pleasant: or the same pleasant, that is sad: so the woman deserueth no commendation, that (as it were) contrarying her husband, when he is merie, sheweth herselfe sad, or in sadnesse vttereth her mirth. For as men should obey the laws of their cities, so women the maners of their husbands. To some women a becke of her husbands is sufficient to declare that there is somewhat amisse that displeaseth him, and specially if shee beare her husband

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid, p. 36; as Dod and Cleaver write, wives should: “submit themselues, and be obedient vnto their owne husbands, as to the Lord, because the husband is by God’s ordinance the wiues head, that is, her defender, teacher, and comforter: and therefore she oweth her subiection to him, like as the Church doth to Christ;” *Household Government*, p. 224.

any reuerence. For an honest matron hath no neede of any greater staffe, but of one word, or one sowre countenance.<sup>393</sup>

Dod and Cleaver counsel women here to be utterly responsive to their husbands. The value of the looking glass (the wife) lies in its ability to reflect an accurate image of its owner (the husband). Penthea's apparently preternatural sensitivity to her husband's enacts this conduct book emphasis on what William Gouge refers to as a "wife's active obedience", summoning her to actively follow and anticipate her husband's demands, not just respond to his requests. Gouge recalls the wife to the "old Law": "*thy desire shall be subject to thine husband and he shall rule over thee*".<sup>394</sup>

Penthea is the model of this early modern conduct book ideal of the perfect wife. Her desires are subject to and respond to her husband's desires. She owns no independent needs. Asked whether she would prefer to go to court, visit Bassanes' island, or remain in his house, she replies:

I am no mistress.

Whither you please, I must attend; all ways

Are alike pleasant to me. (2.1.107-9)

Her abstention from independent desire is comically contradicted by the serving woman Grausis, who squawks: "[i]sland? Prison. / A Prison is as gaysome", adding "On no terms islands; I'll be stew'd first. (2.1.109-10, 15) Bassanes' asides to Grausis ("juggling bawd", "I'll have you pounded", "Damnable bitch-fox!") indicate that Bassanes' own desires are for seclusion, and their interview at the end of the scene confirms his preferences:

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<sup>393</sup> Dod and Cleaver, *Household Government*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>394</sup> Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, p. 43.

th'hadst been better

Rail'd at the sins thou worshipp'st than have thwarted

My will. I'll use thee cursedly. (2.1.147-9)

Penthea's refusal to express a desire for court life is an accurate reading of Bassanes' true wishes.

When Ithocles nervously asks "[t]is not my brother's pleasure, I presume, / T'immure her [Penthea] in a chamber", Bassanes response is technically truthful: "[t]is her will, / She governs her own hours" (2.2.69-71). Yet the extent to which Penthea's will corresponds to her husband's desires is remarkable. She effects the lock-up that Bassanes longs for in act two, scene one, in which he resolves to

I'll have that window next the street damm'd up;

It gives too full a prospect to temptation

And courts a gazer's glances. (2.1.1-3)

Bassanes' paranoia explicitly recalls Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (c.1621) in which Leantio strives to keep his beautiful wife Bianca concealed from public view. The young husband comments:

'tis great policy

To keep choice treasures in obscurest places:

Should we show thieves our wealth, 'twould make 'em bolder.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women*, ed. Roma Gill (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1968) 1.1.165-167; all further references from this edition. Leantio considers his new wife a "most matchless jewel" (1.1.162), a "gem" (1.1.171) and is relieved to have his mother on hand to help

Despite Leantio's efforts, Bianca is "spied" by the Duke "from the widow's window", and the young marriage swiftly unravels as Bianca enters into an adulterous affair with the Duke, at first unwillingly and then apparently willingly, and Leantio embarks on his own retaliatory affair (2.2.2.). In Ford's play, Bassanes' paranoid instructions anticipate the denouement of *Women Beware Women*, but Penthea's self-elected immurement renders his precautions superfluous. She enacts her own damming up. The imagery of locks that is associated with Ophelia reaches new heights in Ford's portrayal of Penthea, but she is figured less as a treasure chest than as a victim of a live burial. When Croton describes her as "buried in a bride-bed", the image of smothering recalls a second dramatic text that is kept in view, along with the conduct manuals, throughout Penthea's narrative: *Othello*.

The association of Bassanes with Othello himself is confirmed by the language of the monstrous that characterises Bassanes and saturates Shakespeare's play. Orgilus considers, for example, that Bassanes' awareness of Penthea's perfections

Begets a kind of monster-love, which love  
Is nurse unto a fear so strong and servile  
As brands all dotage with a jealousy [...] (1.1.60-3)

There is a direct textual echo here of Emilia's description of jealous men in the third act of *Othello*

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keep her under lock and key, because "Old mothers know the world; and such as these, / When sons lock chests, are good to look to keys." (1.1.175-6) Consider Bassanes' own attitude towards Penthea as treasure: "The way to poverty is to be rich; / As I in her am wealthy, but for her / In all contents a bankrupt." (2.1.70-2)

[...] jealous souls will not be answer'd so;  
 They are not ever jealous for the cause,  
 But jealous for they are jealous: 'tis a monster  
 Begot upon itself, born on itself [...] (*Oth.* 3.4.157-60)

Images of the monstrous and animalistic are introduced by Iago and begin to saturate *Othello* as a whole with the contamination of Othello's jealousy. Othello suspects "some monster in his [Iago's] thought / Too hideous to be shown"; jealousy is, according to Iago "the green-eyed monster"; Othello tells Iago to "exchange me for a goat" should he begin to believe Iago's inferences, but comes to consider that "A horned man's a monster and a beast" and swiftly becomes that beast when he strikes his wife, and is finally reduced to the "monstrous act" of smothering her (*Oth.* 3.3.108-9; 3.3.167; 3.3.181; 4.1.63; 5.2.188).<sup>396</sup>

Bassanes' own language is similarly riddled with animalistic metaphors and images; the young lords and ladies of the court are "gaudy earwig[s]" and "Wagtails and jays" (2.1.13, 136). His servant Phulas is a "Son of a cat, ill-looking hound's-head" (2.1.15) and Grausis is a "magpie", "bitch-fox", "rotten maggot" and a "nightmare" (2.1.74,120, 2.3.132,139). He suspects that Ithocles is "one that franks his lust / In swine-security of bestial incest" (3.2.149-50). As for a constant woman, "Twould puzzle all the gods but to create / Such a new monster" (2.2.91-2). This correspondence between Othello and Bassanes is further confirmed in act three, scene two, in which Bassanes is relieved of his jealous rage by Penthea's reasoning in much the same way that Othello is momentarily calmed by a recollection of Desdemona's virtues ("O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear" 4.1.193). The very scenario that *Othello* imagines is set before us in *The Broken*

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<sup>396</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co Ltd) All subsequent references taken from this edition.

*Heart* as Penthea pacifies her virtually rabid husband, who “stares, / Struts, puffs, and sweats” in “Most admirable lunacy.” (3.2.137-8) Poor old Bassanes is very much the ursine creature of Othello’s imagination, literally “charm’d with sounds celestial” by Penthea’s words, and soothed into the “kind animal” kneeling at her feet (3.2.173-4; 3.2.178).

The *Othello* undertow to the often comic Bassanes sub-plot is a continual reminder of the dangers of adultery, or merely the suspicion of adultery, for women. The charge is one that Penthea can deflect by evidencing her own, faultless conduct, and it is this reassurance that calms Bassanes’ rage:

My lord, what slackness  
 In my obedience hath deserv’d this rage?  
 Except humility and silent duty  
 Have drawn on your unquiet, my simplicity  
 Ne’er studied your vexation. (3.2.157-61)

Penthea references some of the key virtues of the early modern ideal wife: obedience, humility, silence and duty. Obedience, humility and duty have already been mentioned as features of a woman’s servant status. Silence was a similar concern: “as modesty giues the best grace to your behaiour” writes Richard Braithwaite, “so moderation of *Speech* to your discourse. Silence in a *Woman* is a mouing Rhetoricke, winning most, when in words it wooeth least.”<sup>397</sup> Penthea’s defence is her absolute obedience to the tenets of conduct literature. The

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<sup>397</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentlewoman, drawne out to the full body expressing, what habilliments doe best attire her, what ornaments doe best adorne her, what complements doe best accomplish her*, London: Printed for Michaell Sparke and are to be. sould, at the Blew Bible – in Greene Arbor, p. 90. For a detailed discussion of silence as a female virtue, see Christina Luckyj, ‘A Moving Rhetoricke’: *Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), especially chapter two, ‘Silence and Gender’.

injunction to silence is, moreover, one that she uses against her husband. When Ithocles removes Penthea from Bassanes' custody on account of his irrational and dangerous jealousy, Bassanes appeals to his wife for defence and intervention, to which she replies: "[s]he needs no tongue / To plead excuse who never purpos'd wrong" (3.2.192-3).

The smothering of Desdemona is kept in suspension or abeyance in *The Broken Heart*, yet it is always in view. Bassanes considers that:

There's a lust

Committed by the eye, that sweats and travails,

Plots, wakes, contrives, till the deform'd bear-whelp,

Adultery, be lick'd into the act,

The very act. That light shall be damm'd up. (2.1.3-7)

This last sentence is also oddly reminiscent of the light and dark imagery that dominates *Othello*. Bassanes' "light" may either refer to the natural light that comes in through the window, using "light" as a literal synonym for windows (as in church architectural terms), or the figurative light of Penthea's beauty. The idea that Penthea's light should be "damm'd up" contributes both to a sense of the oppressive live burial of Penthea's marriage and to the weighty fabric of *Othello* allusions as it gestures towards Othello's "Put out the light, and then put out the light" at the final act of smothering (5.2.7). But it is perhaps in keeping with conduct literature's emphasis on active obedience that Penthea performs her own damming up, and starves her body of food as Othello starves Desdemona of oxygen. She follows her husband's homicidal tendencies through to their

conclusion, enacting the subliminal, intertextually communicated desire to smother her.

In Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness* we certainly see a wife enacting her husband's homicidal intentions. Frankford resolves to "kill" his wife "even with kindness" when he discovers her adulterous relationship with his preferred friend Wendoll. It is a judgement that Anne faithfully enacts. Once banished from the household, she tells the servant Nicholas to tell her husband

That you have seen me weep, wish myself dead.  
 Nay you may say too – for my vow is pass'd –  
 Last night you saw me eat and drink my last. (16.61-3)

Later in the scene she again avows self-starvation; the behaviour she describes is very like that of the sleepless, abstemious Penthea:

So to my deathbed, for from this sad hour  
 I never will nor eat, nor drink, nor taste  
 Of any cates that may preserve my life;  
 I never will nor smile, nor sleep, nor rest" (16.101-4).

The spectacular nature of Anne's starvation also recalls Penthea's; the servant Jenkins predicts that: "there's no hope of life in her, for she will take no sustenance. She hath plainly starved herself, and now she is as lean as a lath" (17.34-6).<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, ed. R. W. Van Fossen (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1961).

**“A long and painful progress”: Penthea’s self-starvation**

Penthea’s starvation is, at one and the same time, a gesture of compliance and of wilfulness; it encodes protest in its very obedience. Her fast enacts the damaging self-denial that is axiomatic of her compliance with patriarchal imperatives both in her submission to her brother’s choice of spouse and the active obedience she performs for that spouse. She is, in fact, obedient to the point of radical masochism. As she tells Orgilus:

Should I outlive my bondage let me meet  
 Another worse than this and less desir’d,  
 If of all the men alive thou should’s’t but touch  
 My lip or hand again (2.3.104-7).

Her faithfulness to her husband and her *fate* is absolute, and she will concede no alternative, no way out, other than death. As she tells Calantha, her remedy “Must be a winding-sheet, a fold of lead, / And some untrod-on Corner in the earth” (3.5.32-3). Like *The Maid’s Tragedy’s* Aspatia, Penthea insists on death as the teleological goal of the narrative, as her use of the imperative “must” indicates. However, Ford’s emphasis on the *process* of Penthea’s death builds on Beaumont and Fletcher’s portrayal of Aspatia to challenge both the confines of the Ophelia-type and the commodification of women in society through Penthea’s absolute adherence to the rules that govern both roles. Her starvation can be read as a protest against the fashioning and governance of women in society through the

texts of conduct literature and of early modern drama: *Othello*, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* and *Hamlet* all stand accused in the tragic forum of *The Broken Heart*.

The emphasis on process in self-starvation corresponds with the emphasis on the process of death required to fulfil the Ophelia-type. The instability of the anorexic position derives from the continual nature and process of denial; desires are always arising and must always be fended off. There is no resting point. Numerous critics have noted the inappropriateness of the term ‘anorexia’ for the symptom it has come to describe. As Rudolph Bell explains, the term anorexia derives from the Greek *an* (privation, a lack of) and *orexis* (appetite).<sup>399</sup> Yet anorexia does not comprehend any loss of appetite, although ingestion may, in the later stages of the illness, become physically difficult. Rather, anorexia is constituted by the constant attempt to overcome appetite. The anorectic, writes Orbach, “has continued to feel her own needs and desires intensely [...] Her anorexia is the daily, even hourly, attempt to keep her needs in check, to keep herself and her desires under wraps.”<sup>400</sup> It is this struggle that arguably defines Penthea. Her response to Orgilus on his approach in the rose garden is one of appalled recognition:

Away! Some fury hath bewitch'd they tongue.  
The breath of ignorance that flies from thence,  
Ripens a knowledge in me of afflictions  
Above all suff'rance. (2.3.42-5)

When she banishes Orgilus, it is a clear attempt to banish temptation. She warns him that: “If ever henceforth thou appear in language, / Message, or letter to

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<sup>399</sup> Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, p. 2. See also Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. xi.

<sup>400</sup> Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. xvii.

betray my frailty, / I'll call thy former protestations lust" (2.3.112-5). Penthea's frailty is her continued susceptibility to the temptations of the world and both emotional and sensual pleasure. Orbach writes of the potentially treacherous nature of the anorexic project:

This new, apparently needless person she has created out of herself feels precarious. She is in danger of evaporating and making visible her very opposite, the despairing, anguished, needy person buried deep in the anorectic's inner world [...] she is in constant danger of breaking down [...] the inner self threatens to burst out. It requires more vigilant binding up which is achieved by an increase in the rituals and obsessive routines which take up more and more of her time.<sup>401</sup>

While Orbach is referring to the obsessive rituals of the anorectic's interaction with food, Penthea in fact enacts her own ritual in order to disengage with Orgilus. Kneeling to him and kissing his hand, she then stands up and orders him to "Remove / Your steps some distance from me" (2.3.74-5). It is a ritual of separation and abstention; once Orgilus has obeyed her she proceeds to exile him from her life.

In her discussion of anorexia as a political symptom, Maud Ellman records how, in the Irish Hunger Strike of 1981, the nationalists revived: "the legal procedure of 'fasting to distrain', known as *troscud*" from the archaic Irish civil code, the *Senchus Mor*, to obscure the practice's links to suffragette activity. According to this code, "a creditor could fast against a debtor, or a victim of injustice could fast against the person who had injured him." If a nobleman

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

refused to concede to a justified and properly conducted fast, he lost all legal rights. According to the *Senchus Mor*: “He who does not give a pledge to fasting is an evader of all; he who disregards all things shall not be paid by God or man.” Ellman suggests that the tradition of Christian saints (such as St Patrick) hunger-striking against God:

may have originated in the *civil* practice of fasting with a hostile purpose against an enemy [...] what appears to the modern Christian as a form of sacrifice and humiliation may once have been, in some of its aspects, a way of taking the kingdom of heaven by violence.<sup>402</sup>

Ellman stresses that in order for this action of fasting to distract to be effective, the fasters must both make a spectacle of themselves and articulate the significance of their abstinence. Anorexia, she contends, is similarly a visual performance which depends upon the other as spectator in order to be read. Furthermore, this performance is one of radical conformism, “[b]ecause its secret is to overpower the oppressor with the spectacle of disempowerment, a hunger strike is an ingenious way of *playing* hierarchical relations rather than abnegating their authority.<sup>403</sup>

Pentheia is certainly playing the male-female hierarchical relations of early modern culture and is, like the early saints abstaining from food, paradoxically both victim and aggressor.<sup>404</sup> Ithocles’ reaction to his twin sister’s emaciated body –

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<sup>402</sup> Maud Ellman, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1993), pp. 12-13.

<sup>403</sup> Ellman, *Hunger Artists*, p. 21.

<sup>404</sup> Harriet Hawkins, Sharon Hamilton and Forence Ali all blame Pentheia for her abstinence, perceiving it as an unimaginative and over-zealous commitment to early modern social codes. All three critics express the view that Pentheia *should* have engaged in an affair with Orgilus. See Hawkins, ‘Mortality, Morality and Modernity’ in Michael Neill ed., *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 133; Sharon Hamilton, ‘The Broken Heart: Language Suited to a Divided Mind’ in Daniel K. Anderson Jr ed., *“Concord In Discord”: The Plays of John Ford, 1586-1986* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1986), pp. 179-80; Ali, *Opposing Absolutes*, p. 52.

“[h]ere is a killing sight” – acknowledges both the passive, dying form before him and its aggressive function. Penthea’s starvation may paradoxically fatally harm its spectators. It is a statement that redounds on Ithocles himself in the final act, as the accusation implicit in her starved body finds its hangman in Orgilus. In life, however, Penthea enacts the doctrine of active obedience to perfection, and plays the perfect wife; but in doing so, she raises a protest against her conditions by the very absoluteness of her own disengagement from the world of subjective needs and bodily appetite.

Susie Orbach similarly calls attention to the political resonance of the anorexic act, writing that:

Like the hunger striker, the anorectic is starving, she is longing to eat, she is desperate for food. Like the hunger striker, she is in protest at her conditions. Like the hunger striker, she has taken as her weapon a refusal to eat. [...] The hunger strike becomes the means of protest to draw attention to the illegitimacy of the jailer, the moral righteousness of the cause, or in her case, the necessity for action.<sup>405</sup>

Orbach’s reference to “the jailer” resonates not only with the Jailer’s Daughter of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* but with *all* of the Ophelia types discussed thus far in this thesis; quite apart from the diction of locks surrounding these characters, all are associated in some way with figures of patriarchal custody, whether they be fathers (Polonius, the Jailer, Saxony, Calianax), brothers (Laertes and Ithocles), or brothers-in-law (Mathias). The jailer’s illegitimacy is very much a concern of the

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Yet the weight and fabric of *Othello* allusions in the play make it plain that Penthea commits adultery with Orgilus at the risk of her own life.

<sup>405</sup> Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. 83.

Ophelia-type's narrative. Of all these plays *The Broken Heart* is perhaps most strongly condemnatory of abuses of custodial privilege, and indeed, of the very system of patriarchal custody that upholds this privilege. It is the character of Penthea who is the vehicle of this condemnation. Both she and the play are in protest at the conditions of her imprisonment, and her action has ramifications for all the Ophelia types.

The meaning of Penthea's name, glossed in the list of speakers as "Complaint", takes on new significance when she is situated in the complaint tradition which, as John Kerrigan writes: "admits poems of spiritual intensity but also social anger" and has its etymological roots in the Latin *plangere* ('to strike, noisily thump'). Complaint has, moreover, strong legal connotations as a 'bill' submitted by a plaintiff with retrospective application – the wrong has already been done.<sup>406</sup> Lorna Hutson argues that sixteenth century complaint literature was inflected by the growing influence of concepts of intention on sixteenth century common law. The legal diction of complaint literature (Hutson instances George Turberville's translation of 'Phyllis and Demophon' in the *Heroides*) creates an environment in which "a woman's voice may [...] be 'doubled' [i.e. distorted, or inflected] by the imperative to construct a fiction of masculine matrimonial intention in order to justify, and perhaps even bring about, the marriage that would retrospectively turn her 'fault' into her 'good name'.<sup>407</sup>

Penthea's complaint issues from a place of radical blamelessness. Her righteous anger at her brother's abuse of privilege is expressed in the language of the law courts. She accuses him of "forfeiting the last will of the dead" (3.2.41)

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<sup>406</sup> John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and Female Complaint*, *A Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 2 & 7.

<sup>407</sup> Lorna Hutson, 'The Double Voice of Renaissance Equity and the Literary Voices of Women' in Danielle Clarke ed., *This Double Voice: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p. 156.

conforming to Hutson's association of the complaint genre with allegations of breach of promise and theories of contract. Forfeit has its etymological roots in the French *farfait*, "wrong, crime, p.p. of *farfaire*, to do wrong" and Medieval Latin *faris facere* "to transgress from *faris*, outside."<sup>408</sup> Penthea's legal diction continues in her threat that

The ashes of our parents will assume  
 Some dreadful figure and appear to charge  
 Thy bloody guilt, that hast betray'd their name  
 To infamy in this reproachful match [...] (3.2.76-9)

The fact that married women in particular could not bring suit under common law is perhaps in part responsible for the abstract nature of the legal forum Penthea conjures, in which ghosts make futile accusations for past wrongs. Penthea's parents' "dreadful figure" (and note the conflation of the two identities into one here) is in fact absolutely unfigured. Crucially, they are imagined as charging Ithocles not with harming Penthea, but with breaking their word and bringing infamy upon them.<sup>409</sup>

Furthermore, Penthea *is* complaint; she becomes the genre. Penthea as complaint indicates the manner in which her body is the complaint, and in which she embodies grievance. Her self-starvation indicts her forced marriage by literalising the divorce between body and mind that it imposed. Forced to physically perform the actions of a desire she does not emotionally feel, Penthea

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<sup>408</sup> Ernest Weekely, *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, 2 vols (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), vol.1, p. 588.

<sup>409</sup> Although as Laura Gowing notes, the ecclesiastical courts were still available to women especially regarding charges of defamation and slander; see 'Language, Power and the Law: Women's Slander Litigation in Early Modern London' in Lorna Hutson ed., *Feminism and Renaissance Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

herself tells Orgilus that “Cruelty enforc’d / Divorce betwixt my body and my heart”, dating this divorce from her forced marriage (2.3.57).<sup>410</sup> That Penthea’s political protest deeply implicates enforced marriage is witnessed to by Ford’s alignment of such marriages with rape. The idea of forced intercourse here (“Cruelty enforc’d”) is repeated again and again in a dense lexicon of rape and ravishment. Penthea frames her marriage as: “A rape done on my truth”, and tells Orgilus that “The virgin dowry which my birth bestow’d / Is ravish’d by another” (2.3.79, 99-100). Furthermore, Ford explicitly renders Penthea’s sense of corporeal pollution and trauma.<sup>411</sup> When Ithocles asks her how Bassanes esteems her, she answers:

Such a one

As only you have made me: a faith-breaker,

A spotted whore. (3.2.68-70)

Penthea’s identification of herself as a “spotted whore” indicates this sense of infection, in this case of sexually transmitted syphilis. In her madness she deems herself again a “ravish’d wife”, and explains her self-starvation as an attempt to purge unwelcome bodily fluids. Speaking of herself in the third person, she relates that:

[...] since her blood was season’d, by the forfeit

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<sup>410</sup> Harriet Hawkins regards the enforced marriage as “the original sin that destroys Penthea”, and cites Stendhal’s comment in *Love* that: “Where there is no love, woman’s faithfulness to the marriage bond is probably against nature ... It is ridiculous to tell a girl she must be faithful to a husband of her choice, and then to marry her against her will to a tedious old dotard.” Harriet Hawkins, ‘Mortality, Morality, Modernity’, p. 132; Stendhal, *Love*, trans. Gilbert and Suzanne Sale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 194-5.

<sup>411</sup> As Rowland Wymer comments: “like many victims of rape she feels physically polluted and therefore morally tainted herself”; *Webster and Ford*, p. 111.



Grausis can tell Bassanes in all legal rectitude that he will not only see and speak to Penthea again, but “feel her too, man. / Be of good cheer; she’s your own flesh and bone.” (3.2.198-201) Rape within marriage finally became illegal in the common law system in 1991 and was placed in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. The case for the defendant of R v R in which this law against rape within marriage was established relied on Sir Matthew Hale’s statement of 1736 that “the husband cannot be guilty of rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract.”<sup>413</sup> Hale’s statement is informed by the same idea of the female body as property that T.E.’s *The law’s resolution of women’s rights* identifies in early modern legal attitudes towards rape of a married woman:

if any virgin, widow, or single woman be ravished, she herself may sue an appeal of rape, prosecute the felon to death, and the king’s pardon (it seemeth) cannot help him. If a feme covert be ravished, she cannot have an appeal without her husband [...] <sup>414</sup>

The rape of a married woman by her husband is, as a result, a legal impossibility and a kind of blind-spot – T.E. does not even consider the possibility. Because if the husband and wife are, as marital theory insisted, one flesh and the wife is the husband’s property then, as Julia Rudolph discusses, rape by an outside party amounts to a property crime against the husband: “Rape was first associated with abduction – the theft of a woman – and was less identified with the sexual

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<sup>413</sup> See Nicole Westmorland, ‘Rape Law and Reform in England and Wales’, *School for Policy Studies Working Paper Series 7* (Bristol, 2004), <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/>, p. 6.

<sup>414</sup> T.E. *The law’s resolution of women’s rights* (1632) in Kate Aughterson ed., *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook. Constructions of Femininity in England* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 153.

violation of a person.”<sup>415</sup> This legal blind spot is something that both *The Atheist’s Tragedy* and *The Broken Heart* work against, struggling to create a vocabulary which can comprehend rape within marriage and the “ravish’d wife” (3.2.146). While *The Broken Heart* frames Penthea as an item of property, it also insists upon her subjective experience, and this is one of violation and shame.

Contemporary responses to anorexia have analysed its association with sexuality on two levels. The first is that fasting itself shuts down the sexual, reproducing body. The onset of amenorrhea according to writers such as Marina Warner, Helena Michie and Susie Orbach enhances the idea of fasting as symbol of wholeness and purity by obliterating the signs of sexuality. Orbach writes that the anorexic woman “does away with the explicit marker of her reproductive capacities. In essence she defeminizes her body.”<sup>416</sup> Penthea’s sense that despite her youth she is “past child-bearing” seems to witness to a similar shutting-down of the sexual, reproducing body (4.2.94). On a second level, however, the rejection of food may be a way in which anorectics assert the integrity and self-possession of their own bodies despite that body’s vulnerable boundaries. As Rudolph Bell writes, food is in some sense an invasion of the body to which holy anorectics choose to say NO.<sup>417</sup> The idea that the female body is an item of property, or commodity under male governance, is thereby contested. Maud Ellman’s analysis

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<sup>415</sup> Julia Rudolph, ‘Rape and Resistance: Women and Consent in Seventeenth-Century English Legal and Political Thought’, *The Journal of British Studies* 39:2 (2000) 157-184 at p. 172.

<sup>416</sup> Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. 7. Marina Warner writes that: “Fasting, like chastity, was prescribed for both sexes, but like virginity, fasting has a particular goal in women that enhances the symbolism of wholeness and purity. Amenorrhea, the absence of menstruation, develops rapidly. Even young girls on a minor diet can miss a period, while starvation (as in the case of the illness anorexia nervosa) can cause permanent damage; menstruation might never begin again”; *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 74. Warner’s comments lead Helena Michie to conclude: “Fasting [...] purifies the body by obliterating signs of sexuality”, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women’s Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 21.

<sup>417</sup> As Bell writes: “Since virgins and pious widows do not engage in sexual intercourse, food is the only thing that enters the bodies of these anorexics by their own volition, or because they are pressed to accede to the orders of their confessors. Over this invasion of their bodies these women retain but one choice – whether to bring a bowl to their lips or a fork to their mouths – and they choose to say no”; *Holy Anorexia*, p. 115.

of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* suggests that "[h]er anorexia replaces her virginity, in the sense that her mouth rejects what her vagina proved unable to withstand. She starves in order to refuse all traffic with a world that threatens to invade her every orifice."<sup>418</sup> The correspondence between Penthea and the later *Clarissa* is clear. Like *Clarissa*, Penthea starves to remove her body from the world that has trafficked her body. Food is a bodily invasion she is able to say no to and is able to control. Ultimately, by rejecting food, she removes her body from circulation by removing her body entirely.

Orbach's description of the force-feeding of the suffragette hunger-strikers indicates the extent to which the female body is not conceived of as a woman's own property:

The government's response to this protest in the form of force-feeding is yet another example of the notion that control of the female body is not something that resides with its owner, the individual woman, but is an area to be contested.<sup>419</sup>

The female hunger-strike can contest the idea that the body belongs to the patriarchy. That Penthea's self-starvation and effacement is interpreted as an assertion of will is left in no doubt by the text, and it is her male relatives that frame it as such most clearly. Armostes warns her: "Be not so wilful, / Sweet niece, to work thine own destruction." (4.2.154-5) Ithocles similarly identifies the will behind his sister's self-starvation:

Nature

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<sup>418</sup> Ellman, *Hunger Artists*, p. 81.

<sup>419</sup> Orbach, *Hunger Strike*, p. 7.

Will call her daughter Monster. – What! not eat?

Refuse the only ordinary means

Which are ordain'd for life? Be not, my sister,

A murd'ress to thyself. (4.2.115-9)

His words identify Penthea's behaviour as unnatural and deviant ("Monster") and locate the will, the murderous intent, that lies beneath that behaviour.

Yet while Penthea's self-starvation is clearly understood within the play as a work of tremendous will, and a violent process that she herself enacts, it is also simultaneously understood as something that has been done *to* her. Bassanes, for example, clearly feels responsible for her physical deterioration, reviving the metaphorical denotation of Penthea-as-space to curse himself:

I, who was made a monarch

Of what a heart could wish for, a chaste wife,

Endeavour'd what in me lay to pull down

That temple built for adoration only,

And level't in the dust of causeless scandal. (4.2.29-32)

While Penthea wilfully famishes the temple of her body, it is Bassanes who feels he has done the work of violence. Orgilus blames both Bassanes and Ithocles for Penthea's wretched state, explicitly laying responsibility for her wasted form at Ithocles' door. He draws the veil off her dead face and commands Ithocles to "[s]urvey a beauty wither'd by the flames / Of an insulting Phaeton, her brother." (4.4.25-6) He assigns Penthea's sapped appearance not to her own work of self-

starvation but to Ithocles' metaphorical scorching of her body by his overzealous social aspirations.

Ellman recounts an allegory written by Bobby Sands, one of the hunger strikers in the Kesh during the Irish hunger strike. In this story a man traps a lark which then refuses to sing. The man starves the lark, and leaves it in a dirty cage: "but the lark still refused to yield. The man murdered it." As Ellman notes, the allegory reveals a certain confusion of agency:

This story reveals how hunger strikes invert the roles of self and other, challenging conventional ideas of agency. The inmates of the prison chose to fast, and also chose to foul their cells, but the mistreatment of the lark implies that they have been forsaken to their filth and forced to starve. So who is starving whom, and who is forcing whom to live in excrement? This question is built into the very structure of the verb "to starve," which can either mean to cause starvation or to suffer it.<sup>420</sup>

Who is starving whom becomes the central question of *The Broken Heart*. Unlike Bassanes, while Ithocles acknowledges the harm he has done to his sister he never accepts responsibility for her starvation. Ellman argues that self-starvation as a political act tries to force the viewer to recognise that they are implicated in the spectacle that they behold:

Somehow they must persuade the people whom they fast against to take responsibility for their starvation. In this way hunger strikers reveal the interdependency in which all subjects are enmeshed, because

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<sup>420</sup> Ellman, *Hunger Artists*, pp. 91-2, citing Sands in Pádraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), p. 53, 17.

they force their antagonists to recognize that they are implicated in the hunger of their fellow beings. At the same time, though, the strikers turn their rage against their enemies upon themselves and immolate themselves in effigy. Their suicide is murder by proxy.<sup>421</sup>

In her madness Penthea becomes most explicitly accusatory. “But that is he”, she says, pointing at her brother: “That’s he, and still ‘tis he.” (4.2.116, 122) She laments her: “wreck’d honor, ruin’d by those tyrants, / A cruel brother and a desperate dotage!” (4.2.144-5) Orgilus’ response is to revenge her ruin; as he himself comments, “She has tutor’d me” (4.2.124). This allocation of blame is a feature that all the Ophelia types comprehend, from Ophelia’s obliquely threatening: “My brother shall know of it” to Aspatia’s sword fight – no matter how inept – against the man who has forsaken her. Penthea embodies this element of accusation and complaint; her emaciated form indicts her society, and her finger-pointing simply enacts the allegations that her body already signifies.

Ithocles, Bassanes and Orgilus all witness and comment on Penthea’s mad raving; their discomfort is palpable:

Ithocles: Here is a killing sight; lo, Bassanes,

A lamentable object.

Orgilus: Man, dost see’t?

Sports are more gamesome; am I yet in merriment?

Why dost not laugh?

Bassanes: Divine, and best of ladies,

Please to forget my outrage! Mercy ever

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<sup>421</sup> Ellman, *Hunger Artists*, p. 54.

Cannot but lodge under a roof so excellent.

I have cast off that cruelty of frenzy

Which once appear'd, impost'rous, and then juggl'd

To cheat my sleeps of rest. (4.2.60-68)

Faced with the visual representation of Penthea's loss of reason, the mens' own language collapses into incoherence and, with Orgilus' sense of his own grotesque merriment, hysteria. Bassanes' distressed apology is virtually incomprehensible, as Orgilus later comment indicates: "Wisdom, look 'ee, / Begins to rave. – Art thou mad too, antiquity?"(4.2.85-6) Bassanes' sense of complicity in Penthea's starvation is registered in his own desire for punishment as he rails: "Fall on me, if there be a burning Aetna, / And bury me in flames!" (4.2.95-6)

While Penthea's mad scene incorporates accusation, it also enacts the healing of an original scene of parting. She revisits the scene in which she denied Orgilus in the rose garden and at the same time revises Ophelia and Hamlet's 'get thee to a nunnery' encounter. Instead of staging a rejection, this scene stages a reconciliation, blaming the conflict on patriarchal interference in the emotive world. Hamlet's "I did love you once" finds itself healed into an affirmation in *The Broken Heart*.

Penthea: [*to Orgilus*] I lov'd you once.

Orgilus: Thou didst, wrong'd creature, in despite of malice.

For it I love thee ever.

Penthea: Spare your hand;

Believe me, I'll not hurt it.

Orgilus: Pain my heart too.

Penthea: Complain not though I wring it hard.

I'll kiss it (4.2.109-112).

The giving of hands parallels the ceremony of marriage, and heals the earlier ritual of disengagement. Above all, the scene emphasizes Penthea's continued affection for Orgilus, and her subjective, sensual longing for a life with him. Orbach's sense that the anorectic is engaged in a continual work of repressing the needy self resonates with Penthea's expressions of continued affection and desire. Referring to her initial engagement to Orgilus, Penthea considers:

Since I was first a wife, I might have been  
 Mother to many prattling babes.  
 They would have smil'd when I smil'd; and, for certain,  
 I should have cried when they cried. Truly, brother,  
 My father would have pick'd me out a husband,  
 And then my little ones had been no bastards. (4.2. 87-92)

Her desires situate her firmly in the world and in the realm of affective relations, in which smiles and tears are mirrored by her children, who are the fruit of a successful and reproductive marriage. Her evocation of the maternal body is in direct contrast to the withered, emaciated woman that the language of the play indicates that Penthea has become.

There is in fact an element of the grotesque in Penthea's distress that has not been present in the Ophelia type before. She becomes a strange, insect-like creeping creature in a mad language of bodily evisceration in which she claims:

There's not a hair

Sticks on my head but like a leaden plummet

It sinks me to the grave. I must creep thither;

The journey is not long. (4.2.76-9)

The tactility of the hair 'sticking' on her head and the image of sinking through grave dirt depicts a very physical decay. Ellman cites the nightmare of a twentieth century anorexic patient, which Ellman herself explains as the unconscious "attempting to interpret the enigma of the body's decreation of itself":

my skin gets all full of holes like a sieve, and all organs, the heart, the lungs, etc., seep through the holes to the outside until I am completely empty inside. There is only the loneliness within me and it is totally black.

As Ellman comments: "The dreamer's body does not simply die but eviscerates itself of all its entrails in a reversal of the process of gestation."<sup>422</sup> Dying is imagined as a grotesque process of bodily decomposition, and it is this emphasis on *process* that so horrifies the audience in the account of Penthea's suicide. As Calantha comments when she hears of Aspatia's death: "She is happy; she hath finish'd / A long and painful progress." (5.2.38-9) It is this stress on the process of death and the absolute, radical conformism of Penthea's behaviour that pushes the classical strain of the Ophelia model to its very limits. At a completely opposite end of the literate-elite / oral-popular spectrum to the Jailer's Daughter, Ford's

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<sup>422</sup> Ellman, *Hunger Artists*, p. 15, citing Victor V. Weizsacker, 'Dreams in Endogenic *Magersucht*' in *Evolution of Psychiatric Concepts: Anorexia Nervosa: A Paradigm* ed. M. Ralph Kaufman et al (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), pp. 189-90.

representation of Penthea performs a horrifying exposé of both the inherited dramatic model and the social position of early modern women.

**APPENDIX A**

The following is a table of the data that has informed my analysis of the basic content and female interest material in the popular ballad corpus. This information is not intended as a research resource as such, rather as evidence of data computation and as evidence for my findings on the ballads. It covers volumes one and two of F. J. Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (New York: The Folklore Press, in association with Pageant Book Company, 1956).

Ballad title and number	No. of recorded variants	Female protagonist?	Strong women/matriarchal power?	Daughter?	Elopement / split loyalties?	Class difference?	Love tokens?	Sexual content?	Pregnancy?	Physical Violence?	Abandonment?	Death?	Reconciliation / remorse?	Significant variations (narrative outline) or minor variations? Give details	'Women's interest'?
Riddles Wisely Expounded (1)	4	Yes.	Yes – solves riddles.	Yes.	No.		No.		No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Yes – in version C she names the devil and the fiend flies away instead of marriage ending, D names the devil but finishes there	Yes.
The Elfin Knight (2)	12	Yes.	Returns riddling task with riddling task.	Yes.	No.		No.		No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Riddles vary.	Yes.
The Faule Knight Upon the Road (3)	2	No.	No.	No.	No.		No.		No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	School boy / child? Maybe.
Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight (4)	6	Yes.	Yes – in A she lulls him to sleep on her lap then kills him with his own dagger. In B, C, D, E and F she throws him into the water and drowns him.	Yes.	Yes – rides to the green wood with the elf knight.		No.		No.	He intends to murder her.	No.	Yes – his.	No.	Variations of circumstance etc.	Yes.
Gil Brenton (5)	8	Yes.	Yes – mother-in-law effects reconciliation.	Yes; mourns because she's left her mother.	No.		Yes – hair, ring and pen knife that prove her identity.	Yes, in before-time of the ballad.	Yes – son born – A 74: father's name written on breastbone. C 84-5 – written on breastbone and right hand.	Yes – Gil Brenton has cut the paps from the breastbones of seven kings daughters for not being virgins.		No.		Minor.	Yes.
Willie's Lady (6)	2	Yes.	Mother-in-law uses witchcraft / folklore (knots) to stop her daughter in law giving birth.		Mother hating daughter in-law.		No.	Implicit.	Yes – can't deliver					Just one version given.	Yes.
Earl Brand (7)	6	Yes – maid comes to his bedside and demands they elope.	Earl Brand returns to mother with maid, to die.	Yes.	Yes – they elope and Earl Brand kills all father's men. B, C, D, E – daughter intervenes to stop him killing father. F unfinished.		No.		No.	Earl Brand battles her family, retainers etc.			Sympathetic flowers in B & C.	Minor.	Yes.
Erlinton (8)	3	Yes.	No.	Yes – A "Erlinton had a fair daughter; I wat he weird her in a great sin; / For he has built a bigly bower, / An a' to put that lady in."	Yes – they elope and Willie (the true love) fights fifteen men and kills them all apart from old one to carry news home.		No.		No.	Fight.	No.	No.		Version C is Robin Hood. Minor variations.	Yes.
The Fair Flower of Northumberland (9)	5	Yes.	B, C – mother says she's not the first, and won't lack dowry to secure a husband. E step-mother vilifies her, father excuses her.	Yes.	Yes – in A she sets a Scottish knight free from father's prison, steals his gold and horses and elopes with him. In B, C and D she sets him free and steals horses.	Nationality difference.	No.		No.	No.	Yes – turned back at border with news that he has a wife and children.	No.	Family take her back.	Minor, though D unfinished and ends on desperate note (maid requesting that he throws her into the mill-dam).	Yes.
The Twa Sisters (10)	21	Yes.	Older sister pushes younger sister into the sea.	Both daughters.	In B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, (M), N, O, P, Q and R the elder sister is jealous of the younger sister's man.		Yes – in B, C, D, E, H, I, J, O, Q, & R.		No.	Yes – older sister pushes younger in; in R miller also shoves her in instead of rescuing her. In S the same, and sister not incriminated.				Minor variations. Dies in all of them except J (fragment) T (fragment) U (unfinished but possibly happy ending? Ends with miller hauling her out with a hook.	Yes.
The Cruel Brother (11)	11	Yes.	No.	Yes – three daughters. Knight asks youngest sister to be his bride but forgets to ask her brother, John.	Brother kills sister because the knight hasn't asked his permission to marry her.		Yes – in D.		No.	Yes – sister bends down from her saddle to kiss brother goodbye and he stabs her.	No.	Yes.	Sister bequeaths brother the gallows-tree (A, B, C, F, G, I, J). A – bridegroom rives his hair. In I, bequeaths husband to her sister.	Minor variations.	Yes.
Lord Randal (12)	15	Female has poisoned him in the greenwood.	Returns to mother, to die.	No.			No – apart from poisoned meal that true-love prepares for him.		No.				Wishes true love hell and fire (A), & gallows tree (B, C, H, I).	Minor variations.	Yes.

Ballad title and number	No. of recorded variants	Female protagonist?	Strong women/matriarchal power?	Daughter?	Elopement / split loyalties?	Class difference?	Love tokens?	Sexual content?	Pregnancy?	Physical Violence?	Abandonment?	Death?	Reconciliation / remorse?	Significant variations (narrative outline) or minor variations? Give details	'Women's interest'?
Edward (13)	3	No.	Mother questioning son about blood on his coat.	No.	Brother kills brother in A over the cutting of a hazel wand; kills father in B because mother has asked him to; in C the victim is unspecified but the fight is also over a hazel wand.		No.		No.	Yes – family murder.	No.	Yes.	Son remorseful.	Victim changes – brother to father, with mother as accomplice.	?
Babylon; or, The Bonnie Banks O Fordie (14)	5	Yes.	Daughters all refuse to sleep with the outlaw, but prefer to die by his penknife. Youngest daughter says she will neither die nor be raped.	Three daughters out pulling flowers.	Outlaw kills the first two sisters without realising they are his sisters.		No.		No.	Kills first two sisters with penknife, then realising relationship kills self in A. D. In B & C the versions are cut short before this realisation is arrived at. In E, the first two sisters are killed by a London robber, but the third sister is rescued by her brother.	No.	Yes, of first two sisters		Significant variations in E – no family relationship between bandit and girls.	Yes.
Leesome Brand (15)	2	Yes – A4: "This ladye was scarce eleven years auld, / When on her love she was right bauld; / She was scarce up to my right knee, / When oft in bed wi men I'm tauld."	A narrated by mother: she gives him drops of Saint Paul's blood to revive his lady.	Yes.	Sends Leesome Brand to the stable to steal steeds, and to her mother's coffer for her tocher.		No.	Implicit.	Yes – A – won't let Brand act as midwife, sends him away to hunt. He returns to find her dead from childbirth, and son likewise. Mother gives him a horn containing three drops of Saint Paul's blood which he puts on lady and son and revives them. In B both die – son shot by Brand?			In B: "9. He houkit a grave, long, large and wide, / He buried his auld son down by her side."	Yes, between A & B – ending changes radically.	Yes.	
Sheath and Knife (16)	4	Yes.		Yes – the king's daughter.	Brother and sister sleeping together.		No.	Implicit.	Yes – A1 "That the king's dochter gaes wi child to her brother."	Sister gets brother to kill her with his arrows.	No.	Yes – sister.	Brother explains sadness as loss of sheaf and knife.	Minor. Names different etc.	Yes.
Hind Horn (17)	8	Beloved.	No.	Yes – the king's daughter.			Yes – exchange of silver wand and diamond ring in A, B,F,G,H gown and gold ring in C, ring in D.				Beloved about to marry someone else.	No.		Minor.	Yes.
Sir Lionel (18)	6	Lady whose knight has been killed by a boar / giant sitting in a tree.	C – witch – 14 "Then into his locks the wild woman flew, / Till she thought in her heart she had torn him through." D similar old lady / witch figure	No.	No.		No.		No.	Killing of boar / supernatural enemy.	No.	Lady's husband dead in A.		Witch / giant ... basic storyline fairly consistent.	No.
King Orfeo (19)	1	Yes – Lady Isabel.	No.	No.	No.		No.		No.	No.	King leaves her to go hunting – 3: "Oh I wis ye'd never gaen away, / For at your hame is dol and wae."	Orpheus myth – he is rewarded for his playing with her return to life.		Happy Shetlandic version of Orpheus and Eurydice.	Yes.
The Cruel Mother (20)	13	Yes.	Mother who kills children.	Yes in C – she walks by her father's castle walls - and in E: "She fell in love with her father's clerk".		Yes – in versions in which she falls in love with her father's clerk.	No.	Implicit.	Yes – A1: "And there she's leand her back to a thorn, / Oh and alelladay, oh and alelladay / And there she has her baby born..." kills child / children and passes as a maiden again, until supernatural encounter with children.	Digs the babe a grave in A; in B & F kills it with a penknife; in C, D & E, gives birth to twins, which she kills. In H gives birth to triplets, which she kills. In I she binds the twins with ribbons and puts them underneath a stone. In J she strangles them with ribbons.		Yes – of infants.	No – babies condemn her to hell.	Method of death etc varies.	Yes.



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King Henry 32)	1	Ghost lady with insatiable appetite – eats Henry's berry-brown steed, his greyhounds and his gos-hawks.						Tells Henry to take of his clothes and lye down by her side – when he wakes up: 18. "The fairest lady that ever was seen / Lay atween him an the wa."							Magical.
Kemp Kay (33)	7	Dirty daughter.		Yes: Kempy Kay meets an old, old man and tells him: 2. "I's I'm coming to court your daughter dear, / And some part of your gear: " "	Match is to everyone's liking.	No.	A13 "She gied to him a gravat, / O the auld horse's sheet, / And he gied her a gay gold ring, / O the auld couple-root."	Grotesque – B12 "Whan thir twa lovers had met thegither, / O kissing to get their fill, / The slaver that hang atween their twa gabs / Wad hae tetherd a ten year auld bill."						Regional, minor.	Yes?
Kemp Owyne (34)	2	Yes.	Step mother who throws Isabel the sea.	Yes.	A3: "Says, 'lie you there, dove Isabel, / And all my sorrows lie with thee; / Till Kemp Owyne come ower the sea, / And borrow you with kisses three, / Let all the world do what they will, / Oh borrowed shall you never be."		Isabel is turned into a savage sea beast. When Kemp Owyne comes, she gives him a magical belt, ring, and brand.	A6. "Her breath was strang, her hair was lang, / And twisted was about the tree, / And with a swing she came about: / Come to Craigy's sea, and kiss with me."	No.	Stepmother throws her stepdaughter into Craigy's sea.	No.	No.		Regional, minor – B ends with returned curse on stepmother.	Yes. Magical.
Allison Gross (35)	1	Yes.	Alison Gross – "The ugliest witch in the north country," Turns him into an ugly worm. But then queen passes by – 13 "She took me up in her milk-white han, / An she's stroakd me three times oer her knee; / She chang' d me again to my own proper shape, / An I nae mair maun toddle about the tree."	No.			2. "Says, Gin ye will be my lemman so true, / Sae monny braw things as I woud you gi."	7. "For I woudna ance kiss your ugly mouth / For a' the gifts that ye coud gi."							Yes? Magical.
The Laily Worm and the Machrel of the Sea (36)	1	Yes.	Stepmother / witch – "2. For she has made me the laily worm, / That lies at the fit o the tree, / An my sister Masery she's made / The machrel of the sea."										Laily worm tells story to father, who makes stepmother change son back into human form, but mackerel won't come to her call: 14: "She has taen a small horn, / An loud an shrill blew she, / An a' the fish came her untill / But the proud machrel of the sea: / 'Ye shapet me ance an unseemly shape, / An ye's never mare shape me." Father burns stepmother at on whins and hawthorn.	Yes. Magical.	
Thomas Rymmer (37)	3	Yes.	Queen of Eilfland.		Thomas has to go with the Elf Queen away from earth for 7 years.	Species difference?	Food – eats her bread and wine.	No.						Regional.	Yes? Magical.

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<b>The Wee Wee Man (38)</b>	7	Sex of narrator unclear? Sees a wee man who is surprisingly strong, and rides off with him, sees rich halls and beautiful ladies.												Regional, minor.	Magical	
<b>Tam Lin (39)</b>	9	Janet hies to Carterhaugh – tells Tam Lin A7 “Carterhaugh, it is my ain, / My daddie gave it me; / I’ll come and gang by Carterhaugh, / And ask nae leave at thee.”				Tam Lin is an elfin knight.		Predatory male sexuality? A2: “There’s nane that gae by Carterhaugh / But they leave him a wad, / Either their rings, or green mantles, / Or else their maidenhead.”	A14: “If that I gae wi child, father, / Mysel maun bear the blame; / There’s neer a laird about your ha / Shall get the bairn’s name.” She goes to Tam Lin who asks “Why pu’s thou the rose, Janet, / Among the groves sae green, / And a’ to kill the bonie babe / That we gat us					Minor, regional.	Yes. Magical.	
<b>The Queen of Elfin’s Nourice (40)</b>	1	Yes – woman separated from her child.	Elfin Queen.			Typical class situation? Elfin queen tells nurse, \$ “o nurse my bairn, nourice,” she says, / “Till he stan at your knee, / An ye’s win hame to Christen land, / Whar fain it’s ye wad be.”			6. “But I moan for my young son / I left in four nights auld.”		Enforced abandonment of son: 1. “I heard a cow low, a bonnie cow low, / An a cow low down in yon glen; / Lang, lang will my young son greet / Or his mither bid him come ben.”				Yes. Magical.	
<b>Hind Etin (41)</b>	3	Yes – daughter / mother.		Yes. When the King sees his grandson he says, A30 “Win up, win up, my bonny boy, / Gang frae my companie; / Ye look sae like my dear daughter, / My heart will birst in three.”	Yes – elopes to wood and bears Akin seven sons. Father had put a warrant on Akin. Misses family / wealth. A - Family reconciled at end, taken to church etc, and daughter is heir of the crown.	A 14. “Your mither was a king’s daughter, / Sprung frae a high degree, / And she might hae wed some worthy prince, / Had she nae been stown by me.” Man was her father’s cupbearer. A16 “My luvie to her was most sincere, / Her luvie was great for me, / But when she hardships doth endure, / Her folly she does see.” B15 “For your mother was an earl’s dochter, / Of noble birth and fame, / And now she’s wife of Hynde Etin, / Wha neer got christendame.”		Living in sin – sinks down in church with shame, but is welcomed by parish priest.	Seven sons.					Significant – husband not involved in return to church in C.	Yes.	
<b>Clerk Colvill (42)</b>	3	Colville’s lady. Mermaid. Returns to mother to die.	Mermaid who seduces Colville away.	No.										Despite assurances he won’t leave his lady, is seduced by the mermaid; A6 “He’s taen her by the milk-white hand, / He’s taen her by the sleeve sae green, / And he’s forgotten his gay ladie, / And away with the fair maiden.”	Minor, regional.	Yes. Magical.

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<b>The Broomfield Hill (43)</b>	6	Yes.	Witch-woman who advises lady.	Sits in her "mother's bower door" (A2).	Double bind - A4 "For if I gang to the Broomfield Hill, / My maidenhead is gone; / And if I chance to stay at home, / My love will ea me mansworn."			Knows can't go to Broomfield hill without losing maidenhead. In C she both cries and laughs as she leaves with her maidenhead.						In B, C, D, E, F it is a wager. B ends sadly - 6. "Now I may sing as dreary a sang / As the bird sung on the brier, / For my true love is far removd, / And I'll neer see her mair."	Yes. Magical.
<b>The Twa Magicians (44)</b>	1	Yes.	Lady is one of the two magicians of the title - turns herself into a turtle dove, eel, duck, hare, mare, hot griddle, ship etc - 12: "And a' the ways she turnd hersell, / The blacksmith was her make."	Not explicitly.		Blacksmith desires the lady - who tells him 4. "'I wudna be a blacksmith's wife / For the full o a chest o gold.'"		All about trying to gain her maidenhead - 14 (final stanza) "Then she became a silken plaid, / And stretched upon a bed, / And he became a green covering, / And gaird her maidenhead."		Ambiguous - does he take her against her will, or is this just a complicated sexual game?					Yes. Magical.
<b>King John and the Bishop (45)</b>	2	No.												Minor.	No.
<b>Captain Wedderburn's Courtship (46)</b>	3	Yes.	Beloved is a riddling lady.	A1 - she is: "The laird of Bristol's daughter".				Captain wishes A4 "To tak you to mine ain bed, and lay you neist the wa." He wants her to lie next to the wall, she says she won't. Ends, A18 "For now she's Captain Wetherburn's wife, a man she never saw, / And she man lye in his bed, but she'll not lye neist the wa." In B, she lies next to the wall.						Minor, regional.	Yes.
<b>Proud Lady Margaret (47)</b>	5	Yes, lady Margaret.	She is a riddling lady.	Yes; A12: "'My father was lord of nine castles, / My mother lady of three; / My father was lord of nine castles, / And there's nane to heir but me." Knight tells her she's lying, and she's only heir to her mother's three castles.										Minor, regional.	Yes. Magical. Supernatural.
<b>Young Andrew (48)</b>	1	Yes, daughter.		Yes; 6: "This ladye is gone to her ffathers hall, / And well she knew where his red gold lay, / And counted forth five hundred pound, / Besides all other iuells and chaines".	Sends her to fetch her father's red gold.			3 "Then he tooke her in his armes two, / And kissed her both cheeke and chin, / And twice or thrise he pleased this may / Before they tow did part in twin."		Young Andrew killed by a wolf - 37. "But now young Andrew he is dead, / But he was neuer buried vnder mold, / For ther as the wolfe devoured him, / There lyes all the great erles gold."	8 "Shee had vpon a gowne of blacke veluett, / (A pittiffull sight after yee shall see: ) / 'Put of thy clothes, bonny wenche,' he says, / 'For noe foote further thoust gang with mee.'" Also forces her to strip her silk kirtle, (10 "And to my owne lady I must itt beare, / Who I must needs loue better then thee") and her petticoat, and silk smock, head gear... she lets down her hair to cover her body.	8 "Shee had vpon a gowne of blacke veluett, / (A pittiffull sight after yee shall see: ) / 'Put of thy clothes, bonny wenche,' he says, / 'For noe foote further thoust gang with mee.'" Also forces her to strip her silk kirtle, (10 "And to my owne lady I must itt beare, / Who I must needs loue better then thee") and her petticoat, and silk smock, head gear... she lets down her hair to cover her body.	Father won't let her back in - 26. "'My house thoust neuer come within, / Without I had my red gold againe.'" 29 "She stood soe long quacking on the ground / Till her hart itt burst in three; / And then shee ffell dead downe in a swoond, / And that was the end of this bonny ladye."	Father repents his actions - cries - 31 "Sais, Fye of gold, and ffye of ffee! / For I sett soe much by my red gold / That now itt hath lost both my daughter and mee!" Father also dies - 32: "But as flowers doth fade in the frost / Soe he did wast and weare away."	Yes.

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The Twa Brothers (49)	7	Leman in A. In B she harps him out of the grave for a kiss which he refuses.										One brother kills the other with a penknife.	In A death is not malicious, in B just hot-headed, in C seems to be quarrel over leman	Significant – see circumstances of death, also in E mother questions blood on Willie's clothes, also F and G, and forces a confession.	?
The Bonny Hind (50)	1	Yes.	8 "For I'm Lord Randal's yae daughter, / He has nae mair nor me."		Incestuous – they are brother and sister.			He asks maid for her green mantle and her maidenhead – 4 "He has taen her by the milk-white hand, / And softly laid her down, / And when he's lifted her up again / Given her a silver kaim."	Possibility of pregnancy – 5 "Perhaps there may be bairns, kind sir, / Perhaps there may be nane, / But if you be a courtier, / You'll tell to me your name."			10. "She's putten her hand down by her spare, / And she's taen a knife, / And she has putn' t in her heart's bluid, / And taen away her life."			Yes. Incest narrative.
Lizie Wan (51)	2	Yes.	No.	Yes –tells her father about pregnancy.	Incestuous – A4. "I ail, I ail, dear brither", she said. / "And I'll tell you a reason for why; / There is a child between my twa sides, / Between you, dear Billy, and I."					A6. "And he has cutted aff Lizie Wan's head, / And her fair body in three, / And he's awa to his mothers bower, / And sair aghast was he."		Yes –and Billy into exile.		Minor, regional.	Yes. Incest narrative.
The Kings Dochter Lady Jean (52)	4	Yes.		A1: "The king's young dochter was sitting in her window, / Sewing at her silken seam, / She lookt out o the bow-window, / And she saw the leaves growing green".	Incestuous – A7 "Gif ye be the king's young dochter," he said, / "I am his aulddest son; / I wish I had died on some frem isle, / and never had come hame! // 8. "The first time I came hame, Jeanie, / Thou was na here nor born; / I wish my pretty ship had sunk, / And I had been forlorn!"	No.	No.	A5 "He took her by the middle sae sma, / And laid her on the gess sae green, / And he has taen his will o her, / And he loot her up agen."		11. "She put her hand down by her side, / And down into her spare, / And she pou't out a wee pen-knife, / And she wounded hersell fu sair."		A19: "Her brither he cam trippin down the stair, / His steps they were fu slow, / He sank into his sister's arms, / and they died as white as snaw." B13: "When I came by the high church-yard / Heavy was the stain that bruised my heel, / ... that bruised my heart, / I'm afraid it shall neer heal."	In C metaphor extended – returns home from encounter with brother and tells parents "Great and heavy was the stane / That on my foot did fa." End – C24 (final stanza) "To her room her brother's gane, / Stroked back her yellow hair, / To her lips his ain did press, / But words spake never mair." D ends similarly – "Up she's taen her milk-white hand, /Streak'd by his yellow hair, / Then turnd about her bonny face, / And word spake never mair."	Yes. Incest narrative.	
Young Beichan (53)	14	Yes.	Shusy-Pie – persistent.	A4 "O this Moor he had but ae daughter, / I wot her name was Shusy Pye".	7. "O she has bribed her father's men / Wi meikle goud and white money, / She's gotten the key o the prison doors, / An she has set Young Bicham free."	Nationality difference – sends him back to his own country, but tells him to come back in seven years and marry her.	A & B – No, just sustenance. C – gives him a razor, five hundred pounds, a steed with a saddle and hounds. D – steed and bone saddle. E – gold and white money, ring.	No.	No.	No.	10 "It was long or seven years had an end / She longd fu sair her love to see; / She's set her foot on good ship-board, / And turnd her back on her ain country." Young Bicham is in the process of getting married when she arrives at his gates.	22: "Take back your daughter, madam," he says, / "An a double dowry I'll gi her wi; / For I maun marry my first true love, / That's done and suffered so much for me."	In F goes to find Beichan with her father's (grudging) blessing.	Yes. Female persistence rewarded.	
<b>VOLUME TWO</b>															
The Cherry-Tree Carol (54)	4	Mary.	Mary.						Yes – Mary asks Joseph to pick her a cherry, because she is with child; he says that the man who got her with child should pick her the cherry. Jesus in her womb commands the cherry tree to bend to her.					Joseph hears angel singing in B & C; both hear " a great din / 'God bless our sweet Saviour, / our heaven't love in." No angels in A.	Yes. Religious
The Carnal and the Crane (55)	1	Mary.	Mary: 5. "She was the purest virgin, / And the cleanest from sin; / She was the handmaid of our Lord / And mother of our king"									Slaughter of the innocents.			Yes. Religious
Dives and Lazarus (56)	2													Differences. Both stories of Dives and Lazarus.	Religious.

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<b>Brown Robyn's Confession (57)</b>	1		Virgin Mary – takes him to heaven 9. "a' is for your fair confession / You've made upon the sea."		Incest – 3. "It is nae wonder", said Brown Robyn, / 'Altho I dinna thrive, / For with my mither I had twa bairns, / And wi my sister five."							Bad weather on boat; the men draw lots and Robyn loses and is thrown into the sea, where he swims until Our Lady appears to take him to heaven.		Yes. Maritime/Religious.	
<b>Sir Patrick Spens (58)</b>	18	Collective only – 9. A"O lang, lang may their ladies sit, / Wi their fans into their hand, / Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence / Cum sailing to the land."	No.			King commands him to go to sea.						A11: "Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour, / It's a fiftie fadom deip, / And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence, / Wi the Scots lords at his feit."	B,C,E,G,H, I, J send a boy up the top mast. Significant variations – K develops narrative of an ill-used ship boy, P & Q have a mermaid etc.	Possibly. Maritime.	
<b>Sir Aldingar (59)</b>	3	Queen.						Queen won't go to bed with Sir Aldingar, so he puts a lazar (leper) in her bed and accuses her of adultery.						Minor differences.	Yes.
<b>King Estmere (60)</b>	2	King Adland's daughter.													Yes?
<b>Sir Cawline (61)</b>	1	Daughter who Sir Cawline is in love with.		Yes; stanza 2 says of the king: "and he hath a ladye to his daughter, / Of flashyon shree hath noe peere, / Knights and lordes they woed her both, / Trusted to haue beene her feere."		13. "I cannot bee your peere: / 'Ffor some deeds of armes ffaine wold I doe, / To be your bacheleere."	Wins her the elridge king's hand with five fingers on it, and his sword.								Yes.
<b>Fair Annie (62)</b>	10	Fair Annie.		Abducted sister to new bride – Earl & Countess of Wemyss daughter.				Sister goes home a maiden.	A5: "But how can I gang maiden-like, / When maiden I am nane? / Have I not born seven sons to thee, / And am with child again?"	Considering suicide? A8: "Come down, come down, my mother dear, / Come frae the castle wa! / I fear if langer ye stand there, / Ye'll let yoursell down fa." Connection with water – standing on the wall looking over the sea strand.	A1 "It's narrow, narrow, make your bed, / And learn to lie your lane, / For I'm ga'n oer the sea, Fair Annie, / A braw bride to bring hame, / Wi her I will get gowd and gear, / Wi you I neer got nane."		Minor.	Yes.	
<b>Child Waters (63)</b>	10	Ellen.	Mother in law in B,C, E, F, G, J.	Yes; B2: "Oh here am I, a lady gay, / That wears scarlet an brown, / Yet I will leave my father's house, / An follow Lord John frae the town."	No.	Not explicit.	No.	Not explicit.	A2-3 'My girdle of gold, which was too long, / Is now to short ffor mee. // And all is with one child of yours, / I feele sturre at my side, / My gowne of greene, it is to strayght, / Before it was to wide.'	Abjection – makes her follow him dressed as a page across moor and water, sends her out for a whore etc.	Tells her he must ride A8 "Soe ffarr into the north country: / The ffairrest lady that I can ffind, / Ellen, must goe with mee."	No.	Regional.	Yes.	

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<b>Fair Janet (64)</b>	7	Janet – forthright – tells father: A4 'A French lord maun I wed, father? / A French lord maun I wed? / Then, by my sooth,' quo Fair Janet. / ' He's neer enter my bed.'	Willie sends man home to mother to tell her he's been slain by his horse.	Yes	Father dictates who she marries: A3 'My will wi you, Fair Janet,' he said, / 'It is both bed and board: / Some say that ye loe Sweet Willie. / But ye maun wed a French lord.'				A11 'O I have born this babe, Willie, / Wi mickle toil and pain; / Take hame, take hame, your babe, Willie, / For nurse I dare be name.'"			Yes – dies dancing: A28 'She had nae turned her throw the dance, / Throw the dance but thrice, / Whan she fell down at Willie's feet, / And up did never rise."	Sympathetic flowers – A30 "The tane was buried in Marie's kirk. / And the tither in Marie's quire; / Out of the tane there grew a birk, / And the tither a bonny brier." B – bridegroom forbids the bells to ring, B22: "There was not a bell in merry Linkum, / But they tinkled and they rang, / And a' the birds that flew above, / They changed their notes and sang."	D – ends with D17: "She leaned her head on Willie's breast, / And her back unto the wa: / 'O there's the key of my coffer, / And pay weel the nouriss fee, / And aye when ye look on your auld son, / Ye may aye think on me.'" F – different ending again "34. Then Willie lifted up his foot, / And dang him down the stair, / And brake three ribs o the bridegroom's side, / And a word he spake nae mair. // 35. Nae meen was made for that lady, / When she was lying dead; / But a' was for him Sweet Willie, / On the fields for he ran mad."	Yes.
<b>Lady Maisry (65)</b>	9	Lady Maisry.	In some versions mother specifically mentioned as calling daughter a whore.	Yes: A3: "An they ha sought her Lady Maisry / Frae father and frae mother; / An they ha sought her Lady Maisry / Frae sister an frae brother."	Brother challenges her on pregnancy – A14 "'O could na ye gotten dukes, or lords, / Intill your ain country, / That ye draw up wi an English dog, / To bring this shame on me?" Family burn her as a whore at the stake. Lover promises to burn her family for her sake.	Nationality difference.	Other lords woo Lady Maisry "wi broches an wi' rings." (A2)	Not explicit.	Yes – brother asks her in A11 'O wha is aught that bairn,' he says, / "That ye sae big are wi?" Burning on stake she tells lord, A29 "'O gin my hands had been loose, Willy, / Sae hard as they are boun, / I would have turnd me frae the gleed, / And castin out your young son.'" Descriptions very visceral – B21 – "got one kiss of her comely mouth, / While her body gave a crack." D17 "He put his foot into the stirrup, / He bounded for to ride; / The silver buttons lap of his breast, / And his nose began to bleed."	Burning of Lady Maisry – A27: "O whan he lighted at the gate, / She heard his bridle ring: / Mend up the fire, my false brother, / It's far yet frae my chin. // 28. 'Mend up the fire to me, brother, / Mend up the fire to me; / For I see him comin hard an fast / Will soon men't up to thee."	No but lord is too late in coming – G15 "he mounted off his milk-white steed, / And into the fire he ran, / Thinking to save his gay ladye, / But he had staid too long."	Yes – Maisry's plus lord promises to torch her father / mother / sister / brother / A31 "An I'll gar burn for you, Maisry, / The chief of a' your kin; / An the last bonfire that I come to, / Mysel I will cast in." H38: "'And mony a bed will I make toom, / And bower will I make thin; / And many a babe shall thole the fire, / For I may enter in.'" "	Lord dies too, but no reconciliation or remorse on part of the family. This is a revenge tale.	Variations though Maisry is always burnt – H39: "Great meen was made for Lady Maisry, / On that hill whare she was slain; / But mair was for her ain true-love, / On the fields for her ran brain."	Yes.
<b>Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet (66)</b>	5	Lady Maisry.		Yes – father tells her she is to marry Lord Ingram.		Plays on that although in fact they are brothers – A8 "'I'd rather be Chiel Wyet's wife, / The white fish for to sell, / Before I were Lord Ingram's wife, / To wear the silk so well. // 9. 'I'd rather be Chiel Wyet's wife, / With him to beg my bread, / Before I were Lord Ingram's wife, / To wear the gold so red."			A21: "When they were laid into their bed - / It was baith soft and warm / He laid his hand over her side, / Says, I think you are with bairn. // 22. 'I told you once, so did I twice, / When you came me to woo, / That Chiel Wyet, your one brother, / One night lay in my bed.'	A26 "Then up did start him Chiel Wyet, / Shed by his yellow hair, / And gave Lord Ingram to the heart / A deep wound and a sair. // 27. Then up did start him Lord Ingram, / Shed by his yellow hair, / And gave Chiel Wyet to the heart / A deep wound and a sair."		Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet kill each other.	No – A28: "There was no pity for that two lords, / Where they were lying slain; / But all was for her Lady Maisry, / In that bower she gaed brain."	Regional.	Yes.

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<b>Glasgerion (67)</b>	3	Yes.		Yes, king's daughter.		No – same class status (A1 "Glasgerion was a kings owne sonne, / And a harper he was good;" it is his churl who is of lower class status.		A11: "He did not take the lady gay / To broulster nor to bedd, / But downe vpon her chamber-flore / Full soone he hath her layd."	A19: "'O then it was your little foote-page / Falsly hath beguiled me: / And then see pulld forth a little penknife, / That hanged by her knee, / Says, There shall neuer noe churles blood / Spring within my body."	Lady kills herself, Glasgerion kills footpage then himself – A23: "He sett the swords point till his brest, / The purnill till a stone, / Thorrow that falseness of that lither ladd / These three liues werne all gone."				Regional, minor.	Yes.
<b>Young Hunting (68)</b>	11	Yes.	Gets Hunting drunk, stabs him, then puts him in the water.			He's the king's son, but unclear for her status.				A6 "and she has minded her on a little penknife, / That hangs low down by her gare, / And she has gin him Young Hunting / A deep wound and a sare."	A1 "O lady, rock-never your young son young / One hour longer for me, / For I have a sweetheart in Garlick's Wells / I love thrice better than thee. // 2. "The very sols of my love's feet / Is whiter then thy face:"		No. She tries to blame someone else (May Catheren) who won't burn: A27: "Out they hae tain her May Catheren, / And they hay put that lady in, / O it took upon her cheek, her cheek, / An it took upon her chin, / An it took on her fair body, / An it took on her fair body, / She burnt like hoky-gren."	Regional, minor. Hidden in lake – men look for his body and are told by the bird: 22 "Leave aff your ducking on the day, / And duck upon the night, / Wear ever that sakeless knight lye slain, / The candels will shine bright." 23. They left off their ducking o the day, / And ducked upon the night / And where that sakeless knight lay slain, / The candels shone full bright."	Yes. Magical. Supernatural.
<b>Clerk Saunders (69)</b>	7	Yes.		Yes – seventh of her seven brothers kills clerk Saunders. Father tries to comfort her.	Says she cannot sleep with him. A3: "' For in it will come my seven brothers / And a' their torches burning bright; / They'll say, We hae but ae sister, / And here her lying wi a knight.'" Seven brothers do come in, and seventh kills Clerk Saunders. Lady thinks his blood is sweat.	Same class status?	No.			A15: "Out he has taen a bright long brand, / And he has striped it throw the straw, / And throw and throw Clarke Sanders' body / A wat he has gard cold iron gae."		Yes – Clerk Saunders. May Margret swears she won't wear shoes, comb her hair or wear anything other than black for the next seven years. G36: "The lady sat, and mourning there, / Until she couldna weep nae mair; / At length the cloks and wanton flies / They biggit in her yellow hair."	Regional, minor – in C lady will enter a nunnery (C19 "'Ye'll marrie me wi the Queen o Heaven, / For man sall never enjoy me.'")	Yes.	
<b>Willie and Lady Maisry (70)</b>	2	Yes.		Yes.	Yes – Willie kills all father's guards in A, trying to get to Maisry, and in B kills brother and watch. Father kills Willie in both.	Willie is a widow's son, Margerie a lady / the king's daughter.				Father kills Willie with sword in bed – again confusion of sweat and blood.		A15 (last stanza) "She turned her back unto the room, / Her face unto the wa, / And with a deep and heavy sich / Her heart it brak in twa."	No – although in B21 daughter says "'gude forgie you now, father'."	In B25: "Nae meen was made for this young knight, / In bowen where he lay slain, / But a' was for sweet Maisry bright, / In fields where she ran brain."	Yes.
<b>The Bent Sae Brown (71)</b>	1	Yes – Ann.	Mother goes to King when Willie has killed three brothers.	Yes – A7: "'I am deeply sworn, Willie, / By father and by mother; / At kirk or market where we meet, / We darna own each other."	A34 – her three brothers set upon him, and he kills them all: "O then he drew his trusty brand, / That hang down by his gare, / And he has slaine these three fierce men, / And left them sprawling there."			No – no time.		Killing of three brothers.	No.			Only one version, but it is like a happy version of 70 – brothers come, can't find lover, lie in wait for him outside, and are defeated by him.	Yes.
<b>The Clerk's Twa Sons O Owsenford (72)</b>	4	Yes – mother who sends husband to bring back her sons.	Sons' mother.	Mayor's daughters – mayor: A4. "'If they hae lain wi my twa daughters, / Meg an Marjorie, / The morn, or I taste meat or drink, / They shall be hangit hie."	Daughters beg for clerk's sons' lives from father, but are refused.	Mighty mayor v. clerk.		No details.		Hanging.		Yes – both sons hanged. Wife – A17: "'O sorrow, sorrow come mak my bed, / An dool come lay me doon! / For I'll niether eat nor drink, / Nor set a fit on ground."	Regional, minor.	Yes.	

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Lord Thomas and Fair Annet (73)	8	Yes.	Son's mother advises him to marry the nut-brown bride, because she has gold and gear, and "the little beauty Fair Annet haes / O it wull soon be gane." A5	Yes in A – Annet's father wakes her to go to the wedding.	Son advised to marry against his choice.	Fair Annet doesn't have oxen and kye like the nut-brown bride.	No.	No.	No.	Nut-brown bride stabs Annet with a bodkin; Thomas kills the nut-brown bride with a dagger, then kills himself.	Yes – Lord Thomas chooses the nut-brown bride over Annet.	Yes.	A29: "Lord Thomas was buried without kirk-wa, / Fair Annet within the quiere, / And o the tane thair grew a birk, / The other a bonny briar." N.B. suicide.	C ends with flying between Annet and the Nut-brown Bride, but goes no further.	Yes
Fair Margaret and Sweet William (74)	3	Yes – Margaret, who dies when her beloved marries someone else.		Relationship with brothers emphasised.		Not explicit, but Thomas is a Lord..	No.	No.		No.	Yes – Sweet William promises to marry her, but then she sees him and his new bride through her window.	Yes – both die. Margaret's ghost visits his bowler.	A17: "Fair Margaret dy'd today today, / Sweet William he dy'd the morrow; / Fair Margaret dy'd for pure true love, / Sweet William he died for sorrow"; sympathetic flowers.	Minor.	Yes.
Lord Lovel (75)	9	Yes – Lady Ouncebell.		King's daughter.		N	No.	No.	No.	No.	In some ways; Lord Lovel has to go away for a long period of time and the Lady does not survive his absence.	Yes.	Lord Lovel comes across his lady's funeral procession. He dies "on the morrow". Sympathetic flowers.	Minor.	Yes.
The Lass of Loch Royale (77)	11	Yes – Fair Isabell of Roch [sic] Royale.	Yes – Gregory's mother refuses entry to Isabell.	Implicit.	Isabell is banished by her kin and is looking for Gregory, her true love.	Yes? The love tokens Isabell gives to Gregory are always much richer.	Yes – rings, smocks.	Implicit – in exchange of smocks and her pregnancy. In B, her maidenhead is taken against her will.	Yes.	No.		Yes. She drowns, and he seems to interrupt her funeral procession.	Gregory predicts his death on the morrow. Sympathetic flowers.	B- she stabs herself. In D and E the child has already been born, and he drags her out of the sea. F finishes: 8) "Sche sailed it round, and sailed it sound, / And loud, loud cried she, / Now break, now break, ye fairy charms, / And let the prisoner pass."	Yes.
Sweet William's Ghost (78)	7	Margaret.	Yes – Margaret's constancy – follows ghost.	When the ghost knocks on the door Margaret first guesses that it is her father or her brother.	No.	No.	Comes for her faith and troth.	In C, the ghost has got three other women pregnant, and three bellhounds are waiting for his soul.	Yes in C.	No.		Yes.	B – finishes before her death, ends with her wishing him a good rest and she doesn't die. Also in C he is followed by three maidens he promised to marry and three babies these maidens gave birth to.	C Yes. The questions Margaret asks the ghost in D seem to indicate female concerns: where do unbaptised children, women who have hung themselves and women that die in childbirth go after death.	
The Unquiet Grave (79)	4	Mourning wife.	Yes.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.		Yes – see variations; beloved always dead.	Gender changes (according to the singer?). Further variations: In A the dead woman tells him: 7) "The stalk is withered and dry, my love, / So will our hearts decay; / So make yourself content, my love, / Till God calls you away." In B the ghost kisses the mourner, and predicts her death. In C the kiss is refused and the ballad terminates. D returns to the sentiment of A and tells him that his: 8) "ship must sail away."	Yes.	
The Wife of Ushers Well (79)	2	Mother.	Yes	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.		A – three dead sons return to their mother for one night from Paradise. They go when the cock crows.	Minor.	Yes.	

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Old Robin of Portingale (80)	1	Marries young wife, who then conspires with his head steward to murder him.	Yes.	No.	No.	Wife and steward's relationship?	No.	Wife with steward.	No.	Yes. Old Robin kills his steward and 24 men who had intended to kill him, and cuts off his wife's breasts and ears.			Old Robin goes on crusades.	Not applicable.	Yes? But misogynist.
Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard (81)	14	Lord Barnard's Wife.		No, wife.	No, adultery.	Yes – Lord Barnard tells the grave-digger to "lay my lady on the upper hand. / For she came of better kin." A29	No.	Yes.	No.	Lord Barnard duels with Little Musgrave and kills him, then kills his wife by cutting her breasts off.	No.	Yes – of Lady Barnard and Little Musgrave in A and B. In C and G Lord Barnard kills himself too.	Lord Barnard regrets slaying them. Lady Barnard doesn't retract her love for Little Musgrave in D.	See deaths. In E19 "I'm right wae for his lady. / For she'll gae witless wud." F & K add Lord Barnard's own son "All weltring in his blood!" (F25)	Yes.
The Bonny Birdy (82)	1	Not really – just unfaithful lady – similar narrative to Little Musgrave, with all-female bird		No, wife.	Adultery.	It's the knight's knight (a retainer?) who is committing adultery with the knight's wife.	No.	Yes.	No.	Yes – the knight runs a sword through the false knight's waist.	No.	Death of retainer.	No.	Not applicable.	Debatable.
Child Maurice (83)	7	The Lady Child Maurice loves is peripheral.		No, wife.	Child Maurice tries to seduce the Lady.		Yes – Child Maurice sends a green mantle and a gold ring.	No.	Child Maurice is the wife's illegitimate son: D24: "I got him in my mother's bower. / Wi mickle sin and shame; / I brocht him up in good green-wood, / Got mony a shower o rain."	Husband cuts off Child Maurice's head and takes it to his wife on his sword-tip.	No.	Child Maurice. Lady dies in A, D and E. Lord Barnard dies in E.	Lord Barnard regrets killing the child with varying degrees of anger at his wife for not telling him.	Minor.	Yes.
Bonny Barbara Allen (84)	4	Barbara Allen.	Barbara Allen returns to her mother to die.	Yes; she tells her mother to make her bed so she can die in it.	No.	Perhaps: Sir John Graeme and Barbara Allen?	No.	No.	No.	No.	He is sick for her; Barbara Allen tells him: 4) "O the better for me ye's never be, / Tho your heart's blood were a spilling.")	He dies and the church-bells ring out "woe to Barbara Allen". She dies on the morrow.	Yes, especially in B which emphasises her cruelty.	B – she comes to see him very slowly and laughs at his corpse when she comes upon the funeral procession – but then when she dies, she follows him.	Yes.
Lady Alice (85)	2	Lady Alice.	A – no. B – Giles tended to by his mother.	Not explicit.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Yes – Lady Alice seems to have abandoned him.	Yes – she sees his funeral procession and demands that he is set down. She dies on the morrow.	A4: "And bury me in Saint Mary's Church, / All for my love so true, / And make me a garland of marjoram, / And of lemon-thyme and rue."	Minor.	Yes.
Young Benjie (86)	2	Marjorie / Maisy.	No.	Sister – her three brothers find her drowned body and ask corpse who murdered it and how to punish him.	No – although Margerie says at first that she dare not let him in because of the three brothers.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Yes – B9 "He took her in his arms twa / And threw her oer the linn." He drowns her.	Argument.	10: "The stream was strong, the maid was stout, / And laith, laith to be dang, / But ere she won the Lowden Banks / Her fair colour was wan."	The brothers punish Benjie by taking out his eyes. They then take care of him, and every seven years bring him back to the scene of the crime.	B introduces an old woman who tells them to ask their sister's corpse to speak to them.	Yes.
Prince Robert (87)	4	Mother-in-law and Fair Eleanor.	Mother-in-law.	More about the son.	Mother curses the marriage and poisons Prince Robert.	Not clear.	Prince Robert has promised Fair Eleanor his ring, but his mother won't let her take it.	No.	No.	Poisoning.	No.	Prince Robert is poisoned: A18 "She's turn'd her back unto the wa, / And her face unto a rock, / And there, before the mother's face, / Her very heart it broke." Burial and sympathetic flowers.	No.	Minor.	Yes.
Young Johnstone (88)	6	Yes.	Sister.	A – Knight has killed her only brother. B – flying regarding sisters that ends in the fight in which the colonel is killed.	Not clear.	No.	No.	No.		Having killed her brother, the knight kills the heroine as well, with very little motivation.		Yes – she loses her heart's blood. In B he is killed by twenty-four arrows in his heart.	As soon as he kills her, he commands her to live and promises to bring leeches (doctors) to her.	Major additions in B but main story-line remains the same.	Yes.

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<b>Fause Foodrage (89)</b>	3	Queen.	Queen.	No.	No.		No.	No.	Yes – in F3 she asks to be spared because of the baby. She gives birth in a pigsty, and exchanges her baby boy for another woman's daughter, to protect him from Fause Foodrage.	Foodrage kills the king and spares the pregnant Queen, but says that if her child is a boy, he will kill it.	No.	Yes – of the king. The son grows up and kills Fause Foodrage.	The son marries the girl his mother brought up in his place.		Yes.
<b>Jellon Grame (90)</b>	4	Lillie-Flower.	Mother in D advises her daughter not to go to the forest.	Yes.	A11: "O should I spare your life", he says, / 'Until that bairn be born, / I ken fu well your stern father / Woud hang me on the morn."	No.			Yes – she kneels for mercy and tells him A10: "Your bairn, that stirs between my sides, / Maun shortly see the light; / But to see it weltring in my blade / Woud be a piteous sark."	He pierces her through the body – but pities the baby and gives it to nurses to bring up		Yes: Lillie Flower is killed, and Lillie Flower's son kills Jellon Grame.	Yes – he feels pity for the baby.	In B, the mother has a bad feeling about her daughter's trip to the forest. C claims that the woman has been ill-used prior to the murder. Significant variations in D.	Yes.
<b>Fair Mary of Wallington (91)</b>	6	Yes – Fair Mary.	Mother forces marriage.	Yes.			Frank recognition that these daughters need to keep their maidenheads ...		Five sisters die in childbirth; the sixth is forced to marry – she cuts the child out of her side with a razor and dies warning the seventh sister not to marry.	Violence of childbirth.		Yes.		B – Scobs in mouth and razor in side. In B & C the mother forces the Mary's youngest sister to marry also.	Yes.
<b>Bonny Bee Hom (92)</b>	2	Yes – we overhear a female complaint.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Yes – ring that darkens or splits when she dies. Also in A a gold chain.	No.	No.	No.	A2: "I never loved a love but ane, / And now he's gone away."	Yes – she dies and so does he – A11 "Now death has come into his bower, / And split his heart in twain; / So their twa souls flew up to heaven, / And there shall ever remain."	Both die.	B has lover willing away his possessions.	Yes.
<b>Lamkin (93)</b>	22	The nurse and Lady.	No.	No.	No.	Lord doesn't pay Willie for his labour.	No.	No.	No.	Willie and the nurse kill the Lady and her baby.	Lord goes over the sea.	Willie is to be executed and the nurse to be burnt at the stake.	Willie and nurse feel remorse because they're going to be hanged or burnt.	In B the lord himself executes Lamkin and the nurse, not the law.	Yes.
<b>Young Waters (94)</b>	1	Queen.	No.	No.	No.	King versus Young Waters.	No.	Suggestion of adulterous desire but it is not acted upon.	No.	Execution.	No.	The Queen picks Young Waters out as the fairest in the company. Her husband becomes jealous and Young Waters has to die.	No.		Yes.
<b>The Maid Freed from the Gallows (95)</b>	8	Yes.	Mother won't save her – then comes to see her hanged.	Yes.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Family will not give gold or fee to spare her from hanging, but her lover comes and saves her.	Some versions are incomplete but in most the heroine is freed from the gallows.	No.	Yes – differing stages of completeness.	Yes.
<b>The Gay Goshawk (96)</b>	7	Yes.		Yes.	The Father won't let her go to the Scottish Knight; she asks to be buried in Scotland.	Nationality differences; as the father tells his daughter in A15: "Ask on, ask on, my daughter, / And granted it sal be; / Except ae squire in fair Scotland / And him you sall never see."	Yes in B, C, D, E and G.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Maid takes a sleeping potion and pretends to be dead.	Heroine is reunited with her lover and sends her seven brothers, who brought her to Scotland to bury her, home.	Minor.	Yes.
<b>Brown Robin (97)</b>	3	Yes.		Yes.	Yes – the heroine gets her father's porter drunk in order to let her lover in, and dresses him up as a maid to let her out. She elopes with him and does not come back.	Apparently; the king and nobles are drinking in the hall but the heroine prefers Brown Robin drinking in the rain.	No.	Implicit – A8: "Whan night was gane, an day was come, / An the sun shone on their feet, / Then out it spoke him Brown Robin, / I'll be discovered yet."	No in A & C, yes in B.	No.	No.	No in A and C. Brown Robin dies in B.	A – no. In B the father comforts his daughter and hangs the porter. In C the porter helps the couple and the story ends with reconciliation with the heroine and her father.	Yes – in B the porter shoots Brown Robin whereas in A they successfully elope. In C the porter helps the couple escape.	Yes.

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<b>Brown Adam (98)</b>	3	Yes.	No.	Not explicit.	No, though Brown Adam is banished.	No, although Brown Adam is a blacksmith and the lady's unsuccessful tempter is a knight.	No.	Knight about to rape lady, threatening her.	No.	Violence threatened by Knight towards Lady. Blacksmith cuts off four of the Knight's fingers.	No, although the maiden begins to feel that Brown Robin stays away too long.	No.	No.	Minor – version C is fuller..	Yes.
<b>Johnie Scot (99)</b>	16	Yes, daughter.		Yes – King's only daughter.	Yes; the father commands (A4): "Gin this be true that I do hear, / As I trust well it be, / Ye pit her into prison strong, / and starve her till she die."	Nationality difference – Johnnie gets the English King's daughter pregnant.	Yes – servant boy uses the sleeve of a silk sark to prove who has sent him.	Implicit.	Yes.	King imprisons and starves his daughter. Johnnie kills King's knight in one on one combat.	In a sense – Johnnie Scot escapes; he sends for the heroine but she cannot come, so he comes to get her. Later he rejects the proffered dowry.	Yes – the king's knight.	Johnnie wins the daughter by winning the fight: a forced reconciliation.	Minor.	Yes.
<b>Willie O Winsbury (100)</b>	9	Yes.		Janet, daughter.	The King's daughter becomes pregnant while he is in prison in Spain.	Not really; she is the king's daughter but he has eighteen corn-mills.	No.	A1 "And Willie O the Winsbury / Has lain long wi his daughter at home, O".	A4-5 "Cast ye off your berry-brown gown, / Stand straight upon the stone, / That I may ken ye by yere shape, / Whether ye be a maiden or none. // She's coosten off her berry-brown gown, / Stooden straight upo yon stone; / Her apron was short, and her haunches were round, / Her face it was pale and wan."	No.	The heroine is left on her own, although once he is summoned Willy seems eager to marry her – he rejects the dowry.	No.	Yes – the king says he would have lain with Willie if he were a woman and grants him his daughter.	Minor.	Yes.
<b>Willie O Douglas Dale (101)</b>	3	Yes.		Yes – King's daughter.	A11 "O will you leave your father's court, / An go along wi me? / I'll carry you into fair Scotland, / And make you a lady free."	Yes – Willy serves "for meat and fee" (A5) but he and the King's daughter fall in love. There is also a nationality difference – Willy is Scottish.	No.	A8 "An the love that passet between these twa, / It was like paramour."	A9 "O narrow, narrow's my gown, Willie / That want to be sae wide; / An short, short is my coats, Willy / That want to be sae side; / An gane is a' my fair colour, / An low laid is my pride." The heroine gives birth in a forest.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Minor.	Yes.
<b>Willie &amp; Earl Richard's Daughter (102)</b>	3	Yes.		Yes.	Heroine elopes with Willy.	Yes; Willie is a serving man.	No.	A2 "they made up their love-contract / Like proper paramour."	Yes – A4 "O narrow is my gown, Willie, / That want to be sae wide; / And gone is a' my fair colour, / That want to be my pride."	No.	No.	No in A. In B, the daughter dies in childbirth. C is incomplete.	Yes in A – the grandchild is a source of joy. In B the father takes the child home to look after it, but wishes Archibald (the lover) were hanged.	Yes – see death.	Yes.
<b>Rose the Red and White Lily (103)</b>	3	Yes, two sisters.	Evil stepmother.	Yes.	The two sisters dress up as pageboys and follow their lovers (their stepbrothers).	No.	No.	Brown Robin uncovers Roses' identity and insists on sleeping with her.	Yes – Rose becomes pregnant.	Yes – White Lily is forced to fight and is wounded.	The stepbrothers are sent away.	No.	Yes – lovers reunited.	Minor.	Yes.
<b>Prince Heathen (104)</b>	2	Yes.	Yes. Prince Heathen attempts to break the heroine's will.	Yes; in version B the heathen knight kills her father, mother and seven brothers.	Yes; heathen Prince kills the heroine's relatives.	Religious differences – the knight is "heathen".	No.	Yes – the heathen knight rapes the heroine in both versions.	Yes, and difficult childbirth in A.	Rape, deprivation and imprisonment.	No; once the Heathen Prince has broken her spirit, he loves her.	No, although she says she's going to die.	Yes – though it's not clear if the heroine Margaret is reconciled.	Version B is fuller but they are fairly similar.	Yes.
<b>The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington (105)</b>		Yes, bailiff's daughter.	Yes.	Yes, the bailiff's daughter.	No.	Not clear – she's a bailiff's daughter, he's an esquire's son.	No.	No.	No.	No.	He is sent to London by his friends to be an apprentice. The bailiff's daughter is too coy and won't show him any countenance.	No, but the bailiff's daughter says she's dead – at which the esquire's on is about to go into exile but then the bailiff's daughter reveals herself.	Yes – when the esquire's son finds that the bailiff's daughter is alive and standing him before him he is joyful - A13: "O farewell grief, and welcome joy, / Ten thousand times and more! / For now I have seen my own true-love, / That I thought I should have seen no more."	No.	Yes.
<b>The Famous Flower of Servingmen (106)</b>		Yes.	Yes – heroine disguises her self as a serving man and seeks a job with the king.	Yes; describes herself in A2 as "My father's chief and onely heir ""	No.		Her true-love builds her a bower.	No.	No.	Yes – thieves slay her knight.	After the knight is slain, she is deserted by her servants.	Yes – of father, then husband.			Yes.

Ballad title and number	No. of recorded variants	Female protagonist?	Strong women/matriarchal power?	Daughter?	Elopement / split loyalties?	Class difference?	Love tokens?	Sexual content?	Pregnancy?	Physical Violence?	Abandonment?	Death?	Reconciliation / remorse?	Significant variations (narrative outline) or minor variations? Give details	'Women's interest'?
Will Stuart and John (107)	2	Yes.		Yes – father won't let her marry Willie Stewart.	Yes – the heroine elopes with Willie.	Nationality difference – King won't let Willie Stewart marry his daughter because he's a Scot.	The ring that she has given him is taken as proof of identity with a message.	They live in common-law marriage for twelve months.	Yes – and the baby is taken to its grandfather for christening.	Threat of beating in both versions – as the father comments in B4: "I'll rather beat fair Ailly in my leather bang / As lang as she can either stand or gang."	No.	No.	Yes – once he sees his baby grandchild the father demands his daughter and her lover marry.		Yes.
Christopher White (108)	1	Yes.					The heroine sends Christopher White a letter with a hundred pounds enclosed etc.	No.	No.	No.	Yes – the lady is turned by money to marry a merchant but then runs off with her first love, taking lots of the merchant's wealth with her.	No.	Woman reunites with her first love.	No.	Yes.
Tom Potts (109)	4	Yes.	Daughter.	A2 "Shee is daughter to the Lord Arndell / His heyre apparrant flor to bee."	The heroine's father forces her to be Lord Phenix's bride even though she loves Tom Potts.	Yes; Tom Potts is lower class "A serving-man of small degree". In the end they let the lady choose between them.	No; but Tom Potts' love is signalled by his blushing and crying when he reads her letter.	No.	No.	Jousting; Tom is wounded in the thigh and Phenix in the arm. Phenix yields.	No.	Phenix pretends Tom is dead – she swoons...	Father is reconciled to Tom's lower-class status.	B ends with advice to marry for love. Other variations are minor.	Yes.
The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter (110)	12	Yes.	Yes; chases the Knight down and asks the king to force him to marry her.	The heroine is a Shepherd's daughter.		At first it seems as if the heroine is lower class, but at the end of the ballad it is revealed that she is in fact of higher social status than the knight himself.		Yes; A4 "He took her by the middle so small, / And laid her down on the plain, / And after he had had his will, / He took her up again."	No.	No.	Yes – he rides back to court but she pursues his horse, running and swimming.	No.	Yes – he tries to buy her off but she insists on marriage. It transpires that she is a Duke's daughter.	In C the emphasis lies more heavily on the rape. Emphasis is similar in E – he takes his will of her "wholly without her leave" (14).	Yes.
Crow and Pie (111)	1	Yes.	Yes. The pragmatism of the heroine is notable; she curses the knight but decides: "'Though a knave hath by me layne, / Yet am I nother dede nor slayne, / I truste to recouer my harte agayne, / And Crysten curse goo wythe yow!'"	Not explicit.	No.		No.	Yes – he rapes her.	No.	Rape.	Yes – he rides off refusing to tell her his name.	No.	No.	No.	Yes.
The Baffled Knight (112)	5	Yes.	Yes.	Yes; the maid asks to be carried to her father's hall.	No.		No.	Yes – the heroine mocks the knight; he might have made love to her but didn't take advantage of the opportunities as they presented themselves.	No.	No.	No – she dismisses him.	No.	No.	In E it is the maiden who delivers the 'moral' of this story: "But when ear you meet a pretty maid, / And two miles from a town, sir, / You may lay her down," she said, / "And never mind her gown, sir!"	Yes.

## APPENDIX B:

### FEMALE THEMATICS: PREGNANCY IN THE POPULAR BALLAD

#### CORPUS

A study of pregnancy in the ballads provides a good focal point for the argument that the ballad corpus be considered a product of a female tradition. Ballad accounts of pregnancy and childbirth demonstrate the convergence of two preoccupations that are central to the corpus: the position of women in society, and the female body. Thirty-five of the first one-hundred and twelve ballads are concerned in some way with pregnancy, a significant thirty-one percent of the first two volumes of ballads. Of these ballads, fourteen give a physical account of the pregnant female body. Almost half of these descriptions are given from the pregnant woman's perspective, giving an account of gestation that is firmly located in feminine experience. The women describe themselves as having lost colour ('Willie O Douglas Dale' (101), and 'Willie and Earl Richard's Daughter' (102)), and also communicate a sense of the feeling of the child in the uterus. The foetus is felt "between my twa sides" ('Lizie Wan', 51A), or to "sturre at my side" (Child Waters, 63A) or "between my sides" ('Jellon Grame', 90A) This awareness of the foetus within is accompanied by a frustration with the physically enlarged body without. Items of clothing shrink; as Fair Ellen informs Child Waters (63A) "[m]y girdle of gold, which was too long, / Is now to short ffor mee" and "[m]y gowne of greene, it is too straight; / Before it was to wide". This sense of the external world contracting and of being claustrophobically hemmed in is echoed by the heavily pregnant Queen of 'Fause Foodrage' (89A), who escapes from her

psychopathic captor by clambering out of a window, moaning “O narrow, narrow is this window, / And big, big am I grown!”<sup>423</sup>

The remaining eight physical descriptions of pregnancy, just over half of the total number of physical accounts, describe the woman’s body from the position of onlooker, and emphasise the social significance of the pregnant female body. Made conspicuous by her physical appearance as having engaged in the sexual act in a way in which the male is never marked out, the woman’s body becomes the locus of the entire community’s concern. This one-sided phenomenon is reflected in the early modern corporal punishment assigned in cases of illegitimate childbirth – public whipping and a year in the house of correction – which invariably applied only to the girl.<sup>424</sup> Pregnancy makes the woman publicly accountable. This communal interest is explicitly registered in ‘Sheath and Knife’ (16A) with the ballad beginning in the insidious background noise of rumour: “It is talked the world over [...] That the king’s dochter gaes wi child to her brither”. Janet’s pregnancy in ‘Tam Lin’ (39A) is discovered to the community at large by her morning sickness; she is “[a]s greene as onie glasse”, and an old knight crossly informs her that the knights will all be blamed for her condition.

More specifically, the ballad women’s pregnant bodies are interrogated by male members of either their natural or marital family, who have a vested interest in protecting her virginal status. In all these accounts, illegitimate pregnancy brings shame on the family. The brother in ‘Lady Maisry’ (65A) focusing on the generality

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<sup>423</sup> All ballad references to F. J. Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (New York: The Folklore Press, in association with Pageant Book Company, 1956); I have followed Child’s indexing. Similar complaints regarding shrinking garments are made by the pregnant women of ‘Willie O Douglas Dale’ (101) and ‘Willie and Earl Richard’s Daughter’ (102).

<sup>424</sup> Tom Pettitt, ‘The Murdered Sweetheart: Child of Print and Panic?’, Proceedings Version, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Communications Forum, Fourth Media in Transition Conference, May 2005: ‘The Work of Stories’, pp. 23-4. Pettitt references W. J. King, ‘Punishment for Bastardy in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *Albion* 10 (1978), 130-151 and J. A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England: A County Study* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1983), p. 59.



law husband informs her that he is leaving to find a young wife to replace her. They discuss how Annie herself will welcome this bride into the home:

‘But she that welcomes my brisk bride  
 Maun gang like maiden fair;  
 She must lace on her robe sae jimp,  
 And braid her yellow hair.’

‘But how can I gang maiden-like,  
 When maiden I am nane?  
 Have I not born seven sons to thee,  
 And am with child again?’

Annie is no longer ‘jimp’ (slim) nor, presumably, is her hair still bright; her altered appearance is aligned with an altered social value, and her husband aims to replace her as if she were a worn-out commodity, a broken-down washing machine.

The social concern for legitimacy expressed in ballads like ‘Lady Maisry’ (65) and ‘Willie O Winsbury’ (100) is reflected in ballads that portray women trying to negotiate with the repressive social mores of their society. The baby-killing ballad ‘The Cruel Mother’ (20A), in which the protagonist gives birth in the wilderness with her back against a thorn-bush, stabs it with a penknife and buries it, demonstrates the high social premium placed on female virginity, and the pressure placed on women to preserve the appearance of it. When she returns to her father’s hall, “She’s counted the leelest maid o them a’.” This takes on a different, pre-emptive and estates-oriented complexion in ‘Glasgerion’ (67A), in which the heroine kills herself to prevent herself conceiving to the man who has just had

aggressive intercourse with her while disguised as his master. As she kills herself she states: ““There shall neuer noe churls blood / Spring within my body.”” More mildly, the tragedy of ‘Child Maurice’ (83D) is precipitated by the female protagonist’s attempts to conceal the illegitimate birth of her son:

I got him in my mother’s bower,  
                     Wi mickle sin and shame;  
 I brocht him up in good green-wood,  
                     Got mony a shower o rain.

Descriptions of childbirth itself occur in a further thirteen ballads. Statistically, this means that twelve percent of the ballads in the first two volumes describe an exclusively female experience and (as it is certainly framed in some of the ballads) an exclusively female province of knowledge. As ‘Bonnie Annie’ (24) tells her lover when he offers to help, “O haud your tongue, foolish man, dinna talk vainly, / For ye never kent what a woman driet for you.”(B7) The sentiment is repeated in ‘Rose the Red and White Lily’ (103B) in a section of dialogue following the man’s foolish offer of ribbons and roses to make Lily feel better:

‘T’d rather hae a fire behynd,  
                     Anither me before,  
 A gude midwife at my right side,  
                     ’Till my young babe be bore.’

‘T’ll kindle a fire wi a flint-stane,  
                     Bring wine in a green horn;

I'll be your midwife at your right side,

Till your young babe be born.

'That was neer my mither's custom,

Forbid that it be mine!

A knight stan by a lady bright

Whan she drees a' her pine.

Childbirth is explicitly a terrain from which men are excluded. In 'Spinning Out Capital', Merry E. Wiesner demonstrates the prestige associated with midwifery, which was perhaps the only publicly recognised profession available to women in early modern Europe.<sup>425</sup> Lily's words confirm the midwife's authority. The ballads are also violently attuned to the damages of childbirth. Among the accounts of childbirth are those of heroines unable to give birth ('Willie's Lady' (6)), heroines that give birth in pain ('The Cruel Mother' (20), 'Bonnie Annie' (24), 'Child Waters' (63), 'Fair Janet' (64), 'Rose the Red and White Lily' (103) and 'Prince Heathen' (104)), and heroines that simply give birth in inappropriate places (in 'Fause Foodrage' (89), for example, the queen gives birth in a pigsty, and in 'Willie O Douglas Dale' (101) the heroine gives birth in a forest). In a chapter on "*Hindring a Woman's Labour*" the early modern anthropologist John Aubrey notes that "Woemen are superstitious [...] at Women's labours still", and cites a passage immediately relevant to the knots tied by the wicked mother in law to prevent 'Willie's Lady' (6) giving birth: "To sitt cross-legg'd, or with our Fingers pectinated,

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<sup>425</sup> Merry E. Wiesner, 'Spinning Out Capital: Women's Work in the Early Modern Economy', in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz ed. *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1977), pp. 241-2.

or shutt-together, is accounted bad, and Friends will perswade us from it.”<sup>426</sup> As Aubrey’s comments indicate, this is an area of female experience and lore, and it is one in which the ballads are fully conversant.

Childbirth is fatal in three of the ballads in these first two volumes: ‘Leesome Brand’ (15), ‘Jellon Grame’ (90) (in which the child is delivered when his mother is murdered) and ‘Fair Mary of Wallington’ (91). ‘Fair Mary of Wallington’ (91A) is a particularly direct example of the risks associated with childbirth. The protagonist begs her mother not to force her into a marriage contract because of her seven sisters, five have already died in childbirth and she fears the same outcome. She is married against her will, and her labour is, as she feared, fatal. The ballad explicitly recognises that in this case, the female race is sacrificed to generation:

She took out a razor  
 That was both sharp and fine,  
 And out of her left side has taken  
 The heir of Wallington.

There is a race in Wallington,  
 And that I rue full sare;  
 Tho the cradle it be full spread up  
 The bride-bed is left bare.

This ballad is particularly concerned with the bloodiness of labour. Version B has:

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<sup>426</sup> John Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* in John Buchanan-Brown ed., *John Aubrey: Three Prose Works. Miscellanies, Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme, Observations* (Suffolk: Centaur Press Ltd: 1972), p.252, citing Sir Thomas Brown *Vulgar Errors* lib.V. cap.22.

Thair was na mickel pride;  
The scobs was in her lovely mouth,  
And the razer in her side.

C, similarly has: “The gags they were in Maisry’s mouth / And the sharp shears in her side.” A study of the motif of pregnancy in the ballads lands us squarely in a territory of female experience and dread and emphatically outside male terrain. This type of material works to locate the popular ballads as products of a labouring, female, oral territory.

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