

TIME, GENDER, AND DIFFERENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S FESTIVE COMEDIES

by

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PREFACE

In Fall 2011, I took my first graduate class in literary theory. While doing research for a course project, I happened to come across Judith Halberstam's book, *In a Queer Time and Place*. I had never before conceptualized the notion of queering time or even thought that such a thing as "queer time" might exist. The more and more I read about the idea, however, the more and more I was titillated by it.

To me, being a graduate student has been a kind of queer existence in itself, marked by its own particular brand queer time. For one, many of us students postpone participation in the "normative" institutions of marriage and family in order to privilege, for a time, non-normative, and often strange interests. We defy the logics of capital accumulation to pursue intellectual, rather than economic wealth. We find ourselves in an extended period of adolescence, lumped into a life-stage with other university students. We are somewhat nomads, and while our friends are buying houses and settling down, we know we are just getting started and that the academic life will eventually lead us somewhere different.

We give up sleep to study, we work through weekends, we live on peanuts for pay, and we do it because we love what we do. Halberstam calls the "queer way of life" a mode of existence defined by "willful eccentricity," and I can't help but think she has graduate life pegged. I would also add that it is not only willful, but delightful, too. Where else would you meet people with such rich, riotous passion—people who care about language, meaning, ideas and interpretation—people with interests as specific as Victorian beards and as broad as defining history itself?

What follows is my heart's darling, as it is my splendid failure. The most difficult part of writing a thesis, I have learned, is the process of letting it go.

CHAPTER I

“How Slow that Old Moon Wanes”: Moon-time and Matriarchy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

I

Now fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
 Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
 Another moon; but O, methinks how slow
 This old moon [waned]! She lingers my desires.
 Like to a step-dame; or a dowager,
 Long withering out a young man’s revenue. (1.1.1-6)¹

Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* opens within the temporal framework of Theseus and Hippolyta’s marriage. Remarking to his beloved that their “nuptial hour / draws on apace,” Theseus shows that he is at once aware of his future—a time commencing with marriage—and his present—a time that measures itself according to the phases of the moon. While “four happy days” will bring in a new moon, until then, he indicates, the old moon wanes slow. Time and desire, according to Theseus’s proclamation, align themselves in two distinct patterns. The sexual desire he feels for Hippolyta aligns with a patriarchal, heteronormative marital timeline represented by his “nuptial hour”—the time commencing with marriage and the consummation of his conquest over Hippolyta. Within his present waiting period, however, Theseus notes a second measuring instrument initiating time’s pace, one which counterbalances the system through which normative marital time occurs. She—

¹ All citations are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ed. Peter Holland (1994).

the old moon—wanes *slow*, impairing the pace at which four days “ought” to move. In moving slow, she creates a distinctive reality that sets itself apart from the reality of Theseus’s upcoming marriage. By eschewing marriage and even prolonging the period before it, the moon enacts a form of time suspended. Theseus longs to be married, and yet the moon delays this anticipated future.

Theseus contrasts the time of his masculine, patriarchal daytime with the time of feminine, matriarchal nighttime. Calling the moon a “she,” he refers to the Roman deity Diana, whose reference is made explicit in Hippolyta’s following response:

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;

Four nights will quickly dream away the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver bow

[New] bent in heaven, shall behold the night

Of our solemnities. (1.1.7-11)

Hippolyta notes two of the goddess’s divine traits—Diana is both governess of the moon and patroness of hunters, appearing in this image as an archeress who draws her bow across the sky’s plane. She is also, like Hippolyta, an Amazonian virgin. Daughter of Jupiter and twin of Apollo (god of the sun), Diana and her feminine realm simultaneously parallel and counterbalance the compass of “masculine” patriarchal daylight. In this regard, her presence and the temporality associated with her directly opposes the time of the sun. Emphasizing Diana’s matriarchy over Apollo’s patriarchy, Theseus and Hippolyta gauge their four days by moonshine *rather* than sunshine, a point reified by Hippolyta’s statement that the four days will “steep themselves in night.” The two lovers articulate binary temporalities only to collapse them. While they set day against night, they envisage that night eventually swallows

up the day. Day and night, however, enable each other as much as they oppose one another. Theseus makes this fact clear when he propounds that “Four happy days bring in/Another moon” (1.1.2-3). Both he and Hippolyta recognize that days must pass in order to bring in the new moon, it is ultimately the moon occurring at night that they anticipate, and not the sun. The wedding is scheduled according to lunar time, yet their different attitudes toward it highlight the ability of this time to enact contradictory outcomes.

As a product of Elizabethan culture, the step-dame dowager of this image conjures the likeness of Queen Elizabeth, who was an elderly woman of sixty five at the time *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced (Montrose 67). Though Elizabeth represented herself as Virgin Queen, embracing her status as a maiden, she also proclaimed herself bountiful mother and frequently bared her breasts as an homage to both these identities (Montrose 67). Embodying dual temporalities, Elizabeth serves as a historical personage who reflects and shapes the cultural fantasies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both a maid rendered young and an actual elderly woman, she traverses the categorical limits of age and temporally-determined identity. Both virgin and mother, she traverses the limits of sexually defined subjectivity. The time Elizabeth enacts thus comes to be intricately bound up in matters of family, marriage, reproduction, birth, death, and the traditional paradigmatic pillars of life experience. Paradoxically, it is also associated with virginity and chastity, states of being which challenge these pillars. Emblemized in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* moon, her time also serves as a reminder that Theseus's patriarchy and dominance over Hippolyta is subsumed by her own matriarchy, and that even his “nuptial hour” is allowed only by permission.

In this chapter, I intend to argue that queer interplay in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

occurs primarily under the influence of the play's female figures—Diana, Hippolyta, Titania, and Queen Elizabeth—whose pervading presences emblemized in the moon create an alternative temporality that allows for desire's free expression.² The moonshine associated with these figures enables a temporality which frustrates, counters, and—at moments—complements traditional arrangements of heterosexist power. Despite *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* generic focus on love aspiring to and consummated in marriage, the play itself displays intense preoccupation with the power of time as a means of destabilizing heterosexual arrangements of power. While these arrangements emerge as the compulsory end product of the play's festive ritual, they do so only under the favor of female figures who articulate sexually non-normative forms of being and modes of desire. Existing outside of and yet within patriarchal family/marriage systems, they endorse and undercut compulsory hegemonic and heterosexist influence.

My analysis of the play's sex/gender systems is heavily indebted to Louis Montrose, who has emphasized *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* shaping fantasies of Elizabethan culture.³ I, like Montrose, aim to emphasize the play's textual negotiations of power, although I am less interested in how art influences culture than in how art conciliates cultural arrangements of subjectivity and desire. My use of the term “desire” draws from the work of

² By using the term “free expression,” I mean to emphasize desire's freedom from patriarchal and heteronormative constraints. It is not that these constraints do not exist, but rather that desire in the play—particularly female desire—manages to break free at least momentarily from them

³ As Montrose puts it, *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* festival conclusion and celebration of romantic and generative heterosexual union “depends upon the success of a process whereby the female pride and power manifested in misanthropic warriors, possessive mothers, unruly wives, and willful daughters are brought under the control of husbands and lords” (74, 76). However, it also evokes what it seeks to oppress—new cycles of sexual and familial violence, and renewed forms of family strife. Hippolyta's marriage bed provides an ironic prospect “in which the procreation of new children will also produce new mothers and fathers” who will engage, undoubtably, in the same power struggles and problems of legitimation. (77). The text discloses “in a sense despite itself—that patriarchal norms are compensatory for the vulnerability of men to the powers of women” (77). Highlighting the interplay between sexual politics in the Elizabethan family and monarchy, the play's hierarchies of power operate within systems that enable and contain each other, pointing to the women to whom *all* Elizabethan men were vulnerable—Queen Elizabeth herself (77).

Valerie Traub, who has shown how Shakespearean drama marks within itself a struggle over the meaning of desire.⁴ Although the Renaissance comes before modern configurations of sexually-determined identity, and the theoretical frameworks I use are, to a degree, ahistorical, I want to make the case that sexuality as a point of observation provides unique access to issues of identity and power in ways that are decidedly historical.⁵ While respecting historically different structures of desire, I simultaneously violate that historical knowledge to see what it will do for a reading of the play. By focusing on the sexual dynamics that govern textual patterns of desire, I mean to emphasize a materialist view which posits that cultural analysis is *always* textual. Contradictions, incoherencies, and instabilities serve as a starting point of inquiry because, as Catherine Belsey puts it “they constitute evidence that existing power relations are always precarious” (forward to Traub’s *Desire and Anxiety*, x). As a function of symbolic order and discursive practice, desire provides access to how historicized formations of the “self” emerge through historical texts.⁶ While it would be

⁴ Traub, Valerie. *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*. New York: Routledge, 1992, Print.

⁵ Alan Bray’s *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, and Jonathan Goldberg’s *Sodometries* are the best current illustrations of how modern sexualities can successfully interact with Renaissance historical texts. In an attempt to fill the discursive gap left in a culture that had no word for “homosexual,” Bray historicizes sodomy, the closest concept to homosexuality that Renaissance Englanders had. Along with sodomy, “buggery” was also a word also close and at least as broad, encompassing, along with same-sex relations, bestiality and heterosexual relations with underaged girls. The word “homosexual,” though, did not occur in England until the 1890s (14). Acknowledging his debt to Bray, Goldberg admits that there were no homosexuals in Renaissance England, and that it is “virtually impossible to believe that anyone might self-identify as a sodomite” (*Sodometries* 19). He holds that categorical sexual “orientation” did not exist in the Renaissance and adapts “sodometrie,” an occasional synonym for “sodomy,” to describe what he calls that “utterly confused category” which is homosexuality (18). Quoting Foucault, Goldberg insists that the homosexual in our current modern context has become a “species,” the early modern sodomite was “a temporary aberration” (*Sodometries* 18). This transience is what interests him the most, and he uses it as a point of access for examining Renaissance sodomy’s “slippages” and “instabilities” (*Sodometries* xv-xvi). Both Bray and Goldberg negotiate pre-discursive formations of homosexuality as a category of sex and classification for same-sex erotic contact. Exposing the cultural “incoherences” and “contradictions” to which Belsey refers, homosexuality, as a point of dissension from normative models of gender and power, offers a counter to the heterosexual matrices which history takes for granted. The issues that both scholars raise chart, as Goldberg puts it, “a path to the unacknowledged availability of homosexuality that is coextensive with social organization itself” (*Queering* 5).

⁶ In feminist theory, Judith Butler has examined how these fantasies emerge through gender and systems of sexuality. Drawing on Foucault, who shows that systems of power *produce* the subjects whom they come to represent, Butler critiques strains of feminist essentialism that assume “some existing identity, understood

incorrect to suggest that sexuality governs a stable form of identity, sexuality, as a process of self-making, is inextricably bound up in the process of identity's *formation*.⁷ While I do not mean to insist that sexuality is the truth of discourse or evidences any stable sense of "self," I do mean to tie sexuality to the linguistic realm through which identity emerges. *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* negotiations of gender and power highlight the contradictions and incoherencies enabled by the figure of Elizabeth as Virgin Queen Mother. As a culturally-invested living text, it processes through both the problems and the pleasures these issues offer to its figures.

By applying modern conceptions of sexuality to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I

through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued" (Gender 1-2). This form of thought, which shapes itself to express the interests and perspectives of "women," emerges under the regime of compulsory heterosexuality. The "unity" of gender, Butler shows, is a false construct built upon binary difference and constructed figurations (178). When these binaries are dissolved, the boundaries of the body show themselves to be only the limits of the social per se (167). According to Butler, no subject pre-exists cultural regimes of identity formation (179). Her point is that "woman," as a category of identity is inherently unstable—as is *any other* form of identity. The substantive "I" is only that—*substantive*—appearing through cultural and linguistic signifying practices (185).

⁷ Butler expounds on this notion when she deconstructs heterosexist gender binaries; a "self," according to her analysis, emerges as a gendered identity only through systems of power relations that demand the male signifier posits itself against female, and vice versa. In this relationship, gender is constructed by what it is *not*, and through binary processes of heterosexual differentiation.² There is no "core" that pre-exists representation, and gender is, in Butler's words, "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. . . and the appearance of substance is precisely that—a performative accomplishment" (179). In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler further develops this concept, discussing the discursive limits of sex and examining how heterosexual hegemony forms the matter of bodies themselves. Rejecting the notion that a body has an essential "sex," she shows that, outside the regimes of compulsory heterosexuality, gender's construction is as precarious as the systems of power that dictate its differentiation. Specifically, same-sex relations, through alternative alignment that excludes differentiation, challenge heterosexual hegemony by showing that its logics are arbitrary—that is, they possess no inherent meaning or stability other than to serve the individuals in power controlling them. In the field of Renaissance studies, Stephen Greenblatt has most notably historicized identitive formations what he terms "self-fashioning," from More to Shakespeare. By the word "self," he implies the expression of identity and the "intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic" structures that govern its generation (1). Social actions themselves, according to Greenblatt, are always embedded in the world of literary text, and self-fashioning is "always, though not exclusively, in language" (9). During the Renaissance, he contends, the concept of a "self" accumulated new meaning in a way that was singular to its particular historical moment, and (male) members of the middle class for the first time experienced a degree of autonomy in "fashioning" their identities. While Greenblatt accounts for the fact that it was only a small number of individuals who actually experienced this phenomenon, and the mass population of Early Modern England did not undergo a "Renaissance" of humanism and learning, his work gestures towards a significant point which resonates strongly with Butler—that an identity is something which is formed, and that it is formed through the process of cultural practices and signifying processes.

mean to emphasize questions of gender, power, and sexual difference and how they pertain to a historically-seated early modern context.⁸ Likewise, I mean to emphasize how this context informs our modern reading of its questions of gender, power, and sexual difference. I aim, in part, to trace subjectivity through the lens of historiography to find the “non-living present in the living present” that is no longer with us (Freccero 70). Although my chapter seeks to historicize, I recognize the value of undoing time as a category of epistemological necessity. As I apply modern conceptualizations of subjectivity to Renaissance texts, I practice attentiveness to the historical past and living present; I also explore how time, within Shakespeare’s play, acts as an intermediary through which alternative modes of being materialize. As *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* creates the culture by which it is created, it, too, exercises this same mode of dual relevance to past and present. Articulating a temporality that spans beyond one age, the text simultaneously veils and unveils its processes of cultural myth-making, revealing just as much about the culture in which it is read as it does about the culture in which it was written. To borrow again from Montrose, I quote Theseus’s observance at the disarray his play’s festival celebration has caused. Theseus remarks to his betrothed:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

⁸ I apply the contemporary assumptions of sexual “identity” so as to distinguish how, in the Renaissance, sexuality was an implicit component to the process of self-making. Whereas I recognize that Early Modern England had no concept of sexually-determined identity, and the “lesbian” subject did not yet exist, I want to claim figures who embody certain contemporary characteristics as crucial components in a genealogy of same-sex desire. Even though the concept of a sexual “self” did not yet exist, idea that self could be made *was* prominent in the Renaissance. Thus, while I acknowledge that sexual subjectivity was not explicitly in existence during Shakespeare’s time, in a sense it *was* already happening. While I employ presentism, I want to draw attention to the various factors that govern self-making, to illustrate the governances of power that shaped this making, and to emphasize the historical validity of applying this methodology.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

Are of imagination all compact. (5.1.5-9)

These “shaping fantasies,” as Montrose has articulated, illustrate within and without the text the dialectical character of cultural representations, and “the fantasies by which the text of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has been shaped are also those to which it gives shape” (31).

Like Montrose, I explore this process of shaping and self-shaping within the context of cultural production, although I contend that the play’s textual fantasies are not *limited* to a solely Elizabethan dialectic.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream, I argue, emerges as product of Elizabethan culture as well as of our own. In my analysis, I attend to issues of the past and present by drawing from the recent work of Valerie Traub and Carla Freccero. Traub disengages from questions of sexual subjectivity to trace a genealogy of homoerotic desire (*Renaissance of Lesbianism*); Freccero, on the other hand, practices a mode of historiography that draws attention to what the living perceive about what is not present but still appears as a figure or voice (*Queer/Early/Modern*). I locate my interpretive practices somewhere in between what Traub and Freccero espouse, both attending to the advantages that modern sexual self-representations offer and taking special heed of Renaissance world views on sex and selfhood. Homosexuality, as a point of counter to “normative” heterosexuality, serves to highlight these issues. The aim of my scholarship is not to “find” lost gays or assume a homosexual identity that transcends history, but, rather, to aim at constructing and deconstructing social formations of subjectivity. Rather than reinforcing binaries or to flip them, I mean to interrogate what happens precisely when we recognize that these binaries are contingent historically specific constructs. In addition to focusing on homosexual relations, I

draw from recent theory on queerness, which has expanded issues of gender and difference to encompass not only same-sex acts, but *any* kind of sexual activity or identity that falls into nonnormative or deviant categories.⁹ Theories of queer time are of particular interest to my project and serve as an entry-point for examining issues of gender, sexuality, and power. My point is that time is not neutral, nor is it “fixed” or certain; by looking at what makes time appear so, however, we begin to see the ideologies that have been naturalized by the dominant holders of power. Historically, “homosexuals” and those who experience sexuality according to non-heterosexist formulations have not been the dominant holders of power. The queer experience of time shows that this element of history is precarious, contingent, and not “natural,” nor is it that one people group should hold power over another.

The “queer” way of life I define draws from what Judith Halberstam’s theory of “willfully eccentric modes of being” (1). Queer subjects, according to Halberstam’s analysis, come to include not only individuals who engage in same-sex acts, but also “ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebacks, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers and the unemployed” (10). Such figures, living outside the logics of family, labor, and capital accumulation, realize queerness through the way they live.¹⁰ Queer time, according to Halberstam, emerges as the outcome of subcultural practices and modes of being which challenge the norms of family and reproduction.¹¹ The “queer adjustment” I make to conceptualize time draws from Halberstam’s contribution to opening up the possibility of new narratives unscripted by heteronormative conventions including marriage, reproduction,

⁹ See Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. “Sex in Public.” *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (Winter 1998): 547-566. Print.

Also, by the same authors, see “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about *X*?” *PMLA* 110 (1995): 343-349. Print.

¹⁰ See also Foucault, Michel. “‘Friendship’ Interview.” *Ethics: The Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984)*. Ed. Paul Rainbow. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vol. 1. New York: New Press, 1998. 137.

¹¹ For more on queer temporalities, see Dinshaw, Carolyn, Lee Edelman, Roderick Ferguson et al. “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion.” *GLQ* 13.2-3 (2007): 177-195.

and death. While Halberstam views such temporalities as the byproduct of postmodern logics and lifestyles, I find poststructuralist interpretations of discourse more fitting for looking at social systems and networks of power. If queer time makes new narratives possible, these narratives, as realized through the shaping fantasies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, open—to borrow the words of *The Tempest's* Miranda—a brave new world “full of goodly creatures.” These queer subjects come to espouse a wide array of values, both redefining the center and showing a center without center.¹²

II

The feminine moon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lingers in the existential sense that, simply, she exerts a form of *being*. She also lingers in the functional sense of delaying the fulfillment of Theseus's sexual desire through marital consummation. While the expectation of Theseus's union with Hippolyta presses time “on apace,” its postponement until the new moon effectively prolongs his desire's gratification, and desire is thus lingered according to a form of time countering the initial marital-time. Emerging during the interim between the moment desire occurs and desire's fulfillment, the alternative time associated with the moon subsequently expresses itself through the epistemological tension between competing forms of desire. Theseus indicates that his desire occurs in the plural sense—he has desires. His declaration allows for the possibility of alternative temporalities and alternative desire; during the time associated with the moon, Theseus's desire itself, having become “lingerred,” emerges as a phantasmic, antithetical counter to the desire that accompanies normative nuptial and heterosexual rhythms. Delay itself thus assumes a form

¹² I borrow phrasing from Jonathan Goldberg's introduction to *Queering the Renaissance*, p. 14.

of eroticism, lingering and affectively prolonging the period before sexual consummation.¹³

The moon lingers in that she persists the forbearance of Theseus's own desire, and "lingered" desire, comes to stand for alternative desire. This alternative desire occurs as the longing which happens during the forestalled progression of the moon's cycle. While his desires are plainly connected to normative, marital sex, they occur unavoidably under the influence of the play's moon. Measuring itself according to a formulation contrary to normative marital outcomes, Theseus's desire emerges as a longing which immediately counters heterosexist formations; yet, as his desire counters marital time frames, paradoxically, it is inextricably bound within them. He longs to be married, yet as he longs, desire's deferral comes to signify longing which instantly opposes marital, normative heterosexist configurations of sex. Theseus's desires exist in mutual tension with one another, while representing his patriarchal authority over his subjects' eroticism also conceding that another being—the feminine moon—has the power to alter desire according to alternative queer logic.

The pervading moonshine that governs his desire occurs both as a matter of nature and a matter of magic. The moon, like the desires which conform to its progression, maintains a dual frame of reference, both literal and fantastic. In the first sense, the moon, as an entity which exists in nature, epitomizes the freedoms offered by the second world of the forest. It is also literalized by the "Midsummer night" and the lovers' progression from the dark of the night to the light of the lovers' wedding day. Ana Vlaspolos has contextualized the play's ritual of Midsummer within its Christian and pagan traditions, arguing that the play maintains a dual frame of reference regarding the holy day's significance ("The Ritual

¹³ That is—for Theseus, gratification delayed signifies a unique moment of longing which is both frustrating and pleasurable. It is frustrating in that he wishes sexual gratification would come sooner, but it is pleasurable (though, granted, not for him) in that it allows the expression of other desires which counter, and complement, heterosexual timelines.

of Midsummer”). Magical elements of the Midsummer ritual, such as water and plants, provide critical access to this folklore, and the moonlight in Shakespeare’s play acquire notable significance within this context.¹⁴ In the play as in real history, the moonshine of Midsummer is frequently associated with dew. Vlaspolos expounds:

The moon, as the celestial body governing not only the tides, but all other waters, and believed to be instrumental in the formation of dew (Fr. VI, 137, 138), must be present in order to affect Midsummer waters and bring forth the dew. The ‘field dew consecrate’ (V.i.409) used by the fairies to bless the wedded couples and their issue, though technically applied after Saint John’s Day (because applied after midnight) belongs to these magical waters by virtue of its property to ward off evils and bodily imperfection. (24)

The magical aspects of water highlight the moon’s own fantastic influence in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as a matter of magic. The moon, as an actual entity that exerts influence over the play’s dew, exemplifies natural time in the calendar sense of occurring once a year, at Midsummer festival. It also occurs in the natural sense in that it is literally a *part* of nature and governs water, a body of nature. These two distinctions combine during Midsummer’s night to assume the supernatural quality that Vlaspolos notes.

The time enacted by the moon at Midsummer enables dew’s formation and magical properties. Montrose’s analysis on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s family dynamics further fleshes out the scene in which dew is used to bless lovers’ marriage bed. Oberon reassures:

Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray,

¹⁴ Vlaspolos does a better job at historicizing her argument than I allow her space. I minimize her justification for performing this particular reading to keep the critical focus on my own argument.

To the blest bride-bed will we,
 Which by us shall blessed be;
 And the issue there create
 Ever shall be fortunate.

...

With this field-dew consecrate,
 Every fairy take his gait;
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace, with sweet peace.
 And the owner of it blest
 Ever shall in safety rest. (5.1.387-406)

This blessing, of course, is rendered ironic considering his own strife-filled marriage with Titania. Montrose adds that it challenges patriarchal order's initial restoration, evoking precisely what it seeks to oppress—new cycles of sexual and familial violence, and renewed forms of family strife (77). Oberon's blessing of the lovers' marriage bed, thus, is not only ironic but provides ironic prospects "in which the procreation of new children will also produce new mothers and fathers" who will engage, inevitably, in the same power struggles and problems of legitimation (77). The water, as a product of moonshine, highlights the moon's pervading influence as it does the moon's pervading time, both natural and magical. When Oberon blesses the marriage bed, the dew he sprinkles over them draws attention to its source, the moon. The incongruity of this scene underscores the moon's entangledness in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* arrangements of love and desire. In one sense it complements the play's triumphant heterosexist outcome, emphasizing the norms of marriage and

reproduction—it is, after all, a fertility blessing. Yet as this blessing complements the play’s outcome, it undercuts the outcome’s outcomes by promising renewed forms of strife and counters to compensatory patriarchy, and by extension, the heterosexist arrangements of desire that ensue under its influence.

Theseus and Hippolyta’s vision of night swallowing up day accrues particular significance given the circumstances surrounding their betrothal. The beginning of the play establishes the end of a struggle in which Theseus has been victorious over the Amazon warrioress:

Hippolyta, I woo’d thee with my sword,
 And won thy love doing thee injuries;
 But I will wed thee in another key,
 With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling. (1.1.16-19)

In the scene he and Hippolyta imagine, contrary to what has happened in their real circumstances, *Diana*, an Amazon goddess, emerges victorious. The power reversal articulated by Diana’s triumph undercuts the initial patriarchal systems the play arranges, suggesting, as Montrose has articulated, that patriarchal norms are compensatory for the vulnerability of men to the powers of women. Time, as a matter of perspective, is pivotal for the arrangements of desire that ensue under this organization. When Theseus compares the moon to a “step-dame” or “dowager,” he envisions a woman who is defined by the time *after* marriage and the death of her husband. Imagining this woman to hold the title of her late husband’s estate, he describes a scene in which she administers a young man’s annuity piece by piece. This image is emphasized by “withering out,” which suggest both the long drawn-out consumption of the estate and the shrinking stature of the old woman.

If, as Montrose has argued, the cult of Elizabeth represents the dialectic character of cultural fantasies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the cult of Diana intensifies the complications which ensue under a similar matriarchal figure.¹⁵ In the Renaissance, Englanders were, to a degree, aware of Diana's authority as providential Mother goddess—as Elizabeth Hart points out, anyone who read the Bible or attended church would have known her from her reference in Acts of the Apostles, where Christian missionaries cry, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians. . . which all Asia and the world worshippeth” (350).¹⁶ In the secular domain, there were also a number of reference tools that would have made Diana's pagan associations explicit. For the sake of clarity, I quote Hart directly:

There were Renaissance dictionaries of ancient mythology, for example, such as the *Dictionarium Historicum, Geographicum, Poeticum* of Charles Stephanus; as well as the Italian mythographical “manuals” of Vincenzo Cartari, Natale Conti and Lilio Gregario Giraldi, sources often consulted by English artists, playwrights, and masque composers. (351)

Diana was also represented prominently in popular literature through English versions of Greek and Roman romances that described her priesthood and the “mysteries” of her cult (Hart 351).

Hart describes the influence of Diana in *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*, Shakespeare's two plays set in Ephesus, arguing that her virginal-maternal authority “functions ideologically within the patriarchal systems respective to each play” (351).

¹⁵ Descended from the Greek Artemis, Diana was, in ancient Ephesus, one of a group of powerful “Mothers” who were venerated in the eastern Mediterranean, among them Cybele of Anatolia, Innana and Ishtar of Syria, Isis of Egypt, Rhea of Crete, Astarte of Palestine, and Aphrodite and Demeter in Greece (Hart 347-348). Linked to moon worship, chastity, agrarianism, and fertility, she was also synthesized with the much more ancient Cybele, a Phrygian goddess associated with Mount Ida, near Troy (Hart 348). Long before her incarnation as a Greco-Roman deity, she was Anatolian mother goddess bound with pagan practices of the East.

¹⁶ Hart quotes Acts 19:27, 28, 34, from the Geneva Bible, 1599 edition.

Diana's female authority, rather than challenging patriarchy, serves to "offer it her blessing" (351). Although *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place in and just outside of Athens, Diana's influence enacts the same probabilities. Hart's argument about Diana reifies Montrose's observation that powerful female figures in Shakespeare insist upon compensatory patriarchal norms (77). Leonard Barkan, looking at artistic representations of the myth of Diana and Actaeon,¹⁷ comments on how the play picks up on the themes of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (352).¹⁸ In Barkan's analysis, Titania serves as a stand-in for Diana, and Bottom for Actaeon. He notes how Ovid calls Diana Titania at the moment Actaeon enters her grove; in Shakespeare's play, the first words spoken about the fairy queen are "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania" (2.1.60). Bottom subsequently represents Actaeon, though his hunt becomes, in the words of Barkan, "a comic *chasse d'amour*" with female wooer "Diana" pursuing her sexually helpless victim (355). By scorning the company of all adult males, Titania creates a cult for herself which also parallels that of the goddess Diana (2.1.62). In the end of the play, though, it is Titania, and not Bottom, who has been made a fool. Upon waking from the spell she has been under, she wonders, "My Oberon! What visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamour'd of an ass!" (4.1.73-74) To this Oberon replies, "There lies your love," and she shudders, "How came these things to pass? / O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!" (4.1.75-77). Titania is humiliated by her bestiality, and Bottom, rather, becomes subjectless, bridging an existence between that of the ass and that of

¹⁷ The myth, recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, recounts the fate of a young hunter (Acteon) who chances upon viewing the goddess Diana bathing in a spring. Diana subsequently transforms Actaeon into a deer. His hounds, failing to recognize him, pursue and eventually kill him.

¹⁸ Nancy Vickers also has done significant work on Renaissance representations of Diana and Actaeon. Looking at Petrarch's Laura and *rime sparse*, Vickers shows how Petrarch's poetry figuratively "scatters" woman by categorizing the parts of her body. Whereas Ovid's Actaeon is literally torn apart, Petrarch's Actaeon sees woman's (albeit divine) body, recognizes its immanent threat, and neutralizes any danger by dismembering the female through poetic description. "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme." *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (Winter 1981): 265-279.

the visionary. Through Bottom's encounter with the divine, he simultaneously has his humanity affirmed and finds himself dead to the ordinary world—hence his declaration that there is no Bottom (4.1.212).

Titania, as the literal embodiment of Diana, highlights the erotic possibilities made available by Diana's alternative moon-time. Although Titania-Diana has been humiliated according to traditional heterosexual arrangements of desire, she has managed, momentarily, to evade the time which impresses and encloses her union with Oberon. Assuming the role of huntress, she inverts normative courtship patterns by becoming the *pursuer*, and making the (male) object of her affection the *pursued*. She also evades the categorical limits of sex, broadening the range of body acts to extend cross-species and cross class. Titania-Diana personified experiences her sexuality in its broadest, most liberating sense, unencumbered by the constraints of normative expectations. As a fairy, she finds it fit to make a donkey her lover; as a queen, she ignores class to court a plebeian. Appropriating the Diana story to fit her own needs, she modifies the complex relationship between a desiring, male gaze and a chaste, unwilling empowered woman by employing her sexual appetite—rather than her stags—as a means of ultimately consuming Bottom.¹⁹ Although her experience is eventually rendered as humiliation, it is nonetheless freeing in that it even provides momentary pause from the everyday rhythms of heterosexual “normality.” Structurally, Titania's bestiality and revelation of it restores her to her “right” place within the play's patriarchal systems;

¹⁹ I do maintain that Titania has agency in this situation. While she under the influence of her husband's spell, I want to push the idea that her *greater* amount of power is what enables (and contains) the patriarchal authority exercised in this scene. Similarly, I want to resist the critical impulse to render female figures passive and instead highlight the ways they are active. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Diana/Titania emerges to give patriarchy her blessing—but with the concession that it is subsequent to her matriarchal power. This dynamic is enacted in the Titania-Bottom episode, where Oberon's spell—while technically rendered as humiliation—allows a her socially sanctioned method of experiencing non-normative sexuality. My emphasis is on the transgression as it is on what allows it and the circumstances determining such. Ultimately, in this scene, Oberon's patriarchal power is not triumphant.

however, the medium through which she has been manipulated highlights her own agency over her actions. In Oberon's description of "Cupid's flower," the plant which renders Titania lovestruck, he describes a scene entrenched in moonlight and recollects seeing Cupid flying and shooting his love arrow towards the heart of a virgin. He reminisces to Puck:

I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth
 Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,
 And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,
 And the imperial vot'ress passed on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
 Yet I marked where the bolt of Cupid fell.
 It fell upon a little western flower—
 Before, milk-white; now, purple with love's wound:
 And maidens call it 'love in idleness.' (2.1.155-168)

In folklore, Cupid's flower was commonly understood to be the wild pansy, or *viola tricolour* (Cohen 118). In this instance, it occurs as the consequence of a failed version of "courtship." Cupid, having aimed at the virgin, finds his arrow subsumed in the "chaste beams" of Diana's moonshine. The votress, a probable figuration of Queen Elizabeth, recalls visions of women who have taken vows as the nuns of Diana and who Theseus has described scenes

earlier (1.1.70-74). She also recalls Titania's close friend, the changeling boy's mother, who died through childbirth. Unharméd, the votress of this image continues on in meditation and "fancy free," while the arrow falls upon the flower. This flower, having turned from white to purple, bears "love's wound," an emblem of heterosexual passion's flagrant failure. Diana's moonlight trumps Cupid's arrow, and her virgins blithely carry on without regard to the thought of generative union.

If I am mixing my metaphors, it is with the conscious deliberation that the moonshine and female power authorities in Shakespeare's play cannot be reduced to a single image. Diana, Titania, Queen Elizabeth, and the vestal virgin suffuse *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with persistent reminders of matriarchal affect, each managing to carve out a world that exists apart from the realm of masculine influence. They assert a mode of being independent of heterosexist articulations of sex, yet they also manipulate these and patriarchal systems of power to serve their own means. Female power in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is subversive, both allowing patriarchy and undercutting it at the same time. While Titania is technically married, her separation from Oberon and refusal to hand over the changeling boy equates a figurative "divorce" from marital norms. Although the juice from Cupid's flower renders her temporarily subject to her husband's influence, it is subsumed by the residual reminder that Diana's exultation allowed this authority from the start. While the flower's juice makes her fall for an ass, enabling cursory "humiliation," it also facilitates an acceptable means—sanctioned by her husband—of experiencing sex outside heretonnormative marital constraints. All of these figures attest to Diana's pervasive influence through the moon, articulating a sexually non-normative, even "lesbian" form of being exclusive from

patriarchy's masculine realm.²⁰ They also highlight the lesbian associations implicit to Diana's cult and matriarchal goddess worship.

III

A Midsummer Night's Dream, as a product of Diana's cult and a creator of Elizabethan culture, displays unique preoccupation with representations of female intimacy. Titania's fondness for the changeling boy, although arguably maternal, designates an even more strongly felt desire for his mother. Titania recollects:

His mother was a votaress of my order:
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood,
 When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
 Which see, with pretty air and with swimming gait
 Following, her womb then rich with my young squire,
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,

²⁰ By calling this form of being "lesbian," I mean to equate it with the practices associated with goddess-worship and highlight the exclusion of men from expressions of sexuality. Diana/Titania/Queen Elizabeth do not need men to express desire, nor do they need men to enact power. Like Valerie Traub, I use this term as a deliberate come-on, of course recognizing that Renaissance Englanders had no real concept of sexually-determined identity. The "lesbian," according to her as well as my analysis, serves less as a stable epistemological category than as a rhetorical representation al figure. Carla Freccero, borrowing from Derrida, has envisioned this sort of figure as a "specter" (*Queer/Early/Modern*). The female figures in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are *not* lesbians in the present sense; as specters of the past and present, however, they exert a certain form of haunting that allows us to claim them as crucial representations of femme-femme intimacy.

As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die:
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
 And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.123-137)

Echoing Diana's own implemented order of vestal priestesses, Titania describes her special amity for the boy's mother, a devotee of her following. She reminisces over their friendship's close conversations and shared laughs, recalling with sadness her intimate's mortal passing. This relationship serves as Titania's justification for keeping her boy close, foreswearing Oberon's bed and company (2.1.62-63). Appointing the changeling boy to her exclusively female realm, she expresses her desire for his mother by extreme possessiveness, eschewing Oberon's paternal power and sexual contact.

Hermia and Helena also maintain a close friendship. In an almost parallel scene to the one Titania had described about *her* friend, Helena, thinking she has been betrayed, chastises Hermia:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry: seeming parted,
 But yet an union in partition,
 Two lovely berries mounded on one stem.

So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
 Two of the first—like coats in heraldry,
 Due but to one and crowned with one crest,
 And will you render our ancient love asunder,
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend? (3.2.208-216)

At the heart of Helena's anger is the thought of close betrayal. Having been intimate with Hermia since childhood, she recollects sewing one flower together on the same piece of cloth—both a picture of their closeness and a metaphor for their own oneness. In Helena's mind, the two are like twin cherries, which seem to be separate but are also together, containing two bodies but one heart. The intimacy she describes is so dear that she cannot fathom its perceived betrayal. Passionate both in her anger and in her love for Hermia, Helena abounds with more emotion than she can contain, and the thought that her Lysander could love another is secondary to the thought that Hermia would double-cross their friendship.

Shirley Garner has emphasized the play's function of cutting off the close female friendships it initially articulates. For instance, Titania's friendship with the Indian boy's mother is undercut by Oberon's final possession of him; by the end of the play, Oberon has both the boy *and* Titania's exclusive love. Oberon's gain, as Garner argues, "is Titania's loss; she is separated from the boy, and, in that separation. . . severed from the woman whom she had loved" (51). Similarly, the play arranges close friendship between Hermia and Helena only to shut it down in the same aesthetic gesture. Although by play's triumphal ending, Helena and Hermia's conflict is cleared by their pairing with the "correct" spouses, they are never reconciled with one another; after the women sleep and awaken with whom they will

marry, they neverspeak again. Having been robbed of their voices, they silently slip into the play's background—a point which, as Garner maintains, “suggests that in their new roles as wives they will be obedient, allowing their husbands dominance” (59). More recently, early modern scholarship has sought to resist critical models which “reinscribe patriarchy as monolithic and the early modern woman as powerless” (Traub *Renaissance* 10).²¹ Female intimacy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although eventually rendered asunder, nonetheless emerges as one of the play's primary topics of fascination. As invested agents, the play's females attest to both Diana's matriarchal “lesbian” cult and patterns of desire available apart from heteronormative constraints.

Titania's love for Bottom serves as an extreme example of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* non-normative desire; whereas the intense emotional intimacy and erotic attraction felt between the play's females does not necessarily equate the fairy queen's raw bestiality, it does highlight alternative modes of intimacy made available under Diana's pervading influence. When Oberon exerts his patriarchal influence to render his own wife back to human relationships, he is able to do so only through the effects of Diana and the juice of her bud. Likewise, it is Diana's juice that is used to restore Lysander to “sound” judgment, allowing for the proper heterosexual pairs to marry and reinstate order over the play's

²¹ It should be noted that male *and* female same-sex friendship was a common theme in early modern literature, and many other representations in literature depicted it as the “sacrifice” for sexual gratification available through marriage. Montrose, of course, has shown how Oberon's blessing of the marriage bed emblemizes *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* cycles of familial friction; patriarchal norms, under the systems of authority that the play articulates, emerge as subordinate to the powers of women. Drawing on the Ovidian tradition of same-sex friendship, Valerie Traub has exposed scholarship's negligence to female-female desire, arguing that early modern England witnessed a considerable “Renaissance of lesbianism” proffered in part by manuscript culture's technology of print and its proliferation of female-female representations (*The Renaissance of Lesbianism*). Granted, what it means to be a “lesbian” depends on what it means to make love—and “what it means to make love depends on conceptualizations of the physical body” (16). The “lesbian,” according to Traub's line of analysis, serves less as a stable epistemological category than as rhetorical, representational figure. The female figures in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are *not* lesbians in the present sense of having sexually-determined identity; as specters of the past and present, though, they exert a certain form of haunting. Emerging from historically-situated discourse, they allow us to claim them as, if not exactly lesbian, crucial representations of femme-femme intimacy.

ensuing confusion. Whereas there seems to be no disagreement about the identity of Cupid's flower as the pansy, the identity of Dian's bud has been contested, usually being taken as a fictive invention of Shakespeare's.²² The two most popular identifications for it are usually the Artemisia and the Agnus Castus (Cohen 118-119)²³.

Vlaspolos has added to theories of Dian's bud by contextualizing the moonlight and dew associated with the ritual of Midsummer. Arguing that the ritual, rather than the allusion, provides the key to verifying the plant's identity, Vlaspolos notes how "Dian's bud" shares the curative functions of mugwort, also known as St. John's plant, motherwort, and cingulum sancti johannis (25). Mugwort, a subspecies of Artemisia, was attested to have a variety of curative powers and used to dispel the effects of previous drugs and magical spells, and during the Midsummer festival, when the plant's power was thought to reach its peak, "a wreath of it was worn in order to ensure healthy eyesight for the coming year" (Vlaspolos 26). Both Dian's bud of Shakespeare's play and mugwort belong to the realm of Diana, the genus Artemesia borrowing its name from Artemis, the Greek equivalent of her Roman name (Cohen 118). Oberon recognizes the bud's properties of restoration, remarking as he drops the juice on Titania's eyelids:

Be as thou was wont to be,
 See as thou was wont to see.
 Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
 Hath such force and blessed power. (4.1.70-74)

Although Oberon physically employs Dian's bud to incite its magical precipitations, he

²² See Mats Ryden, "The Contextual Significance of Shakespeare's Plant Names" in *Studio Neophilologica* (1984).

²³ In addition to Marion Cohen's comments on "'Dian's Bud' In A Midsummer Night's Dream IV. i. 72" in *Notes and Queries* (1983), see Charlotte Otten's in *Notes and Queries* (1988).

DEMETRIUS

It seems to me

That yet we sleep, we dream. (4.1.186-193)

While Demetrius sees a haze, Hermia sees things double, and Helena puzzles whether she finally has the object of her affection—both her own and not her own. Dreaming, to the lovers, emerges as an alternative form of existence which both counteracts and contains the “real” world. If anything, they dream without waking, and dreaming itself comes to exert a form of temporality which counters everyday rhythms and progressions. The language they use is explicitly paradoxical—“mountains turned clouds,” “a parted eye,” and “mine own and not mine own” reflect uncertainty as they do dreaminess, contradicting normative logic yet nonetheless materializing through illusory vision. Mountains turn to mist, eyes remain out of focus, and Helena, having found Demetrius, her “jewel”, finds that she has him and does not have him. Even paralleling Diana’s paradoxical function of both virgin and the goddess of fertility, the doubling in this passage renders the ending contingent, and not decisive.

This scene, for all its discrepancy, recollects Hippolyta’s statement at the opening of the play that “Four nights will quickly dream away the time,” (1.1.8). Hippolyta articulates what the lovers actually experience; while in the conservative sense, her phrasing references to time’s passing at a quicker than normal pace, it also makes room for the idea that time itself can be done away with by dreaming. Both of these possibilities are realized on the day of Hippolyta and Theseus’s wedding. As Anne Paolucci has articulated, the enveloping action—the action that Theseus dominates—can be traced accurately enough in time (320). The opening scene of the play establishes that the royal marriage will take place in four days, both setting forth to the time-span that will be covered through the course of the play, but also alerting us to the *awareness* of time and the “psychological effects we can expect in

characters subject to such awareness” (Paolucci 320). On the morning of the royal wedding, Theseus reminds us that it is the first day of May, reasoning the lovers he and his company stumble upon must have “rose up early to observe / The rite of May” (4.1.131-312).

Theseus’s four days seem to have elapsed at this point, yet the play’s apparent time-scale has exhibited two days with one intervening night. Paolucci has reconciled this disparity to argue that sleep functions as a way of distinguishing time in one long magic night, suggesting that day-night contrasts cannot guide interpretations of this period. Emphasizing the play’s sequence of dreaming rendered in Hermia’s prophetic dream, Bottom’s “bottomless dream,” and Titania’s “vision,” she holds that there is, indeed, some kind of order in the play’s apparent confusion.

Paolucci provides a relatively compact explanation for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream’s* time and practices a mode of interpretation that contains, rather than embraces, the new narratives made available by the play’s temporal possibilities. Her analysis, however, is significant for the relationship it draws between the play’s dreaming and its complex time-scale. Dreaming and time in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* function in intricate alliance with one another, a point literalized in the play’s title. “Midsummer,” of course, indicates the time of season, and “night” emphasizes the time that occurs within a single twenty-four-hour period, when the sun has set and the moon has risen. Dreaming occurs as a form of fantasy and convoluted time, a poetic expression of the freedom offered by the play’s moonshine and festive celebration. Culturally reflective of the “shaping fantasies” of Elizabethan culture, it also attends to the paradoxes embodied by Queen Elizabeth—and, by version of mythology, the goddess Diana. When Hippolyta imagines that four nights will “dream away” the time, she heralds the powers of both these female figures. When the four nights *do* actually dream

away the time, condensing it to two days interspersed with one night, Diana/Elizabeth emerges victorious over the subsequent patriarchal time of Theseus and the lovers' nuptial hour. Allowing for the expression of nonnormative desire and eschewing the practical constraints of marital/homosexual union, Titania, Hippolyta, and Elizabeth—conflated in the symbolic figure of Diana—not only swallows up time but affectively belies it. As Diana appears to give marriage her blessing, her blessing is rendered hauntingly ironic considering the play's perpetual harking back on feminine, queer, and consequently matriarchal time.

This time is further expounded in Theseus's final proclamation and Puck's speech at the lovers' bed-time. Theseus, the ever-practical cynic, notes the clock-time represented by the hour of midnight, yet he follows this statement by the figurative/poetic articulation of alternative fairy time. He voices:

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

Lovers to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

. . . Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity

In nightly revels and new jollity. (5.1.354-361)

Theseus's apparent skepticism about "fairy toys" (5.1.3) abates to concede that the "fairy time" predominates the hours from midnight to dawn. His equation of bedtime with fairy time also concedes to the visible association of these temporalities with sexual experience and the activities performed *in* bed. While referring to the lovers' consummation of their heterosexual desire, he is at once aware of fairy influence over this desire and its relation to a certain time-frame. Thus, his patriarchal power emerges only subsequent to the authority of these fantastic beings and the time associated with them. Puck expounds on the meaning of

fairy-time, declaring in the following speech:

Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite
 In the churchway paths to glide;
 And we fairies that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following a darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic. (5.1.370-378)

Alluding to the goddess's threefold figure, which also includes Hecate and Luna, he draws attention to Diana's influence over infernal regions, and her diabolical association with witchcraft and darkness.²⁴ Representative of a kind of "witching" hour, fairy time according to Puck exists at night, in direct contrast to the light of the sun. The fairies from Hecate's team are as ghosts arising from graves, figures both of darkness and of death a frolic. As they follow darkness, though, they "give gathering light," substituting the natural black of night with brightness of their own (5.1.382). Members of Diana's company, they suffuse the play's end with the ever-present reminder of her preeminence. Emerging at the hour of the lovers' consummation, their fairy-time allows for heterosexual union with the knowledge that it *only* occurs their hour and is hence subservient to their—and by extension, Diana's—power.

While fairy-time at the play's end simultaneously blesses and undercuts the play's triumphant heterosexual ending, it impresses this ending's hollowness by the avowal that the

²⁴ The Oxford edition indicates in a footnote that Ovid talks of "triple Hecate" but the phrase is not original to him. The goddess was named Hecate or Proserpina in Hades, Diana on earth and Luna, Cynthia, or Phoebe in heaven.

audience dreams. Puck pronounces at the play's epilogue:

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this, and all is mended,
 That you have but slumber'd here
 While these visions did appear.
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream. (5.1.423-428)

Drawing the play's viewers into to the lovers' dreamy vision and the dreaming literalized by *Midsummer night*, Puck's final epilogue does away with time as a category of epistemological stability. The literal hours that the audience has spent watching the play are, like Demetrius's mountains turned to clouds, figurative mist that dissolve like dew. Diana-Titania-Hippolyta-Elizabeth open up new narratives ample enough to extend beyond the limit of their play, blessing the audience by including them in its dream. As *A Midsummer Night's Dream* creates queer time, it eradicates time, showing a world full of exuberant desire and rich, riotous love.

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CHAPTER II

Text and Time: Bodies and Boundaries in *Twelfth Night, Or What You Will*

I

SIR TOBY: Approach, Sir Andrew: not to be a-bed
 after midnight is to be up betimes; and ‘diluculo sugere,’
 thou know’st—

SIR ANDREW: Nay, by my troth, I know not; but I
 know, to be up late is to be up late.

SIR TOBY: A false conclusion: I hate it as an unfilled
 can. To be up after midnight is to go to bed then, is
 early: so that to go to bed after midnight is go to bed
 betimes. (2.3.1-9)

In this brief exchange between Toby and Andrew, *Twelfth Night*’s use of time enacts explicit dependence on language. Toby initially states that being awake after midnight is to be up in good time, for to rise at dawn is healthful for the body. While Andrew maintains that late is late, Toby counters that going to bed after midnight is also to go to bed in the early hours of the morning—thus, it is to retire early. Toby and Andrew illustrate time’s function as a matter of perspective and shows that it can be determinable by speech. Whereas numeric markers render the hours after midnight as stringent law, Toby and Andrew show that language has the capacity to manipulate hourly significance. Their speech determines when time is early; it also determines when time is late. Linguistic manipulation in this scene also extends to show time’s indeterminacy—according to perspective and expression, both of

these characters maintain that a single hour can be early *and* late.

Temporal and linguistic indeterminacy in *Twelfth Night* function outrightly in the manner of Toby and Andrew's reasoning to establish its spirit of festive revel. In naming his play twice—*Twelfth Night, Or What You Will*—Shakespeare invokes this same rhetoric to present audience members with three temporal-linguistic contingencies while establishing a basic temporal boundary: 1) that the play they view is *Twelfth Night*, the festival celebration of Epiphany; 2) it is *What You Will*, literally whatever and anything; and 3) it is any other thing one “wills.” Although the play's reference to Twelfth Night establishes its time as a specific period of festivity, its body contains no actual reference to the festival itself and provides little indication even to its time of year. By leaving its festive, calendar, and elapsed times equally ambiguous, the play's title thus raises a fourth coexistent contingency—that *Twelfth Night*, as a specific period of festivity, is what anyone chooses to make of it. Like Toby and Andrew's time, which can be both early and late depending on language and perspective, *Twelfth Night's* title time exhibits outright play with language, showing that it can be both of its titles, all of its titles, and none of its titles all at once.

In this chapter, I intend to argue that homoerotic play in *Twelfth Night* occurs primarily under the influence of female linguistic manipulation which allows, enables, and dictates the formation of subjective temporalities. These temporalities facilitate the expression of same-sex desire which undercuts and challenges the play's apparent festive timeline. By showing that time is determinable according to language, *Twelfth Night's* female figures evoke the limits of their play's genre, subverting traditional marital/reproductive timelines to frame alternative, feminine times based on indifference. By using the term “indifference” to describe *Twelfth Night's* feminine wordplay, I mean to employ its meaning

in three ways. First, I use it as “in-difference” to draw attention to the collapse of difference that occurs once desire is arranged between members of the same sex. I also use it to evoke the social demarkations of sexual difference within a specifically Early Modern historical context and to highlight the regulatory forces that attend to the materialization of the Early Modern body.²⁵ Lastly, I use difference and indifference in the Derridean spirit of *différance* to gesture towards language’s function of simultaneously vowing and disavowing itself, and I use it emphasize the processes through which meaning comes to be constructed.²⁶

The language I analyze functions in the manner of speech acts and of text. In the case of Toby and Andrew, whom I have quoted in order to show how the play’s language shapes time, it functions through speech, which involves one or more subjects participating in the physical pronouncing words. At other moments in the play, language acquires a literalized, material form through written script, and I argue that *Twelfth Night* parallels scripted functionality through the actions of female bodies. While making the distinction between speech and text may come off as reductive, I want to be clear about these two things because they operate under separate, yet complementary, conditions. Whereas speech functions (often, but not always) as discourse, text, because it is one step removed from language, operates within a unique construction that highlights the complex relationship between signified and sign.²⁷ In *Twelfth Night*, these possibilities are realized through the acts of female bodies.

²⁵ I hold that the power of heterosexual hegemony forms the matter of bodies themselves, and bodies themselves are conceived in a historical context according to a citational set of practices dependent on language.

²⁶ Derrida, Jacques. “Différance.” *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 1-27. Print.

²⁷ As Lacanian psychoanalysis has argued, this relationship is most often realized as the longing for that which is absent, though I want to press this theory to emphasize the problematics—and the possibilities—that surface when language is organized according difference. Desire, according to Lacan, is tied up in the lack of something and the unconscious sense of absence. He maintains that the Phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of logos is wedded with the advent of desire. While desire is represented in the Phallus, the Phallus is also representative of a longing which *can not* be expressed by a signifier.

My analysis of *Twelfth Night* focuses on its female figures partially in an effort to reclaim them as crucial materials in a complex genealogy of same-sex desire; it also does so with the recognition that to be gendered, historically, has been to be female. I quote Judith Butler's theorization of the lesbian phallus:

If the morphological distinctness of “the feminine” depends on its purification of all masculinity, and if this bodily boundary and distinctness is instituted in the service of the laws of a heterosexual symbolic, then that repudiated masculinity is *presumed* by the feminized morphology, and will emerge either as an impossible ideal that shadows and thwarts the feminine or as a disparaged signifier of a patriarchal order against which the specific lesbian-feminism defines itself. In either case, the relation to the phallus is constitutive; an identification is made which is at once disavowed. (87)

Female relationships in *Twelfth Night* I argue, draw attention to the formation of bodies and their explicit dependence on language. Like Butler, I emphasize the instability of gender morphologies. If two women can arrange desire without the need for difference, why does difference matter? Butler is also significant to my project because she shows how the matter of bodies is formed by text. As I engage in textual analysis on a literal level, working with *Twelfth Night* as a cultural artifact, I also emphasize how bodies themselves function in historically-specific contexts through textually constitutive modes of being. While the distinctness of the “feminine” posits simultaneous presumption and disparagement, it shows how a singular identification of the body has been made, it becomes immediately unmade, and the body materializes through a recursive loop of difference negated.

In a specifically Renaissance context, this negation accumulates significance—or

rather *insignificance*—given the history of “lesbian” representations prior to modernism.²⁸ In response to the work of Alan Bray and Jonathan Goldberg, Valerie Traub has drawn from classical discourse to develop an analytical framework of “practicing impossibilities,” pressing the notion that “what it means to be a lesbian depends on what it means to make love, [and] what it means to make love depends on conceptualizations of the physical body” (16).²⁹ I borrow from Traub to highlight the plausible “impossibility” of female homoeroticism—and the Early Modern “indifference” to female homoeroticism—to contextualize what, precisely, it meant for early modern women (albeit stage characters) to express same-sex desire. While *Twelfth Night* engages in representations of female homoeroticism, it calls into question the reign of festival heterosexist triumph and uses language to rearrange time on an alternative, femme plane.

II

According to the most traditional line of interpretation, *Twelfth Night*, as festive comedy that sanctions the expression of sexual libertinism, permits momentary mayhem in order to reinforce existing power hierarchies.³⁰ This temporary upheaval is contained in two ways—first, through the literal “two hours” span of its performance time and second, through

²⁸ It is significant to note that neither “sodomy” or “buggery” described erotic contact between females. Valerie Traub also examines the historical obscurity of women’s same-sex erotic desire in “The (In)Significance of ‘Lesbian’ Desire in Early Modern England,” *Queering the Renaissance*, Ed. Jonathan Goldberg. Traub differentiates between the French female sodomite, the English tribade, and the theatrical “femme.” Whereas French female sodomites, under French law, were distinguished as women using prosthetic supplementation to entail penetration, English female “sodomites,” or, rather, tribades, were women with enlarged genitalia that allowed them to penetrate “like a man” (66). Neither of these discourses, Traub articulates, include erotic desire or non-penetrative acts. Whereas the tribade and sodomite are at once magnets of cultural fantasy and fear, the femme “lesbian” who neither challenged gender roles nor reproductive imperatives “seems to have been so unworthy of notice that little not was taken of her at all” (79). The only time the femme was considered a threat was within the realm of drama, and only when she was perceived as a threat to the heterosexual marriage plot.

²⁹ “Practicing impossibilities” takes cue from the courtier-dramatist John Lyly’s late sixteenth-century play, *Gallathea*, where Cupid, devising against a group of Diana’s virgin nymphs, says, “I will make their pains my pastimes, and so confound their lives in their own sex that they shall dote in their desires, delight in their affections, and practice only impossibilities” (cited in Traub 5).

³⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis has historicized the festival’s function of reinforcing hegemony in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1965).

the performance's restriction to the literal space of the stage. While *Twelfth Night* enacts multiple pleasures and wills to pleasure, it restricts these pleasures to festival practice, prompting the endowment of structures which ultimately oppose free desire. As Thad Jenkins Logan has argued, however, *Twelfth Night* is unique to its festive genre in that it specifically evokes the *limits* of festivity by continually drawing attention to what lies immediately ahead—specifically, the looming prospects of age and decay. The experience of the *Twelfth Night* is, on many occasions, different from that of Shakespeare's other festive comedies, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, divorcing the festival ritual from its pastoral setting, firmly seating it within the class context of Illyria's aristocracy. Even Toby, Maria, and Sir Andrew who form the play's sub-plot are not really common, although the conventions of comedy and Shakespeare's usual practices would have them lower or working class.

Feste, the character whose name most explicitly references the festive tradition, is arguably the most *un-festive* character in *Twelfth Night's* carnival. Rather than stressing revelry, indulgence, and disorder, he directs attention to aspects of life experience we might prefer to forget: “death, the swift passage of time, and the fact that, on the whole, life is likely to bring us more pain than pleasure” (Logan 229). Festivity, in this context, is not the satisfying experience *Twelfth Night's* title suggests we would like to imagine. Stressing daunting uncertainty towards the future, Feste accentuates the limits of festivity as he challenges the motives and pretexts essential to festival itself. As Logan notes, “Feste is a professional. Festivity is work for him, and it is evidently work which has become tiresome” (229). When asked by Toby and Andrew for a love song, Feste responds with a song which is *about* love, yet more closely focuses on youth's ephemerality and the passage of time. He

sings:

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
 Present mirth hath present laughter;
 What's to come is still unsure:
 In delay there lies no plenty;
 Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
 Youth's a stuff will not endure. (2.3.47-52)

Acknowledging his festival's present occupation with desire, romance, and unrestrained sexuality, Feste stresses present experience tainted with uncertainty towards the future, highlighting his play's temporality as well as its brevity. Current pleasure within its time-bound frame of reference exists *only* because its uncertain future—yet as this future enables *Twelfth Night's* revel, it contains it with the threat of unknowable resolution, what comes hereafter. In this context, the play's heterosexist ending in which socially acceptable lovers are coupled off is neither happy, nor does it wholeheartedly confirm the value of festival pleasure. While the play repeatedly links pleasure to its annihilation in the near future, it evokes the limits of its genre by drawing attention to what comes after. The “time” of *Twelfth Night* thus exists with immediate attention to the present as defined by the future.

Malvolio, like Feste, serves as the play's festive antagonist, enacting his comedy's necessary sacrifice and foretelling its unavoidable cost. When, thanks to the trickery of Toby, Maria, and Fabian, he has been cast in a dungeon for lunacy, Malvolio anticipates what the thrust of his play dreads—“the whirligig of Time” which brings in revenges (5.1.369). Enduring twisted psychological torture, Malvolio's existential self-doubt and madness is superficially imposed by the play's pranksters, though it also exemplifies what crisis will

ensue when the Illyrians' uncertainty is pushed to its limits. One of the crises Malvolio experiences comes from the textual discrepancy between what he has been led to believe and what, actually, is his reality. On receiving Maria's forged letter, he examines the handwriting and determines that it belongs to Olivia. He wonders, "By my life, this is my lady's hand: these be her very C's, her U's, and her T's; and thus makes she her great P's. It is, in contempt of question, her hand" (2.5.84-86). It also makes a bawdy pun, confirming its correspondance between text and body. When Malvolio enacts the letter's instructions and wears cross-gartered yellow stockings and a smile as it tells him, contrary to receiving his expected reaction, he finds himself put to shame and scorn, cast into "hideous darkness" and isolation from his community (4.2.29).

The cost of his isolation is further exploited with the threat that darkness itself has been fabricated in his own mind, and Feste taunts from outside his chamber:

Fie, thou dishonest Satan! I call thee by the most modest terms; for I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy: sayest thou that house is dark? . . . Why, it hath bay windows transparent as barricadoes, and the clearstories toward the south north are as lustrous as ebony; and yet complainest though of obstruction? . . . Madman, though errest: there is no darkness but ignorance. (4.2.30-42)

The crux of Malvolio's torture is reified by Feste's insistence that darkness is *not* caused by the absence of light, but rather by his own ignorance. Equating substantive darkness with cognitive dimness, Feste pushes Malvolio into further isolation by practically thrusting him into semiotic crisis. Calling darkness light, Feste implies, as Elizabeth Freund has noted, "that discourse creates or annihilates reality at will" (478). Annihilating Malvolio's reality by

declaring it untrue, Feste forces him into an alternative way of being which he cannot withstand. Through this crisis, *Twelfth Night*'s festival faces its limits, where the laws of language that dictate difference no longer operate. If order is restored through heterosexual coupling at the play's end, it is with the ironic concession that this order signifies nothing more than an artificial imposition. Malvolio, having faced the horror of language's futility, serves as the play's sacrificial scapegoat. In declaring his impending revenge, he also forewarns the couples' own unhappy curse of having to face the same horror (5.1.370). Feste, like Malvolio, warns that this ruination occurs some moment in the future, and thus awaits "the whirligig of Time" (5.1.369).

III

I want to take a moment and turn towards looking at how, precisely, the festive time works to affect *Twelfth Night*'s female figures. According to Feste and Malvolio's experience, this time exists within of the incessant, pressing threat of what comes "hereafter." In this sense of festivity, Viola and Olivia most explicitly experience this threat as a temporally-based pressing compulsion to reproduce. When Feste sings that "youth's a stuff will not endure," he reminds these females that their erotic attractiveness and childbearing capacities *are* subject to time. While the play initially articulates one arrangement of time and festivity, however, it just as soon undercuts it by showing its female figures who dictate their own time through linguistic manipulation. Evading normative marital-reproductive festive coercions, Olivia and Viola create an alternative time that collapses difference and refigures desire on an exclusive female plane.

At the play's open, both females have undergone loss. Having lost her brother, Olivia vows to mourn seven years and refuse all suitors. Avoiding heterosexist attachment, she

affectively places herself outside marital and festive timelines by determining her own time.

Valentine recounts:

. . . like a cloistress, she will veiled walk
 And water once a day her chamber round
 With eye-offending brine: all this to season
 A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
 And lasting in her sad remembrance. (1.1.27-32)

Dictating the period of her grief, Olivia finds power in the structure time's rigidity allows. Carving out a space largely free from courtly engagement, she manipulates time in order to maintain brother's memory and to refrain from conjugal intimacy. Like Andrew, who believes that late is late, Olivia has solace in temporal sustainability; her seven years of mourning mean what they do *because* she has made them so. As a singular, material period, this time exists as a substantive body she can influence even to the point of perpetuating her grief's remembrance.

Viola, having also lost her brother (or, rather, thinking she has lost her brother), views time as fate. Rather than claiming agency over her use of time, she submits to time to resolve her fortunes. Resolving to dress as a boy and enter into the Duke's service, she devotes herself to time also like a cloistress, vowing faithfulness until it "untangles" her trouble (1.2.57, 2.2.39-40). Finding herself in a foreign land without the protection of her title, she likewise removes herself from the realm of reproductive availability. Unlike Olivia, she views time as an entity to which she is subject; rather than manipulating time, she submits to it. This submission, however, is precisely where she locates her agency. By committing to time-as-fate, Viola creates a means deferring the resolution of her status, and the byproduct

of her vow mediates alternative sexuality expressed through crossdressing.

One of the clearest instances of Olivia's awareness of her sexuality's dependence on time occurs during a conversation she has with Viola. Having vowed to mourn her brother seven years, Olivia is confronted by Viola-dressed-Cesario, who chides her for removing herself from the realm of courtship and sexual availability (even though she, ironically, has done the exact same thing). Finding herself strangely attracted to the female boy-servant who delivers this message, Olivia becomes immediately smitten and removes the veil she has vowed to wear in the company of all males. Acknowledging the apparent folly of her grief, she admits, "Why, then, methinks 't is time to smile again. . ./The clock upbraids me with the waste of time" (3.1.125,130). The clock "upbraids" Olivia because it reminds her of the time she has spent mourning rather than reproducing. Realizing that a valuable portion of her youth has been squandered, she concludes that at present, she must smile again. Rather than continuing her ritual mourning, she admits to her apparent foolishness, seeing her own sexuality entirely in terms of time. The irony of Olivia's admission is that she makes it on the basis of attraction to Viola/Cesario who, as a female, cannot satisfy another female's desire to reproduce. While Olivia admits that she has wasted time, she does so in the manner of parody. Likewise, Viola's chastisement of her is done to a similar effect. Whether or not Olivia *knows* Viola/Cesario's sex is to a degree irrelevant; the arrangement of desire this scene allocates implicitly contextualizes its time on a femme-femme plane.

Language and time work together to enable *Twelfth Night's* female figures with the advantage of exploiting language and, by extension, allowing them to create a temporality that defies their festive setting. By arranging sexual desire between females and explicitly relating it to time, the play evokes the limits of traditional festive outcomes. While the

marital-reproductive timeline Feste sings of is implicit to *Twelfth Night*'s festive trajectory—that is, “chaos” leading to triumphant heterosexual union—Olivia and Viola’s same-sex desire offers a way of eluding “necessary” normative end consequences. Lesbian eroticism *need not* reproduce, thus rendering their “waste of time” insignificant. If Olivia and Viola have committed to time, either as a concrete period or an abstract entity, the time enacted by their desire rearranges its markers so that they are inconsequential. In this context, Feste’s refrain that “youth’s a stuff will not endure” rings a matter of perspective rather than matter of law, and youth serves rather to emphasize erotic availability rather than reproductive capacity. Emphasizing the collapse of substitutions performed by genitals that lack (a phallus, that is), Olivia and Viola, as “lesbians,” figure desire on an alternative temporal plane that has no need for anatomical difference, which is both sexual and textual. While acknowledging that their youth is brief, they find this fact to be precisely *why* it is advantageous to express desire at their present, and desirability applies to either gender. In this regard, *Twelfth Night* articulates the spirit of difference and indifference that its title evokes, and desire is what its female figures “will.” Showing hetero- and homo-erotic, desire in *Twelfth Night* defies its festive time.

In *Twelfth Night*, the problem of language collapses immediately under the time and arrangement of desire articulated by its female characters. While, as some might argue, the aegis of Viola/Cesario’s male dress and representation of Orsino’s house might subsume their lesbianism under a dominant heterosexual paradigm, the linguistic agency appropriated by these characters highlights the very arbitrariness of desire and any need for difference. Evading the pressing compulsion to reproduce, Olivia can assert, “’tis not that time of the moon with me to make one in so skipping a dialogue” (1.5.195-196). By using linguistic

insignificance to her advantage, she can also freely claim that “Love’s night is noon” (3.1.147). Desire, as Olivia sees it, has no need for the kind of time that her festival dictates. Rather, her speech determines time. Just as Toby and Andrew have illustrated that a single hour can be both early and late, she shows that time can be whatever a lover makes of it.

In one statement, Olivia calculates her time according to the lunar calendar; maintaining that it is *not* her time of the moon, though she just as soon dispels the need for time by calling into count what love—i.e. desire—allows for language to determine. “Skipping dialogue” especially functions in direct correlation to textual—and sexual—difference. Engaging with Viola/Cesario on the basis of language, Olivia’s speech affirms what lesbian textualism allows—erotic availability expressed through the collapse of difference. She can “skip dialogue” because, presumably, it is not her time of the moon. While Olivia asserts her own erotic availability, she eschews its dependence on normative reproductive time by stating that desire’s hour might as well be night *or* noon; just as her language disregards difference, it disregards time by creating an alternative time.

When Olivia states that it is not her time of the moon, she creates difference in order to collapse it. Highlighting to the arbitrariness of gender distinctions, she distinguishes her body from others by drawing attention to its status as non-menstruating. Rather than reinforcing heterosexist binaries, her body engages in the alternative discourse of homologous sameness. Even this sameness, however, is indifferent to whether or not it happens to occur; just as love’s hour can be night *or* noon, her body can be like *or* unlike Viola’s. Language in this instance arranges itself according to a feminine plane that immediately dismembers itself. Time occurs as a matter of perspective and is refigured to exclude the need for. Evoking the limits of its festive genre, *Twelfth Night* engages linguistic

and temporal free play which disassembles the need for order. In the early Middle Ages, a woman's later fecundity and health were thought to be determined by the age menstruation began (Green 55). By the later Middle Ages, this view shifted to account for menstrual periodicity, and "adolescent women were believed to menstruate in the first phase of the moon, women in the prime of life in the second phase, and older women in the third of fourth phase" (Green 55). It was also linked to an understanding of the cosmos which valued the equilibrium of heat and moisture, rendering any "leaking" of fluids to be a disruption of the boundaries of the body and universal balance (Bildhauer 68). Bettina Bildhauer, examining the medieval treatise *Secreta Mulierum* (*Secrets of Women*), has illustrated that the menstrual flow, despite its uncontrollability and disruptiveness was *precisely* what allowed a stable distinction between genders (68). While it would be wrong to presume that the position taken by the *Secreta* is representative of all medieval writers and people, it does represent an influential strand of thought in which gender is constructed through the difference between menstruating and non-menstruating bodies.

It is especially important to note that this dismemberment functions, in spite of itself, to obscure the play's apparent patriarchy and heterosexism. Like Olivia and Viola's female bodies which collapse difference through refigured desire, text serves as a means of countermanding the order of Orsino's dominant house. Maria's forged letter is a prime example of feminine textual exploitation and illustrates on a basic level how words can assume concurrent sameness and difference. She concocts a prank to falsify a letter in Olivia's hand and drop it where Malvolio will find it. This letter will profess Olivia's supposed love and oblige him to foolery. Maria, with her coconspirator, Toby, devises:

MARIA: I can write very like my lady your

niece: on a forgotten matter we can hardly make distinction of our hands.

SIR TOBY: Excellent! I smell a device. . .

He shall think, by the letters that thou wilt drop, that they come from my niece, and that she's in love with him. (2.3.157-164)

Maria's forged letter exploits text to enact parody; while her script *looks* like Olivia's, the basis of her joke is that it is *not* Olivia's. In a very literal sense, her text enacts both sameness and difference, conflating both these values to serve her purpose of prank. Sharon Holland, noting the gender dynamics at work in Maria's letter, asks, "If another woman can easily impersonate a female lover's hand, then what does this say about the authenticity of the female part?" (388). Holland surmises that "women's love can be made and unmade, while men's attraction is always already solidified and even engendered" (388). Emphasizing the "father's house" upon which male identity in *Twelfth Night* is based, she concludes that Illyria "is a man's world over and over again as the play unfolds" (388).

The household—and in particular, Orsino's household—in *Twelfth Night* represents a classic form of patriarchy, and as Lisa Jardine has noted, the eroticization of many of the play's females "is dramatically constructed in terms of the relationship to the domestic economy and the place they occupy in relation to the heads of their adopted households" (32). Like Holland, I want to draw attention to the flexibility of female textual representation; like Jardine, however, I want to emphasize this flexibility's concurrent conflation of sameness and difference. Historicizing textual accounts of early modern transvestism, Jardine has illustrated that sexuality signified the absence of gender difference as inscribed upon the

bodies of those equivalently “mastered” within a household (28). Drawing from classic depictions of male and female prostitution, her work highlights the significant point that despite to either gender, prostitution was always represented the *same* textually as transvestism; transvestism, rather than enacting misrepresentation, formed a *coherent* range of the erotic possibilities made available by establishment in service.³¹ To call *Twelfth Night*, as Holland does, “a dialogue between men for whom women are the language” is to miss the point of the matter (388). While Maria exchanges one script for another, her agency in the matter highlights the play’s awareness of the possibilities that textual indifference allows. Her position in Olivia’s matriarchal house also shows that the collapse of substitutions performed by female text can be entirely independent from patriarchal authority. While Maria’s imitation of Olivia’s hand substitutes female text for female text, it could just as well be that of any other person—what matters is *that* it is an imitation. That it is performed on an exclusively feminine plane reifies the play’s rejection of patriarchy’s need for sexual difference. The sexual implications of both females’ scripts take on meaning *through* the possibilities they allows, even if they are only proffered as a prank.

Gendered and sexual indifference regarding the figure of Viola/Cesario, while functioning under the cover of Orsino’s house, hinges on the erotic possibilities made available by her position in service. Describing her physical features the Duke specifies these possibilities:

DUKE: O then unfold the passion of my love,
 Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith;

³¹ Jardin writes, “As twentieth century readers we recognize the eroticism of gender *confusion* and reintroduce that confusion as a feature of the dramatic narrative. Whereas, for the Elizabethan theatre audience, it may be the very *clarity* of the mistakenness—the very difference to gendering—which is designed to elicit the pleasurable response from the audience” (34-35).

It shall become thee well to act my woes:

She will attend it better in thy youth,

Than in a nuncio's of more grave aspect.

VIOLA: I think not so, my lord.

DUKE: Dear lad, believe it;

For they shall yet belie thy happy years,

That say thou art a man; Diana's lip

Is not more smooth and rubious: thy small pipe

Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,

And all is semblative a woman's part.

I know thy constellation is right apt

For this affair. . . .

VIOLA: I'll do my best

To woo your lady. (1.4.25-43)

Viola/Cesario's appeal, as suggested by this dialogue, is contingent upon her erotic and textual interchangeability. Like Maria's script, she enacts dual sameness and difference, looking to be like a woman (like Olivia), and like a boy (unlike Olivia). In both instances, discourse conforms to serve the role of imitation; while Maria's plays out as a practical joke, Viola's plays out to conflate sameness and difference upon an exclusively femme plane. The patriarchal house of Orsino thus becomes subsumed under the cover of female homoeroticism, acting as a medium—sanctioned by the Duke himself—through which Viola and Olivia's femme-femme desire is acutely expressed. The difference Orsino attempts to exploit collapses due to the fact that Cesario/Viola *is* a woman like Olivia, and her “pipe”

and “lip” *are* a woman’s part. She is also a woman who is *not* Olivia, although this absence and sameness of difference becomes even further complicated within the literal context of the play’s stage, in which Cesario/Viola *is* actually a boy. Jardine comments:

As [modern] readers, we recognize the eroticism of gender *confusion* and reintroduce that confusion as a feature of the dramatic narrative. Whereas, for the Elizabethan theater audience, it may be the very *clarity* of the mistakenness—the very indifference to gendering—which is designed to elicit a pleasurable response from the audience. (35)

The sexual possibilities made available through Viola/Cesario’s ambiguous gender highlight the clarity of the play’s gender mistakenness. Though Viola’s gender is ambiguous under the Duke’s service, this ambiguity is due, as Jardine has noted, to the domestic economy of his house rather than any topological insistence on stable sexually-determined identity. Orsino does *not* dictate Viola/Cesario’s sexual availability even if he manipulates it, and the “small pipe” and “rubious lip” he commands emerge as spendable objects through her *own* absence of difference from Olivia’s body. Viola/Cesario reifies this possibility scenes later when she tells the Duke, “I am all the daughters of my father’s house / And all the brothers too” (2.4.120-121). What matters in this phrase is *that* she is all the daughters and brothers, and she happens to live under the domain of her father.

Examining *Twelfth Night* in the context of Renaissance beliefs about the physiology of sex, Stephen Greenblatt has shown how the play enacts these beliefs in the transposed medium of language. He notably highlights the common thought that both males and females contained both male and female elements so that “the predominance, rather than the exclusion, of one or the other helped, along with the original position of the seed in the

womb and other factors, to determine sexual identity and to make possible a harmonious accord between sex and gender” (103). One consequence of this belief was a fascination with the possibility of sex change—and almost always from female to male. Historicizing accounts of girls becoming heated with exercise and emerging with anatomically male genitalia, Greenblatt maintains that, in *Twelfth Night*, the friction creating this heat is specifically associated with verbal wit. While Greenblatt uses the ambiguity of Viola’s gender to discuss the dimensions of transvestism on the Early Modern stage, I am interested in how *Twelfth Night*’s women, as female *figures* and representational images help to negotiate a discourse of alternative eroticism. If verbal friction in *Twelfth Night* draws attention to Viola’s range of erotic availability, her relationship to text confirms its indifference. Viola’s verbal exchange with Olivia dramatizes the play’s female appropriation of text, showing Orsino’s patriarchal language subsumed under lesbian poetics.

Acting as a message carrier for Orsino, Viola literally “carries” his words to just as soon overturn them. When she asks Olivia, “Good madam, let me see your face,” she outsteps his authoritative bidding to enact an alternative form of eroticism arranged between women (1.5.225). Although Olivia has vowed to keep her face veiled from men, recognizing the new plane on which her desire has been figured, she agrees to engage in Viola’s wordplay and acknowledges its textual overruling. She asks, “Have you any commission from your lord to negotiate with my face? You are now out of your text: but we will draw the curtain and show you the picture” (1.5.226-228). Viola has not had commission to “negotiate” with Olivia’s face, but she does so regardless. As Jami Ake has noted, her apparent “success” in gaining admittance to the countess also constitutes a significant disruption in Orsino’s understanding of Petrarchan practices (378). Although Valentine,

Viola's predecessor, did not succeed in relaying the Duke's message, he actually fulfilled his Petrarchan mission in securing the mistress's scornful rejection of the downcast lover.

Viola's breach, however, hinges on her spontaneity with words, and Olivia is more interested in her textual manipulation than her predictable message: "I heard you were saucy at my gates, and allowed your approach rather to wonder at than to hear you" (1.5.197-198). The exchange that ensues between the two women further reifies the failure of Orsino's language, as it does the significance—and insignificance—of female linguistic manipulation.

Rather than finding Olivia to be the silent Petrarchan mistress Orsino's script assumes, Viola finds that she is a fully embodied woman who speaks and dismembers language:

VIOLA: 'Tis beauty truly bent, whose red and white

Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on . . .

OLIVIA: I will

give out divers schedules of my beauty. It shall

be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labell'd to

my will: as, *item*, two lips, indifferent red; *item*, two

grey eyes, with lids to them: *item*, one neck, one chin,

and so forth. (1.5.239-249)

In this scene, Olivia anticipates her blazon and masters it in a striking reversal of the Petrarchan convention which, as Nancy Vickers has observed, subordinates the threat of female erotic power by figuratively dismembering the female body.³² Rather than allowing herself to be dismembered by the Petrarchan text Viola carries, however, she turns its

³² Vickers, Nancy. "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme." *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (Winter 1981): 265-279. Print.

convention upon itself to practice this dismemberment by means of automatic textual exploitation. By inventorying her own looks, Olivia turns language towards herself in a reassertion of her agency. She anticipates the blazon, and she dismembers *it* by reducing it to its barest fragments—item two, item two, item one, and so forth. As Olivia dismembers the blazon, she also turns it on herself, using it to catalogue her own features.

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CHAPTER III

The Myth of Eden and Fraternal Conflict in *As You Like It*

I

Under an oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age
 And high top bald with dry antiquity,
 A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
 Lay sleeping on his back: about his neck
 A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself,
 Who with her head nimble in threats approach'd
 The opening of his mouth...
 A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
 Lay crouching, head on ground, with catlike watch,
 When that the sleeping man should stir. (4.3.102-114)

Imagine the scene. A man, fraught with fatigue and desiring rest, camps in a garden under a shady oak tree, eventually falling asleep. As he dozes into slumber, blissfully unaware of his surroundings, a female snake approaches his figure. Gliding up and around the sleeper's neck, she approaches his open mouth, threatening to enter it at any moment. Meanwhile, a hungry lioness watches from a nearby bush. As the scene continues, her efforts are thwarted; having spotted a looker on, she retreats into the brush. Composed of a nobler disposition, the she-cat will not prey on a target that appears dead—so she crouches still, waiting for his stir. This scene is from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, a festive comedy which demonstrates the outlines of a Christian Edenic allegory. The play's rustic setting, the Forest

of Arden, functions as an obvious stand-in for Eden, a “golden world” in which inhabitants are innocent, rustic, and free from original sin. While the iconography of the serpent and tree echo Eve’s temptation, *As You Like It*’s revisions to the Eden narrative shift the locus of conflict from moral virtue to sexual capability. The gendered and sexual dynamics of this scene are inevitably complex, with the seductive female snake embodying the threat of penetration, the aesthetics of the scene rendering the male sleeper as “feminine” imperiled damsel, and the lioness’s biting potential illustrating the material fear of dismemberment.

In the Christian Genesis narrative, Eve, the first woman, is deceived by a serpent who convinces her to eat from the tree which God has declared forbidden. After she has eaten, she shares the forbidden fruit with her husband; both partakers’ eyes are opened to sin, and evil enters the world as God’s penalty for their disobedience. They are expelled from the garden, sentenced to labor and toil by the sweat of their brows and their sons are born by the two as the first inheritors of original sin. In Shakespeare’s play, this temptation is displaced from the “Eve” of the scene—the sleeping man (Oliver)—to an external onlooker who is the sleeper’s brother (Orlando). While shifting the emphasis of the scene from marital to fraternal relationships, Arden’s temptation scene is also reminiscent of another Genesis story—that of the rivalry between Adam and Eve’s sons, Cain and Abel. In the following chapter, I intend to examine the Adam-Eve and Cain-Abel narratives as reworked in *As You Like It*. Emphasizing the play’s familial dynamics, I explore the issues of sibling rivalry within the context of early modern organizations of power. For the stakes of fraternal conflict raise issues intrinsic to the institution of early modern family: gender, the regulation of socially-sanctioned sexuality, the mother’s love, inheritance, and the right to the father’s blessing.

Fraternal conflict in *As You Like It*, I argue, occurs consistently under the pressing anxiety towards female power. The issues of sibling rivalry in this play are indicative of familial conflict occurring under the late reign of Queen Elizabeth I. In my analysis, I will explore how this rivalry figures the Elizabethan sex/gender system and the queen's place within it. The fantasies and fears allowed by the play's conflict show how, at its particular historical moment, gendered political negotiation occurred at the level of the individual family, and how the family as a site for the enactment of these conflicts occurring under the Elizabethan monarchy. Within a psychoanalytic frame of reference, I show how fraternal struggles between children function under sexualized arrangements of desire. I hold the view that "the subject"—that is, the focus of psychoanalytic inquiry—can not exist before the social order that produces it; I also hold that early modern histories and political economies *produced* the modern psychological subject that, in psychoanalysis, is taken to be the cause of action. For by glimpsing at the conditions of human existence, especially during early modernity, the subject emerges as that under *subjection*—not the antithesis of social process, but its focus.³³

By highlighting strife between brothers, *As You Like It* emphasizes the gendered dynamics ensuing once patriarchal, male alliances of power are undercut, as it reifies male power itself. As Louis Montrose has noted, the intense and ambivalent personal bonds on which the play is focused—bonds between brothers and between lovers—affect each other reciprocally and become the means of each other's resolution" (313). The focus of *As You Like It* is clearly male relationships, and it is not, as C.L. Barber would have it, that its setting's differentiated landscapes act in simple opposition—rather, at each moment the play allows the pastoral paradise of Arden exemption from social constrictions, it undercuts any

³³ See Dollimore, Jonathan. *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (1991). Print.

probabilities of actual deviation by subsuming them under the greater force of patriarchy.³⁴

And yet this patriarchy is ever-conscious of female power, fearful of the threat it poses to the existing hegemony. Unlike my previous chapters, which focus particularly on drama's female "sisters," so to speak, in this chapter I concentrate on drama's brothers; for I want to illustrate how Elizabethan society at the moment they were conceived stratified power by allocating it to men at every level—that is, every level except for the top. For familial strife, both gendered and sexualized, points to the authoritative mother to whom all English subjects were vulnerable: Queen Elizabeth herself.

Also, unlike my previous chapters, this chapter looks at time as a means of distinguishing the play's setting. Time in *As You Like It* equals the "time" of Arden/Eden—that is, the temporal location that allows certain early modern fantasies (and fears) to be played out. I do not want to take time's "fixedness" in this case for granted; it too is a construction which, to the aid of my analysis, helps to make clear markers of power under which sexuality, gender, and relationships are historically organized. As a narrative construction, it allows for the "external" framework which is—to a degree—given, though not necessarily predisposed. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play's created "feminine time" which is emblemized in the imagery of the moon, sets itself in opposition to the patriarchal "nuptial hour." In *Twelfth Night*, time is manipulated by female textuality which negates the need for sexual and linguistic difference. In *As You Like It*, time is stable in that it is not the fluid, ebbing continuum the other festive comedies demonstrate. Although having the appearance of being fixed, time in *As You Like It* nonetheless serves as a topic of fascination for many of the characters, who stress its variation according to personal experience as well as its inevitability.

³⁴ C. L. Barber, "The Use of Comedy in *As You Like It*," *PQ* 21 (1942). Print.

II

As You Like It's Arden is an Edenic paradise, though not entirely an Eden. One of the ways the play illustrates this fact is through its setting's relationship to time, both as paradise, i.e. the location of an earlier, indeterminate time period, and as a heterotopic juncture where the characters are permitted to be both in and outside of time. In the play's opening scene, the wrestler Charles comments on both these facets of Arden, explaining to Oliver that Duke Senior has been exiled and fled with his company to the forest:

They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day and flee the time carelessly as they did in the golden world. (1.1.93-96)

The golden world to which Charles refers is a direct quotation of classic mythology's first age of history, a pagan version of Eden and time when humans were innocent and uncorrupt. Charles's allusion to Robin Hood likewise contextualizes Arden's invocation of an earlier "Eden" located in England. While the Duke and his company camp in a location that hearkens to these temporally earlier versions of paradise, they also do so in a manner that "flees" time itself. Fleeing the time, as Charles describes it, refers to the company's careless passing of time, though it also describes how they have created a space supposedly exempt from time's effects. The interpretive possibilities allowed by the Duke's "fleeing" leave Arden's time open; while in keeping with the play's quotation of a simpler "golden" time,

they also allow for the concession that a space can be potentially unbound from temporal regulation.

In the space Charles imagines, the Duke and his company both pass time and theoretically evade it. In keeping with the Genesis narrative, the exiled Duke Senior expands this notion and comments on Arden's exemption from seasonal markers of time. Likewise, he directly references the Eden myth's "pre-fallen" state of paradise:

Now; my co-mates and brothers in exile,
 Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
 More free from peril than the envious court?
 Here feel we not the penalty of Adam—
 The season's difference, as the icy fang
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind. (2.1.1-7)

Deliberately comparing the natural world of Arden to the "envious" court, Duke Senior draws a distinction between the court's political sphere of influence and the supposedly apolitical realm of the forest.³⁵ In this version of paradise, seasonal difference has not yet come into existence, and rather than being subject the "churlish chiding" of winter, he and his company observe a persistent, eternal springtime. In the pre-fallen state of nature he imagines, neither he nor his company is subject to Adam's "penalty," the curse God placed on humanity in Genesis 3:14-19 for Adam's sin. Duke Senior's description of Arden/Eden also implies that its setting is innocent, uncorrupted by evil and personal ambition.

³⁵ In the pre-Fall state of nature he imagines, neither he nor his company is subject to Adam's "penalty," the curse God placed on humanity in Genesis 3:14-19 for Adam's sin. In the Genesis story, Adam and his wife Eve are expelled from paradise; Adam is sentenced to labor over "thorns and thistles," (Gen 3:18) and Eve is respectively condemned to multiplied pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16). It is also implied that their sin brings death into the world realized through the changing of seasons, which cycle through natural decay, passing, and regeneration.

Although the Duke insists that Arden is an Eden in its exemption from time, numerous other moments in the play draw attention to the opposite case. Touchstone, for instance, emphasizes time's hourly effect of deteriorating human subjects—"From hour to hour we ripe and ripe / And then from hour to hour we rot and rot, / And therefore hangs a tale" (2.7.26-27). Jaques likewise emphasizes time's effect on humankind's experience of "ages" beginning with infancy and eventually ending in "second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything (2.7.165-166). While Orlando insists that there is "no clock in the forest," Rosalind quickly correct him that "Time travels in divers paces with divers persons," and that it "ambles. . . trots. . gallops. . . [and] stands still" according to personal disposition (3.2.267-294). Consequently, while the Duke professes the forest's timelessness, nearly every other character asserts its time *boundedness*. This time boundedness is demonstrated explicitly through human experience of it; as Touchstone and Jaques note, *everyone* is subject to age and decay. (They also demonstrate a cyclical understanding of temporal progression, with Touchstone emphasizing the circular motion of clock hands and Jaques laying stress on the circular rotation of life stages.) Rosalind, who conversely argues that time is subjective to the individual, nevertheless comes undone at her lover's tardiness for a tryst (3.4.16). Celia, who all but becomes silent upon her entry into the forest, outrightly associates Arden's space with its time. Asserting, "I like this place / And willingly could waste my time in it," she maintains agency in determining how her time is spent (2.5.87). She decides she likes Arden; therefore, she will waste her time in it.

In the Forest of Arden, time clearly *does* matter, and Duke Senior's situation of it in an earlier time period stresses, rather, the intention to control social shape and order. Arden,

then, may be said to be the fixed place upon which persons attach multiple times both in cooperation and competition with each other. Arden is an Eden sweet to those choosing to see it as so; it is also not Eden and very subject to the same hegemonies of power that govern court. The tension *As You Like It* sets between these two times serves as one of the primary conflicts of the play, setting its pretext for examining the ensuing issues of personal, political, and familial life.

III

Fraternal conflict occurs across two family groups. Prior to the play's open, Duke Senior has been deprived of political power by his younger, usurping brother Frederick. Orlando, youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois's family, is likewise deprived of the right to his father's state by the elder sibling, Oliver. Under the law of primogeniture, Oliver inherits Sir Rowland's entire estate; rather than upholding his promise to "breed" Orlando well—that is, to provide him with a gentleman's education—he leaves him to an upbringing little different from the treatment of a piece of livestock (1.1.7-10). Both of these conflicts come to a head in the forest which, while Eden-like, also reframes the Genesis mythology to conflate it with the conflict between Cain and Abel-like brothers. As the Old Testament narrative tells, after Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, their sons, Cain and Abel, are born as the first inheritors of original sin. When the children are grown, both of them approach God to present him with offerings. Abel, the shepherd, brings the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions; Cain, the farmer, brings an offering of fruit. Without reason, God deems Abel's sacrifice favorable and rejects Cain's. Embittered by rejection, Cain takes Abel out to a field and murders him. In Genesis, this case is not isolated but rather serves as the originary moment for later fraternal conflict between Jacob and Esau and later between Joseph and his

brothers. In *As You Like It*, likewise, the pretext for Duke Senior's mini-kingdom in Arden highlights the political issues essential to the play's quotation of similar fraternal struggle.

Louis Montrose, commenting on *As You Like It*'s theme of fraternal struggle, notes that its initial conflict arises from the circumstances of inheritance by primogeniture, by which the differential relationship between the first born and his younger brother is augmented at the father's death. As the play begins, Orlando and Adam are discussing the terms of a paternal will; the first scene quickly explodes into fraternal resentment and envy, and by the second scene, the impoverished youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys finds himself victimized by a "tyrant brother" who refuses him the right to what the father has granted (1.3.278). Oliver has not only ignored the father's will, but under the law of primogeniture has assumed the place of the father in the de Boys family. Assuming command over the family estate, he literally replaces Sir Rowland as the holder of its land and assets. Assuming command over his brother, he figuratively replaces Sir Rowland as the father *figure* in charge of Orlando's wellbeing and/or desolation. Montrose, observing this dynamic, writes that under primogeniture, "the eldest son assumes a paternal relationship to his siblings; and the potential for sibling conflict increases when the relationship between brother and brother becomes identified with the relationship between father and son" (283).

The wrath of Cain, Montrose has also noted, echoes in Oliver's fratricidal musings at the end of the first scene:

I hope I shall see an end of him [Orlando], for my soul—yet I know not why—hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so

much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am so misprized. (1.1.128-134)

Orlando's repetition of the word "keep" in this scene—"My brother Jaques he *keeps* at school and report speaks goldenly of his profit. For my part, he *keeps* me rustically at home, or to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkempt. For call you that *keeping* for a gentleman of my birth? (1.1.4-8)—likewise serves as a possible echo of Genesis 4:9, where Cain questions the Lord, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The conflict between Duke Senior and Duke Frederick is less explicitly articulated yet equally prominent: "the old duke is banished by his younger brother, the new duke" setting the pretext for Senior's exile to the forest as for Rosalind's banishment (1.1.81).

Both Orlando and the duke flee to the Arden, a supposed Eden, to escape the wrath of oppressive brothers, yet even as the forest would be a place supposedly exempt from conflict, the relationship between Duke Senior and Orlando enacts many of the same issues faced at court. While the duke calls his men "brothers," in the play's second act, he nonetheless retains a legislative, even fatherly command over them not unlike the command exercised by Frederick and Oliver (2.1.1). Fraternal spirit, according to Duke Senior's regulation of power, is *not* the equivalent of democracy, and this fact is clarified by his dispensation of favor according to a hierarchical basis: "Every of this happy number. . . / Shall share the good of our returned fortune, / According to the measure of their states"³⁶ (5.4.158-161). As under the law of primogeniture, where the firstborn son receives right to fatherly authority over the younger, Duke Senior positions metaphorically "brother" to his company but maintains the place of father-ruler of Arden. His exertion of power in the forest overall has

³⁶ See Peter B. Erickson, "Sexual Politics and the Social Structure in *As You Like It*." *Massachusetts Review* 23.1 (Spring 1982). 65-83.

an effect which colonizing rather than liberating; for instance, when Orlando confronts the former's company in demand of food, he is quickly put in his place by Duke Senior's hegemonic authority: "Art thou thus boldened, man, by this distress? / Or else a rude despair of good manners, / That in civility thou seem'st so empty" (2.7.92-94). To this chastisement, Orlando can only apologize, "Pardon me, I pray you. / I thought all things were savage here" (2.7.106-107).

Positioned in subservient compliance with Duke Senior's political, "civilized" authority, he quickly recognizes that the forest is not what he had imagined it to be. While he has escaped the authority of one Duke (Frederick) and one brother (Oliver), these power figure has been quickly replaced in the figure of Duke Senior, who espouses both political and fraternal influence. As the surrogate duke, he takes the place of dictator in his mock forest-court; as brother—yet not quite brother—he, like Oliver, asserts a role that is unequivocally complicated under the substitution of one familial authority figure for another.

III

As You Like It's primary conflict and resolution have to do with bonds between men—Duke Senior and Duke Frederick, who contest over political power; and Oliver and Orlando, who contest over the remainder of their father's estate. In each case, one brother has been disgraced by another. Enter the ladies. When *As You Like It* does present close kin, it appears in the figures of Rosalind and Celia, cousins with such an intimate relationship that Charles, the wrestler attached to Frederick's court, remarks that "never two ladies loved as they do" (1.1.91). Scenes later, Celia describes their deep closeness:

We still have slept together,

Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,
 And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,
 Still we went coupled and inseparable. (1.3.65-68)

Celia depicts her alliance with Rosalind as intensely loyal, loving, and completely reciprocal. While presented in the tradition of same-sex friendship, however, it is presented in language that is emotionally and erotically charged. By employing the image of Juno's swans "coupled and inseparable" to describe their relationship, Celia suggests that, like swans who have mated for life, she and Rosalind are united in permanent alliance. Her statement also allows for the possibility that this alliance is not only emotional, but physical in the sexual sense. While the play's heterosexual marriage plot functions to bring a harmonious ending that satisfies the generic sense, it is nevertheless notable that this resolution occurs at the cost of female bonds. Initially characterized by feminine loyalty in the face of male adversity, both Rosalind and Olivia eventually turn away from the intimacy of female alliance toward the security of relationships with men.

Orlando's union with Rosalind, as Montrose has noted, entails the "strengthening of his ties to his elder and to a lord who becomes his patron. In other words, his atonements with other men—a natural brother, a social father—precede his atonement with Rosalind" (282). Tending to Duke Senior in the forest-court of Arden, Orlando does not go forward in pursuit of love until after he has established loyalty to him. Upon her first engagement with the young man, Rosalind notes his father's relationship to her father, commenting, "My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul, / And all the world was of my father's mind" (1.2.189-190). By serving the Duke and wooing Rosalind, Orlando reestablishes the broken connection with his father's legacy; thus, his bond with Duke Senior and bond with Rosalind affect each other

reciprocally and become the means of each other's resolution. While Celia demonstrates no interest in heterosexual companionship for the majority of the play, her union with Oliver nonetheless provides the resolution that allows each brother his "happy" ending. The play's close, which cements male bonds, thus functions in part as a defensive act against female relationships. Dramatically speaking, female intimacy acts as a "threat" to its generic heterosexual thrust; likewise, by emphasizing the girls' closeness and then rearranging their alliances to fit heterosexual conventions, the play reifies their status as subservient subjects of masculine authority. Peter Erickson adds that "female vitality kept manageable and male power kept loving" provide social resolution at *As You Like It's* end (82). Not only do these two purposes work together, but they also enable one another—female vitality is kept manageable, *therefore* male power is kept loving; male power is kept loving *so that* female vitality might be kept manageable.

Bearing the traces of a redemptive Christian allegory, *As You Like It* frames the conflict between brothers and the pressing anxiety toward female power to conflate it with both the Cain-and-Abel narratives and the iconography of the serpent and the tree. In the play's culminating scene, Oliver, described as a "wretched ragged man," sleeps on his back under a mossy oak (4.3.5). As the female snake seductively encircles his neck and the lady lioness gazes on, the temptation quoted from Genesis is displaced from the figure of the sleeper to his silent looker-on, brother Orlando. As Orlando is faced with the choice of leaving his brother to the two beasts, fraternal conflict is brought to its head. Oliver narrates:

Twice did he turn his back, and purposed so;
 But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
 And nature, stronger than his just occasion,

Made him give battle to the lioness,
 Who quickly fell before him. (5.1.125-129)

This act of valor dramatically serves to bring about the comedy's happy resolution: the estranged brothers are restored to peaceful relationship, and each are enabled to marry their respective sweethearts, Rosalind and Celia.

Both the female snake and the lioness, while literally imperiling Olivier's well-being, encapsulate anxiety toward female power on a figurative, symbolic level significant to the play's structural integrity and to its Renaissance cultural context. The gendered and sexual dynamics enacted in this scene assert fear towards becoming feminized; Oliver, who has to this point been seen as hyper-aggressive and traditionally masculine, is rendered passive and consigned into the role of damsel in distress awaiting rescue. Jeopardized by his subservient, "feminine" positioning as the imperiled maiden, Oliver's status is further exploited as he becomes the object of the lioness's voyeurism. Stripped of his subjectivity, Oliver's objectivity crystallizes him as passive/female image and bearer of the gaze. Displayed, even, as a fetishistic, sexualized object, the aesthetics of this scene build upon his physicality to transform looking into something satisfying in the art form itself. The way he is looked at becomes spectacle, and Oliver as woman-in-representation comes to signify symbolic castration, the loss of sexual dominance and virility. The visual pleasure and danger of this scene is further heightened by his effeminization as the object of the snake's desire; while threatened by her feminine, sexual powers, Oliver is equally threatened by her phallic ones, and the prospect of her penetration into the opening of his mouth renders him vulnerable, subservient, and powerless. The female snake also exercises a sexual threat, which is that she will penetrate Oliver and thus render him feminized. Figuratively embodying the male fear of

sodomization, she forebodes the psychic horror of being emasculated; as a phallic mother, she augurs man's ultimate nightmare, which is that of losing sexual dominance and facing, ultimately, self-obliteration.

To extend this reading one step further, or to "queer" it as the text so clearly begs, it should also be noted that emasculation and even self-obliteration are not inherently divested of pleasure. On the contrary, as the theory of Leo Bersani has shown, it can be quite a pleasurable experience.³⁷ Reworking Freud to suggest that sexuality is the expression of a core of masochism, Bersani traces early human development to the moment where an infant is confronted with the overwhelming symbolic complexity in the world around him—what Lacan would call his introduction to the *nom du pere*. This moment, experienced as self-nihilism, later becomes the blueprint for adult sexuality—or again, to put it in Lacanian terms, the endless pursuit of desire. Bersani differentiates from Lacan in that he framing of desire as pleasure or excitation rather than satisfaction, and when *AYL*'s snake seductively encircles Oliver's neck, there is no reason to suggest that in this scene is, indeed, unenjoyable to him or the audience. Rather, the aesthetics of the scene—its lush imagery and description of the "green and gilded" seducer—show quite the opposite case, drawing attention to a fetishized picture of dominated masculinity. To ground this reading in a more material context, the prospect of penetration also offers an socially sanctioned way for Renaissance playgoers to imagine female sodomization.³⁸

³⁷ Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. Print.

³⁸ For a particular rich historicization of female penetrative acts, see Valerie Traub's "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," *Queering the Renaissance*, Ed. Jonathan Goldberg, and her book *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Traub discusses the French female sodomite, the English tribade, and the theatrical "femme." Whereas French female sodomites, under French law, were distinguished as women using prosthetic supplementation to entail penetration, English female "sodomites," or, rather, tribades, were women with enlarged genitalia that allowed them to penetrate "like a man." The "femme" according to Traub, used neither of these methods in sex. (66)

IV

Shakespeare's main source for *As You Like It*, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*, depicts a battle between the hero Rosander and a male lion. The addition of the female snake to this battle, while functioning symbolically as the "phallic mother," adds to the play's citation of the Eden narrative, reifying its stakes of good versus evil. As John Hale has noted, the snake and the lion were often paired together in Biblical literature as traditional representations of evil, deceit, and violence, and Early Modern playgoers were likely to be familiar with their depiction in Psalm 91 verse 13, which reads in the King James Version: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon thou shalt trample under feet."³⁹ The play's emblemizing of this psalm's imagery, while fitting the play's *moralitas*, nonetheless becomes complicated when the lion's sex is changed from male to female. While Hale attributes this change zoologically to the greater ferocity of the female species, he discounts gendered implications of this scene to simply suggest that the lion's sex change "helps to internalize" Orlando's fight, which becomes that of one family against another (245).⁴⁰

Although the family dynamics at work in this scene do create a heightened sense of conflict, the broader implications of the lioness's maternal presence more importantly illustrate the nature of this conflict *as well as* the anxiety behind it. The crouching lioness who gazes on "with udders all drawn dry," represents the figure of a female whose familial function has been impugned, standing paradoxically as mother and not-mother. Much like Oliver himself, whose inherited right over his patriarch's estate renders him positionally father and not-father to Orlando, the lioness materially embodies the conflict that arises once a figure's social role has become complicated. To have given milk, she has to have mothered

³⁹ John K. Hale. "Snake and Lioness in *As You Like It*, IV.Iii." *Notes And Queries* 47 (245).1 (2000): 79. Print.

⁴⁰ That is, the presence of a mother figure heightens the play's theme of family relationships.

at some moment in time, yet the text suggests that this moment was long ago. Alternatively, the text leaves open the possibility that she has never given milk, and the reference to her udders draws attention to her age and lack of fecundity rather than her actual maternal status. There is also the possibility that she has nursed recently, and therefore, she is hungry. By calling attention to her “udders,” the play thus also implicitly evokes her lactating potential. As a quasi-maternal being, the female lioness threatens patriarchal order in a process analogous to female snake’s hazard to Oliver. Waiting hungrily on her prey with catlike watch, she threatens to dismember the masculine subject by physically tearing him to pieces. Again, she encapsulates the anxiety of being dominated by a female mother figure, and her biting potential illustrates the fear of being castrated, further enacting the material obliteration of the masculine object.

Orlando eventually intervenes to save Oliver, preserving the masculine subject and upholding the play’s apparent patriarchy. As Louis Montrose adds, the bonds between brothers and also between lovers affect each other reciprocally to serve as the means of each other’s resolution.⁴¹ As the genre of comedy most often dictates, the play ends in a marriage ceremony. Having been reconciled with one another and nuptially bound with their respective sweethearts, the brothers may now exit the liminal space of the woods to return to a socially stable court, as also to their family lives.

⁴¹ Louis Adrain Montrose, “‘The Place of a Brother’ in *As You Like It*: Social Process and Comic Form.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32.1 (Spring 1981): 28-54. Print.

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CONCLUSION

I encountered several difficulties while working on this thesis; while complications are a natural part of the writing process, I found that once I looked at the “finished” product (I put finished in quotes since, as my advisor once told me, a thesis is never really finished but simply “turned in”), several issues still begged clarification, as they did some further explanation of my intentions for this project.

To begin with, first is the choice of comedic plays for my analysis, as opposed to plays from any other genre. In some regards, this decision happened independently from any “deliberate” decision. My focus began microscopically, with an interest in one line from one play—when, in *As You Like It*, Orlando tells Rosalind “there’s no clock in the forest” (3.2.267). This line always struck me as fantastic, even whimsical, and I wondered what it might mean for a place to have “no clock.” The more I looked into this matter, the more convinced I became that clocks—and time disrupted— were essential to the “festive” trajectory of the play. I also found that time served a surprisingly productive lens for looking at issues of gender and sexuality. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It* are obviously related to and bound by a festive time implicit to their genre, each allowing a momentary period of mayhem which undercuts and reifies the preexisting systems of power. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* creates an alternative time associated with the moon and its cycles—in this sense, a biological time. *Twelfth Night* deals with representational time as it calls attention to the power of language and perspective. In *As You Like It*, time is associated with a place—Arden/Eden—which enacts a mythical, heterotopic time.

Up until this point, I have resisted a discussion of genre because, to be candid, I do not know what specific “time” the histories, tragedies, and romances enact. I do believe, however, that all of these genres demonstrate a specific interest in time. The histories, obviously, enact the time of the past—and I cannot help but think of that great speech in *Richard II* where the king bemoans:

I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;
 For now hath time made me his numbering clock;
 My thoughts are minutes; and with sighs they jar
 Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,
 Whereto my finger, like a dial’s point,
 Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears. (5.5.49-54)

The tragedies, in many cases, enact a sort of prolonged time, and the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* is missed time—or, rather, that time allowed the lovers to miss each other. The romances also enact prolonged time; the most prominent case being *A Winter’s Tale*, which features a sixteen-year gap and, to top it off, a character named Time.

I evaded performing a theorization of time, which served to my advantage and disadvantage. By not theorizing time and attempting to form a specific definition of how it functions, I was able to open up my analysis to creatively look at time in a number of ways; however, as I was working through my own language to determine what, exactly, I was looking at, I found my vocabulary limited. I also took for granted that linear, normative time is always patriarchal, whereas queer time is always associated with feminine time. I do believe that to be gendered is to be female, so in part, this choice was deliberate. The pitfall of this assumption is, however, that it is an assumption.

Still, I believe in the value of arguing for a specifically female time. Maybe it's the Virginia Woolf in me wanting not just a room of her own, but a time of her own.

VITA

Allison Doornik was born September 16, 1988 in Orange, California. She is the daughter of Albert and Donna Fator Doornik. A 2006 graduate of Salinas High School, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English and minor in music from Westmont College, Santa Barbara, in 2010. While at Westmont, she worked as a tutor in the campus Writing Studio. As a tutor, she assisted students with composition issues including organization, style, grammar, and mechanics.

After receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree, she enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University in 2011. While working on her master's, she held a Teaching Assistantship in 2011-2013. During this appointment, she provided assistance to faculty members by performing both teaching and teaching-related duties, including instructing lower level courses, developing teaching materials, preparing and giving examinations, and grading examinations or papers. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta.

ABSTRACT

TIME, GENDER, AND DIFFERENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S FESTIVE COMEDIES

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This thesis examines Shakespeare's festive comedies, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*. Drawing from textual analysis, historical approaches to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and contemporary theory on gender, I make the case for a feminist interpretation that emphasizes agency and empowerment. My means for crafting this argument stresses the implicitness of time to these issues; thus, while arguing for a feminist interpretation of these texts, I also argue for reading that emphasizes attention to time. In my first chapter, I argue that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* creates a "feminine time" which is emblemized in the imagery of the moon and associated with the goddess Diana. In my second chapter, I argue that the feminine textual manipulation in *Twelfth Night* allows for an alternative time which opposes the play's festive genre. In my last chapter, I examine the time of *As You Like It's* setting and use it to show how the play enacts specifically Early Modern fantasies—and fears—pertaining to the female figure.