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Nature and the Female Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama

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Abstract

Nature and the Female Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama: The aim of this thesis is to explore how Shakespeare constructed his supernatural characters, most specifically through the lens of gender, and to what extent these characters adhere to the binary between masculine order and feminine disorder to be found in early modern conceptions of the world, the sexes and the supernatural. An initial analysis shows that Shakespeare does not confine his characters to these rigid gender models and that his characterisation of them involves blurring the boundaries, dissolving differences and creating ambiguous figures who belong to neither of the stereotypical supernatural male or female roles. A male magus will be shown to share common ground with the female witch and a 'hag' will prove herself a master of the male arts, including Shakespeare's own, the theatre. Further to this, I find that, though Shakespeare blurs the boundary between the male and female supernatural characters, there is, ultimately, a limit to this boundary-crossing, and that the female characters are almost always aligned with disorder. This, I argue, is due to the importance and emphasis Shakespeare places on their supernatural powers as being rooted in their bodily self, whereas in contrast, his male supernatural characters are always aligned with (patriarchal) order and their abilities are often explicitly non-corporeal and figured as the result of a masculine-coded 'art' or other scholarly activity. To explore these distinctions, I examine the supernatural figures in each of the genres of Shakespearean drama, in particular focusing on Joan of *Henry VI, Part One*, the paired figures of Oberon and Titania and Prospero and Sycorax of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, the correlations between disorderly women, the natural and the supernatural in both *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, and, finally, the orderly 'mankind witch' Paulina of *The Winter's Tale*.

Lay Summary

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The aim of this thesis is to explore Shakespeare's creation of his male and female supernatural characters. I find that Shakespeare's female supernatural characters are almost always aligned with disorder, and that this is in keeping with early modern thinking about women. This is in contrast to his male supernatural characters who align themselves with order. Another key difference I find in Shakespeare's construction of the two sets of characters is that the magical abilities of the female characters are conveyed through language and imagery redolent of the natural world. The locus of their supernatural powers, furthermore, is always their bodily self. Their powers are rooted in the characters' corporeality. Again, this is in contrast to the male supernatural characters, whose magical powers are instead figured as distinct from and separate to their bodies. For these characters, their supernatural abilities are an art, such as medicine, or the result of intellectual study. However, I also find that not all of Shakespeare's supernatural characters are as clear-cut as this. There are some characters, such as Prospero in *The Tempest*, who, though male, shares a great deal with his disorderly, female opposite, the witch Sycorax. Furthermore, I find that, towards the end of his career, Shakespeare was creating female supernatural characters who align themselves with the patriarchal order.

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Nature and the Female Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama

Introduction

Witches, wizards, fairies and sorceresses all stalked Shakespeare's stage. 'Nearly one-third of his plays contain speaking roles for supernatural beings', and they appear in every genre in which he wrote, populating the histories, comedies, tragedies and romances.[1] They were, and are, speaking, delighting, tricking, illuminating, enchanting, entreating, encroaching, vital, *significant* characters. But what did they signify to the first, early modern audiences, and what do they continue to mean to us today? This thesis aims to tease out this question.

As Bladen and Brailowsky note, 'Shakespeare's plays were written and performed for early modern audiences, for whom the supernatural, whether sacred, demonic or folkloric, was still part of the fabric of everyday life'.[2] As part of this 'everyday life', what we moderns would term 'supernatural' was, for the early modern playwrights, another theoretical prism through which to ponder, question and interrogate life as they knew it.[3] Elements of the supernatural—its creatures, their magical powers, and their correlation with the natural world—could be weaved into a drama to complex effect and be used to raise questions, including questions about men, women and the similarities and differences between them. The aim of this thesis is to explore how Shakespeare presented his supernatural characters, most specifically through the perspective of gender. At first glance, Shakespeare's supernatural characters appear to adhere to the early modern binary between masculine order and feminine disorder. However, a deeper analysis of Shakespearean drama will show that Shakespeare does not confine himself or his characters to these rigid gender models. Instead his characterisation involves blurring the two boundaries, dissolv-

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[1] Garrison, John S., *Shakespeare and the Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 3. Bladen, Victoria and Yan Brailowsky, 'Introduction: Shakespeare and the supernatural,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 1 -27, p. 1.

[2] Bladen and Brailowsky (2020), p, 1.

[3] As James, Susan, 'Shakespeare and the politics of superstition,' in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. by David Armitage, Conal Condren, and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 80 - 98, writes: 'as well as drawing on the resources of the spiritual world to enrich the narratives of his plays, Shakespeare also explores early modern debates about the supernatural itself, probing the ambiguities surrounding it and portraying the passions and convictions that it arouses in his contemporaries', p. 80.

ing differences and creating ambiguous figures who belong to neither of the stereotypical supernatural male or female roles. A male magus will be shown to share common ground with the female 'foul witch' and a female 'hag' will prove herself a master of the male arts, including Shakespeare's own, the theatre (*The Tempest*, 1.2.258, *The Winter's Tale*, 2.3.107).[4] I examine the supernatural figures, male and female, in each of the genres of Shakespearean drama, consider the potential effects of Shakespeare's sources, influences and possible collaborations on their construction, and analyse the dramatic potential of the ambiguity thus created. Further to this, I find that, though Shakespeare blurs the boundary between the male and female supernatural characters, there is, ultimately, a limit to this boundary-crossing: the female characters are almost always aligned with disorder. This, I argue, is due to the importance and emphasis Shakespeare places on their supernatural powers as being rooted in their bodily self—this, of course, is in keeping with early modern theories of woman as, in the words of Natalie Zemon Davis, 'the disorderly one par excellence in early modern Europe'.[5] In contrast, his male supernatural characters are always aligned with (patriarchal) order and their abilities are often explicitly non-corporeal and figured as the result of a masculine-coded 'art' or other scholarly activity. This, in turn, allows the male characters to eschew and 'abjure' their magical abilities, an act which a female character can never replicate (*The Tempest*, 5.1.51).

This thesis is comprised of five chapters, each exploring a different facet of my core argument—the difference in rhetorical construction of male and female supernatural characters, and how this, in turn and in certain plays, is replicated or reflected in the rhetorical construction of the natural world. My first chapter focuses on Joan of *Henry VI, Part One*; the second, the paired figures of Oberon and Titania and Prospero and Sycorax of *A Midsummer Night's* Dream and *The Tempest*; the third chapter explores *Macbeth*'s witches, the witch-like Macbeth and his Lady, and their effect on the natural world of Scotland; the fourth explores the gendered role of nature and the daughters, natural and 'unnatural', of

[4] All quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *The Winter's Tale* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[5] Zemon Davis, Natalie, 'Women on Top,' in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 156 - 185, p. 156.

King Lear (2.2.467);[6] and, finally, the fifth chapter reflects upon the Helena, 'Doctor She', of *All's Well That Ends Well,* and the 'mankind witch' Paulina of *The Winter's Tale*, two female supernatural characters who are aligned with patriarchal order (*All's Well That Ends Well*, 2.1.77, *The Winter's Tale*, 2.3.67).[7] Their actions re-create the patriarchal order but even then, the potential disorderliness of their 'magical' selves is (must be) de-emphasised: Helena disavows the credit of her miracle cure, citing her father and the ultimate Father, God himself, as the origin of her abilities and Paulina invents a male sculptor as the artist of the 'statue' Hermione. Shakespeare, however, presents us with a final, subversive, sting in the tail: Paulina may be in service to the patriarchal order, and her abilities may be downgraded from necromantic witchcraft with the power of life over death to a mere facility with showmanship, but this facility is the real power of the *male* art of theatre—Shakespeare's power. He gifts his (potentially) last female supernatural character with his own male artistry, complicating the gendered binary to the last.

What Was A Woman?
Ophelia: O heat, dry up my brains! (*Hamlet*, 4.2.154)[8]

Before we begin to examine what Shakespeare might have meant by aligning women with nature, we must first try to uncover what the early moderns believed a 'woman' meant. Nothing very good, according to Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks: 'Although they disagreed about many other things, the vast majority of religious and secular writers before 1500 regarded women as clearly inferior to men and saw the patriarchal systems as natural, divinely authorized, and good', and this perception persisted long into the early modern era, helped along as it was by its foundation in classical thought, resurrected through

[6] All quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997).

[7] All quotes from *All's Well That Ends Well* are from Gossett, Suzanne and Helen Wilcox (eds.), *All's Well That Ends Well* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[8] All quotes from *Hamlet* are from Jowett, John (ed.) *Hamlet* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1993 - 2099).

the reevaluation of classical texts throughout the Renaissance.[9] As Maclean notes, 'the difference of sex … [was] an indispensable duality in Renaissance as in scholastic thought', and was itself based upon 'the theory of the humours, which [was] the dominant theory of psychological difference'.[10] First theorised by Hippocrates and Galen, and built upon throughout the early modern era,[11] the balance of the humours—blood, phlegm, yellow bile (or choler) and black bile—in the body was believed to constitute not only the health of the individual but also their personality, their 'nature'.[12] The physical and mental differences between men and women were thought to stem from the proportions of which their body was composed of each of the four, beginning at conception and lasting the entire lifetime.[13] Drier and hotter was the better mix: this was how the average man was composed.[14] In contrast, the average woman was colder and moister, owing to the pre-

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[9] Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Fourth Edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 23. Wiesner-Hanks also makes this useful point about the surviving record on which the early modernist must rely for evidence: 'Ideas about women, particularly the ideas of educated men, are in many ways the easiest thing to investigate when analyzing the experience of women in any culture', p. 22. These ideas were written down in 'religious, scientific, and philosophical writings' which 'came to be considered authoritative and unquestionable, so that the ideas of educated men spread to the vast majority of women and men who could not record their own ideas and served as the basis for law codes that attempted to regulate behavior', p. 22-3.

[10] Maclean, Ian, 'The Notion of Woman in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology,' in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 127 - 155, p. 144.

[11] Wiesner-Hanks (2019) notes that 'nearly 600 editions of Galen's writings were printed between 1500 and 1600', p. 29.

[12] Kern Paster, Gail, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) p. 7-8. Smith, Bruce R., *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) writes that this figuration worked both ways. Humoural theory created personhood and personhood was figured as a form of the humours: 'Galenic medicine invited an early modern man to experience his *self* in terms of body fluids and body organs', p. 13-4

[13] The heat of the body, itself the result of the proportion of the 'hot' and 'dry' humours, was determined the sex of the body: the higher heat of the male pushed the genitals outwards, see Smith (2000), p. 15.

[14] Wiesner-Hanks (2019): 'Men were understood to be generally hotter and drier than women, though each individual was thought to have a characteristic temperament or "complexion," determined by the balance of the four humors', p. 27-8. Smith (2000) concurs: 'With respect to masculine identity, the most important implication of the elements/humours/organs system is that masculinity is a function of body chemistry. In particular, it is a function of the two 'higher' elements, air and fire, and the two 'hotter' humours compounded of those elements, blood and choler', p. 15.

dominance of phlegm and black bile.[15] Kern Paster quotes Helkiah Crooke, author of *Microcosmographia: a Description of the Body of Man* (1615): 'We conclude … that … men are hotter than women … as well in regard of the Naturall Temper, as that which is acquired by diet and the course of life'.[16] Kern Paster writes,

> For Crooke—and for other thinkers…—women's coldness was both natural and environmental, an innate feature compounded by the action of the six Galenic nonnaturals (air, diet, rest and exercise, sleeping and waking, fullness and emptiness, and the passions) summed up casually in his phrase "acquired by diet and the course of life."[17]

Concurrent with humoral theory was the idea that there were no two sexes—male and female—but instead a single sex, scaled by perfection, with an ideal—the perfect example, the male—and the 'female' the imperfect version. Laqueur dubbed this the 'one-sex model', and it resulted from the idea of inversion. Laqueur writes,

> Instead of being divided by their reproductive anatomies, the sexes are linked by a common one. Women, in other words, are inverted, and hence less perfect, men.[18]

Woman was an inverted man, with the penis and testes remaining within her trunk, as womb and ovaries, respectively, and this was due to a lack of heat in conception. However, Christian M. Billing has warned against any scholarly over-emphasis on the 'one-sex model' as the definitive early modern understanding of the sexes, particularly those sexes as constructed on the theatrical stage. Though '[c]lassical conceptions of reproductive anatomy unarguably constitute the framework within which early Renaissance figurations of sex identity were conceived', his readings of early modern medical texts have found that, in reality,

> it is untrue to say that ancient hypotheses maintained a dominant position in experimental anatomy or quotidian medicine throughout the entire early modern period. It is even less true to say that they had significant influence over

[15] Kern Paster, Gail, *Humouring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 77-8.

[16] Quoted in Kern Paster (2004), p. 77.

[17] Kern Paster (2004), p. 77.

[18] Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 26.

> figurations of the body in theatrical and popular culture. Theories of human corporality changed radically by the time that a fully developed professional theatre emerged in England in the 1580s. This epistemological shift had a profound effect upon the ways in which the sexed and gendered body was staged.[19]

This radical change, brought about by a new emphasis on dissection in the work of anatomists, meant that 'the latter 1500s saw a pronounced shift in anatomical understanding', with the classical anatomists 'considered less trustworthy sources that needed even the most basic of their *a priori* assertions contested or refuted by contemporary scientific practice'.[20] Examining the medical treatises of the late 1500s to the early 1600s, Billing finds that

> the same linguistic registers are used to describe organs belonging separately to men and women. The second thing to strike the reader, however, is that, as time progresses, a significant amount of detail becomes added to each basic stem of vocabulary in order to differentiate two discrete sexes. From around 1590, new sexually demarcated prefixes and compound nouns begin to be employed in a more sophisticated anatomical register setting females apart from males. Such amalgams were born of a need to circumscribe the two discrete sexual exemplars emerging from the increasing metaphorical body of evidence drawn from dissected human cadavers. It was a shift that led to a new linguistic *modus operandi* in which female and male anatomies were ubiquitously set apart.[21]

Phyllis Rackin argues a similar point to Billings. She notes that Laqueur's 'one-sex model' prioritised Galen's theories over the 'many Renaissance writers [who] argued that women's bodies were essentially different from men's'.[22] Our understanding of early modern conceptions of the differences, or lack of, between the sexes, then, must be expanded

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[19] Billing, Christian M., 'Man Made Woman: Early Modern Anatomy and the Emergence of Sexual Difference,' in *Masculinity, Corporality and the English Stage 1580-1635* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 13 - 47, p. 16.

[20] Billing (2008), p. 14.

[21] Billing (2008), p. 29 - 30.

[22] Rackin, Phyllis, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 12.

beyond the ‘one-sex model’. Many theories were in circulation at the time Shakespeare was writing his male and female characters and, as is always the way, many of these ideas have filtered into the works. The ‘one-sex model’, as Simone Chess puts it, ‘understood male and female bodies, while generally sexually different from one another, to be homologous and, therefore, changeable’.[23] Chess, drawing on the work of Will Fisher, writes that ‘[b]ecause anatomical sex could be seen as “a continuum,” sexual differentiation between men and women could be seen as unfixed and impermanent’.[24] This model allowed a certain ambiguousness and permitted characters that sat in the middle between the two extremes, male and female, and, as I will show, Shakespeare exploits this possibility in his creation of his supernatural characters. Concurrently, the ‘two-sex model’ insisted upon an essential difference between the two sexes. It argued that a woman’s body marked her, incontrovertibly, as different from a man—not only different, but lesser. Shakespeare’s construction of female characters shows the signs of this way of thinking as well: his female characters’ bodies are shown to be far more of a determining factor over their personalities than a male character’s body is over his. This is especially the case in the construction of his supernatural characters. A witch was a witch in body and a female character could never throw off this essential aspect of her being. In this way, Shakespeare’s thinking seems to be wedded to a ‘two-sex model’, to a theory that perceived women as essentially different from men. He was influenced, I argue, by both theories of the differences, or lack of, between the sexes. My argument posits that Shakespeare’s creation of his supernatural characters can be viewed as being on a spectrum, with male-order and female-disorder at either extreme, and his characters sitting along it, some closer to the extremes than others but all containing elements of both extremes. At the same time, however, there is a constant difference between the sexes: the female characters are inherently different due to the incontestability of their fundamentally disorderly bodies which must, perforce, define their supernatural abilities. Imposing supernatural abilities on these characters means Shakespeare draws out and exaggerates the differences imposed on the sexes in early modern conceptions of sex and gender.

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[23] Chess, Simone, *Male-to-Female Crossdressing in Early Modern English Literature: Gender, Performance, and Queer Relations* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), p. 6. Orgel, Stephen, ‘Nobody’s Perfect: Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88:1, 1989, 7 - 29, writes that ‘for the Renaissance the line between the sexes was blurred, often frighteningly so’, p. 13.

[24] Chess (2016), p. 6.

Humoral theory argued for the essential differences between men's and women's bodies in many different ways, and especially allowed for a belief in the inherent disorderliness of the female body. For both men and women, the balance of humours in the body could be directly affected by the environment because, in the early modern conception, the body was porous, 'much less bounded and restrained', than it is considered today.[25] The female body, however, was thought to be both more open to the elements than the male's and more affected by them, 'more protean than man'.[26] As David Hillman notes, '[i]f men's bodies were normatively considered to be permeable and in flux, women's were depicted as embarrassingly incontinent and shamefully inconstant'.[27] Women were also more likely to be humorally colder than men and, as humoral theory was configured without the division present in later modernity between mind and body, the nature and experiences of the body directly affected the mind, the imagination, the personality, and, most especially, the capacity for reason.[28] And it was *reason* that women, due to the imbalance of their humours, most crucially lacked. 'Heat stimulated action and cold depressed it. Clear judgement and prudent action required the free flow of clear fluids in the brain', writes Kern Paster, whilst phlegm, predominant in women, 'was responsible for the general inconstancy of women'.[29] The 'coldness and sponginess of female flesh, relative to the flesh of men, become traits of great ethical consequence by explaining the sex's limited capacity for

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[25] Laqueur (1992), p. 103. Kern Paster (1993) notes that: 'Beside being open and fungible in its internal workings, the humoral body was also porous and thus able to be influenced by the immediate environment', p. 9. In 'Minded Like the Weather: The Tragic Body and its Passions,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, edited by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 202 - 217, Kern Paster writes that '[t]he early modern body — marked by porousness, humoural instability, and the extreme volatility of its passions — was in continual reciprocal interaction with its environment, at times taking that environment into itself, at times spilling out of its own boundaries', p. 202.

[26] Laqueur (1992), p. 103.

[27] Hillman, David, 'Staging Early Modern Embodiment,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 41 - 57, p. 43.

[28] Hillman (2015), p. 42. Kern Paster (2004) notes that 'early modern bodies have an affective immanence and lability supported rather than contradicted by humoral theory, for the reason that affective life was constituted by the humors coursing through the bloodstream and saturating the flesh. It is the immanence of the passions, the power of the passions, that early modern binaries seem intended to counter in a quest for the self-sameness—the manly constancy—so prized by humanist thought', p. 22.

[29] Kern Paster (2004), p. 13.

productive agency, individuality, and higher reasoning'.[30] Thus, it was, as Kern Paster notes, that the 'Galenic commonplace that "the Minds inclination follows the Bodies Temperature" had particularly disastrous consequences for early modern constructions of the psychophysiology of women'.[31]

Those disastrous consequences manifested in one key way: disorder. Though both male and female bodies were open to the changes of the elements and directly affected by them, women's bodies were far more greatly affected. Bruce Smith, building on Laqueur's 'one-sex model', writes that the different placement of the internal and external genitalia 'prompted early modern men to contrast the vaginal openness of women's bodies and the foreskinned closedness of their own'.[32] Their inherent state, colder and wetter than men, more open, less capable of constancy-bequeathing reason, meant that, as Natalie Zemon Davis writes, they had a 'changeable, deceptive, and tricky temperament'.[33] This type of temperament was a risk, threatening to good order: 'The female sex was thought the disorderly one par excellence in early modern Europe'.[34] Zemon Davis, looking at the early modern conception of women through the prism of 'sexual symbolism', connects the belief in the humoural imbalance of women to 'questions of order and subordination'. It was the 'lower female sex' that was 'conceived as the disorderly lustful one'.[35] If the feminine was disorderly, it stood to reason that the opposite of feminine, masculine, should stand for order. Wiesner-Hanks, writing on the fundamentally binary thinking of early modern thought,

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[30] Kern Paster (2004), p. 78-9. In contrast, men 'being hotter than most women, were thought to have better perceptual and cognitive apparatuses—better hardware and software—and were able to report more rationally and reliably about the world', p. 79. We can see an aspect of this humoural belief in *Hamlet*, when, attempting to hold back tears in the face of the sister's death by drowning, Laertes states, 'Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, / And therefore I forbid my tears' (4.4. 180-1). Ophelia has had too much water both by drowning and in her humoural balance that created the madness that led to her drowning, her natural moistness.

[31] Kern Paster (2004), p. 77.

[32] Smith (2000), p. 15. He adds that the 'extension of the open/closed distinction to other orifices besides the urethra and the vagina explains why women were thought to be more voluble than men', p. 16.

[33] Zemon Davis (1999), p. 156. She adds, 'the female's mind was more prone to be disordered by her fragile and unsteady temperament', p. 157, because '[w]ith the women the disorderliness was founded in physiology', p. 156.

[34] Zemon Davis (1999), p. 156.

[35] Zemon Davis (1999), p. 177.

inherited from 'both Greek and Christian' theorisation, emphasises one of the primary binaries they had to contend with,

> a dichotomy between order and disorder, which was linked to other polarities including culture/nature, reason/emotion, and mind/body. In all of these, men were linked to the more positive term and women to the more negative one.[36]

Both the 'one-sex' and 'two-sex' model viewed women as less perfect than men. Laqueur argued that the 'one-sex model' was 'construed as illustrative rather than determinant':[37] its existence was a facet of, rather than the originator of, the early modern conception of the world itself, another illustration of a wider cosmological framework of perfection and imperfection. Aristotle, whose ideas were hugely influential throughout the early modern era, was the source of the theories Laqueur has since labeled the 'one-sex model', which 'tended to view human anatomy and physiology on a single scale',[38] with women as 'imperfect or misbegotten males'.[39] Humoralism similarly proposed an example of perfection: the balance of humours to be found in the average man. The balance in the average women was, alas, imperfect: hence, the fact of her woman-ness. This 'telos of perfection'[40] was not only to be found in conceptions of sex but, as Kern Paster notes,

> The language of humoralism, thoroughly suffused by signifiers we assign to ethical discourse, establishes an internal hierarchy of fluids and functions within the body which is fully assimilable to external hierarchies of class and gender.[41]

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[36] Wiesner-Hanks (2019), p. 287.

[37] Laqueur (1992), p. 62.

[38] Wiesner-Hanks (2019), p. 27.

[39] Wiesner-Hanks (2019), p. 27. She adds that Aristotle 'regarded women as fundamentally intellectually inferior', as well as fundamentally imperfect, p. 27.

[40] Laqueur (1992), p.

[41] Kern Paster (1993), p. 19.

These 'external hierarchies' placed women beneath men in what E. M. W. Tillyard referred to as the Great Chain of Being.[42] This 'divinely ordered nature of all Tudor-Stuart experience' included every aspect of the natural world and human society: 'Ranks of angels, of temporal governments, disposition of the seasons, the weather, plants, animals and even human anatomy are congruent in their hierarchies'.[43] Claire McEachern refers to the *Exhortation Concerning Good Order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates* (1569), which declared that: 'Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters, in most excellent and perfect order'.[44] Masculine order stood above female disorder in the interests of good governance and healthy society. In this way, it is evidence of the embedded patriarchal thought of early modernity. Laqueur, in his study of sex, gender and generation, emphatically links this mode of thought to the oppression of women:

> The one-sex model can be read, I want to suggest, as an exercise in preserving the Father, he who stands not only for order but for the very existence of civilization itself.[45]

Male superiority can be seen through the active role the male takes in producing children:

> being male and being a father, having what it takes to produce the more powerful seed, is the ascendancy of mind over the senses, of order over disorder, legitimacy over illegitimacy. Thus the inability of women to conceive within themselves becomes an instance—among many other things—of the relative weakness of

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[42] Tillyard, E. M. W., *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), 'As a chain, creation was a series of beings stretching from the lowest of inanimate objects up to the archangel nearest to the throne of God,' p. 11. He writes of the 'Elizabethan World Picture' that the 'Elizabethan conception of world-order was in its outlines medieval although it had discarded much medieval detail. The universe was a unity, in which everything had its place, and it was the perfect work of God. Any imperfection was the work not of God but of man; for with the fall of man the universe underwent a sympathetic corruption. But for all the corruption the marks of God's perfection were still there, and one of the two great roads to salvation was through the study of created things. But though the idea of unity was basic, the actual order of the world presented itself to the Elizabethans under three different, though often unrelated, appearances: a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance to music', p. 11.

[43] McEachern, Claire, 'Shakespeare, religion and politics,' in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 185 - 200, p. 187. She adds that the 'Tudor-Stuart social order is ideally divine, organic, patriarchal and linked to land and rank and even language', p. 187. As I will argue, this is, as she writes, an *ideal* society—not a real one, and certainly not the real experience of the early moderns. As McEachern writes, 'Tudor-Stuart officialdom was made keenly and frequently aware… of just how idealized idealizations of a uniform nation could be', p. 188.

[44] Quoted in McEachern (2010), p. 187.

[45] Laqueur (1992), p. 58.

her mind.[46]

Bruce Smith, once again building on Laqueur's arguments, has analysed James I's statement that

> God made one part of man of earth, the basest element, to teach him humility; his soul proceeded from the bosom of Himself, to teach him goodness; so that if he looks downward nothing is viler, if he cast his eyes to heaven he is of a matter more excellent than Angels; the former part was a type of Adam, the second of Christ, which gives life to that which was dead in itself.[47]

James, Smith writes, has 'framed' the human (male) body 'within the Great Chain of Being': 'man's upper body figures as the seat of reason, purer in spirit, closer to God and the angels; his lower body, as the seat of passion, contaminated with the flesh, closer to the Devil'.[48] This 'lower' half is also aligned with the disorderly and the feminine, the opposite of reason, purity and order.[49].

The imposition of order and hierarchy on the body was of a part with early modern conceptions of the world as a whole. As Laqueur has noted, the 'telos of perfection' covered every aspect of the world. E. M. W. Tillyard called this strand of early modern thinking the 'Elizabethan world picture',[50] and it can be discerned within many early modern political tracts, especially those that outline the role of government (naturally propagandist in

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[46] Laqueur (1992), p. 58-9. He notes the essential patriarchal notion behind this cataloguing of the nature of 'woman' (as opposed to the nature of 'man'). The woman is the 'problematic, unstable … body that is either a version of or wholly different from a generally unproblematic, stable body [of the man]. As feminist scholars have made abundantly clear, it is *always* woman's sexuality that is being constituted; woman is the empty category. Woman alone seems to have "gender" since the category itself is defined as that aspect of social relations based on difference between sexes in which the standard has always been man', p. 22.

[47] Quoted in Smith (2000), p. 1.

[48] Smith (2000), p. 1.

[49] Wiesner-Hanks (2019) too writes about the link between women and the lower, disorderly half of the body: 'Women were also more "disorderly" than men because they were unreasonable, ruled by their physical body rather than their rational capacity, their lower parts rather than upper', p. 329. This was also why 'they were more often suspected of witchcraft', p. 329, as will be discussed below. Hillman (2015) notes that the early modern conception of women 'extend[ed] the bias of ancient writings associating women with the material realm', p. 43.

[50] Tillyard, E. M. W., in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943) declared that 'this idea of cosmic order was one of the genuine ruling ideas of the age, and perhaps the most characteristic', p. v.

tone). James I defined the role of the king in these terms**:** 'I am the husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body; I am the shepherd, and it is my flock'.[51] Carroll notes:

> Thus, as the father is to the child, the husband to the wife, the head to the body, and the shepherd to the flock, so is the king to his people, whose only response can be one of submissive, unthinking, feminized obedience.[52]

Wiesner-Hanks writes perspicaciously on this subject, linking the early modern thinking about gender with its thinking about power as a whole:

> Once we begin to investigate all relationships of power ("political" in its broadest sense), we find that gender was a central category in the thinking of early modern Europeans. The maintenance of proper power relationships between men and women served as a basis for and a symbol of not only the larger political system but also for the functioning of society as a whole. Relations between the sexes often provided a model for all dichotomized relations that involved authority and subordination, such as those between ruler and subject. Women or men who stepped outside their prescribed roles in other than extraordinary circumstances, and particularly those who made a point of emphasizing that they were doing this, were seen as threatening not only relations between the sexes but also the operation of the entire social order. They were "disorderly," a word that had much stronger negative connotations in the early modern period than today[.][53]

Tillyard's vision has since been questioned and modified by critics, most pre-eminently by those of the New Historicism, for whom Tillyard's argument was both circular and focused only on a single thin strand of the varied web of theories about the world available to early moderns.[54] Catherine Belsey, for instance, arguing from this position, notes the

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[51] Quoted in Carroll, William C., 'Theories of Kingship in Shakespeare's England,' in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume II*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 125 - 145, p. 132.

[52] Carroll (2003), p. 132.

[53] Wiesner-Hanks (2019), p. 328 - 9.

[54] Holderness, Graham, 'Tillyard, History, and Ideology,' quoted in *1 Henry IV* (Third Norton Critical Edition), ed. by Gordon McMullan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 267 - 274, p. 273-74. Tillyard's thinking was also, of course, influenced by the society of his own lifetime, the end of the Second World War and the decline of the British Empire, p. 271.

circularity of allusion within the historians of Tillyard's generation: 'When it came to cultural history, political predisposition became more evidently part of the hermeneutic circle', that Tillyard 'read a number of Renaissance plays to find a commitment to order, and discovered in consequence that most of the other plays of the period were also committed to order'.[55] And, naturally, to declare that *every* Early Modern thought and behaved in exactly the same way is ludicrous.[56] Chernaik notes that 'critics of the Tillyard-[Lily B.]Campbell school regularly cite the Elizabethan *Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion* as evidence for a "universally held" belief in the sinfulness of disobedience among Shakespeare's contemporaries', when, he notes, the fact that the *Homily* even needed to set out what, it assured its auditors, was the natural formation of society, is telling.[57] Egan notes the 'striking omission from Tillyard's model of a self-satisfied political orderliness that was thought to mirror the orderliness of the wider cosmos': 'the much-debated pragmatic doctrine of Machiavellianism'.[58] And McEachern points out that Shakespeare was well aware of the differences between how the Elizabethan and Stuart rulers might wish society to function and its reality: 'Shakespeare's plays demonstrate time and time again, when it comes to state ideology there is theory, and then there is practice'.[59]

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[55] Belsey, Catherine, 'Making histories then and now: Shakespeare from *Richard II* to *Henry V*,' in *Uses of history: Marxism, postmodernism and the Renaissance*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 24 - 46, p. 25. See also pp. 24 - 5. She adds the important point that 'Tillyard's nostalgic reading of the plays re-enacts, of course, his relation to his own historical moment. *Shakespeare's history plays* was published in 1944. All around was disorder. But beyond this there lay as the solution universal acceptance of the great ideal of hierarchy', pp. 31 - 2.

[56] Holderness (2003) points out the various schisms and arguments of the culture's 'intellectual divisions', p. 270. These 'divisions' included debate over 'matters of religion, politics, law, ethics; there were Catholics and Protestants and Puritans, monarchists and republicans, believers in the divine right of kings and defenders of the common law and the rights of the subject. In the Tillyardian view political thought in the 1590s was dominated by an almost superstitious belief in the significance of the political settlement of 1485 when, over a century before Shakespeare's history plays were composed, the civil wars (the "Wars of the Roses") were ended by the accession of the first Tudor monarch, Henry VII. Yet only 50 years subsequent to the production of these plays, the entire kingdom of Britain was divided by a Civil War of much greater consequence, in the course of which the people found it legally and morally possible to execute the king and declare a republic', p. 270.

[57] Chernaik, Warren, 'The wars of the critics,' in *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 15 - 22, p. 16.

[58] Egan, Gabriel, *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), p. 6.

[59] McEachern (2010), p. 188.

The patriarchal thinking in Tillyard's conception of the orderly universe is also so apparent that it barely needs to be pointed out. Tillyard cites Ulysses' speech on degree, order and chaos in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* as one of the main sources for his argument that the 'Elizabethan World Picture' dominated the early moderns' conception of the world.[60]

> The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> In fixture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office, and custom, in all line of order.
> And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
> In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
> Amidst the other, whose med'cinable eye
> Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
> And posts, like the commandment of a king,
> Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
> In evil mixture to disorder wander,
> What plagues and what portents, what mutiny!
> What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
> Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors
> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
> The unity and married calm of states
> Quite from their fixture! O, when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> The enterprise is sick. How could communities,
> Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogeniture and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
> But by degree stand in authentic place?
> Take but degree away, untune that string,

[60] Tillyard (1969), p. 10.

And hark what discord follows. (1.3.84-109)[61]

The speech is deeply patriarchal, so wholly male that there is not one mention of women throughout. Harmony and order are evoked through masculine figurations: these 'brotherhoods' are completely masculine, a relationship of men with men. Ulysses speaks from a dark, complicated play that grapples with misogyny, with the ever-present (masculine) concern over whether women were faithful, or whether they could ever, naturally, be capable of being faithful (to a man). This concern over faithfulness can be read as of a piece with a larger concern: of the threat to order that is the disorderly woman. Orderly relations between men and women imply that the man is in control of the woman, and thus can guarantee her faithfulness. But for early moderns, women were inherently disorderly, hence Ulysses' palpable anxiety.

This idea of order and disorder, with the female body being the lesser, disorderly one meant that, in the hierarchy of the world, with order being higher than disorder, the man, associated with order, was higher than the woman, in just the same way that 'man' (i.e., human man) was higher than the animal world. This meant that the woman, being lower, was closer to the animal world of nature than she was with the masculine world of culture and civilisation.[62] Jeanne Addison Roberts found evidence of this thinking in Shakespeare's works. Contra to 'Jardine, Orgel, and Greenblatt' who 'all suggest … that the primary identity of Shakespearean "women" is male and that their appeal is as males to males',[63] she argues that 'Shakespeare's women are neither male nor female but may

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[61] All quotes from Jowett, John (ed.) *Troilus and Cressida* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1903 - 1992.

[62] Maclean (1999) notes the 'metaphorical association of woman with mother earth, nutrition, fruitfulness and the fluctuations of the moon, which is deeply embedded in the substratum of ancient medical thought, and sometimes explicit there. The implications of these metaphors—passivity, receptiveness, compassion, mutability—may account in part for the Renaissance view of female psychology', p. 145.

[63] These scholars are arguing from the position that because the women on Shakespeare's stage were cross-dressed young men, they were 'perceived' as men: Jardine, Lisa, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983), p. 29 - 33; Orgel (1989), p. 22, 26 - 8; Greenblatt, Stephen, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 91 -3. Quote taken from Addison Roberts, Jeanne, *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus and Gender* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), p. 13-4.

be understood as projections of male fantasies of the Wild female other'.[64] The early plays, she writes, 'play out the association of the female with the forest, revealing a barely repressed fear of and revulsion to the mysterious "other" and emphasizing the importance of male Culture', whilst the later plays display the 'erosion of man/animal, male/female, and male/barbarian boundaries … [which] prepares for the terrifying collapse of man/animal boundaries that leads … to the horizontalizing of the vertical Chain of Being in *King Lear* and the later plays'.[65]

I do not believe that the female characters of Shakespeare, in his early plays, nor, for that matter, throughout the corpus, are primarily 'male fantasies of the Wild female other': as I hope to show throughout this thesis, they are far more complex and ambiguous than that. I do think that it is interesting, however, that they can be viewed in this way. It shows that there is, perceptibly, a connection between many of Shakespeare's female characters and the natural world. Tamora, as Addison Roberts notes, is extensively associated with the natural world.[66] In *Titus Andronicus*, she is given two speeches which describe, and position herself within, the natural world. They are passages in which the same piece of the natural world—the forest in which the Romans hunt—is described in two very different ways, rhetorically creating two very different spaces. Idling with her lover, Aaron, Titania first delineates a secret bower in which they may indulge their lust:

> The birds chant melody on every bush,
> The snakes lies rollèd in the cheerful sun,
> The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
> And make a chequered shadow on the ground.
> Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit,
> And whilst the babbling echo mocks the hounds,
> Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns,
> As if a double hunt were heard at once,
> Let us sit down and mark their yelping noise;
> And after conflict such as was supposed
> The wand'ring prince and Dido once enjoyed

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[64] Addison Roberts (1991), p. 13-4.

[65] Addison Roberts (1991), p. 19, 17.

[66] Addison Roberts (1991): 'Tamora is a creature of the Wild—both female and foreign', p. 36.

When with a happy storm they were surprised,
And curtained with a counsel-keeping cave,
We may—each wreathèd in the other's arms,
Our pastimes done—possess a golden slumber
Whiles hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds
Be unto us as is a nurse's song
Of lullaby, to bring her babe asleep. (2.3.12-29)[67]

Not a hundred lines later, the forest has changed. Tamora now describes a place that is comprised of

A barren detested vale…;
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe.
Here never shines the sun, here nothing breeds
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven.
And when they showed me this abhorrèd pit
They told me here at dead time of the night
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins
Would make such fearful and confusèd cries
As any mortal hearing it
Should straight fall mad or else die suddenly. (2.3.93-104)

This piece of the natural world has been doubled: it is unclear how we should imagine it, or how a single stage should be dressed to evoke it. (Shakespeare's stage, of course, was famously empty, with the space below, conceptually figured by the use of the trapdoor, also available for rhetorical construction.) In this way, the forest mirrors Tamora's deception of Saturninus. Like the forest, she presents a double face. Bi-natured. The similarity between herself and the forest links the two, the woman and the natural world. They are both, in Zemon Davis's words, 'changeable, deceptive, and tricky'.

It is not only in this instance that Shakespeare connects female characters and the natural world. Names often provide an intriguing window into the role and purpose of a

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[67] All quotes from *Titus Andronicus* are from Taylor, Gary, Terri Bourus, Rory Loughnane, Anna Pruitt and Francis X. Connor (eds.) *Titus Andronicus* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). pp. 183 - 249.

character (hence why many modern editions of Shakespeare's works include a small précis of the character names and short inquiries into their possible meanings). Many of Shakespeare's heroines' names echo aspects of the natural world and these span the entirety of the Shakespearean corpus. They include Juliet, whose name contains within it the month, July, in which she was born, and with it, a suggestion of the 'stifling summer heat which paralyses the city of Verona' and leads, inevitably to her tragic demise.[68] Specifically, she was born on 'Lammas Eve' (1.3.18), 'the harvest festival which took place on 1 August',[69] an ominous rhetorical gesture on Shakespeare's part towards reaping at the very beginning of her tragically short life.[70] Other examples include Marina, Pericles' daughter, whose name includes the sea upon which she is born, from a play written towards the end of Shakespeare's career.

Flowers are another aspect of the natural world to which Shakespeare's female characters are consistently linked. One of the 'rose of May' Ophelia's[71] most memorable scenes is the sequence in which she frantically, liltingly lists the properties of 'rosemary; that's for remembrance', 'pansies; that's for thoughts', as well as 'fennel', 'columbines' and 'rue', 'herb of grace o' Sundays' (4.2.170-74). Her connection to the natural world extends throughout her life, up to and including her death. Evocative foliage frames her death, enveloping her:

> There is a willow grows askant the brook,
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
> Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
> Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do 'dead men's fingers' call them.
> There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds
> Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,

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[68] Chiari, Sophie, *Shakespeare's Representations of Weather, Climate and Environment: The Early Modern 'Fated Sky'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 58.

[69] Chiari (2019), p. 64.

[70] All quotes from *Romeo and Juliet* are from Connor, Francis X. (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 997 - 1077.

[71] *Hamlet*, 4.2.157.

When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up,
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (4.2.160-77)

Ophelia appears 'like a creature native' to stream, a piece of the natural world. Shakespeare experiments, taking an ironic glance at this idea, in his later play *The Winter's Tale*, in which the supposed shepherdess Perdita, in fact the lost princess of Sicilia (as hinted at in her name), enters 'pranked up' as one far above her station of 'poor lowly maid' (4.4.10, 9).[72] Just as her festival clothes reveal her true nature, she, too, like Ophelia, gifts her guests with appropriate flowers, revealing the important connection in Shakespearean drama between women and the natural world. To Camillo, she presents 'rosemary and rue. These keep / Seeming and savour all the winter long' (4.4.74-5). In a further, unknowing revelation of her true nature, she refuses to give out 'carnations and streaked gillyvors', also known as 'nature's bastards' (4.4.82-83): like her father, she too has an irrational distaste for illegitimacy. In this way, the natural world (flowers, natural and 'unnatural') is used by Shakespeare to display aspects of his female character—her 'nature'.

The irrefutable 'natural' aspect of the female nature can be seen in a telling passage from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Helena, injured at Hermia's seeming betrayal, recalls their shared childhood.

O, is all quite forgot?
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
Have with our needles created both one flower,

[72] Quotes from *The Winter's Tale* are from Pitcher, John (ed.), *The Winter's Tale* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

> 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 moulded on one stem. (3.2.202-12)[73]

Hermia and Helena sitting together to embroider, tellingly, a flower, are themselves a fruit, a 'double cherry', 'two lovely berries'.

The secrets of the 'black, and midnight hags': Supernatural Women[74]

Shakespeare's rhetorical connection of women with the natural world broadens into what, from a modern perspective appears to be a supernatural dimension. We can see how easily the two, the natural and the supernatural, can accommodate each other: there is nothing preventing Tamora's description of the 'abhorrèd pit' from containing the line wherein 'A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes' are separated only by a comma.[75] Bladen and Brailowsky note the interrelation between what we would define as 'natural' and 'supernatural' in early modernity:

> The realm of the "natural" was imagined as alive with spirits and forces that could be harnessed with the right knowledge, using what was understood as natural magic. […] The natural was thus a manifestation of the supernatural space of divine design; their version of nature was already infused with what,

[73] Quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Holland, Peter (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[74] *Macbeth*, 4.1.62. All quotes from *Macbeth* are from Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[75] The edition of the play in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition* (ed. by Gary Taylor, Terri Bourus, Rory Loughnane, Anna Pruitt and Francis X. Connor) includes the note that 'this abhorrèd pit' may refer to the stage trap-door, 'which may or may not have been open and visible from the beginning of the scene; suggestive of the hell-mouth of medieval liturgical drama' (p. 207). The possible link between this play (and others) and the medieval morality plays, in which figures, including the Devil and his demons, as well as angels, appeared is another example of how the early modern stage was a broad space for many types of non-human characters to appear.

to us, is a supernatural conception.[76]

If the natural world was linked with the feminine, and the feminine was conceived of as disorderly, it followed that the natural world was also suspected of disorderliness. As Wiesner-Hanks noted previously, the binary thinking of early modernity contrasted natural world with the city, a delineation that occurred concurrently with a differentiation between order and disorder and masculine and feminine. The natural world, as feminine, was equated with disorder as opposed to the orderly, male-run urban city. Potentially disorderly natural and supernatural events were of great interest to early moderns and Shakespeare made good use of their dramatic potential.[77] 'For most people living in Elizabethan England,' Charlotte Scott writes, 'the natural world was a text, "God's folio", through which they could interpret the Scripture of the Christian faith'.[78] Hence, when something strange or unprecedented occurred in the natural world—a flood, a drought, a heatwave or a sudden cold-spell—people attempted to explain it through their faith. Unusual events, such as eclipses, were thought to serve as portents of evil times to come. An eclipse in *Henry VI, Part Three* triggers this analysis: 'In this, the heaven figures some event' (2.1.32).[79] The cry of an owl was an uncanny omen, as evinced by Richard's panicked outburst, 'Out on

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[76] Bladen and Brailowsky (2020), p. 2. They add that, 'In the Shakespearean canon, natural phenomena — such as storms, "monstrous" births and screeching owls — often function as omens, their strangeness as generative of the uncanny as ghosts, spirits, witches and magic. These natural phenomena often serve as foreshadowing to the audience and as signs for characters to interpret, just as nature was read as a divinely created book of hidden truths', p. 3.

[77] As Bladen and Brailowsky (2020) note, 'Supernatural elements implicitly question the border between the human and the non-human, and between the visible and the unseen. They also raise questions of control and agency that intersect with the exercise of power, a central focus across Shakespeare's *oeuvre*', p. 1.

[78] Scott, Charlotte, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 17. She adds, quoting Alexandra Walsham, that the people of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century 'shared the conviction that nature was a vehicle by which God communicated, as it were, telegraphically, with human beings'', p. 17. See also Hulme, Mike, 'Climate,' in The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare: Shakespeare's World, 1500-1600, Volume I, ed. by Bruce R. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 29 - 34, who notes that '[i]n late sixteenth-century England, climate was … a signifier — but of portentous events, human moral failure, and judgements of divine will', p. 29. He adds that '[i]n his plays, Shakespeare was able to explore this tension between he normality of expected and seemly weather as ordered by the idea of climate and the abnormality of untimely or extreme weather that disrupted this sense of climatic order', p. 30.

[79] Quotes from *Henry VI, Part Three* are from Cox, John D. and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), *King Henry VI, Part 3* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

you, owls! Nothing but songs of death' (*Richard III*, 4.4.425).[80] Dead bodies somehow bleeding anew hinted at the presence of their murderer (*Richard III*: 1.2.53-4).[81] Phillips writes that, '[t]hroughout the canon, calamities in nature frequently portend personal or political unrest', and points to the frequent use Shakespeare made of sudden violent storms on the eve of such society-disordering acts as the regicide in *Macbeth* (2.4.1-10) and the assassination of Caesar: Act Two of *Julius Caesar* begins with '*Thunder and lightning*', and Caesar notes that 'Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace tonight' (2.2.1 and stage direction).[82] *Julius Caesar* also features ominous 'horrid sights' (2.2.16) in the sky, which Calpurnia interprets as a war in heaven which predicts a war on earth:

> Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol. (2.2.19-21)[83]

Other more straightforwardly supernatural occurrences, such as the appearance of the deceased as ghosts or spirits, also invokes, and symbolises, the disruption of order. Bladen argues that the supernatural disruptions in *Julius Caesar*, in which 'graves have yawned and yielded up their dead' (2.2.18), are both caused by, and reflect, the 'political trauma' which 'opens up the boundaries between the living and the dead'.[84] Garrison writes that the appearance of ghosts in the plays is 'part of an inventory of elements that signal that

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[80] Quotes from *Richard III* are from Jowett, John (ed.), *Richard III* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[81] See note 53-4 in Jowett, John (ed.), *Richard III* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 161-2. Bach, Rebecca Ann, 'Manliness Before Individualism: Masculinity, Effeminacy, and Homoerotics in Shakespeare's History Plays,' in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume II*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), pp. 220 - 245, writes that the 'dead body does indeed bleed on stage, offering material proof to audiences of Richard's association with the devil', p. 241.

[82] Phillips, Chelsea, ''Rudely stamped': supernatural generation and the limits of power in Shakespeare's *Richard III*,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 50 - 69, p. 54. All quotes from *Julius Caesar* are from Humphreys, Arthur (ed.), *Julius Caesar* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Quotes from *Macbeth* are from Clark, Sandra and Pamela Mason (eds.), *Macbeth* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[83] Garrison (2018), p. 71. He notes that the 'fiery warriors' 'could be interpreted as some divine combat or as personification of a lightning storm with heavy rain. In either case, this reinforces the blurring of categories and boundaries', p. 71.

[84] Bladen, Victoria, 'Shakespeare's political spectres,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 31 - 49, p. 34.

the world has gone topsy-turvy'.[85] The ghost of Old Hamlet springs first to mind; Horatio suspects that his appearance 'bodes some strange eruption in our state' (1.168). Finally, the most pungent example of Shakespeare's use of the supernatural as the sign of societal disorder has to be his presentation of the 'cacodemon' Richard III (*Richard III*, 1.3.144). His birth, growth and eventual reign are all wretched, spiteful and disordered, as his mother attests:

> Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
> A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
> Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
> Thy schooldays frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious;
> Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
> Thy age confirmed proud, subtle, bloody, treacherous.
>
> (*Richard III*, 4.4.159-64)

Phillips notes the use of 'wayward' to describe Richard's infancy: 'the Folio of *Macbeth*' refers to the witches as the "weyard/weyward' sisters', associating him yet further with the supernatural, disorderly female.[86] 'Deformed, unfinished, sent before [his] time / Into this breathing world scarce half made up' (*Richard III*, 1.1.20-21), born with teeth (*Richard III*, 4.4.46), Richard's body is similarly disorderly, with a 'withered arm' that he claims is both the result of nature disordering him because of some supposed malevolent animus (*Richard III*, 1.1.18-19, *Henry VI, Part Three*, 3.2.153-62) *and* the curse of a witch (conveniently, Edward's wife (*Richard III*, 3.4.72-77, 75)). Since disorderly nature and witchcraft were intrinsically linked in the early modern mind, these two statements may not have appeared as contradictory then as they do now. Phillips argues that '[e]vil signs accompany Richard's birth, but the birth itself is also prophetic. The discordant cacophony with which Richard entered the world is also echoed in his self-identifaction with 'a chaos' [*Henry VI, Part Three*, 3.2.161]'.[87] This chaos, 'a disorderly generative force',[88] is the ultimate binary opposite to order.

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[85] Garrison (2018), p. 71. He points to the appearance of the ghosts of Richard's victims in *Richard III* who 'signal[…] a disturbance in the normal order of the state', p. 77.

[86] Phillips (2020), p. 58 - 9.

[87] Phillips (2020), p. 61.

[88] Phillips (2020), p. 61. She adds that '[c]haos serves as the womb of the world, and its disordered nature echoes the permeable and ungovernable early modern womb that could so corrupt human generation', p. 61.

When a supernatural figure is female, the disorderliness is doubled. (And Richard III is insistently feminised throughout his presentation.[89]) It is why the figure of the female witch was so much more feared than a male magician—and hence the far greater numbers of women executed for supposed supernatural crimes.[90] The insistent link between witchcraft and women is persistent in both early modern texts and in modern criticism of these early modern products.[91] Malcolm Gaskill goes so far as to refer to it as 'the female witch-stereotype'.[92] For instance, though Keith Thomas writes that a 'witch was a person of either sex (but more often female) who could mysteriously injure other people', by the next sentence, this un-gendered witch is specifically female: 'The damage *she* might do — *maleficium*, as it was technically called — could take various forms' (my italics).[93] Women were more likely to be witches because it involved being taken in, seduced or tricked by the Devil and as 'the weaker sex', the imbalance of their humours making them more credulous, or less charitably, less intelligent and with less recourse to reason than men,

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[89] As noted just above, Richard is intensely connected to the disordering, chaotic womb: Philips (2020), p. 61.

[90] Wiesner-Hanks (2019): 'In central and western Europe, learned authors and unlettered villagers, male and female, generally agreed that most witches were women, and the gender balance among those accused, tried, and executed reflects this belief', p. 286; 'About 80 percent of those questioned, tried, and executed for witchcraft in Europe after 1500 were women', p. 280. See also Gaskill, Malcolm, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 30.

[91] It was also another inheritance from the classical past. Gaskill (2010) notes that '[l]inks between women and witchcraft date back to antiquity', and cites numerous examples, ranging through the Egyptians, Babylonians, Sumerians, to Homer's Circe, the myth of Medea and the Witch of Endor cited in the Bible, p. 30.

[92] Gaskill (2010), p. 32. He notes that though both men and women were believed to make use of magic, it 'only makes it more interesting that the theoretical witch, the literary witch, the witch of popular imagination, should be female', p. 31. He theorises that the 'polarity of gender and the polarity of good and evil were, perhaps unconsciously aligned, so that the mysteries of womanhood lent substance to the mystery of what it meant to be a witch', p. 31.

[93] Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 519.

they were naturally more 'vulnerable to the temptations of Satan'.[94] Frances Dolan concurs, noting that the '*female* body's particular maleability' meant that they were more 'suited' to become the devil's servants, adding that with their new powers, women's 'maleability' increased further:

> Witchcraft belief grants witches extraordinary capacities for transcending bodily limitation—they can assume different shapes, become invisible, or fly—yet such belief attributes these capacities to traditionally feminine moral and physical weakness. As Eve's gender exposed her to Satan's temptations, so women's especially defenseless, fluid, penetrable, and manipulable "natures" made them vulnerable to demonic seduction.[95]

Wiesner-Hanks agrees. Discussing woman's purported disorderliness, quoted above, she writes that:

> Witches were women who let these qualities — links with nature, their emotions, and their bodily drives — come to dominate them completely; they were both disorderly and actively bent on destroying order. Witches disturbed the natural order of the four elements and the four humors in the body by causing storms and sickness. They disrupted patriarchal order by making men impotent through spells or tying knots in a thread and subjecting their minds to their passions in a double emasculation. The disorder they caused was linked to the first episode of disorder in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the rebellion and fall of Satan.[96]

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[94] Thomas (1971), p. 620. Gaskill (2010) concurs: 'witchcraft was associated with women because they were seen as […] more susceptible to diabolic temptation'; 'The original here was Eve', p. 30. Thomas's larger argument for the 'existence' of witches in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England comes down to economic factors: women were more likely to be poor, and hence more reliant on their neighbours' aid for survival, a dependence that, he argued, led to resentment and thus to allegations of witchcraft against the poor woman: pp. 669-77. Since Shakespeare makes little use of the belief in witches succumbing to the, often sexual, temptations of Satan, I only note here its existence in the culture of the time.

[95] Dolan, Frances, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 189-90. She adds that 'witches' own bodies constituted a primary source of evidence against them. Their guilt and their choice of supernatural bonds over social ones was assumed to be mapped onto and manifested in their bodies' p. 190.

[96] Wiesner-Hanks (2019), p. 287 - 9. Zemon Davis (1999) links the witch's disorder to the innate disorder of the woman's humoural imbalance:

> The lower ruled the higher within the woman, then, and if she were given her way, she would want to rule over those above her outside. Her disorderliness led her into the evil arts of witchcraft, so ecclesiastical authorities claimed[.] (p. 157)

One of the foremost sources for early modern conceptions of witches and witchcraft is Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). This work, a condemnation of what he believed to be a Catholic-inspired superstition and false belief in witchcraft,[97] is helpful, even as we must always be aware that, as Scot was delineating common beliefs about witches in order to prove them false, some measure of dramatic license and exaggeration must be allowed for. Nevertheless, it is useful for noting commonalities in belief.[98] We can glean certain assumptions, namely that witches were women and that witches' powers were active in, with and upon the natural world, from his statement that

> For if any adversity, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corn, cattell, or liberty happen unto them;[19] by and by they exclaime upon witches. As though there were no God in Israel that ordereth all things according to his will, punishing both just and unjust and with greefes, plagues, and afflictions in manner and forme as he thinketh good: but that certain old women here on earth, called witches, must needs be the contrivers of all mens calamities, and as though they themselves were innocents, and had deserved no such punishments.[99]

'Certain old women' work their *maleficium* upon 'children, corn, cattle': all three, the children in the house, the crop in the field, the family or farm's milking cow, would have fallen under the responsibility of (non-aristocratic) women in early modern England. As Dolan notes,

> Scot participates in the pervasive early modern association of witchcraft with domesticity: Witches undermine domestic order, hinder domestic and agricultural production (particularly "women's work"), and baffle sexuality and reproduction.[100]

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[97] Greenblatt, Stephen, 'Shakespeare's Bewitched,' in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. by Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 108 - 35, notes: 'Scot's project is disenchantment in the interest of restorating proper religious faith', p. 115.

[98] It should also be kept in mind that witchcraft beliefs changed throughout the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries. Gaskill (2010) notes that 'philosophical scepticism' began as a 'minority position', whilst 'legal scepticism was widespread', that scepticism then 'grew *within* the accepted world of demons', until the 'debate intensified in the 1650s and sceptics gained ground. The paradigm was shifting', p. 58, 59.

[99] Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), Booke I, Chapter I, p. 1. (Text is from the 1584 edition).

[100] Dolan (1994), p. 174.

Witches were linked with the feminine and the natural world in other ways as well. Thomas refers to what he calls 'the peculiarly English notion' of the witch's familiar, the small animal through which the witch worked her *maleficium*. According to this belief, a witch was believed

> to possess a familiar imp or devil, who would take the shape of an animal, usually a cat or a dog, but possibly a toad, a rat, or even a wasp or butterfly. This familiar, who performed useful magical services for his mistress, was supposed to have been given by the Devil himself, or purchased or inherited from another witch. The witch's mark was sometimes thought of as a teat from which the familiar could suck the blood as a form of nourishment.[101]

Such familiars were outlawed by the witchcraft act of 1604, which forbade the 'entertaining and feeding [of] evil spirits'.[102] The idea of the witch's familiar continues to associate witches and domesticity, as outlined by Dolan and, like the other aspects of the witch's housekeeping, it distorts and perverts traditionally female acts, including the rearing and nourishing of children. (Noting Thomas's use of traditional pronouns for witches and the Devil, it is almost as if the familiar (always a 'he' in Thomas's account) is the child of the witch and the Devil. The witch's mark as teat continues the perversion of the mother's (or wet-nurse's (no matter who, always female)) role in breastfeeding.[103] In this way, English belief concerning witches lays heavy emphasis on the witch's femininity: she disorders the 'natural' role of women in keeping house, providing food and nourishment, and producing and rearing children.

Scot delineates yet another aspect of witchcraft that is linked to the natural world: their supposed power over the weather.

> Such faithlesse people (I saie) are also persuaded, that neither haile nor snow, thunder nor lightning, rain nor tempestuous winds come from the heavens at the commandement of God; but are raised by the cunning and power of witches

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[101] Thomas (1971), p. 530.

[102] Thomas (1971), p. 530.

[103] Purkiss, Diane, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), believes that the witch 'signifies both men's and women's idea of the bad lactating mother' which 'translate[s] into the elaborate fantasy of the witch and her suckling familiar' p. 134. Moreover, 'witches' suckling of familiars in the guise of animals blurred the boundaries between humans and animals' p. 134.

> and conjurers; insomuch as a clap of thunder, or a gale of wind is no sooner heard, but either they runne to ring bels, or cry out to burne witches; …
> But certainly, it is neither a witch, nor devil, but a glorious God that maketh the thunder.[104]

This claim that witches' power included influence over the weather reappears in *Newes from Scotland*, which relates how the witch Agnis Tompson

> confessed that at the time when his Maiestie was in Denmarke, she being accompanied with the parties before specially named, tooke a Cat and christened it, and afterward bound to each parte of that Cat, the cheefest partes of a dead man, and seuerall ioynes of …
> his bodies, and that in the night following the saide Cat was conueied into the midst of the sea by all these witches sayling in their riddles or Ciues as is aforesaide, and so left the saide Cat right before the Towne of Lieth in Scotland: this doone, there did arise such a tempest in the Sea, as a greater hath not beene seene: which tempest was the cause of the perrishing of a Boate or vessell comming ouer from the towne of Brunt Iland to the towne of Lieth, wherein was sundrye Iewelles and riche giftes, which should haue been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Maiesties comming to Lieth.[105]

Furthermore, these witches and

> the said christened Cat was the cause that the Kinges Maiesties Ship at his comming foorth of Denmarke, had a contrary winde to the rest of his Ships, then being in his companye, which thing was most strange and true, as the Kings Maiestie acknowledgeth, for when the rest of the Shippes had a faire and good winde, then was the winde contrarye and altogither against his Maiestie: and further the saide witche declared, that his Maiestie had neuer

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[104] Scot (1584), Booke I, Chapter I, p. 1 - 2.

[105] Anonymous, *Newes from scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of doctor fian a notable sorcerer, who was burned at edenbrough in ianuary last. 1591*, *EEBO The Huntington Library records — unstructured*, STC (2nd ed.) / 10842.3 (London: Printed by [T. Scarlet] for William Wright, 1592), p. 8.
https://www.proquest.com/books/newes-scotland-declaring-damnable-life-death/docview/2248504197/se-2 (accessed May 4, 2023).

> come safelye from the Sea, if his faith had not preuailed aboue their ententions.[106]

In attempting to destroy God's anointed sovereign, these witches were a threatening, disorderly incursion on early modern society. Purkiss notes how Scot focuses on the disorderliness of witches, in spite of his disbelief in their supposed magical abilities:

> Like demonologists, Scot equates witchcraft with inversion and disorder, but responds by arguing that such an inversion is inconceivable in the light of Protestant providentialism. […] Scot subsequently "explains" witchcraft as the outcome of a disordering of the witch's body and mind; in other words, as a mental illness.[107]

If witches lacked disordering magic, then they still possessed disordered minds. And if they *were* somehow dangerous, as Dolan notes, Scot's subsequent explanation of a witch's supposed danger, as not magical powers but a facility with poisons, still aligned her with a specifically feminine type of disorderly crime:

> Sir Reginald Scot, one of the earliest and best-known skeptics about witchcraft, links witchcraft practices to poison, which was associated with women's covert violence, criminality, and domestic treachery. […] Scot thus casts poison as a form of female power in which he can believe; in his view, poison, by empowering the weak, inverts social and domestic hierarchies in disturbing ways[.][108]

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[106] Anonymous, *Newes from scotland* (1592), p. 8 - 9.
Naturally, in recounting a case in which the king was threatened by witchcraft, it was in the interest of the pamphleteer to exaggerate the power of these supposed witches, both to heighten the supposed threat to his life and reign and also to demonstrate his own power, his 'faith', in overcoming them. He also writes that witches claimed that James was the target of the Devil because 'the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the worlde (*Newes*, 1592, p. 7). Naturally, this is a propagandistic piece, placing James as God's anointed and a King (and man) fit to vanquish the Devil. Orgel, Stephen, 'Jonson and the Amazons,' in *Spectacular Performances: Essays on Theatre, Imagery, Books and Selves in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 60 - 79, writes that 'James was convinced that there had been, from his youth, a systematic and continuous conspiracy against his throne and his life; those responsible were not any of the multitude of political enemies that did in fact fill the early part of his reign, but witches under the direct control of the devil', p. 65. He frames this mode of thinking psychologically, linking it to James's desire to contain and expel the chaos of his own birth and potential illegitimacy inherited from his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots. Witches, 'unreliable, powerful, dangerous,' in James's mind, he suggests, incorporated 'his general distrust of women': p. 66-7.

[107] Purkiss (1996), p. 65.

[108] Dolan (1994), p. 173.

Scot's tract was influential, though its mission to increase scepticism surrounding the supernatural influence of witches faced an increasingly uphill battle once the particularly witch-phobic James I came to the throne. As Anthony Harris writes,

> The work seems to have had considerable impact on Scot's contemporaries, although not always in the way in which the author intended. Ironically, the book is such a treasure-house of magic lore (with charms, spells and conjuring rituals set out, complete with diagrams) and contains such a host of authentic witchcraft tales and racy anecdotes that its main influence seems to have been to act as a source-book for other writers — including Shakespeare, Jonson and Middleton — most of whom culled the witchlore and ignored the accompanying ironic comments and refutations.[109]

Indeed, if Shakespeare agreed with Scot that there was little to fear from witches (as, indeed, he may well have), then he also recognised the dramatic potential in the early modern beliefs Scot was at pain to denounce. Scot viewed the accused witches as impoverished, impugned old women, whereas those denouncing them, if they believed their accusations to be true, accepted that these women had a supernatural connection to, and control over, the natural world. It is this aspect that Shakespeare put to use in his drama, since Shakespeare's witches do indeed share a great deal with those described by Scot and the *Newes from scotland*. There is a particular overlap in the portrayal of the Scottish witches in *Newes from scotland* and the 'secret, black and midnight hags' (4.1.62) of *Macbeth*, enough that Shakespeare's use of it as a source seems undeniable. All of these witches threaten shipwreck through manipulation of the weather. The First Witch promises to punish the 'master o' th' Tiger' (1.3.7), with her own power over the wind as well as that of her fellow witches (11-16): 'it shall be tempest-tossed' (25)—compare the 'contrary winde' of the *Newes*. The *Newes* states that the witches 'went by Sea each one in a Riddle or Ciue',[110] the First Witch of *Macbeth* says 'in a sieve I'll thither sail' (8). Both display their supernatural power by defying the limits of the natural world, traversing the waves without sinking in a vessel composed of holes. Tompson's use of a cat in her charms, a creature of the natural world, is also evoked in *Macbeth*, in the 'cauldron scene' of 4.1 where the witches toss multiple creatures into the pot, including a 'toad' (6), a 'fenny snake' (12), an

> Eye of newt and toe of frog,

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[109] Harris, Anthony, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 16.

[110] Anonymous, *Newes from scotland*, 1592, p. 6.

Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing (14-7).

Other witch-like figures in the plays also share these characteristics. The magic of Sycorax, the 'foul witch' of *The Tempest* (1.2.258) is also mediated through the flora and fauna of the natural world.[111] She has, according to Prospero, 'confine[d]' Ariel in 'a cloven pine' (1.2.274-77) and her magical charms, according to her son, were the result of a process in which 'wicked dew' was 'brushed / With raven's feather from unwholesome fen' (1.2.321-22). Like his witchy mother, Caliban too invokes the winds—an attempt, perhaps, to muster a similar curse as the ones she could conjure: 'A south-west blow on ye' he pronounces to Prospero, 'And blister you all o'er' (323-24). These two elements of witchcraft, control of the weather and the use of animals, are also invoked by Shakespeare in his characterisation of other types of female supernatural characters beyond witches. Titania, the fairy queen of *Dream*, is portrayed as in command of the natural world. Her speech describing the ill effects of the fairy monarchs' dissension (2.1.116) upon the natural world lists 'contagious fogs' (90) and 'rheùmatic diseases' of the air (105) as some of the most deleterious results.[112] Natural disorder, then, was a key component in Shakespeare's construction of his female supernatural characters.

A 'magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable' (*As You Like It*, 5.2.59 - 60)[113] Shakespeare's Supernatural Men

As we have seen, the early modern conception of a witch was of an unruly, disorderly woman who perverted the 'natural' role of woman. Shakespeare's witches, and other female supernatural characters, contain facets of this idea, and, crucially, all are aligned with a disordered natural world. But what of men who had access to supernatural powers? How were they thought about in early modernity? As Thomas notes, there were 'cunning men' and 'wise men' who offered 'a variety of services, which ranged from healing the sick

[111] Quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[112] All quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Holland, Peter (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[113] All quotes from *As You Like It* are from Dusinberre, Juliet (ed.), *As You Like It* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

and finding lost goods to fortune-telling and divination of all kinds',[114] but magic was also a realm of study, related to the sciences and philosophy, and it is this type of magical-man, the magus-type, that Shakespeare most often reached for when creating his male supernatural characters. As Gareth Roberts notes, there wasn't a single 'Renaissance Magic', no agreed upon definition as to what it comprised, its reach or its limitations. Instead, he writes, magic was 'plurally understood in the Renaissance'.[115] Two influential critics have both identified three main types of magical theorisation, perhaps conscious of the magical significance said to lie in the power of three. Thomas writes that there were '[t]hree main types of magical activity,

> natural magic, concerned to exploit the occult properties of the elemental world; celestial magic, involving the influence of the stars; and ceremonial magic, an appeal for aid to spiritual beings.[116]

Roberts, too, identifies three main discourses of magical thinking: orthodox, 'high magic' and popular.[117] Shakespeare's male magic seem most influenced by the early modern practitioners of 'high magic'.[118] These men were perceived as operating within a different, notably *higher* echelon than the female witch, so much so that even Reginald Scot had something, necessarily snide, to say on their behalf: these men were those who

> when they have either learning, eloquence, or nimblenesse of hands to accompanie their confederacie, or rather knaverie, then (forsooth) they passe the degree of witches, and intitle themselves to the name of

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[114] Thomas (1971), p. 209-10. Bladen and Brailowsky note the perceived lowness of this type of magic, particularly the fact that it was too close to what was perceived as feminine-type supernatural abilities for much comfort: 'In comparison with scholarly magic, lower magic was based on local, experiential and folkloric knowledge, not derived from bookish learning; this was the preserve of cunning women and men. Although this too was believed to be based on natural magic and an understanding of occult forces in nature, it was nonetheless often perceived as easily sliding into the dubious, "black" magic, requiring demonic assistance. Also, lower magic was often associated with the female witch, feared for her *maleficium*, the ability to cause harm to people and animals', p. 6.

[115] Roberts, Gareth, 'Marlowe and the metaphysics of magicians,' in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 55 - 73, p. 67.

[116] Thomas (1971), p. 233.

[117] Roberts (2000), p. 63-7.

[118] Purkiss (1996): 'The stage sorcerer engages with apprehensions about humanism and the power of print and rhetoric, most powerfully in *Dr Faustus*, and these engagements are heavily marked by assumptions about the connection between such topics and the masculine,' p. 184.

conjurors. And these deale with no inferiour causes: these fetch divels out of hell, and angels out of heaven; these raise up what bodies they lift, though they were dead, buried, and rotten long before; and fetch soules out of heaven or hell with much more expedition than the pope bringeth them out of purgatory. These I say (among the simple, and where they feare no law nor accusation) take upon them also the raising of tempests, and earthquakes, and to doe as much as God himselfe can doe. These are no small fooles, they go not to work with a baggage tode, or a cat, as witches doe; but with a kind of majesty.[119]

Shakespeare's male supernatural characters share a great deal with those early modern men delineated by Scot. 'Fetch[ing] divels out of hell' is reminiscent of 'that great magician, damnèd Glendower' (1.3.83) at work in *Henry IV, Part One*, who claims that he 'can call spirits from the vasty deep' (3.1.52).[120] (Indeed, Scot's use of the word 'fetch', sprightly and colloquial, may also have influenced Shakespeare's personification of the blustering Welsh magician.) The calling up of benign spirits ('angels') recalls Prospero's supernatural agent, his 'brave spirit' Ariel (1.2.206), whose airy nature is suggested by his promise to 'to fly', 'to ride / On the curlèd clouds' (1.2.190, 191-2). Scot's suggestion that magicians claimed to 'raise up what bodies they lift [list]' is also echoed in *The Tempest*, when, later in the play, Prospero's powers take on a more ominous aspect: 'graves at my command', he claims, 'Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth / By my so potent art' (5.1.48-50). This fearsome prospect has a redemptive, if still awe-(and fear?-)inspiring aspect in *Pericles*, in which Cerimon revives Thaisa, seemingly from the dead (3.2.75-94).[121] Like Prospero, Cerimon claims to have studied a 'secret art' (3.2.30),[122] and the scene in which Thaisa comes to life, with Cerimon's imperious calls for 'rough and woeful music' (85), can certainly project the 'kind of majesty' of which Scot speaks.

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[119] Scot (1584), Booke XV, Chapter I, p. 217.

[120] Quotes from *Henry IV, Part One* are from Bevington, David (ed.) *Henry IV, Part One* (The Oxford Shakespeare) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)

[121] Quotes from *Pericles* are from Loughnane, Rory (ed.), *Pericles* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2659 - 722.

[122] See *The Tempest*, where Prospero blames 'being transported / And rapt in secret studies' for why his brother was able to usurp the dukedom of Milan (1.2.76-7, 1.2.66-116).

According to Thomas, 'all the evidence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests that the common people never formulated a distinction between magic and medicine'.[123] We can see within Shakespearean drama the same slippage. Partly this is due to the early modern conception of the universe, which was perceived to be one of correspondences through and between the hierarchically ordered spheres of existence.

> [J]ust as an individual man was believed to mirror the world in miniature, so the hand or the face mirrored the man. Such systems worked by what the German, Cornelius Agrippa, called "the harmoniacal correspondency of all the parts of the body". From the disposition of the part one could infer that of the whole. In the same way one could accept the doctrine of signatures, according to which every herb bore a visible indication of its medical role. The work of the astrologers was similarly reinforced, for the influence of the celestial bodies upon the constitution of earthly ones could not be doubted. Even geomancy could be justified as the prophetic message of the soul communicated in a state of rapture[.][124]

As such, the stars at one's birth could be thought to influence one's body, mind and destiny. (This was not wholly accepted, of course, by everyone in society, and thus we can have Gloucester and Edmund in *King Lear*, two characters with wholly different views on the importance of the stars:1.2.103-17, 1.2.118-133).[125] But the theory underpinned much of the proto-scientific thinking of the era, and resulted in 'much lore about the astrologically derived properties of plants and minerals'.[126] If everything in the universe was connected by invisible correspondences, then the flora of the earth (itself affected by its position on the earth, the time of day it was harvested, and so on) could have effects on the human body beyond mere chemical alterations. The doctor-figures of Shakespearean drama reflect this magical-scientific thinking, and as no woman could become a licensed physician in early modern England, this type of science-magic was a learned branch of magic that was exclusive to men, along with the study of philosophy and theology, the preserves of

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[123] Thomas (1971), p. 800.

[124] Thomas (1971), p. 265.

[125] Quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997).

[126] Thomas (1971), p. 264.

all-male universities.[127] This magic, despite using the natural world, as a witch's might, was separated from the natural world by the magus-scientist's control of the elements. He used them, as opposed to being of a piece with them, displaying Agrippa's desire for 'control' over the natural world. No-one would ever accuse the male magus of being an earth bubble, as Banquo wonders about the witches on the heath (*Macbeth*, 1.3.79-80), nor are they to be found embedded within the natural world as Sycorax is in the threat from her son: 'All the charms / Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you' (*The Tempest*, 1.2.339-40). Thus Friar Laurence, picking the fateful herbs that will spur on the tragic denouement of *Romeo and Juliet*, combines a proto-scientific thinking with what, to a modern audience, sounds like magic:

> Now, ere the sun advance his burning eye
> The day to cheer and night's dank dew to dry,
> I must up-fill this osier case of ours
> With baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers.
> The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb.
> And from her womb children of divers kind
> We sucking on her natural bosom find,
> Many for many virtues excellent,
> None but for some, and yet all different.
> O mickle is the powerful grace that lies
> In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities (2.2.5-16)

As Kaara L. Peterson argues, Cerimon, in *Pericles*, is

> presented as an ideal physician, praised for his charity, unmatched medical skill, and rejection of material gain to the extent that his association with Aesculapius is explicitly invoked… Cerimon's treatment of Thaisa is long and pointed in its associations, with his reference to the "Egyptian" authority

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[127] Howard Traister, Barbara, '"Doctor She": Healing and Sex in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 333 - 347, differentiates between women who practised some form of medicine in the early modern era and licensed medical professionals (a profession only open to men): 'All non-licensed medical personnel — by far the largest group of medical practitioners in London — were labeled "empirics" and considered to lack proper medical training', thus '[w]omen who practised medical arts were by definition empirics, and a number of the unlicensed practitioners brought before the London College and accused of illicit practice were women,' p. 334-5.

perhaps invoking the pre-Hippocratic fragments of Egyptian papyri.[128]

This 'ideal physician' echoes Friar Laurence's language, explicitly linking Agrippa's 'harmoniacal correspondency' to medicine:

'Tis known I ever
Have studied physic, through which secret art,
By turning o'er authorities, I have
Together with my practice, made familiar
To me and to my aid the blest infusions
That dwells in vegetives, in metals, stones,
And so can speak of the disturbances
That nature works, and of her cures (3.2.29-36)

Another, this time licensed, physician within Shakespearean drama is Gerard de Narbonne, the father of Helen, protagonist of *All's Well That Ends Well*. His medicine also slips between science and magic. The first description of the medicine contains language that emphasises the experiments that have created it. Helen speaks of

some prescriptions
Of rare and proved effects, such as his reading
And manifest experience had collected (1.3.193-5).[129]

The 'remedy' is 'approved, set down' (1.3.200). But at the same time it is presented as something almost uncanny, the cure that no other doctor, not even the best that France has to offer, has managed to provide. The King despairs that

our most learnèd doctors leave us, and
The congregated College have concluded
That labouring art can never ransom nature
From her inaudible estate. (2.1.111-14)

However, de Narbonne's 'prescriptions' are able to do just that. Helen says that

There's something in't
More than my father's skill, which was the greatest

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[128] Peterson, Kaara L., 'Shakespearean Revivifications: Early Modern Undead,' *Shakespeare Studies*, Volume 32 (2004), 240 - 266, p. 253.

[129] Quotes from *All's Well That Ends Well* are from Loughnane, Rory (ed.), *All's Well That Ends Well*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2275 - 346.

> Of his profession, that his good receipt
> Shall for my legacy be sanctified
> By th' luckiest stars in heaven (1.3.214-18)

The language Helen uses here—'sanctified' suggests blessed whilst the reference to the 'luckiest stars' aligns with Cornelius Agrippa's theory of 'harmoniacal correspondency'—to describe the 'something' else within the medicine moves us away from science into the realm of the supernatural. Helen speaks of a 'triple eye' (2.1.103) and promises the King a miracle (2.1.129-40).[130]

Despite some overlap in the powers of male magician and female witch (notably, the 'raising of tempests, and earthquakes', i.e. a power to control the natural world[131]), there is a key difference which Scot points out. An indefinable 'kind of majesty' is contrasted with the work of the male magician's female opposite, the witch, who, as a woman, was naturally closer to nature than the more perfect man. Her magic was conducted through the 'baggage tode' (toad) and cat, as seen earlier in Agnis Tompson's use of a 'christened Cat' in her attempt to break up James's ship in a storm. The type of male magus-majesty noted by Scot and used by Shakespeare is notably bloodless, more akin to the spirits such magi were said to be able to call up than the corporeal, animal magic of the female witch. The male magician's 'majesty' was carried over and bequeathed to their stage counterparts: Prospero, in particular, dominates the stage as a magus-patriarch and is given a dignity denied to the likes of *Macbeth*'s witches or, indeed, the never-seen, much denounced Sycorax.[132]

Part of this 'majesty', I suggest, is the by-product of the mystique attached to higher learning: a completely male arena in the early modern era, since women were barred from the universities. Bladen and Brailowsky, too, have noted a certain gendered snobbishness in early modern conceptions of supernatural abilities:

> The practice of magic was traditionally gendered and subject to class

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[130] I will examine Helen's motivations for such occlusions of her own abilities in the fifth chapter of this thesis, *The Orderly Woman:* All's Well That Ends Well *and* The Winter's Tale.

[131] See Scot (1584), above, note 117.

[132] As Bladen and Brailowsky (2020) note, 'In *The Tempest*, the gendered polarity of magical practice is represented by the juxtaposition of Prospero, presented as an ennobled, scholarly sorcerer wronged by his enemies, and Sycorax, described as a "foul witch" […] (although since she never appears on stage, the audience only has Prospero's word for this)', p. 6.

> distinctions. Higher magic, ostensibly white magic, was based on learned, scholarly knowledge and seen as the preserve of male magicians, the respected magus revered (at least by some), often compared to celebrated contemporary examples. In this context, magic was considered as an extension of book-based knowledge, generally inaccessible to women through a lack of access to education and prejudice against female curiosity and power.[133]

A certain 'majesty' of learning and scholarly ambition is evident in the writings of Cornelius Agrippa:

> Magick is a faculty of wonderfull vertue, full of most high mysteries, containing the most profound Contemplation of most secret things, together with the nature, power, quality, substance, and vertues thereof, as also the knowledge of whole nature, and it doth instruct us concerning the differing, and agreement of things amongst themselves, whence it produceth its wonderfull effects, by uniting the vertues of things through the application of them one to the other, and to their inferior sutable subjects, joyning and knitting them together throughly by the powers, and vertues of the superior Bodies. This is the most perfect, and chief Science, that sacred, and sublimer kind of Phylosophy, and lastly the most absolute perfection of all most excellent Philosophy. [134]

As Roberts notes, this magus-like 'high' magic is composed of words, books and scholarly craft. Its languages were 'the learned ones of Greek, Latin and Hebrew'.[135] He writes,

> "high" magic, certainly cabalistic magic, [are] intensely textual practices and have long sought for the virtue of the "authentic" or "original" text. It may be no accident that some Renaissance humanists (such as Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Reuchlin, and Agrippa) were intensely interested in the power of words, editing, the restoration of authentic texts, and magic. […] The desire to reconstruct an original text promising access to its author might be analogous to cabalistic

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[133] Bladen and Brailowsky (2020), p. 5.

[134] Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Heinrich, *Three books of occult philosophy*, *EBBO Harvard University Library records - unstructured*, Wing / A789 (London: Printed by R. W. for Gregory Moule, 1651), Book I, Chapter II, p. 2 - 3. https://www.proquest.com/books/three-books-occult-philosophy-written-henry/docview/2240905163/se-2 (accessed May 4, 2023).

[135] Roberts (2000), p. 65. Thomas (1971): 'The intellectual study of magic was a European phenomenon emerging in the Florentine Italian Renaissance with the Platonism of such writers as Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, and spreading to Northern Europe through the works of Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa', p. 234.

attempts to rediscover the secret name of God by which he authored
(or author-functioned) creation.[136]

More than just being ‘about’ language, ‘high’ magic was a complete philosophy that sought both to imbibe and vault over the other sciences, to imagine a complete theorisation of the world, which is why, Roberts suggests, Agrippa referred to his studies an ‘occult philosophy’.[137] As such, ‘high’ magic as a practice signalled ‘a desire for knowledge and control over nature’.[138]

A desire for control over nature necessitates the magus to step beyond it, beyond nature’s reach, to divorce himself from the natural world. The female witch, on the other hand, is defined by her body and its closeness (closer than that of the male, at least) to the natural world. For Roberts, ‘magic was a male art, which commands supernatural power, and was quite unlike witchcraft, which was a female practice which supplicates it’.[139] I would add a further distinction: for male practisants, the magic remained separate from their own self. It was located in books and academia, theorised as a form of learning. We might mention here Caliban’s know-how in overthrowing Prospero. The magus’s power is ‘embodied not in Prospero himself but in […] objects’,[140] three key stage props: his robe (Prospero calls it his ‘magic garment’, 1.2.24), his ‘staff’ (5.1.54), and the one most emphasised throughout the play, tellingly for my argument, his *book*. When abjuring his magic, Prospero promises that he will ‘drown [his] book’ (5.1.57). Caliban, plotting to overthrow the magician, repeatedly tells his co-conspirators: ‘Having first seized his books’ (3.2.87), ‘Remember / First to possess his books; for without them / He’s but a sot’ (89-91), ‘Burn but his books’ (94). As Egan writes, ‘Prospero himself perceives this separation of his artistic function [his magical powers] from his identity as a man to the extent that he can, in

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136 Roberts (2000), p. 58.

137 Roberts (2000), p. 65.

138 Roberts (2000), p. 66.

139 Roberts, Gareth, “An art lawful as eating’? Magic in *The Tempest* and *The Winter’s Tale*,’ in *Shakespeare’s Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 126 - 42, p. 128-9.

140 Egan, Robert, *Drama Within Drama: Shakespeare’s Sense of his Art in* King Lear*,* The Winter’s Tale*, and* The Tempest (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 93.

putting off his garment, say, "Lie there, my Art" [1.2.25]'.[141] For female magic users, usually termed witches, it is a corporeal power, rooted in their body. (Hence the belief in the 'witch's mark', the so-called evidence of her power, which is to be found on her body: her power *is* her body.) Where Prospero is the well-read magus, Sycorax, his opposite in the play, is a 'blue-eyed hag' (1.2.269). 'Hag' meant witch, 'blue-eyed' is a possible reference to pregnancy,[142] the two together are another mark of her irreducibly corporeal magical existence.

However, as will be shown, Shakespeare's portrayal of Prospero and Sycorax is not so simple and straight-forward as that. These characters do not restrict themselves to their side of the gendered binary but encroach upon their opposite, until the two apparent poles blur and ambiguity reigns. Sycorax shares aspects of the magus and Prospero turns out to share a great deal with the 'foul witch'. They are two characters who share traits with their dramatic, supernatural precursor: Medea. Though there is still a key gendered difference that distances them from each other—the fact that Prospero may 'abjure' his magic, since it is not rooted in his bodily nature, unlike Sycorax—Shakespeare prods and questions his own characters' constructions and early modern gendered thinking. There are no dictats nor easy generalisations in his character construction, nor his plays as a whole. To illustrate this point I here take a look at the character Glendower, from *Henry IV, Part One*, to demonstrate how, in a smaller role, Shakespeare's construction of a supernatural character incorporates the stereotypical aspects of early modern thinking about both masculine and the feminine supernatural characters to create a character who does not fit neatly into either category. Glendower is one of many Shakespearean characters for whom ambiguity is central. No-one in the play seems to have a firm grasp on who, exactly Glendower is, nor are they truly sure of the limits of his powers. For Glendower's own part, he cultivates this ambiguity and claims that there are *no* limits to his abilities, though this ambiguity and his claims, as we will see, are ultimately undercut.

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[141] Egan (1975), p. 93.

[142] Orgel glosses 'blue-eyed' as 'generally explained as "with blue eyelids", implying pregnancy', p. 116. Loughnane, Rory (ed.), *The Tempest*, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) similarly reads 'blue-eyed' as 'with blue eyelids (considered a sign of pregnancy', p. 3083.

'That great magician, damned Glendower' (*Henry IV, Part One*, 1.3.83)[143]

At first glance, the 'damnèd Glendower' of *Henry IV, Part One* appears to be the male magician, par excellence, helpfully displaying all the facets of the specifically masculine magic-user illustrated above. By his own admission, Glendower is highly literate, speaks at least two languages, cultured (raised at court, no less), articulate and with an especial facility for wordplay (3.1.41-47, 117-22). However, he is a creation of Shakespeare (as opposed to the historical figure upon whom he was based) and as such he cannot possibly be as straightforward as he first appears. His depiction as a stereotypical male magus cannot simply stick to one half of a rigid gendered binary. And so it proves: though male, he is an unruly and disruptive presence on the stage and within the historical narrative of the play. And, like those unruly female supernatural characters, his supernatural powers are presented through natural imagery.

As the line 'great magician, damned Glendower' suggests, there are two facets to Shakespeare's presentation of this supernatural character. Whilst he is 'damned', like a witch, almost always a female supernatural creature, he is at the same time a 'great magician', a phrase that may also describe the host of male supernatural characters, such as Prospero and Cerimon, whose powers, because they are acquired through scholarly arts somehow absolve their bearers of the evil taint of witchcraft. Glendower is proud of his learning, boastfully asking,

> Where is he living, clipped in with the sea
> That claims the banks of England, Scotland, Wales,
> Which calls me pupil or hath read to me?
> And bring him out that is but woman's son
> Can trace me in the tedious ways of art
> And hold me pace in deep experiments (3.1.43-48)

No female supernatural character lays claim to an 'art', or boasts of a superiority in 'deep experiments': this is a particularly male aspect of supernatural ability, one of scientific learning and experimentation, as opposed to a conception of supernaturalism rooted in natural imagery, as seen with the characters of Titania, Sycorax and the witches of *Mac-*

[143] All quotes from *Henry IV, Part One* are from Bevington, David (ed.), *Henry IV, Part One* (The Oxford Shakespeare) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

beth.[144] Glendower also claims musical accomplishment: 'I framed to the harp / Many an English ditty lovely well' (3.1.119-21), which links him with another magician-like figure who appears to know the secrets of the music which can revive the almost-dead, *Pericles*' Cerimon. Glendower's impressive learning is reinforced by Hotspur's frustrated complaint

> Sometime he angers me
> With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
> Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
> And of a dragon and a finless fish,
> A clip-winged griffen and a moulten raven,
> A crouching lion and a ramping cat,
> And such a deal of shimble-shamble stuff
> As puts me from my faith. I tell you what:
> He held me last night at least nine hours
> In reckoning up the several devils' names
> That were his lackeys. (3.1.144-54)

Mortimer tells us that Glendower is 'Exceedingly well read and profited / In strange concealments' (3.1.162-3), a line (163) glossed by Bevington as 'proficient in occult arts'.[145] 'Strange concealments' recalls Prospero's 'secret studies' (1.2.77): the idea of hidden away knowledge hinting at both Prospero and Glendower's having read a very great deal and possessing the sort of penetrating intellect necessary to uncover these buried truths. Like Prospero, who wields control over Ariel, his 'brave spirit' (1.2.206), Glendower 'can call spirits from the vasty deep' (3.1.52) and summon invisible music-makers to 'hang in the air a thousand leagues hence' (3.1.220). Though we never see those watery denizens (and Hotspur must have the cynical last word on them: 'Why, so can I, or so can any man, / But will they come when you do call for them?' (53-4)), in the case of the musical spirits summoned by Glendower, here the play, as *The Tempest* does, colludes with the magician. The audience too hears the music. Howard and Rackin note that

> Shakespeare's text supports Glendower's project—and his claim to magical power—with the stage direction "*The music plays*" … In fact, Shakespeare seems in this scene to be complicit with the Welsh

[144] The phrase 'woman's son' recalls the witches of *Macbeth*'s elliptical description of Macduff as 'none of woman born' (4.1.79). This oblique echoing reminds us that Glendower, like Prospero, shares aspects of the female witch.

[145] Bevington (1987), p. 250.

magician. Together they detain—and entertain—their audiences with
an idyllic interlude that interrupts the progress of the historical plot.[146]

This reference to genre, the historical genre of *Henry IV, Part One* and Glendower's nature which is at odds nature with it, again suggests that Glendower, and his supernatural powers, may be an interloper from another genre, that of romance. Rosalie Colie suggests that 'the political magician Glendower, and his lyrical daughter' are characters 'of romance',[147] a intriguing proposition which invites speculation that Glendower may be an early draft for a character more suited to a type of play that Shakespeare may already have been thinking about but hadn't yet attempted to write. Wales as a site for a supernaturally-inflected reunion and renewal figures prominently in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, a later romance (*Cymbeline*, 3.6).[148] Viewed as a figure from romance, his affinity with Cerimon and Prospero is brought into sharper distinction. The presence of a romance character within a history play means that Glendower disrupts and disorders the narrative order. His entry into the history play is as disruptive as the birth of Glendower is on the natural world (3.1.12-16), his presence as disorderly as his powers which disrupt the natural order. Glendower's disorderly nature—usually, in early modern conceptions of gender and in Shakespeare's presentations of supernatural characters, the preserve of women—is a key aspect of his character, and a substantive example of how Shakespeare complicates his presentation of the learned, male magus type.

According to Bach, 'Shakespeare's history plays, all of which depict England in disorder, are profoundly interested in how manliness is constructed and maintained'.[149] She writes, following Laqueur, 'in Renaissance England there was no firm biological distinction between men and women', creating a concern that a man might become (or, arguably,

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[146] Howard and Rackin (1997), p. 173.

[147] Colie, Rosalie L., *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 22.

[148] The magical tone of the Wales-set scenes is set out clearly in the following lines:

Belarius: Is not this boy revived from death?
Arviragus: One sand another
Not more resembles that sweet rosy lad
Who died, and was Fidele. (5.6.120-23)

Quotes from *Cymbeline* are from Loughnane, Rory (ed.), *Cymbeline* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2975 - 3068.

[149] Bach (2003), p. 220.

‘decline into’) a woman. ‘Shakespeare’s history plays,’ Bach goes on, ‘are especially concerned with demonstrating the womanliness (or monstrosity) of men who violate their duty to God, their king, and their country. Such men are often described in the history plays as “effeminate”’.[150] To be a man, Bach argues, was to be an orderly, loyal subject; a disorderly rebel, whatever their sex, could not possibly conform to a masculine role. So, when Glendower says outright, ‘Come, here is the map. Shall we divide our right / According to our threefold order ta’en?’ (3.1.68-9), his masculine status is immediately troubled.[151] That Glendower is a disruptive presence in *Henry IV, Part I* is clear in his intention, along with the other rebels at odds with Henry IV, to break up the established order, boundaries and landscape of the British mainland. In this, he is both “effeminate”, as Bach notes, and he is also akin to the female supernatural agents of disruption of the Shakespearean canon: he presents in himself both ‘womanliness’ *and* ‘monstrosity’. Glendower himself declares that he was born to disorder the natural world:

> At my nativity
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
> Of burning cressels, and at my birth
> That frame and huge foundation of the earth
> Shaked like a coward. (3.1.12-16)

His garrulous nature (he repeats, in the face of Hotspur’s disbelief, that ‘[t]he heavens were all on fire; the earth did tremble’ (3.1.23)) reveals another aspect of Glendower’s supernatural self-conception.[152] Recounting his birth, when ‘the front of heavens was full of fiery shapes,’ he adds another highly site-specific detail: ‘The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds / Were strangely clamorous to the frighted fields’ (37-39). The moun-

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[150] Bach (2003), p. 220.

[151] Highley, Christopher, ‘Wales, Ireland, and “1 Henry IV”, in *Renaissance Drama*, Vol. 21 (1990), 91 - 114, notes the correspondence between Glendower and another Celtic-fringe traitor to the English nation-state, Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, p. 95-6, 98. He further notes the instance when Robert Cecil referred to Tyrone as ‘the Diana’ and argues that

> On the surface, Burgh’s analogy can be taken as a commonplace attempt to disarm Tyrone by effeminizing him, just as Hotspur emasculates Glendower by likening the Welshman’s garrulousness to that of “a railing wife” … But the analogy, which rests upon the association of Tyrone and Diana as forest dwellers, also demonizes Tyrone by linking him to a goddess whom the Renaissance portrayed from one perspective as a dangerous and unconfined figure, an Amazon who existed outside and in defiance of established, male, power structures’, p. 100.

[152] As Bach also notes, Glendower’s talkative nature is another way in which he conforms to an early modern conception of femininity, p. 235. And see Highley (1990), p. 100.

tainous, rural Welsh landscape is precisely, evocatively conveyed in this swift reference. Glendower's Welsh nationality appears as an important part of his self-identification, the natural landscape of the place especially. He is emphatically linked to the place, presented almost as a part of the landscape:

> Three times hath Henry Bolingbroke made head
> Against my power, thrice from the banks of Wye
> And sandy-bottomed Severn have I sent him
> Bootless home and weather-beaten back. (3.1.62-5)

The specificity of 'sandy-bottomed'—the reader or auditor can vividly picture an image of the warrior-wizard standing ankle-deep in the riverbed—roots Glendower firmly in his natural landscape. It seems to follow on, as natural, that his supernatural powers should be to command these elements.[153]

That Glendower's nationality should take such precedence in his characterisation is of a piece with the character's links with the feminine and the supernatural. Howard and Rackin, tracing the origin of Shakespeare's use of Wales as a symbolic signifier in *Henry IV, Part I*, write that the 'double association of Wales with savagery and with female power had a precedent as ancient as Geoffrey of Monmouth'.[154] They point especially to a story related in Holinshed, and alluded to by Shakespeare in *Henry IV, Part I*. Westmorland relates that a 'thousand' of the English army were 'butchered' and that,

> Upon whose dead corpse there was such misuse,
> Such beastly shameless transformation,
> By those Welshwomen done, as may not be
> Without much shame retold or spoken of. (1.1.42-46)

This 'shameless transformation', implying castration, suggests that in 'Shakespeare's historical source as in his play, Wales', as well as a place of 'beastly' wildness, 'is identified as

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[153] Holinshed, Raphael, *The firste volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, *EEBO Harvard University Library records - unstructured*, STC (2nd ed.) / 13568b (London: for John Hunne, 1577), writes of Glendower that 'as was thoughte, through arte magike, he caused such foule weather of windes,[17008] tempest, raine, snowe, and haile to be raysed, for the annoyance of the Kings army, that the lyke had not bin heard of', p. 1134 - 5. https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2254612484/Sec0289/96F74E117FAF4A1CPQ/1?accountid=10673&docview_hit_text=Glendower#017025 (accessed August 4, 2023).

[154] Howard, Jean E. and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 169. Westmorland refers to the 'irregular and wild Glendower' (1.1.40), pointing up his 'savage' nature, as to be expected of one so closely associated with Wales.

the source of emasculation and female power'.[155] It is not only the Welshwomen of Westmorland's tale who emasculate and overpower men: Glendower's daughter, whom he describes as 'a peevish self-will'd harlotry' (3.1.193), renders Mortimer helpless with the glamour and beauty of her singing (3.1.194-218). The wild, feminine Wales, Howard and Rackin write, 'anticipates [Shakespeare's] representation of Cleopatra's Egypt, another exotic, alien nation where, as Caesar complains, Antony "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" [1.4.5-7]'.[156] This place of savage women remains far from English (male) control, almost the inverse of an orderly, male-coded England: as Rackin points out, '[n]o women fight on the side of the English'.[157] Wales, in this play, is ruled and epitomised by the 'irregular and wild Glendower' (1.1.40), an effeminate magician.

Holinshed's influence on the play reminds us of the important point concerning the portrayal of Glendower's supposed magical abilities, that *Henry IV, Part I* is a *history* play. As will be seen later on in this thesis, the genre in which Shakespeare was writing influenced and changed how he presented the supernatural characters he chose to inhabit said play-world. In *Henry IV, Part One*, Glendower's claims to magical art are consistently held to the fire, by Hotspur especially. His is a constant cry of cynicism, the rough voice of the 'realistic' world of *Henry* IV: Harris refers to it as 'scoffing rationalism'.[158] To Glendower's claim that the sky was afire at his conception, Hotspur replies, 'Why so it would have done at the same season / if your mother's cat had but kittened, though yourself / had

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[155] Howard and Rackin (1997), p. 169. Garrison (2018) concurs, arguing that the 'manner in which the dead are treated signifies the savage nature of the Welsh', p. 95. He writes that the Welsh women's actions completely disorder the normal processes of reproduction: they 'revive[…] English soldiers only to kill them and have them sexually abused in order to underscore the ways that political rebellions interrupt normative heterosexual reproduction. Put simply, dead soldiers cannot father children who will grow up to become more soldiers. The strange allusions to necrophilia in the aforementioned passages dramatize this by showing the uselessness of the soldiers' penises and the perverse purposes to which they are put. These English bodies stand in for the threatened demise of Englishness, and the erotic interaction with them signifies their inability to produce additional English bodies through sexual reproduction', p. 95.

[156] Howard and Rackin (1997), p. 173. Quotes from *Antony and Cleopatra* are from Bourus, Terri (ed.), *Antony and Cleopatra* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 2567 - 2657.

[157] Rackin (2005), p. 49.

[158] Harris (1980), p. 139.

never been born' (3.1.17-19). The abrupt undercutting of Glendower's lofty verse with Hotspur's hardened prose heightens the effect of the change in register, from magical cosmology to spare likelihood. In this manner, Hotspur appears as a possible precursor to *King Lear*'s Edmund, another young man born too far from the political power he dreams of, who butts heads with an older man too credulous of the 'heavens' for his liking.

Furthermore, Hotspur, in disavowing Glendower's presumptuous claims for self-importance ('These signs have marked me extraordinary, / And all the courses of my life do show / I am not in the roll of common men' (3.1.40-42)), nevertheless reiterates and re-emphasises Glendower's close connection to the natural world of his birth, almost as if the truth of it seems too evident even for Hotspur to cavil at.[159] The 'earth,' according to Hotspur,

> shook to see the heavens on fire
> And not in fear of your nativity.
> Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth
> In strange eruptions. Oft the teeming earth
> Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed
> By the imprisoning of unruly wind
> Within her womb, which for enlargement striving
> Shakes the old beldam earth and topples down
> Steeples and moss-grown towers. At your birth
> Our grandam earth, having this distemperature,

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[159] Hotspur's continuous bathetic undercutting of Glendower's claims are reminiscent of an aspect of romance that Janet Clare, in *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), identifies in Fletcher's *Philaster*. '[F]ollowing the disappearance of Arethusa, is comic in its irreverence. The King equates monarchy with superhuman powers and demands categorically that his daughter be found: "I do command you all, as you are subject, / To show her me! What, am I not your King? / If ay, then am I not to be obeyed?" (4.4.30-2). To which Dion makes the reasonable rejoinder that obedience can only follow 'things possible and honest'. This prompts even more outlandish claims:

> 'Tis the King
> Will have it so, whose breath can still the winds,
> Uncloud the sun, charm down the swelling sea
> And stop the floods of heaven. Speak, can it not?
> (4.4.42-5)

To which Dion utters a simple, emphatic, and bathetic "no", a striking instance of the play's undermining of high-flown rhetoric,' p. 242. *Henry IV, Part I*, an early history play, then, may have provided an early influence on the construction of the romance dramatic genre, in which, as Clare notes, the 'tenor of the dialogue, speaking more of ridicule than subversion, has affinities with the near-absurdities', p. 242.

In passion shook. (3.1.24-34)

Whilst destroying Glendower's claims to exceptionalism, Hotspur still aligns him with nature, a 'diseased', 'unruly' or disordered natural landscape with an emotive, active 'beldam earth' whose human-like activity and conditions ('colic pinched', or ridden with a (human) illness, 'vexed', 'distemper[ed]' and possessed of a 'passion') suggest a labouring mother. In this analogy, of the labouring earth-mother, the child being born would be Glendower himself, a monstrous, supernatural type of birth, Glendower the child of Wales herself. This birth is a source of disruption whose specifics, the 'toppl[ing]' of 'steeple and moss-grown towers', are echoed in Titania's description of natural disorder in *Dream* (2.1.91-2) and Lear's description of the apocalyptic storm:

Rage, blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'the world (3.2.1-7)

As we have seen, then, Shakespeare complicates Glendower's initial presentation as a male magus by aligning him with the natural world and to feminine disorderliness. Partly this is the result of the genre of *Henry IV, Part One*. Glendower may share romance-related affinities with Cerimon and Prospero, but there is a telling difference: Cerimon and Prospero's powers are treated with an solemn, deferential respect by the characters with whom they share a stage. Cerimon's awe-struck admirers praise his skill: 'The heavens / Through you increase our wonder, and set up / Your fame for ever' (3.2.92-94). Prospero's future son-in-law, Ferdinand, is equally agape: Prospero is 'so rare a wondered father', his magic 'a most majestic vision' (4.1.123, 118). Glendower, however, is mocked almost relentlessly, by Hotspur (who dominates the text with his railing) and this is of a piece with his feminisation. Highley notes that in Glendower's first appearance on the stage, he is a rather different type of man from what has been described to us.[160] 'That devil Glendower' (2.4.357) who has triumphed on the battlefield is actually, in Hotspur's scornful terms, 'as tedious / As a tirèd horse' or, even worse, 'a railing *wife*' (3.1.154-55, my emphasis). 'Glendower acts as courteous host to his fellow rebel-lords, boasts of his profi-

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[160] Highley (1990), p. 99.

ciency in English and musical composition, shows a civilized self-restraint, and even yields to Hotspur over the issue of land distribution,' Highley writes, and this is a presentation which 'domesticates' the wizard, 'invalidating his frightening reputation,' until he becomes a 'figure of ridicule'.[161] Part of this invalidation is the removal of Glendower from the masculine field of battle to the feminine domain of the home and the family. The bathos of the hyper-masculine warrior with the power to control the elements who is revealed to be a feminised home-body is emphasised by his complete removal from the battlefield. We never see the Glendower in battle. The reason for this (Glendower is 'o'erruled by prophecies' (4.4.18)) is Shakespeare's creation,[162], and 'its inclusion has the effect of nullifying Glendower's alleged "magic"—transforming it from a potential source of opposition to the state into a rationale for inaction'.[163] Glendower's magic is denigrated and feminised: no longer a method of war, it is a method of avoiding war, avoiding the masculine arena to remain within the locus of the feminine, the home. Indeed, the only textual evidence we have of Glendower's powers is within the home, when he calls on his spiritual house musicians to play. This is resolutely *not* the magic of war but domestic, feminine.

We have seen then how Glendower's characterisation combines the learned male magus prototype with the witch's natural and disorderly magic, rooted in the corporeal body. Indeed, the latter seems to win out. It is in such a way that Shakespeare, through genre and characterisation, creates ambiguity within and between supposed binary poles: male/female, order/disorder, incorporeality/corporeality. This may not be surprising. As Smith notes, the 'trouble with binary oppositions, as any reader of Derrida will tell you' is that 'they are arbitrary. They don't stay put'.[164] He notes the 'tendency of X to become A, no matter how carefully one polices the boundaries between the two': 'If 'man' needs 'woman' in order to be 'man', then womanliness will constantly threaten to erupt from within'.[165] This is especially true of characters in stage plays where, as McEachern has it, the 'call-and-response dialogic requirements of drama mean that no proposition in a play ever

[161] Highley (1990), p. 99.

[162] Highley (1990), p. 99.

[163] Highley (1990), p. 99 (quoting Zitner).

[164] Smith (2000), p. 127.

[165] Smith (2000), p. 127.

goes unchallenged'.[166] Shakespeare is constantly working between the two poles, male and female, order and disorder, incorporeality/corporeality to create his drama. As will be seen, however, there *are* limits to this ambiguity: Shakespeare's presentation of female supernatural characters root their abilities in their disorderly bodies, whereas his male supernatural characters' abilities are not. This thesis will explore both how Shakespeare creates ambiguity and where, it appears, that he cannot.

Nature and the Female Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama

The structure of this thesis is as follows: in the first chapter, I examine the characterisation of Joan la Pucelle—or Joan of Arc, or St. Joan—of *Henry VI, Part One*: her many names are a further sign of her essential nature as multiplicity. Her nature as plural is in contrast to Talbot, epitome of masculine (read: patriarchal) order, and I examine the role the many (possible) authors of *Henry VI, Part One* may have played in Joan's multifaceted presentation. As part of investigating who is responsible for the different Joans of the different Acts of the play, I examine the various ways Shakespeare depicted scenes in which spirits are summoned, including those in *Henry VI, Part Two*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* (as well as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*), to tease out what Shakespeare, or Marlowe, or Nashe, or all three, may have meant to suggest by Joan's actions in *Henry VI, Part One*. I find that one important difference between Joan and those male sorcerers who summon spirits (Faustus and Prospero) is the fact that she offers her body: 'My body shall / Pay recompense if you will grant my suit' (*Henry VI, Part One*, 5.2.39-40).[167] In this way, the authors of *Henry VI, Part One* emphasise the importance of the female supernatural character's corporeality, her body, to her supernatural abilities, in contrast to the male supernatural characters.

This contrast, between the bodily nature of the female supernatural characters' abilities and the incorporeal nature of the male supernatural characters' magical abilities, is also to be found in the next two plays I examine: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Both feature twin pairs of supernatural characters, male and female, with the female standing for disorder and the male (loudly, self-consciously) standing for order: Tita-

[166] McEachern (2010), p. 188.

[167] Quotes from *Henry VI, Part One* are from Burns, Edward (ed.), *King Henry VI, Part One* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London, New York and Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000).

nia and Oberon and Sycorax and Prospero. I investigate this supposed binary, as well as the supposed benevolence of the violent, controlling patriarchal order both male characters claim for themselves. I also find that the supposed binary is just that—supposed. I show how both Oberon and Titania and Prospero and Sycorax share more than divides them, particularly Prospero and Sycorax who are both strongly influenced by the ancient witch-prototype, Medea. However, a binary does remain between the sexes. Sycorax and Titania's supernatural abilities are rooted in their body, as befitting the early modern dichotomy Shakespeare supports in his drama: that the female sex is disorderly. Female supernatural characters, whose powers stem from their body, cannot 'abjure' their powers, as Prospero does (*The Tempest*, 5.1.51), because they, both in their bodily nature and their powers, are essentially disorderly.

I continue to explore the questioning, blurring ambiguity of Shakespeare's presentation of the supernatural in the third chapter of the thesis, examining the treatment of the order/disorder binary (and its representation through both male and female characters who deal in the supernatural) in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. In *Macbeth*, disorder is brought about by characters who disorder the gender binary within themselves (the witches, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth), and in *King Lear* the binary between order and disorder is shown to be null, that order and disorder contain within themselves their opposite. Shakespeare includes in this play a gendered presentation of natural world, in that it is aligned with the female characters. Nature's dual aspects in the play are aligned with the two sets of female characters, with Goneril and Regan representing the disorderly and Cordelia a beneficent view of nature that would almost stand for order, if it did not ultimately fall and die.

My fourth chapter is an examination of two supernatural female characters who are aligned with masculine, patriarchal order. Reading *The Winter's Tale*, I explore the order/disorder, male/female binary through the characterisation of the 'mankind witch' Paulina, who, like Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well,* provides cover for her own disordering 'magic' power by claiming a male source for it. Her magic is in the service of order, preserving the royal family and ensuring the happy ending of the tragicomedy.[168] Female disorder, as figured in Paulina and Helen, recreates masculine order, and by doing so, Helen ensures the life and vitality of the French royal line (and secures herself the husband of her choosing

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[168] As Egan (1975) writes, 'Shakespeare… deals with an urge to actualize in reality the vital patterns of order inherent in art', p. 3.

as well), whilst Paulina, in preserving Hermione, ensures the recreation of the patriarchal, nuclear family. The line between male/order and female/disorder is shown to be null and Helen's use of the male discipline of medicine and Paulina's use of the male artist-persona, that of Guilio Romano, for their quasi-supernatural roles are a purposeful ambiguity, unlike those seen in previous chapters. Moreover, Shakespeare provides one final subversive swipe at the idea of the disorderly female: Paulina's revivification of Hermione is a thrilling dramatic set-piece, a bravura example of the male art of the theatre: the disorderly female's supernatural power is shown to be Shakespeare's own.

Disorderly Joan: The Nature of La Pucelle

Henry VI, Part One

Henry VI, Part One presents an examination of order and disorder amid an increasingly fractious, dangerous play-world of England and France. The two countries are at war. On the 'home side' is Talbot, the courageous, chivalrous, hyper-masculine war hero. He is, in Geoffrey Bullough's terms, the 'epitome of order and loyalty'.[169] For David Riggs, in *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories*, Talbot is defined by his 'drive towards a godlike transcendence over all that is base and vile'—'godlike' control over that which is disorderly—with Joan characterized as, in contrast, 'a "base" Amazonian monster'.[170] Continuously counterposed with Talbot throughout the drama, Joan la Pucelle, the holy maid in men's armour, is the only one to match him in physical prowess and stage power, and indeed, she is shown to overpower him in both. Joan is a female character active and successful in the male space of war.[171] Unlike Talbot, who deals only in the tangible power of the sword, Joan also has recourse to supernatural, spiritual aid. 'It is not surprising that Shakespeare's female characters often come to the stage trailing clouds of supernatural power,' Rackin notes, as Joan most certainly does. Her argument posits this facet of Shakespearean women in the irregularity of their theatrical position, contra the supposedly lesser status of early modern women in society. Female authority, therefore, was an 'inconceivable reality', 'female power' was 'intolerable' and 'incomprehensible within the categories of patriarchal thought'. As such, any female character displaying either authority or power 'could be rationalized only in terms of the supernatural'.[172] Incomprehensible, inconceivable, intolerable: Joan is, to the English forces, all three. She resists and repulses Talbot, and with him, English patriarchal society. Bullough, like Riggs, considers her in opposition

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[169] Quoted in Bernhard Jackson, Gabriele, 'Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc', *English Literary* Renaissance, December, 1988: 40 - 65, p. 40.

[170] Riggs, David, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories:* Henry VI *and Its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 21.

[171] Chernaik, Warren, 'The paper crown: *1*, *2*, and *3 Henry VI*,' in *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 23 - 44 notes that 'Talbot is given a prominence as English champion far more than in the chronicles — at times he seems to be fighting the French wars singlehanded — and the symbolic opposition of Talbot and Joan La Pucelle is largely Shakespeare's invention', p. 29.

[172] Rackin, Phyllis, 'Patriarchal History and Female Subversion,' in *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 146 - 200, p. 193-94.

to Talbot, describing her as the '"epitome of disorder and rebellion"'.[173] In this chapter, I explore Joan's disorderliness as a possible consequence of her discordant characterisation in a play written by multiple authors recounting events previous to those already staged in *Henry VI, Part Two* and *Henry VI, Part Three*. I will tease out how best we should 'read' (or watch) the scene in which Joan's supernatural nature is 'proved', the scene in which she summons her 'familiar spirits' (5.2.31), through a comparison with other staged scenes of spirit summoning by Shakespeare's contemporaries and Shakespeare's own earlier and later instances.[174] I will then explore how Joan's creators and characterisation may have influenced Shakespeare's later handling of his female supernatural characters and their disordering relationship to patriarchal society.

Joan of *Henry VI, Part One* is perhaps one of the most described characters and yet all of these many instances of description seem only to contradict one another, as opposed to creating a cohesive character. She is both 'a shepherd's daughter' (1.2.72), as well as one 'issued from the progeny of kings' (5.3.38); one who claims to the Dauphin that she 'exceed[s]' her 'sex' (1.2.90) but is otherwise resolutely feminine, both conventionally—the 'Bright star of Venus' (1.2.144), 'Divinest creature, Astreea's daughter' (1.5.43)—and unconventionally: 'an Amazon' (1.2.104), 'the English scourge' (1.2.129) and a 'woman clad in armour' (1.5.3). She is both sanctified, the chosen one of 'Christ's mother' (1.2.106), one whose 'profession's sacred from above' (1.2.114), a 'holy' and 'glorious prophetess' (1.4.101, 1.5.47), '[v]irtuous and holy, chosen from above' (5.3.39), even 'France's saint' (1.5.68), whilst at the same time being 'a witch' (1.5.6, 1.5.21), an 'ugly witch' (5.2.55), either the 'Devil, or devil's dam' (1.5.5), 'damned sorceress' (3.2.37), 'that railing Hecate' (3.2.63), the 'Foul fiend of France and hag of all despite' (3.2.51). Both saint and sinner, Joan is both virgin and whore. She is a 'virgin from her tender infancy' (5.3.50), 'sweet virgin' (3.3.16), and, less resolutely, '[a] maid, they say' (2.1.21). Concurrently, she is also an 'Excellent Puzel' (1.2.110), a 'high-minded strumpet' (1.5.12), and sometimes the sexual slurs are inflected with notions of the supernatural: she is a 'cursed drab' (5.3.32), a 'vile fiend and shameless courtesan' (3.2.44). This seemingly endless plurality is a lasting impact of the chronicle sources for the play. Edward Hall's Joan is similar-

[173] Bernhard Jackson (1988), p. 40.

[174] All quotes from *Henry VI, Part One* are from Burns, Edward (ed.), *King Henry VI, Part One* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London, New York and Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000).

ly given multiple descriptors,[175] and, as Chernaik points out, 'Holinshed's account of Joan shows a similar ambivalence, speaking of her in one passage as "of person stronglie made and manlie, of courage great […] an understander of counsels", and in another castigating her "excrable abhominations", including "conversations with wicked spirits"'.[176] In *Henry VI, Part One*, all of these many descriptions, spoken by her supporters, her enemies and Joan herself, create a dramatic soundscape in which truth and lies merge into a chaos of presentation and perception from which there can only be one certainty: Joan, in this play, *is* ambiguity. A 'maid and monster, oracle and witch', she 'appears a paradox embodied'.[177] As this paradoxical ambiguity, Joan disrupts gender norms, and so presents a frightening aspect to the patriarchy. Joan blurs the gender binary within herself, is both masculine, in 'exceed[ing her] sex' in martial prowess (1.2.89-90), and is a passive, feminine 'prophetess' (1.4.100-01), mere vessel and conduit for the Virgin Mother's visions (1.2.74-83). She is both a 'holy maid' (1.2.51) and an 'Excellent Puzel' (1.2.110), a quibble on the homophone of Pucelle/Puzel (a pun repeated by Talbot in an attempt to denigrate Joan and dismiss her claims of virginity, and in doing so, further demonstrating the ambiguity of

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[175] Hall's *Chronicle* (1548), or *The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*, elaborately describes Joan as

> mayd; monster; Ione the puzell; oracle; soothsayer; deuilishe wytche; sathanicall enchaunterese; sorceresse Ione (called the mayde, sent from GOD); witch or manly woman; blotte … to the Frenche nacion; shepherdes daughter; a chamberlain in a hostrie; beggers brat; an enchateresse; an orgayne of the deyill, sent from Sathan, to blind the people and bring them in vnbelife; supersticious sorceresse, and a diabolical blashemeresse of God; a persone schismatike and erroneous, in the lawe of Iesu Christe; pevishe painted Puzel; Image or an Idole; fale prophetisse, and seducer of the people.

Quoted in Speiss, Stephen, 'Puzzling Embodiment: proclamation, *La Pucelle*, and *The firft Part of Henry VI*,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. by Valerie Traub (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 93 - 111, p. 94. Speiss (2016) writes that Hall 'catalogues Jeanne in a manner symptomatic of this larger cultural impetus to name her through profusion', p. 94.

[176] Chernaik (2007), p. 30.

[177] Speiss (2018), p. 94. He adds that 'the Bastard of Orleans inaugurates the play's dominant leitmotif by proclaiming Joan's substance in—and as—profusion', p. 102.

Joan's status, 1.4.106).[178]. For Burns, the Pucelle/Puzel quibble is not so much a pun as an 'exposure of a set of shifting and overlapping connotations generated from one variously spelt word'. He notes yet another connotation buried in Pucelle/Puzel, that of 'pizzle, an Elizabethan term for penis': 'The woman in man's clothes wielding a sword is a pucelle with a pizzle, and therefore a puzzle'. In just this way, he writes, the 'play expands the figuration implicit in the term to create in one role a summation of binary categories normally seen as discrete — saint/witch, peasant/gentry, villain/hero, man/woman, virgin/whore'.[179] Joan contains and confounds each side of these binary distinctions, and for Schwarz, Joan's character is 'a kind of exemplary chaos'.[180]

I concur with each of these arguments. However, I would refine these claims for Joan as a puzzling chaos. I would argue that the chaos that comprises Joan's character is the result of the terms in which the male characters attempt to define Joan overlapping, inaccurately, with how Joan defines herself. As in Speiss's reading, I argue that the play's characterisation of Joan 'incorporates' these 'terms of division into her physical substance'.[181] These two presentations of Joan, her own self-portrayal and the portrayal of her given to us by the male characters, do not match and, in fact, the male characters' perspectives skew ours, the audience's, into misreading how Joan defines and presents

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[178] Burns, Edward, 'Introduction,' in *King Henry VI, Part One*, ed. by Edward Burns (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London, New York, Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), pp. 1 - 103, p. 26. As Burns notes, 'In English, "pucelle" means virgin, "puzel" means whore. The two English words can be used in performance to create a double perspective on Joan; she can be played as fully aware of her own implicit ambiguity', p. 26. Speiss (2018) notes that through this pun, Burgundy (and, I would add, Talbot) 'discloses one of the play's dominant strategies for resolving Joan's puzzling status: 'they' will locate Joan in the 'tearme[s] of her sexual and gendered substance', p. 102.

[179] Burns (2000), p. 26.

[180] Schwarz, Kathryn, 'Fearful Simile: Stealing the Breech in Shakespeare's Chronicle Plays,' in *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 79 - 107, p. 86.

[181] Speiss (2016), p. 94.

herself.[182] We can see this in the male characters', both French and English, insistent sexualization of her, against her claims to virgin purity.[183] Gutierrez notes this in her analysis of Act One, Scene Two in which 'the onlooking Frenchmen' watch and interpret Joan and the Dauphin's conversation and physical confrontation 'as verbal sexual foreplay'.[184] This scene, according to Gutierrez, acts 'much like a play within a play', with 'the actual audience measur[ing] the onlookers' comments against their own experience of the scene', thus 'call[ing] attention to the act of interpretation': 'Joan is represented to the English audience through the filter of the French perspective'.[185] Though a great deal can be done in staging to either complicate or facilitate this problematising of interpretation, nevertheless the Frenchmens' commentary can be read as possible stage directions within the dialogue, and this is an interpretation of the text for which encouragement can be found throughout the drama. Though Joan presents herself as a 'virgin from her tender infancy, / Chaste and immaculate in very thought' (5.3.50-51), the male characters sexualise her continuously. Alençon, watching Joan and the Dauphin, muses cynically that '[t]hese women are shrewd tempters with their tongues' (1.2.123), hearing only seduction in Joan's claims of divine power.[186] Charles, too, though he is won over, is very much won over in sexual terms: 'Meantime look gracious on thy prostrate thrall', he asks, when Joan has bested him in physical combat (1.2.117). He appears to believe her claims to divine inspiration but a sexual fascination is obvious. 'Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?' he begins,

> Thou with an eagle art inspired then.
> Helen, the mother of great Constantine,
> Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters were like thee.

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[182] Gutierrez, Nancy A., 'Gender and Value in *1 Henry VI*: The Role of Joan de Pucelle,' *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 42 (1990), 183 - 193, writes that, 'While the French, throughout the play, have "constructed" Joan as a cross-dressing whore, and the English have "constructed" her as a witch from hell, Joan's words and actions have suggested that she is neither. However, the perspectives of both the French and the English have been presented to the audience as providing the correct interpretation of Joan. From the very beginning, Joan haas no power to impose her self-fashioned identity upon the world of the play', p. 192.

[183] In my reading, whether Joan actually *is* a virgin is besides the point. She may not be, however she claims that she is, and the male characters' refusal to view her as such skews our, the audience's, perception of her, to such an extent that we perhaps cannot take her at her word.

[184] Gutierrez (1990), p. 189.

[185] Gutierrez (1990), p. 189.

[186] Burns (2000) writes that 'Alençon subverts the sanctity of her initial self-presentation by sexualizing her rhetorical skills: "These women are shrewd tempters with their tongues" [1.2.123], as he puts it in the scene where she wins over the Dolphin, a scene riddled with *double entendre*', p. 29.

Bright star of Venus, fallen down on the earth,

How may I reverently worship thee enough? (1.2.140-45)

'Venus,' goddess of love, is a pagan reference overlaying Joan's own Christian language, insists on imposing a carnal sexuality upon Joan, a sexuality that she denies in herself. Speiss writes that Joan's 'interlocutors reconfigure her […] through the "intelligible" logic of feminine lasciviousness and disorder'.[187] Such constant prejudicial interpretation means that Joan's own words can then appear to the audience as further evidence of such a characterisation. Joan is adamant in her claims:

I must not yield to any rights of love,

For my profession's sacred from above:

When I have chased all thy foes from hence,

Then I will think upon a recompense. (1.2.113-16),

However, such is the French noblemen's influence, few readers will read, few audiences will hear and few actors will speak these lines as anything other than as coy flirtation.

In this way, the male characters of *Henry VI, Part One* disorder our, the audience's, perception of Joan, over-writing her own self-characterisation, reading 'Venus' when what was written was 'virgin'. But Joan's paradoxical nature is not simply a matter of an insistent, blinding male gaze. Her fragmented character is the result of textual fractiousness as well. Critical consensus, for the most part, now agrees that *Henry VI, Part One*, is the result of a collaboration by Shakespeare with at least two other playwrights. Thomas Nashe's authorship of Act One has similarly gained critical consensus: Brian Vickers, evaluating the claims of various scholars as to the composition of the play, writes that '[a]fter the work of Stalker, Dover Wilson, Mincoff, Vincent, and Taylor, we can attribute Act 1 of the play to Nashe with a high degree of probability'.[188] Sarah Neville's edition of the play for *The New Oxford Shakespeare* writes that: 'Shakespeare is consistently identified as

[187] Speiss (2018), p. 103. He adds that '[w]hen she proclaims holy virginity, the Dauphin reads her as an erotic object', when 'she negotiates with Charles', Alençon repeats the usual invective against women's speech (1.2.123), p. 103. The English forces act in much the same way, seeking to 'stabilize Joan's excess significance through the repetition of terms and paradigms […] as if the English might smother her beneath the slanderous sediment', p. 103.

[188] Vickers, Brian, 'Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Coauthorship in *1 Henry VI*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3, Special Issue: The Complete Shakespeare (2007), 311 - 352, p. 339.

the author of 2.4, 4.2, and parts of 4.3-4.5; his scenes are probably later additions. Nashe almost certainly wrote all of Act 1'.[189]

Evidence for Nashe's involvement is mainly stylistic: MacDonald P. Jackson writes of Act One's 'jerkiness and its plethora of grammatical inversions'. These, according to Jackson, 'do not belong within Shakespeare's stylistic range', but they do, however, very much belong in Nashe's.[190] Harlow, whose work Vickers does not seem to have consulted in his survey, is nevertheless in agreement. Harlow writes:

> The weightiest evidence for Nashe's authorship… [is] the presence in Act 1 of the play of apparent borrowings from [Henry Howard's] *A Defensative [against the Poison of Supposed Prophecies]* which was a major source for Nashe, but of which Shakespeare is reputed to show no knowledge whatever.[191]

These borrowings include a reference to the Sibyls (1.2.56), which had cropped up in Nashe's *Christ's Tears* and *The Unfortunate Traveller*.[192] That Nashe most likely wrote this passage is important as it is in Act 1 that Joan's disorderly nature and the male characters' hand in the creation of this is most in evidence. The reference to the Sibyls of Rome appears in Act 1, after the Bastard, presenting Joan to the Dauphin, initially claims,

> Be not dismayed, for succour is at hand:
> A holy maid hither with me I bring,
> Which by a vision sent to her from heaven
> Ordained is to raise this tedious siege
> And drive the English forth the bounds of France. (1.2.50-54)

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[189] Neville, Sarah (ed.), *The First Part of King Henry the Sixth; or, Harry the Sixth,* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2016), p. 926. She lists Shakespeare as responsible for the adaptation, p. 923. See also Craig, Hugh, 'The Three Parts of *Henry VI*,' in *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mysteries of Authorship*, ed. by Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 40 - 77, pp. 41-2.

[190] Jackson, Macdonald P., 'Shakespeare's Early Verse Style: *Titus Andronicus*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Arden of Faversham*,' in *Early Shakespeare, 1588 - 1594*, ed. by Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 102 - 120, p. 113.

[191] Harlow, C. G., 'The Authorship of *1 Henry VI* (Continued),' *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (1965), 269 - 281, p. 272.

[192] Harlow (1965), p. 272.

'Succour', 'holy maid', 'vision… from heaven', '[o]rdained': the language is insistently Christian, anointing Joan, as it were, in divine virtue. However, his next claim, the reference to the Sibyls, complicates this presentation: 'The spirit of deep prophecy she hath, / Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome' (55-56).[193] For Tricomi, this last claim is of a piece with the first: 'The Bastard's description sets forth several hallmarks of a saint. Acclaiming Joan as "A holy maid," the usual requirement for a female saint, the Bastard attests that she has been visited by a heavenly "vision," another mark of divine favour, and, tellingly, that she has been endowed with a gift of "deep prophecy."'[194] According to his argument, that the authors (here, Nashe) of *Henry VI Part I* first suggest that Joan is a saint and then unmask her as a fraud as part of 'the most strategically developed dramatic inversion of a saint's play that we have from the post-Reformation period',[195] merely claiming Joan as a saint was indication enough of her disruptive potential in post-Reformation England. I, however, would argue that the Bastard's claim that Joan's gift for prophecy exceeds that of the Sibyls of Ancient Rome is evidence of a male character claiming on Joan's behalf something she has not herself said, and thus muddying and confusing her characterisation. The Bastard here introduces yet another way to read Joan—this time as a pagan prophetess—when Joan portrays herself as emphatically Christian. Burns notes that the 'rhetoric Puzel uses of herself is biblical rather than historical, and refers persistently to the Catholic doctrines associated with the Virgin Mary'.[196] Even when she is calling upon her 'familiar spirits' (5.2.31) for prophetic aid, those she calls upon are definitively within the sphere of early modern Christian belief. They are the 'substitutes / Under the lordly monarch of the north' (5.2.26-7), that is, the servants of the Devil.[197]

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[193] As Burns (2000) notes, in much the same way, the Dauphin will later 'expresses his admiration for Joan Puzel in a series of apparently unrelated types, a confusion of Christian, Old Testament and classical' (1.5.43-49, 56-70), p. 45. Speiss (2018) argues that 'the Bastard's thick description serves less to codify than to confound', that the many figures he conjures up to describe Joan with, '[m]ale and female, mythical and biblical, maid and mother, daughter and wife' mean that 'Joan emerges amidst a patchwork of names and absent bodies', p. 102.

[194] Tricomi, Albert H., 'Joan la Pucelle and the Inverted Saints Play in *1 Henry VI*,' *Renaissance and Reformation*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2001), 5 - 31, p. 11

[195] Tricomi (2001), p. 25

[196] Burns (2000), p. 46.

[197] Burns (2000) notes that 'the lordly monarch of the north' is the 'name for the devil derived from Isaiah, 14.13', Note 27, p. 259.

The Dauphin's reference to pagan prophetesses disorders Joan's Catholic self-presentation. This disruption disorders Joan's presentation by layering on another rhetorical framework through which to understand her character, a rhetorical framework that complicates any easy understanding through the introduction of apposite references, references that send the reader or auditor to similar, but in ways crucially different, signifiers than those first introduced by Joan. That Nashe was the author of these passages would be fitting, as, according to Hutson, it was Nashe's way to 'push[…] language […] in the direction of the material and perceptual pleasures of meaning's disruption'.[198] In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe had 'undermin[ed] any possibility of distinguishing those who legitimately claim to speak in God's name from those who are merely impostors'.[199] He does the same again in *Henry VI, Part One* with Joan.

In this way, Joan is a precursor to a similar female character who acts in the masculine sphere: Helen, in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Helen too argues for herself as a mere vessel for holy power, just as Joan does: *All's Well*, 2.1.134-39; Henry VI, Part One, 1.2.106, 113-14.[200] And, as with Helen, Joan's self-perception is over-written by her male witnesses, who instead suspect a sexualised form of witch-craft (*All's Well*: 2.1.70-76; *Henry VI, Part One*, 3.2.44). For Hodgdon, it is because Joan 'threatens to disrupt and violate gender polarities' that 'the French as well as the English label her a strumpet, while the English further demonize her' as a witch.[201] Bernhard Jackson concurs. Joan's gender-disrupting is alarming and because of this, she must be quelled: 'By far the most popular strategy for neutralizing the manly woman was to feminize her'.[202] *Henry VI, Part One* does this by taking away Joan's sword, removing her from the battlefield and situating her, at last, within the magical circle in which she summons her 'familiar' spirits (5.2.31). (The

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[198] Hutson, Lorna, 'Fictive Acts: Thomas Nashe and the Mid-Tudor Legacy,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485 - 1603*, ed. by Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 718 - 32, p. 723.

[199] Hutson (2009), p. 730.

[200] All quotes from *All's Well That Ends Well* are from Gossett, Suzanne and Helen Wilcox (eds.), *All's Well That Ends Well* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[201] Hodgdon, Barbara, 'Enclosing Contention: *1*, *2*, and *3 Henry VI*,' in *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 44 - 99, p. 55.

[202] Bernhard Jackson (1988), p. 59.

term ‘familiar’ further feminises Joan: the spirits who took the shape of small animals to aid witches in their *maleficium* were referred to as ‘familiars’; the spirits summoned up by practitioners of ‘high’ magic were never referred to as such.[203]) This feminisation flattens and limits her power, and it is in keeping with the driving rhetorical force of Act 1 that it is orchestrated by a male character. It is Talbot, the ‘epitome of order’, who fires off the first witchcraft accusation. Initially he cannot comprehend why it is that he has been beaten in combat by a woman: ‘My thoughts are whirled like a potter’s wheel, / I know not where I am nor what I do’ (1.5.19-20). Despite this, in his next line, a cause has been discovered: Joan is a ‘witch’ who ‘by fear, nor force, like Hannibal, / Drives back our troops and conquers as she lists’ (21-22). Of course, Joan is later ‘unmasked’ as a witch, the narrative of the play seeming to confirm her male prosecutors, in Act 5 when she calls up her ‘familiar’ spirits (5.2.31). But she is termed one before we see this (and, in fact, the audience is the only one to see her make the attempt[204]). Gutierrez notes that Joan’s summoning scene is a culmination of the male characters’ efforts to construct her as the sort of woman capable of such an act:

> Act 5 shows Joan finally and irrevocably as the male characters and the audience have fashioned her. Whatever options she had as a character—and these options are evident in the kind of disjunction noted by so many critics…—these options are narrowed to the one meaning acceptable to the patriarchal construct of the play [205]

Bernhard Jackson notes that this ‘conjuring, once established, assigns her to an overwhelmingly female class of malefactors’,[206] a ‘conventional female threat,’ in Gutierrez’s phrasing, who is ‘treated conventionally: she is burned’.[207]

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[203] Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 530.

[204] Dickson, Lisa, ‘No Rainbow without the Sun: Visibility and Embodiment in *1 Henry VI*,’ *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 30 (2000), 137 - 156, p. 151.

[205] Gutierrez (1990), p. 192, see also p. 185.

[206] Bernhard Jackson (1988), p. 60.

[207] Gutierrez (1990), p. 193. Chernaik (2007) reads the end of the play slightly differently but ultimately reaches the same conclusion, that Joan’s power is denuded before she is destroyed: ‘The degradation of Joan in the final scenes can be seen as a way of neutralizing the threat she represents. Stripped of her demonic allies, she is revealed as a mere woman after all, and is punished for stepping out of line’, p. 30.

One of the defining aspects of this 'female class of malefactors' was the supernatural power of their words. Other than her beyond-belief martial prowess, it is Joan's words that are the most powerful, and thus dangerous for the English forces, Burgundy especially. Talbot calls her 'that railing Hecate' (3.2.63), 'railing' being a gendered term of contempt for woman's words. (Hecate, 'goddess of witchcraft'[208] reappears in *Macbeth*, to harangue, then frolic with, the three witches (3.5).[209]) And in the turning of Burgundy, though Joan claims only that her words are 'sugared' (3.3.18), the Dauphin urges her to 'Speak, Puzel, and enchant him with thy words' (3.3.40) and Burgundy, whether he believes it or not, ponders whether 'she hath bewitched me with her words, / Or nature makes me suddenly relent' (3.3.58-9). The use of 'nature' here is important because Shakespeare's supernatural female characters' powers are always rooted in their bodily nature. Burgundy, tellingly, does not define further this vague 'nature' that has led him to betray the English: is it his own, Joan's, or the nature of her supernatural words? How much of Joan's characterisation here is Nashe's work? Nashe's established interest in the inherent ambiguity of words and the limits of their meaning would suggest that this aspect of Joan's witchcraft, if not ultimately penned by him in these scenes, might at least be considered an element of his lasting influence throughout the work.

The change in Joan's characterisation, between Act 1, in which the term 'witch' may be read as a mere misogynistic insult, to Act 5, in which the audience alone witnesses her sorcery and she is sentenced to a witch's death, lines up with what Hugh Craig has found in his research into the disputed authorship of *Henry VI, Part One*, that the 'middle and later Joan sequences' are the work of Christopher Marlowe.[210] In his tests, Craig has corroborated Thomas Merriam's earlier work, using his 'parallel-passages technique' to deter-

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[208] Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), note 53, p. 124. All quotes from *Macbeth* are from Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[209] The scene is largely thought to be written as a result of a revision of the play at a later date by Thomas Middleton: see Brooke (1990), pp. 57-9. 'Hecate', however, is referenced several times throughout the play, in scenes securely to be thought written by Shakespeare: 'witchcraft celebrates / Pale Hecate's off'rings' (2.1.53) and 'to black Hecate's summons' (3.2.44).

[210] Craig (2009), p. 62. These sequences are 'on the Marlowe side of the line' in the graph of his 'lexical-word tests' (p. 63), meaning that 'Two of the three Joan sequences use words Marlowe favours, and avoid works he also neglects, sufficiently to align them with his 44 segments rather than the 1254 by other writers', (p. 62) whereas Joan's 'early sequence' is 'on the other side', i.e., not by Marlowe (p. 62). Sarah Neville (2016) agrees, writing that 'Marlowe is clearly the author of 5.4 and 5.5, and probably other scenes featuring Joan in Acts 2-5. There may be a fourth writer', p. 926.

mine Marlowe's authorship of these passages.[211] Merriam had noted there were a great many parallels to Marlowe's work *Doctor Faustus* in the scene of Joan's spirit-summoning, the most extended being the line 'aid me in this enterprise' (5.2.28).[212] Gary Taylor agrees, finding several 'unique parallels' between *Faustus* and Joan's summoning scene.[213] If Marlowe were the author of this new, later interpretation of the historical Joan, we have yet another male author writing his own version of what this character represents. 'Let us assume,' Craig writes,

> that Joan la Pucelle, in the middle of the play at least, is indeed the creation of Marlowe. Our perspective on her immediately shifts. Her alliance with fiends and witches, her scoffing rhetoric, her acting under disguise, are then those of a Marlovian villain. Her origins and ambitions come into focus: she is the daughter of a shepherd, aspiring to wield exceptional power based not on inheritance but on native wit and daring.

'If Marlowe wrote the later scenes in which she is involved', he notes, then 'her abrupt descent into witchcraft and fornication would find parallels in *Doctor Faustus* in particular'.[214]

There are undoubtedly issues with the 'parallel-passages' technique. The process, writes Ed Pechter, is always 'constructed on an unstable foundation': 'impressionism'.[215] Though the 'negative check'—ensuring that the passage or phrase appears only in the two texts found by the adventuring scholar, as opposed to perhaps being a thought or phrasing more general to the time—'helps to reduce […] the problem; parallel passages, even "fairly unobtrusive" ones, will always be compromised by the subjectivity of their origins'.[216] As Craig himself writes,

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[211] Craig (2009), p. 59-60.

[212] Craig (2009), p. 60. He also notes Merriam's other identifications of parallels with Marlowe's work in this scene: 'Another of Merriam's examples is "regions under earth" [5.2.31-2] […] In *2 Tamburlaine* we find the words "the region under earth" (IV.iii.32); Merriam reports that there is no parallel phrase in Shakespeare or in any other play of the period collected in *Literature Online*', p. 60.

[213] Taylor, Gary, 'Who Read What When?,' in *Early Shakespeare, 1588 - 1594*, ed. by Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 284 - 301, p. 296.

[214] Craig (2009), p. 67-8.

[215] Pechter, Ed, 'Against Attribution,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 69, Issue 4 (2018), 228 - 255, p. 238

[216] Pechter (2018), p. 239. See also p. 237-38.

> Particular difficulties [in determining authorship] with these plays arise from the fact that they come from a period when individual authorship was less established than later. The fact that it was far less common to name an author on a play's title-page in the 1590s than later is a good indication of this. Moreover, it may well be more difficult to detect the distinctiveness of individual styles in history plays of this period than elsewhere because the genre itself was getting established in the early 1590s, writers were learning rapidly from each other, and strong influences like Kyd's, Marlowe's, and Shakespeare's were felt everywhere.[217]

Is the result of an author's contribution to a collaboration really so different, one feels compelled to ask, to the result of another author's writing in the style, or under the influence, of that first author? We could say, for instance, that the Joan of Act Five of *Henry VI, Part One* is Marlowe's creation. Is there so much of a difference between that and the Joan of another author, Nashe, say, or Shakespeare, writing a Joan *in the style of* Marlowe's Faustus or Tamburlaine? Pechter nods to this in his cautionary essay 'Against Attribution'. Quoting David Lake, Pechter notes that 'passages "striking in thought or diction" are problematic because they are "open to imitation," leaving us uncertain whether we're hearing Shakespeare or an imitation or parody or unconscious echo of Shakespeare'.[218] Acknowledging that Shakespeare was 'immersed in his professional environment', he argues against a too-narrow focus on 'collaboration', arguing instead for an 'expanded sense':, asking scholars to consider, instead of asking whether Shakespeare was 'working with' another author, asking instead how he may have 'worked out' of their work.[219] Janet Clare echoes this call, asking for an emphasis on 'circularity rather than linearity' in works researching the supposed sources of the Shakespearean canon, keeping in mind the early modern 'theatrical economy of exchange and negotiation'.[220] It was within this economy that Shakespeare earned himself some notoriety for some perhaps over-zealous circulari-

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[217] Craig (2009), p. 44.

[218] Pechter (2018), p. 238.

[219] Pechter (2018), p. 235. See also p. 235 for Marlowe and the *Henry VI* plays. Stanivukovic, Goran, 'The Language and Style of Early Shakespeare,' in in *Early Shakespeare, 1588 - 1594*, ed. by Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 76 - 101, notes that 'Stylistic appropriation was a staple feature of the poetics in the 1590s, poetics in which writers achieved originality by imitation,' p. 77.

[220] Clare, Janet, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 18.

ty. 'Henry Chettle's oblique attack, under the mantle of Robert Greene', as is well-known, paraphrased a line from *Henry VI, Part Three* describing the blood-thirsty Queen Margaret (*Henry VI, Part Three*, 1.4.137).[221] Clare highlights the subtleties of the insult, drawing a line between 'imitation — though bereft of the positive sense it has in Renaissance theory'—the sort that showed an author to be lacking in the rhetorical skills to properly carry off the allusion[222]—and 'theft'.[223] Though there was no sense of 'proprietary interest' in these claims about the creation of certain phrases or ideas, these attacks do show that there were 'anxieties and animosities generated by the commerce and competition of early modern theatre practice'.[224] They show, perhaps, that Shakespeare, in his early career, may have borrowed a little too liberally for his antagonistic fellows.[225] Stanivukovic quotes Schoenbaum, who suggests that 'when the Greene pamphlet calls Shakespeare "an upstart crow", its author echoes Horace's reference to "the crow divested of its plundered lustre,"' thus 'implying Shakespeare's appropriation'. What Shakespeare is especially being accused of lifting is 'bombastic blank verse'[226]: i.e., Marlowe's forte.

As Clare also notes, early modern dramatic texts 'quote from and refer to other plays, and seem to have been written and produced in the knowledge that there was an

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[221] Clare (2014), p. 30. All quotes from *Henry VI, Part Three* are from Cox, John D. and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), *King Henry VI, Part Three* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

[222] Clare (2014), p. 2-7.

[223] Clare (2014), p. 10. She notes that 'classical and Renaissance theory presented the crow as a superficial imitator', p. 10.

[224] Clare (2014), p. 11.

[225] This is not to say that there has not been extensive debate about what, exactly, Shakespeare was being accused of in *Groate's-worth*. Sharpe, Will, 'Collaboration and Shakespeare's Early Career,' in in *Early Shakespeare, 1588 - 1594*, ed. by Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 54 - 75, notes that '[t]he implications of the *Groatsworth*'s reference to Shakespeare (the crow of Horace or Aesop, the actor aping writers through performance or turning writer himself, plagiarist or patcher) continue to be a matter of vehement debate. Brian Vickers has recently restated that it refers exclusively to actors as speaks of poetry stealing the writers' limelight. In this figuration, Shakespeare is not being discussed within the context of authorship at all', whereas 'Rory Loughnane argues that *Titus* was not a collaboration in the true sense, and that the comment could imply Shakespeare's taking over others' incomplete plays without credit' (p. 57). Sharpe, for his own part, writes that 'there has not been to my mind any consistent suggestion that being beautified with the feathers of others in this sense might also refer to the reflected glory got from co- or collaborative authorship', p. 58.

[226] Stanivukovic (2020), p. 76.

interpretative community well acquainted with others representing similar dramatic narratives and motifs, and therefore in anticipation of some collaboration with their auditors'.[227] Could Joan, or the Joan of Act Five, at the very least, have been created as a specifically Marlovian reference? Could some of her many descriptors have been referents to a specific type of early modern dramatic creation? There are certainly broad parallels between the characterisation of Joan and Marlowe's Faustus: both are humbly-born: Joan is (sometimes) referred to as a shepherd's daughter; Faustus's parents are 'base of stock' (Prologue, line 11). Both exhibit a brazen 'self-conceit' (*Faustus*, Prologue, 20): for Joan it is a belief in her own divine favour and earthly martial prowess, for Faustus it is his own 'cunning' (20). The self-belief of both individuals powers their ascent to the heights of their society only for them to fall down to earth at the end.[228] The Chorus' summation of Faustus's travails, 'His waxen wings did mount above his reach' (20-21), could describe Joan's rise and fall as well as his own. There are also similarities, and intriguing divergences, in the scenes in which Joan and Faustus summon their spirits, which will be examined further in a later section of this chapter.

If early Joan, whose presentation demonstrates a mischievous prodding at the essential ambiguity of language, is the product of Thomas Nashe and late Joan, whose sudden turn to gratuitous, hair-raising demoniacal theatrical bombast is a creation similar to those other great tragic heroes of Christopher Marlowe, where does Shakespeare figure into this?[229] If he were working in tandem with these two other writers, and we cannot reconstruct exactly the nature and mechanics of early modern theatrical collaboration, what did he make of Nashe and Marlowe's differing interpretations of this one female character? Did these writers' creations feed into what Shakespeare would go on to explore through

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[227] Clare (2014), p. 26. She adds, '[f]or an audience watching one play through the lens of another there is an enlargement of meaning', p. 26. Stanivukovic (2020) concurs, arguing for 'a dramatic culture in which homage, parody, and competition defined the manner of writing plays as much as any definite sense of collaboration', p. 78. Archer, Harriet, 'Poetry, Counsel, and Coercion in Shakespeare's Early History Plays,' in *Early Shakespeare, 1588 - 1594*, ed. by Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 147 - 166 also notes that the historical record available for playwrights to plunder was itself 'a collaborative endeavour, as sceptical, polyvocal, and composite texts like Holinshed's *Chronicles* and the *Mirror for Magistrates* make clear', p. 148.

[228] All quotes from *Doctor Faustus* are from Scott Kastan, David (ed.), *Doctor Faustus* (Norton Critical Editions) (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005). All quotes are from the 'A-Text'.

[229] Clare (2014) notes that the *Henry VI* plays 'echo[…] the dramatic speech of Marlowe', p. 144.

his own female characters whose power lies in the supernatural, in their verbal conniving? What does Joan's witchy nature tell us about how Shakespeare tackled ideas of gender, nature and the supernatural? Comparing the characterisation of Joan in *Henry VI, Part One* with other supernatural characters, both female and male, from other plays within the canon can help us grasp an idea of the potential evolution of Shakespeare's thinking about these ideas.

Nashe was, of course, not alone in considering the potential ambiguity of language. Shakespeare too explored the destabilising potential of apparently comprehensible language through the supernatural, including female witches. This is seen most clearly in *Macbeth*, where the 'riddling words' of the three witches are their defining trait and they are the clearest evocation of the play's concern with muddied meanings. They share too Joan's gender disruption. These witches confuse Banquo as to their gendered appearance: 'You should be women. / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so' (1.3.46-48). The witches also perform a summoning ritual, another facet of witch-belief of use to dramatists. As Bernhard Jackson writes, it is this act that effectively damns Joan, disregarding all her previous ambiguity and completing her 'feminization'. But what would an early modern audience have thought was being signified when presented with a mock-demonic summoning? Whilst folk belief maintained that witches could and did summon 'familiars' who they treated as quasi-children and used to practise their *maleficium* upon their victims, it is debatable as to how much such stories were 'believed' as fact.[230] Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* had presented a speaking part for a devil character who was shown to be rational, urbane, almost human. Mephistopheles' characterisation is more akin to Shakespeare's later fairy-king Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than he is to the silent, unyielding spirits raised by Joan, those who '*walk and speak not*' (5.2.33). Unlike those spirits, who make only brief appearances and speak very little, if they are not completely silent, Mephistopheles is a fully constructed character, shown to have motives unknown to Faustus and to be capable of complex, even scholarly argument. When Faustus asks whether it was his summoning that brought Mephistopheles to the stage, the devil's answer is full and thorough:

> That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*;
> For, when we hear one rack the name of God,

[230] Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 527.

Abjure the Scriptures and his Savior Christ,
We fly in hope to get his glorious soul;
Nor will we come unless he use such means
Whereby he is in danger to be damned. (1.3.44-54)

Faustus's summoning is detailed in full in Marlowe's text (even though, according to Mephistopheles, it is ultimately pointless): almost every facet of its creation is included, from the time of day (1.3.1-4), to what is involved in the drawing of the circle (7-9), filled as it is with the ''breviated names of holy saints, / Figures of every adjunct to the heavens, / And characters of signs and erring stars, / By which the spirits are enforced to rise' (10-13). Faustus's Latin incantation is also featured at length (16-22). The one thing that is occluded is what, exactly, Faustus has 'sacrificed' to the spirits (7). This sacrifice is mentioned only once, briefly and never again elaborated upon. This is in direct contrast to the scene of Joan's summoning in *Henry VI, Part One*. That Joan has sacrificed herself to call up her spirits, sacrificed her physical body, is emphasised throughout Joan's pleading.

Where I was wont to feed you with my blood,
I'll lop a member off and give it you
In earnest of a further benefit
So you do condescend to help me now. (5.2.35-8)

The importance of Joan's body—her female body—to her demoniacal act of summoning is a point more forcefully re-emphasised a few lines later:

No hope to have redress? My body shall
Pay recompense if you will grant my suit.
They shake their heads.
Cannot my body nor blood sacrifice
Entreat you to your wonted furtherance?
Then take my soul — my body, soul, and all —
Before that England give the French the foil. (39-44)

Unlike Faustus, whose summoning is comprised of verbal markers of intellectualism, of the language of astrology, theology and other, masculine (since the universities were an all-male preserve) sciences, the focus of power in Joan's sorcery is her body, her sexualised female body especially if we hear an echo of prostitution in the offer of 'recompense'. (And she will, of course, 'pay' for her crimes with her body, which will be burned.) Faustus is not burned, or at least, not by other mortals. His final death might be seen as an allegory on the danger of pride and self-regard (Prologue, 20-21), rather than a mortal society's form of execution as it is with Joan. Indeed, Faustus's plea that he will 'burn his books' (5.2.116)

if only he will be saved from hell localises the evil power in the books, his signs of learning, whereas in *Henry VI, Part One*, the evil power is located in Joan's body, which *is* burned. In this way, the male magician's power is not carnal but intellectual, whereas the female witch's power is bodily, not intellectual.

If the differences between Faustus's summoning and Joan's might lie in the difference of perception between male and female supernatural powers, there is another staged summoning however, within the *Henry VI* play series which, involving two women, has more in common with the scene of Joan's summoning. *Henry VI, Part Two* features a scene in which Eleanor, the jealous wife of Humphrey, is duped by 'Margery Jourdain, the cunning witch' and 'Roger Bolingbroke, the conjuror' (1.2.75-6), who summon

> A spirit, raised from depth of underground,
> That shall make answer to such questions
> As by your grace shall be propounded him. (1.2.79-81)[231]

Both Margery and Bolingbroke are in the pay of Somerset, hired to bring down Humphrey through the ambitions of his wife. Hume, a co-conspirator, speaks directly to the audience:

> They, knowing Dame Eleanor's aspiring humour,
> Have hired me to undermine the Duchess
> And buzz these conjurations in her brain. (1.2.97-99)

Critical consensus seems resolved on the matter that *Henry VI, Parts Two* and *Three* were written before the so-called *Henry VI, Part One*, which, in the words of Burns, was 'what in the Hollywood terms of the late twentieth century is known as a "prequel", a dramatic piece that returns for ironic and challenging effect to the narrative roots of an already familiar story'.[232] The summoning scene in *Henry VI, Part Two*, the first of such scenes to be staged within the *Henry VI* plays, is not meant to be viewed as 'real'. It is upfront in its role as a piece of the burgeoning civil war, a symptom of the breakdown of order among the ruling class, an obvious piece of political chicanery. When Hume leaves us with the words

> Hume's knavery will be the Duchess' wrack,
> And her attainture will be Humphrey's fall (1.2.105-06)

there can be little room to doubt the dramatic tone of the preceding scene.

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[231] All quotes from *Henry VI, Part Two* are from Knowles, Ronald (ed.), *King Henry VI, Part 2* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London, New York and Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004). Taylor (2020) has noted this scene's parallels with Marlowe's works *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus*, p. 295-96.

[232] Burns (2000), p. 4-5.

If the first demonic summons of the *Henry VI* plays is a piece of political theatre, how does this affect how we view the second summons as a piece of literal theatre? Might it be, as Burns writes, that 'as a form the "prequel" is inherently ironic; it depends on the audience having a knowledge of the outcome of events that the characters depicted as living those events do not themselves possess'.[233] If so, Joan's summoning scene would have been presented to an audience already familiar with the hokum that had come before, framed as it was by *Henry VI, Part Two*'s ironic filter: Margery and Bolingbroke's summons were emphatically false, why, then, should we believe the portrayal of Joan's summons to be sincere? The staging of the scenes, from what can be gleaned from the texts as we have them, show them to remarkably similar. For both, the motive of the summoner is a glimpse at the future—'the King: what shall of him become?' (*Henry VI, Part Two* 1.4.29), Joan asks for 'signs of future accidents' (*Henry VI, Part One* 5.2.25)—and the spirits who have such knowledge are drawn up from below. In *Part Two*, when the ritual is finished, the spirits are ordered to return 'to darkness and the burning lake!' (1.4.39); when Joan fails to persuade her 'choice spirits' 'culled / out of the powerful regions under earth' to speak, she laments that 'hell [is] too strong for me to buckle with' (5.2.24 / 31-2 / 49). Dramatically, both sets of 'spirits' appear to have been physically embodied by an actor, perhaps costumed to signify 'spirit'. In *Part Two*, '*the Spirit riseth*' (1.4.22, stage direction), suggesting that the actors portraying them made use of a trap-door[234]. (In *Part One*, the stage direction reads '*Enter Fiends*' (5.2.28), perhaps from the trap door as well, perhaps not.) The movements of *Part One*'s spirits are surprisingly well-documented: '*They walk, and speak not'* (33), '*They hang their heads*' (38), '*They shake their heads*' (40), and finally, '*They depart*' (44). It suggests a ritualistic choreography, a dance-like set of movements designed to convey meaning without speech. And this, in turn, suggests a palpable, infernal, unknowability to these strange silent figures, especially when compared to their earlier counterparts. In contrast to the fiends of *Part One*, the dramatic straightforwardness of *Part Two*'s figures' means that they border on the banal. They speak the future matter-of-factly: for Henry,

> The duke yet lives that Henry shall depose,
> But him outlive, and die a violent death. (1.4.30-31)

For the Duke of Suffolk,

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[233] Burns (2000), p. 5.

[234] Knowles (1999), Note 22.3, p. 190.

By water shall he die and take his end. (33)

And for Somerset,

Let him shun castles:
Safer shall he be upon the sandy plains (35-36)

The only surprise is that these prophecies do come true, except that there is no surprise for the audience, because there has been no tension resulting from any ambiguity on the spirits' part. We never have to wonder whether the spirits speak the truth: because they are so flat in effect, we do not think to wonder. The lack of mystery is wholly in keeping with the charlatans' sham performance and as such, the strangeness of the fiends brought up by Joan's later summons imply to the audience that they, in fact, are the real deal.

This move towards ambiguity may be seen as an evolution in Shakespeare's thinking about and through supernatural topics. The demonic summoning of *Henry VI, Part Two* includes three prophecies. The summoning scene in *Macbeth* also features three prophecies, but these are redolent of the ambiguity suggested by the fiends summoned by Joan. Ambiguity is the reigning note from the beginning of *Macbeth*, and particularly so in the witches' summoning of the spirits. From the start, it is not clear who is spirit and who is summoner. Macbeth greets the witches with the order 'I conjure you' (4.1.4), recalling Joan's 'ancient incantations' to call up her fiends (5.2.48). 'Howe'er' the sisters know the future, he demands they 'answer' him (4.1.5). Questions of the future are what both the witches Joan and Margery (and the conjuror Bolingbroke) asked of their spirits, giving us pause as to what, exactly, the witches of *Macbeth* are: mortal witches or spirits themselves? In response, the witches ask Macbeth whether 'th'hadst rather hear it from our mouths, / Or from our masters' (4.1.76-77). 'Call 'em: let me see'em' (77) is Macbeth's response. The Witches then summon the three Apparitions: just as Margery Jourdain purported to do. The roles of summoned and summoner merge in *Macbeth*, mirroring the uncertain line that exists between the sisters and Macbeth himself. How separate they are, how much they are a part of each other, this uncertainty is epitomised in the summoning scene.

The Apparitions themselves, and the prophecies they speak, are just as ambiguous. Like the spirits of the *Henry VI* plays, the Apparitions appear to have been performed by actors. We don't know how those spirits were costumed, and those of *Macbeth* present further questions. How, exactly, was an '*armed head*' (4.1.83) presented to the audience at

the Globe?[235] The later two Apparitions, '*a bloody child*' (90) and '*a child crowned with a tree in his hand*' (100) are akin to Joan's silent fiends, presenting oblique meaning without speech. And just as the fiends said nothing, *Macbeth* emphasises the unnerving strangeness, and implicit threat, of the Apparitions by having the sisters urge Macbeth not to speak to their masters: 'He knows thy thought: / Hear his speech, but say thou nought' (4.1.83-4). When Macbeth bullishly insists on demanding to know Banquo's fate, the sisters acquiesce, ominously relaying the message to the Apparitions: 'show his eyes, and grieve his heart' (125). This effectively frames how we are to hear their prophecies. The difference in language between the prophecies of *Henry VI, Part Two* and those of *Macbeth* is striking. Unlike Margery's spirits, which foresaw death and spoke it plainly—the spirit warned that Suffolk would die in water, and so it proved—the Apparitions' warnings are conspicuously riddling (86-139), perhaps deliberately leading Macbeth to believe himself invulnerable (94-95), and we are primed to fear and mistrust their apparently comforting phrases. In this, the Apparitions feel like a revisiting of the fiends of *Henry VI, Part One* by a more mature dramatist, more confident in leaving supernatural phenomena unexplained, and aware of the greater dramatic potential of ambiguity.

An important distinction to make between these summoning scenes is that they appear in vastly different plays within different genres. Though *Macbeth* is technically a history—it shares a source-author with the *Henry VI* plays, Raphael Holinshed—it appears with the tragedies in the First Folio, and subsequent editors of Shakespeare have been happy to follow suit. A role for the sisters as executors of Macbeth's doom is fitting for a tragedy, and as such the ambiguous nature of the summoning scene, the Apparitions and themselves, accord with the murky world Shakespeare has Macbeth plummet through on his way to death.

A further instance of the importance of dramatic genre for an analysis of summoning scenes can be found in *The Tempest*. Though no true summoning takes place, Prospero's soliloquy of Act 5, in which he decides to 'abjure' (5.1.51) the magical arts which have sus-

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[235] Harris, Anthony, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) too notes the similarities between these scenes. 'The *Macbeth* scene has marked affinities with the conjuration episode in *Henry VI, Part Two* (I.iv) and the nine lines spoken by the spirit that rises and descends in this scene were probably spoken by an actor directly addressing the audience', p. 163.

tained him during his exile, includes an allusion to powers that sound strikingly similar to those of *Macbeth*'s witches, as well as Joan's.[236]

Graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. (5.1.48-50)

Such is Prospero's claim—the audience never sees him perform such a deed—and it bears a remarkable similarity to Joan's claim that she has 'culled' spirits '[o]ut of the powerful regions under earth' (5.2.31-2). Harris points out that 'Prospero's references to …[the spirit-like] "weak masters" [5.1.41] is reminiscent of the Weird Sisters' "masters"'.[237] An earlier 'wizard' had also claimed as Prospero had that he could raise the dead, *Henry VI Part Two*'s Bolingbroke. Prospero's evocation of the ripest hour for magical arts, a time of 'moonshine' and 'midnight' (5.2.37, 39), finds a predecessor in Bolingbroke's similar claim that

wizards know their times.
Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
[…]
The time when screech-owls cry and ban-dogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves;
That time best fits the work we have in hand.
(*Henry VI, Part Two*, 1.4.15-20).

Do we have as little reason to believe Prospero's claim as we have to believe Bolingbroke's? The evidence of the play-text persuades us that we might accept Prospero's words—we have, after all, witnessed his creation of the illusion of the tempest itself (1.1, 1.2.26-32) and a myriad other magical acts (1.2.185, 4.1.120-22, 5.1.60-1)—whereas the play-text of *Henry VI, Part Two* ensures that we think of Bolingbroke's lines as little more than the stage patter of a sham-magician. Genre, again, is key. Bolingbroke's scene plays as black comedy in an otherwise straight telling of dramatic narrative history. Act Five of *The Tempest*, on the other hand, is a romance, or a tragicomedy. The narrative momentum is one towards reconciliation and forgiveness, as in its genre-mates, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*. *The Tempest* does complicate this onward-rush to a bittersweet 'happy ending' with the noticeably unrepentant Antonio (who makes no reply to Prospero's

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[236] All quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[237] Harris (1980), p. 135.

embittered forgiveness, 5.1.129-34) and a Prospero who seems unwilling to forgive and forget his brother's treachery: 'most *wicked* sir, whom to call brother / Would even *infect* my mouth, I do forgive / *Thy rankest fault*' (5.1.130-32). Insults outnumber kindnesses in Prospero's words to his brother, and the re-appearance of infection-imagery, most insistently linked in the play with Sycorax, the witch of the island before Prospero's arrival, as well as Prospero's *other* enemy, suggests that her supposed 'foul'-ness (1.2.258) (or Prospero's hatred of it) lingers on. Nevertheless, as in *Pericles, Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, the ending of *The Tempest* is concerned with the new—new marriages (Miranda and Ferdinand's) and thus new generations, anticipated new shores—and rebirth. Prospero's abjuration of his summoning-abilities (and the apparent aspect of himself that is invested enough in them to brag about his prowess) is a key part of this sea-change towards the new. This abjuration's necessity for the ending is alluded to by the prominence of Prospero's speech in which he does so—a soliloquy to begin the ending of the play—and the length of time Shakespeare gives him to do so, a total of twenty-five lines. It seems that, in order for new life to begin, Prospero must relinquish his power over spirits, over life-and-death. There is a bittersweet feeling to this act, as epitomised in Prospero's farewell to his now-freed spirit-aide Ariel. The affection between the two in this sad parting is conveyed in a short conversation comprised of asides: 'Was't well done?' Ariel asks, 'Bravely, my diligence. Thou shalt be free,' is Prospero's reply (5.1.240-41). This is in keeping with the tone of the tragicomedies, as exemplified by their generic title. It is why Bolingbroke and Prospero, though both 'wizards', though they both have the power to raise the spirits of the dead, are such different characters and why their scenes of summoning, though similar in many verbal and dramatic aspects, are such different theatrical experiences.

So what does this mean for our original study? We have seen how different genres, tones and authorial intent can influence how the same basic scene—a summoning of demons—plays out and is communicated to an audience. To return to Joan, we can begin to perceive how the genre of *Henry VI, Part One*—a history, specifically a history play tracing the beginning of the ruination of a kingdom through disorder and civil strife—might suggest to audiences that the summoning scene is meant to be taken seriously. Joan is an enemy of the English forces; she has already proven herself a master of guile and subversion in convincing Burgundy to defect; she is a female character wearing masculine armour and taking on the traditionally masculine role of leading an army: she is, in short, defying and confusing the gender binary. She is an element of the disorder and terror alight-

ing on the English forces and, beyond them, the kingdom itself, and she is, in defeating Talbot and conquering cities, almost successful. Is there really such a wide theoretical gap between the prospect of this spectre of terrifying disorder (Joan herself) and the idea that said spectre could supernaturally raise up yet more terrifying spectres? The ease with which the English forces' misogynistic attacks on Joan slip from 'whore' to 'witch' suggests that it is not, in the early modern masculine imagination at least.[238] The overall tone of *Henry VI, Part One* also allows us to view and stage her summoning scene straight: it is of a piece with the sense of encroaching chaos, entirely in keeping with a stage already littered with the strewn bodies of the war-dead. Authorial intent is harder to gauge in this play, however, as has been shown, there are multiple authors whose intent in their individual characterisations of Joan jostle and overlap in their demands on our attention. But this very over-lap, this disorder of interpretations, is interesting in and of itself. Lisa Dickson asks some probing questions about the role of perception in determining a character's 'true' nature. She points out that the audience is the only one to witness Joan's summoning scene, a privilege not shared by those who condemn her to the stake for the crime.[239] She writes that

> the later judgement is made based on evidence that *only we have seen*; in fact, the English ignorance of this scene has no effect on the final outcome of her trial, which is based, not on "proof" of Joan's sorcery, but on the English need to expose, humiliate and destroy the enemy. Joan is not a witch, in other words, because she has been shown to be one, but because the consolidation of English identity in opposition to the French who form their constitutive outside demands that she be so.[240]

In other words, the English forces create the Joan that they need for their own purposes: an enemy, a whore, a witch to be burned. Dickson probes further, asking whether the audience, both early modern and modern, are guilty of the same thing:

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[238] Rackin (1990) notes that 'cross-dressing is the sign of supernatural power; in the histories, however, the power is demonic, and the sign stigmatizes its wearer as a witch. Joan's masculine dress, like the beards of the witches in *Macbeth*, is the sign of the uncanny', p. 200. She refers to Joan's demonic abilities as 'the illicit supernatural power of a disorderly woman who has refused to abide by the limits of her natural role,' p. 197-98.

[239] Dickson (2000), p. 151.

[240] Dickson (2000), p. 152. Speiss (2018) raises a further, intriguing question about Joan's summoning scene. If spirits are shown to walk on the stage, would this not, he asks, 'violat[e] a central tenet of Protestant reform'? The 'very materiality' of the spirits would be a proof of Joan's witchcraft that was 'precarious for Protestant playgoers to accept', p. 105.

> Recognizing ourselves in this judicial tableau, we also confront our own confidence in historical knowledge. Do we see Joan, even in the privacy of the sorcery scene, as a unified subject, or does this *dramatis personae*, poised between history and fiction, reflect back to us our own desire for unity?[241]

Is the search for this 'unity' of character, of what 'she' represents for an author or an age, ultimately futile? The question is especially important in the specific case of the Joan of the *Henry VI* plays, a multi-authored creation within a multi-authored medium. Can a Joan amalgamated from the works of multiple hands, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Nashe, ever support a unified critical argument or does her fragmentary, confused nature ultimately over-ride all attempts to make her stand for something more?

That she is fragmentary, and *disorderly*, rather than confused, is, I think, the most important aspect of this Joan. In her ambiguous nature—perhaps unintentional, perhaps not—we can see the seeds of what Shakespeare will go on to create in his own, sole-authored supernatural women. Joan, as a woman who resorts to supernatural aid, is demonised where male characters are not. For Joan, a female character, this act of spirit-summoning disorders the natural way of things. This is not merely because she invokes the aid of creatures beyond mortal existence and understanding, but because Joan, as a gender-defying, binary-disordering character is, in herself, utterly disorderly to the world of *Henry VI, Part One*. Though she dies a witch's death, the burning of her mortal body is not enough to prevent her disorderliness from leaching out and overthrowing the world of the play. Even before her death, the disorder that she represents has been the death of Talbot: '[f]actionalism thrives, to the extent that the division between York and Somerset (unhistorically) undoes Talbot himself'.[242] Her supernatural powers are an extension of this innate disorderliness, and the fact that these powers are rooted in her *body*, as is made clear in the summoning scene of Act Five, is an important aspect of her characterisation which will reappear and reverberate throughout Shakespeare's later canon.

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[241] Dickson (2000), p. 153.

[242] Dessen, Alan C., 'Stagecraft and Imagery in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*,' *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 23, Early Shakespeare Special Number (1993), 65 - 79, p. 72. Riggs (1971) concurs: 'If [Joan] epitomizes the external forces that threaten the aristocratic ideal of military service and gentle blood,' the concepts for which Talbot stands, 'there are signs of internal erosion as well', the 'most ominous of these come from the professional civil servant Winchester' and 'from the contentious, quarrelsome gentlemen of the Inns of Court', p. 105.

Disorder and Order, Corporeality and Incorporeality, Female and Male: The Supernatural in A Midsummer Night's Dream *and* The Tempest

In *Henry VI, Part One*, Joan la Pucelle's characterisation is constantly changing, shifting, dissolving and resolving, a completely different vision from each and every viewpoint the drama presents for us to wonder and *puzzle* at her. She is ambiguity. However, this disorderly refusal to settle into a single, cohesive persona is still, in *Henry VI, Part One*, part-and-parcel of her femininity. She is aligned with the idea of the disorderly female and the play consistently emphasises this fact, right to the moment in which she uses her disorderly female body in her disorderly supernatural rites. This characterisation places her in total opposition to Talbot, the staunch, straightforward flag-bearer for masculine orderliness. We might ask ourselves why the masculinity of Talbot and his fellow English nobles, a masculinity of violence and oppression, of naked land-grabs, torture and murder, should be considered 'orderliness' at all—and we shall, anon. For now, in this chapter concerning Shakespeare's treatment of the supernatural characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, I want to consider the ambiguity inherent in their gendered presentations. *The Tempest*, and more specifically, Prospero himself, initially asks us, the audience and readers, to consider the supposedly depraved, disorderly witch Sycorax, a character created rhetorically by Prospero and Caliban and never seen on stage,[243] as the polar opposite of the benevolent magus Prospero who creates from the wilds of a surprisingly bustling deserted island a new order that ripples out beyond the island's shores to the old-world of Italy and its environs. Certainly, many scholars have followed Prospero in this

[243] Bladen, Victoria and Yan Brailowsky, 'Introduction: Shakespeare and the supernatural,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 1 - 27, note, since Sycorax 'never appears on stage, the audience only has Prospero's word for' her, p. 6. Prospero's word, as well as that of Caliban, I would add.

construction of himself and concurred with his reasoning behind his actions.[244] However, a closer look at the characterisation of Prospero (and his supposed opposite, Sycorax) reveals that, instead of sitting far apart, diametrically opposed to one another, as, say Joan and Talbot are in *Henry VI, Part One*, Prospero and Sycorax actually have a great deal in common. So much so, it would be better, I argue, to view them both as sitting on a spectrum between the two extremes 'male-orderliness' and 'female-disorderliness'. These two extremes also include the difference in how the supernatural element of the characters' is presented as intrinsically a part of the characters' body (in female characters) and separate to the body (in male characters). The two extremes might better be labelled 'male-orderliness-supernatural-incorporeality' and 'female-disorderliness-corporeality'. This construction, instead of arguing for binary oppositions, allows for the characters to share traits, sources and influences, as well as allowing critics to accept and reflect the characters as Shakespeare constructed them. We can see that Prospero sits closer to the male-orderliness-incorporeality extreme than does Oberon, and much closer than do either Titania and Sycorax. However, Prospero sits closer to Oberon than he does to the extreme, and Titania and especially Sycorax sit much closer to him than his initial outbursts might wish us to realise.

[244] To pick just a few examples from very, very many: Goodland, Katherine, 'From Prospero to Prospera: transforming gender and magic on stage and screen,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 218 - 241, writes that '[f]or much of the play, Prospero repeatedly pits his male, white magic against Sycorax's female, black witchcraft,' though Shakespeare invites the suggestion that 'Prosero and Sycorax might be more alike than different,' p. 232; Lindley, David, 'Music, Masque, and Meaning in *The Tempest*,' in *The Tempest: Norton Critical Editions*, ed. by Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp. 187 - 200, writes that in the play, '[m]agic power exists to be harnessed, but it is the nature of the magician's designs that determines the moral value of that power. Under Prospero the island resounds to sweet noises, where for the witch Sycorax the only music was the shriek of the imprisoned Ariel. Prospero must liberate the lords from their charmed imprisonment as he had earlier released Ariel if we are not to condemn him as he condemns Sycorax,' p. 198; Moseley, Charles, 'The literary and dramatic contexts of the last plays,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. by Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 47 - 69, compares their supernatural powers and finds them diametrically opposed: 'True *Magic, theurgia*, is opposed to Witchcraft, *goetia*, Prospero to Sycorax,' p. 59; Bladen and Brailowsky (2020) write that '[i]n *The Tempest*, the gendered polarity of magical practice is represented by the juxtaposition of Prospero, presented as an ennobled, scholarly sorcerer wronged by his enemies, and Sycorax, described as a "foul witch"', p. 6, though they add that 'Shakespeare invited questions over Prospero's distinction between his magic and Sycorax's by using Medea's incantation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*' for Prospero's magic (p. 6), which I will discuss later on in this chapter. Harris, Anthony, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) bridges the divide: 'Although Prospero's magic is clearly of a higher order than that of Sycorax, it is noteworthy that, in a work so rigorously designed around complementary themes and contrasting characters, the parallels between the two both unite them and highlight their essential differences', p. 144.

At first glance, Oberon and Prospero present as remarkably similar in both characterisation and their role in the plot. And, of course, though one is explicitly supernatural, a fairy king (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.144) and the other only Duke of Milan (*The Tempest*, 1.2.58), both display remarkable magical abilities: Oberon can put the magical flowers of the Athenian wood to use (2.1.148-85, 249-67) and become invisible to mortal eyes at will (2.1.186); Prospero declares that he commands a multitude of '[s]pirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies' (4.1.120-22) and can charm mortals to sleep (1.2.185) (and possibly magically awake them as well: 1.2.306) and into paralysis (5.1.60-1).[245] Both also have a supernatural assistant to aid them. Oberon's 'gentle Puck' (2.1.148), who claims to 'jest to Oberon, and make him smile' (2.1.44) shares a remarkable similarity to Prospero's 'dainty Ariel' (5.1.95). Both of these relationships are based around a nexus of command and obedience, occasionally suggestive of a martial hierarchy: Ariel calls Prospero his 'master' (1.2.189) and 'commander' (4.1.167) and Puck, likewise, refers to Oberon as his 'lord' (3.2.278) and his 'captain' (3.2.110). Both are instrumental in carrying out their masters' plots.[246] Ariel raises the tempest (1.2.193-206), separates the ship-wrecked survivors (1.2.219-220) and terrifies the 'three men of sin' (3.3.53) as a harpy at the spirit banquet (3.3.53, stage direction), all as Prospero 'bad'st' him (1.2.219). In just the same spirit of service, Puck obeys Oberon's command to 'fetch me that flower' (2.1.169), and then to apply it on Titania's eyelids, thus effecting Oberon's 'torment' (2.1.147). Both these servants display an almost child-like glee in their exploits, whether it is Ariel hallooing the spirit dogs he and his master have set on Caliban and his drunken co-conspirators ('Silver! There it goes, Silver!' (4.1.257)), or Puck mischievously scaring the Mechanicals out of their wits (3.1.101-106, 3.2.9-31). This childishness is also reflected in their frustration when apparently not receiving what they consider their due attention from their masters: both repeat the same phrase, 'I go, I go' (*MND*, 3.2.100, *Tem* 4.1.187) with Puck again displaying his greater linguistic freedom, demanding that Oberon '*Look* how I go' (3.2.100, my italics).

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[245] All quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Holland, Peter (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and all quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[246] Maslen, R. W., 'Dreams, Freedom of Speech, and the Demonic Affiliations of Robin Goodfellow,' *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 1 (2009), 129 - 144, p. 134.

Barbara Mowat has read Ariel as 'a servant boy' of a 'streetcorner "art-Magician" or "Jugler"' (Prospero) who is 'ready for his freedom'. She identifies the bickering and arguments between them as the 'language with which he and Prospero haggle over a few more hours of service'.[247] It is an intriguing reading of this relationship, particularly as it explains the palpable affection evinced within it: Prospero, when he is not threatening or haranguing Ariel (for example, as at 1.2.257), litters his speech with kindnesses and affectionate epithets: 'my quaint Ariel' (1.2.317), 'my tricksy spirit' (5.1.226), 'my Ariel, chick' (5.1.317). There is enough evident affection between them that Ariel's question, 'Do you love me, master?' (4.1.48) and Prospero's response, the definitive, 'dearly' (49), seems a plausible evocation of their relationship, despite the vicious dressing-down Prospero had earlier administered (1.2.242-258).[248] The conflicted nature of Prospero's relationship with Ariel, paralleled as it is with Sycorax's treatment of the spirit, is another aspect of Prospero's ambiguous supernatural power, which will be examined further later on in this chapter.

Mowat's reading of the relationship between Prospero and Ariel also points up a degree of difference between Prospero and Oberon. Unlike Ariel, Puck is not a servant with a contract. Shakespeare does not provide a specific, textual reason for Puck to obey Oberon; it is a fact of their characterisations and their relationship. Puck's obedience to Oberon can be read as a delineation of how the fairy society of *Dream* is constructed,[249] or as Shakespeare characterising Puck as a fairy who wishes to serve, or, indeed, both. Ariel's terms of service, on the other hand, are made very clear in the long second scene of the first act of the play, in which so much of the characters' past and how they each

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[247] Mowat, Barbara A., 'Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus Pocus,' *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1981), 281 - 303, p. 297.

[248] There is, of course, plenty of room within the nuances of their relationship for differing theatrical interpretations. There have been many in which antagonism and strife rule the day, most notably the famous production in which Simon Russell Beale's Ariel responded to Prospero's emancipation by spitting on him (see Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan, 'Introduction,' in *The Tempest* (The Arden Shakespeare, Revised Edition, Third Series), ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), pp. 1 - 138, p. 116 - 117.

[249] Holland (1994) refers to Briggs's examinations of the folklore of the 'trooping fairies', and their society seems to have been explicitly courtly, p. 23. The courtly nature of Puck specifically has also been highlighted by Lamb, Mary Ellen, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Breeching the binary,' in *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Jonson* (Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture) (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 93 - 124, p. 106.

came to the island, is laid out. It is because Prospero freed Ariel from the pine in which Sycorax had imprisoned him (1.2.276-279) that he must serve his magical master:

> Prospero: It was mine art,
> When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
> The pine and let thee out.
> Ariel: I thank thee, master.
> Prospero: If thou more murmur's, I will rend an oak
> And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
> Thou hast howled away twelve winters.
> Ariel: Pardon, master.
> I will be correspondent to command
> And do my spiriting gently. (1.2.291-298)

That Prospero is holding Ariel's freedom over him, as a gift from himself that can be denied just as easily, is clear from the thunderous and threatening verse. Prospero dominates all of the conversations he holds in this second scene, and his language here is especially violent: 'rend' and 'peg' are his threats, the oak has 'knotty entrails' like a living, arboreal body which has been tortured and twisted, and the pain of Ariel's threatened imprisonment is described explicitly ('howled'). The strength and ferocity of his lines are evident from Ariel's meek replies, which are affixed to the ends of Prospero's verse lines. His concession, communicated in a mere two and a half lines, the longest he has spoken for the last forty lines of the scene, is demonstrably that of a brow-beaten slave. Prospero calls him '*My* brave spirit' (1.2.206, my italics), he 'owns' him. Ariel had tried to call Prospero to account for apparently changing the terms of his service, asking that Prospero

> Remember I have done thee worthy service,
> Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, served
> Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
> To bate me a full year. (1.2.247-250)

Prospero's response is a furious demand for gratitude and loyalty. 'Dost thou forget' (1.2.250) completes Ariel's half-line, suggesting that, in his rage, he is cutting his underling off and launching into his own speech. That this conversation ends with Ariel agreeing to another two days of service (1.2.298-299) is entirely predictable.

The existence of this nebulous 'contract'[250] (it is never referred to as such in the play, and is only alluded to in such contentions as illustrated above) serves the function of emphasising Prospero's control over Ariel, a control over the figure through whom he subsequently controls the events of the play. It is a significant difference from Oberon, who has a far looser control over Puck, and a more companionable and equal relationship with him.[251] Puck, for instance, could never claim, as Ariel does, that he has 'made no mistakings', and Oberon, in his turn, is utterly unlike Prospero in that he does not punish or harangue his servant for his mistaken application of the flower's juice on the wrong Athenian lover (3.2.88-91). Oberon's response is merely to say,

> This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,
> Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully. (3.2.345-346)

Compared to Prospero's anger, one could almost begin to wonder whether it is in fact Oberon who, in allowing his underling to create such havoc among the Athenian lovers without reprimand, is the one who is being negligent. (Puck, for his part, is also the opposite of his meek servant counterpart. Unlike Ariel, who concedes to his master's furious disapproval, Puck claims merrily that he both 'mistook' (3.2.347) and is 'glad it so did sort / As this their jangling I esteem a sport' (3.2.352-3).) But where Oberon allows his underling free rein, he shows a great similarity to Prospero when instructing his servant to put into effect his wider plot: reasserting his control over Titania.

Attempting to impose order over others is what most unites Oberon and Prospero. For Oberon, this control is focused primarily on Titania, though he also has a hand in directing the affairs of the mortal Athenian lovers (2.1.259-266). Prospero's control extends to every other character on the island, from Ariel and Caliban, whom he has enslaved (1.2.364-370, 3.2.40-42) to the King of Naples himself. It is the fundamental similarity between the two characters and it is the function that they both serve within their dramas.

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[250] Orgel, Stephen, 'Introduction,' in *The Tempest*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 1 -87. who speaks of the 'threats of contraction', p. 20.

[251] Though Woodcock, Matthew, 'Spirits of Another Sort: Constructing Shakespeare's Fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Regina Buccola (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 112 - 130, finds 'Puck stresses that he works by royal command, or at least under royal aegis', p. 125, and Lamb (2006) refers to him as a 'well-spoken and deferential servant to Oberon', p. 5, 'a courtly servant to an aristocratic master', p. 124 and writes that 'Shakespeare's Puck aligns himself with monarchal values in his feudal obedience to Oberon, in the courtly self-deprecation of his Epilogue, and especially in the snobbishness of his initial response to the artisans', p. 106.

They both set the plots, of their respective dramas as well as their own schemes, into action.[252] Because of this, many commentators have referred to them as 'stage-managers',[253] and most of these commentators provide as evidence for their claims the theatrical-esque spectacles created by both Prospero and Oberon. Oberon orchestrates the spectacle of Titania caressing the ass-headed Bottom, drawing explicit attention to visual aspects of the scene by calling it 'this sweet sight' (4.1.45), and Prospero sets up the display of the initial tempest as well as the spiritual masque. Again, the fact that this is something to witness is stressed. Miranda is aghast as the sight of the tempest (1.2.5-15), Prospero calls the masque a 'vanity of mine art' (4.1.41), denigrating the work by emphasising its superficiality.

Fundamentally, however, these managed spectacles serve to underscore how control, of other characters and the wider environments of the play, is a core characteristic of both Oberon and Prospero. It is through the spectacle of Titania's amorous encounter with Bottom, through which Oberon insists that she herself will see anew ('Be as thou wast wont to be, / See as thou wast wont to see' (4.1.70-71)), that Oberon reasserts his control over his wife. His plan is to trick and humiliate her into returning to his 'bed and company', into the role as subservient wife that she had previously, specifically 'foresworn' (2.1.62). For Montrose, 'Oberon's preoccupation is to gain possession, not only of the [changeling] boy, but of the woman's desire and obedience'.[254] It is a desire that re-establishes climatic harmony where there had been, analogous to the split in the marriage and Titania's refusal to cede to his demands, seasonal disorder. Once they are 'new in amity', as Oberon so terms it (4.1.86), they can dance and 'rock the ground' (4.1.85), restoring 'the winds' (2.1.88) which will now clear the 'contagious fogs' (2.1.90) which had previously

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[252] Chaudhuri, Sukanta, 'Introduction,' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 1 - 115, p. 104.

[253] For instance, Foakes, R. A., 'Introduction,' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (The New Cambridge Shakespeare) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1 - 48, writes that other characters are 'watched over by Oberon and Puck as stage-managers, whose control over events is marked in their spells' p. 30, and Lindley, David, 'Introduction,' in *The Tempest*, ed. by David Lindley (The New Cambridge Shakespeare) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1 - 101, points out this connection between Prospero and Oberon: 'Shakespeare had used "manager figures" in earlier plays, and in some ways Prospero is a reworking of Oberon', p. 15. See also Chaudhuri (2017), p. 104.

[254] Montrose, Louis Adrian, '"Shaping Fantasies": Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture,' *Representations*, No. 2 (1983), 61 - 94, p. 71.

been brought up onto the land from the sea (2.1.89-90), a disordering of nature's intrinsic order that had led to turmoil (2.1.88 ff.). In like manner, Prospero too sets himself up (initially) as the force of order in opposition to Sycorax's natural disorder, as will be discussed further later on.

The centrality of the idea of control and of order to both Oberon and Prospero is stressed and emphasised by their structural opposition to two female supernatural figures who represent in themselves the idea of nature disordered. In *Dream*, the seasonal disorder, the 'progeny of evils' (2.1.115), wrought by the 'dissension' and 'brawls' (2.1.87) between the fairy monarchs, is aligned emphatically with the Queen. It is she who adumbrates its disastrous effects on mortal lives (2.1.101-102), it is she who feels the pity for its victims who are powerless in its wake (2.1.94-100) and, though she herself lays the blame for it with Oberon (she claims that it is '*thy* brawls' which have 'disturbed our sport' (2.1.87, my italics), both Oberon ('Do you amend it, then. It lies in you' (2.1.118)) and the structure of the play lay the blame at her door.

This element can, of course, be emphasised or downplayed in productions. As Lamb points out, it is the comedy of the fairy queen besotted with the ass-headed workman that is usually the most striking image taken away by audience members.[255] The theatrical brio of the scene, in which Oberon is cuckolded in a joyful, charming manner (Jan Kott's reading of this interlude as one of dark, bestial sexuality notwithstanding[256]), would seem to counteract his plan to induce Titania's return to his side through humiliation, especially for an amused audience, especially as such humour rarely seems directed *at* Titania, but rather appears an expression of celebration of the transformative power of complete adoration. However, it is nevertheless only when she has 'render[ed] up her page' (2.1.185) to Oberon that their marriage is restored, and such restoration is the only way (there are no other options admitted by the play) in which the seasons can be restored to order. It is only when Titania vows to no longer 'cross her Oberon' (2.1.119), when she promises him obedience and Oberon's control extends to her actions as well,

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[255] Lamb (2006) refers to the scene's 'remarkable theatrical appeal', p. 109.

[256] Kott, Jan, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (translated by Bolesław Taborski) (London: Methuen and Co., 1964), p. 80 - 6. Maslen, R. W., *Shakespeare and Comedy* (London: Thomson Learning, 2006) notes that the threat of bestiality implicit in Oberon's plot aligns Titania with the practices of early modern witches, p. 149. As witches were the ultimate in feminine disorderliness, this close brush is yet another example of Titania's own disorderliness (though engineered by her supposedly 'orderly' husband).

that the problematic disturbance in nature is resolved.[257] In this way, the disturbances of a disordered nature are rooted in the character of the disobedient, wilful Titania, and the eventual ordering of the climate is portrayed as stemming from Oberon. Oberon is thus aligned with order, Titania with disorder.

Titania's supposed place at the epicentre of natural disorder is exemplified in her speech on the harm the fairies' quarrel has created in the natural world. The speech, listing the deleterious effects of the climatic upheaval, constantly stresses that it is the disorder, the loosing of natural boundaries and their attendant deluges and illnesses, that is at the root of the problems.

> never since the middle summer's spring
> Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
> By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
> Or in the beachèd margin of the sea
> To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
> But with thy brawls thou has disturbed our sport.
> Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
> As in revenge have sucked up from the sea
> Contagious fogs which, falling in the land,
> Hath every pelting river made so proud
> That they have overborne their continents.
> The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
> The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
> Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
> The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
> And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
> The nine men's morris is filled up with mud,
> And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
> For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
> The human mortals want their winter cheer.
> No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
> Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
> Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

[257] Montrose (1983), p. 67.

That rheumatic diseases do abound;
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mock'ry, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world
By their increase now knows not which is which;
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension—
We are their parents and original. (2.1.82-117)

'Fogs' which should be kept safely out to sea have encroached onto the land, causing sickness ('contagion') and flooding. The disorder has caused the rivers to breach their orderly, allotted limits and channels, they have been made 'proud', a descriptor that conflates natural disorder with immorality. The resultant 'drownèd field' is exemplary of this disorder: water has encroached on the land, an orderly binary is conflated, and the one side, the land, is overwhelmed, submerged. It is not only the geography that is out of order, but the natural cycles of time too. The yearly calendar is disordered, humans 'want their winter cheer' and are without the blessings of carols and hymns.[258] The festivals pass unmarked and unnoticed, the human manner of ordering the passing of time thrown into disorder by the confusion in the natural world. The green corn has 'rotted ere his youth attained a beard': death comes before age in a world that no longer makes sense. Human cultivation can no longer succeed when nature is not following its own rules, the ox and

[258] Phillips, Chelsea, ''Rudely stamped': supernatural generation and the limits of power in Shakespeare's *Richard III*,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 50 - 69 reads this disorder through the prism of the early modern thinking about 'monstrous births': 'Instead of the normal year's cycle of birth, growth, harvest and death, fuelled by harmony between the fairies', there is instead 'redoubled copies of their strife', p. 56. She notes that the final speech of the play specifically promises protection from potential natural danger in children: 'When all is forgiven and order restored, the fairies provide a blessing to the new married couples that specifically protects their future children from "the blots of Nature's hand…/ Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,/ Nor mark prodigious, such as are/ Despiséd in nativity" [5.1.400-04],' p. 56.

the ploughman's work is 'in vain'.[259] Again, the natural disorder is expressed in moral terms, the natural pathways, '[f]or lack of tread are indistinguishable'.

This disorder is explicitly feminised. The natural agent of much of the disorder is the moon, 'the governess of floods' and her gender is re-emphasised in the very next line (she is '[p]ale in *her* anger' (my italics)).[260] As Chiari argues, 'in the *Dream*, nature clearly represents female agency. It is in essence a feminine and a destructive force'.[261] And the teller of this dismal tale of disorder is the Fairy Queen (not the Fairy King). Furthermore, Titania is not only associated with natural disorder in this one speech.[262] The Fairy Queen herself replicates this disorder.[263] The 'chaplet of sweet summer buds' on 'Old Hiems' thin and icy crown' is an image of natural disorder, one that is a repetition and reinforcement of the earlier image of 'hoary-headed frosts' which 'fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose', that Ti-

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[259] Scott, Charlotte, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) notes that 'Titania invites the audience to imagine elemental distraction', adding that 'Titania's picture of a broken order focuses on husbandry—arable and animal—and the means by which humans regulate, enjoy, and sustain their lives', p. 21.

[260] Chiari, Sophie, *Shakespeare's Representations of Weather, Climate and Environment: The Early Modern 'Fated Sky'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019) writes that *Dream*, '[w]ith its focus on the power of the moon, on female agency, on seasonal disturbance as well as on rain and wetness, it presents us with a dense network of meteorological themes that reveal how much, in the period, weather issues could be put to use in order to reflect a gendered vision of life and of the world. In the *Dream*, it is Titania's surprisingly human behaviour and, more generally, the violence of female impulses that account for the harshness of the climate', p. 48-9. She notes that the 'general wetness' of this passage 'turns the forest into a female locus (dis)ordered by Titania since, as "leaky vessels", women's moist, lunar physiology accounted for their alleged lack of reason', p. 47.

[261] Chiari (2019), p. 47.

[262] Though in this speech, as Chiari (2019) notes, 'it is Titania's lack of discipline and self-restraint that has generated the climatic chaos that she describes', p. 46.

[263] Chiari (2019) notes that, '*Dream*'s ambiguous queen must have called to mind some evil fairy not unrelated to the witches often suspected of practising weather magic — a belief still firmly held by many of Shakespeare's contemporaries … Throughout the comedy, Titania seems to play with the meteorological conditions near Athens by altering them at the drop of a hat: if she first triumphantly emphasises the bitterness of the climate in 2.1, she proudly asserts a few moments later that "[t]he summer still doth tend upon [her] state" (3.1.146). This shows that, if she personally delights in perfect summer weather, she can also, like the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, conjure up fogs and floods in order to blight the earth', p. 42. Chiari reads Titania's speech describing the natural disorder as resembling 'a blasphemous anti-prayer, for if she perfectly depicts the Athenians' pathetic situation, she neither begs for clemency nor hopes to have her sins absolved. On the contrary, a few lines further down, she insists on her right to keep the little changeling boy for herself, thus cynically accepting the possibility of another spell of foul weather in retaliation against her refusal to obey Oberon', p. 42. I will examine Shakespeare's use of weather-disordering witches in my next chapter.

tania herself re-enacts twice.[264] Puck reports Oberon's complaint that Titania 'crowns' the Indian boy Oberon covets 'with flowers' (2.1.27). The disorder of this image, of nature encroaching over a man's own person, is highlighted by Oberon's own plans for the boy. He wants the boy to enact the role of a 'knight of his train, to trace the forests wild' (2.1.25). Holland glosses 'trace' as to mean 'range over'[265] and as such, it is another example of Oberon's control over nature, of the 'forests wild'. It is an example of male control over nature that Oberon wishes to train the changeling boy, because he is a boy, to emulate.[266] The image of Titania covering the boy with flowers, a female-powered disordering whereby man is pliant and passive in the face of nature, is a dangerous inversion of Oberon's aims. It is surely this point that Oberon wished to make plain to Titania in his plan to humiliate her since she re-enacts this image of disordering nature on Bottom, on whom she is tricked to 'dote' (4.1.44):

Come, sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy. (4.1.1-4)

The 'translated' (3.1.113, 3.2.32), transformed Bottom, with the ass's head, is a half-man, half-beast, undone and overpowered by nature. It is Oberon's trick to, first, force Titania to 'dote' on him, and then to 'undo / This hateful imperfection of her eyes' (4.1.61-2), so that she may perceive what she has created: 'his hairy temples' which she has 'rounded / With a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers' (4.1.50-1), the man so overpowered by nature that he is no longer fully a man, out of control, a horror of disorder. The trick appears to work, as Titania cries 'O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!' (4.1.78). Oberon is quick to re-order what Titania has disordered. He orders Puck to re-instate Bottom's full humanity ('Robin, take off this head' (4.1.79)), and claims the changeling child (4.1.58-61). Titania is brought into line. After the trick, she begins to call Oberon her 'lord' once more (4.1.98), which, as Chaudhuri notes, is 'the very term she had earlier contested' (2.1.63-4).[267] As Montrose notes, the female is brought back into obedience to the male, the wife to the

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[264] Chiari (2019) notes that this act is also a gender-blurring act: 'Hiems, the male Winter King embodying old age, seems mocked and unmanned by Nature', p. 47.

[265] Holland (2008), p. 154.

[266] Montrose (1983) reads this aspect of the play in terms of Elizabethan socialisation of children, and as one of the 'crucial transitions in the male and female life cycles', p. 66-7, see also p. 71.

[267] Chaudhuri (2018), p. 84.

husband, and just so is nature also re-ordered. There is no more talk of 'brawls' and 'contagious fogs', only blessings. In the final scene of the play, Oberon and Titania come together so that Oberon may bless the issue of Theseus and Hippolyta's bridal bed:

Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride bed will we,
Which by us shall blessèd be,
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be,
And the blots of nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand.
Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious such as are
Despisèd in nativity
Shall upon their children be. (5.1.393-405)

For Olson, the conclusion of the play, suffused with the calm of peaceful union, is a 'reflection of the concord between Oberon and Titania, between their loves. It suggests a return of the world of nature from seasonal disorder to a similar harmony'.[268] That Oberon is the one to speak this blessing, when, given its concern with fertility and marriage one might assume a female supernatural creature, whether fairy or deity, such as the classical Juno or Hymen, might hold sway, is, in this context, unsurprising. In the *Dream*, Titania is the locus of natural disorder, which is here evoked by the 'blots of nature's hand', the 'mole, harelip', 'scar', and 'mark prodigious', the very things that Oberon is banishing. The orderly and healthy succession of children, the result of an orderly nature, is under Oberon's control, and his to bless and bequeath.

Thus far, this reading of the play would place Oberon firmly towards the extreme end of the spectrum labeled male-orderliness. However, one would have to ask, wouldn't that be privileging Oberon's account of the play's narrative? In response to Titania's listing of the malign effects of their quarrel, Oberon declares 'Do you amend it, then. It lies in you. / Why should Titania cross her Oberon?' (2.1.118-9). Placing the fault with Titania, aligning

[268] Olsen, Paul, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage,' in *ELH*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1957), 95 - 119, p. 117.

her with natural disorderliness may be in keeping with early modern ideas of femininity, but Shakespeare appears to be doing more with her character than replicating these prevailing notions, as is demonstrated by the terse, authoritarian way in which he has Oberon speak of it. His reaction to her refusal to cave to his demands is as much the cause of the disorderly weather as Titania's initial refusal. Titania describes the disorderly effects the fairy monarchs' quarrel has had on the human world, thus claiming enough ownership of it to acknowledge the repercussions: 'We are their parents and original', she declares, which is more than Oberon does (2.1.117). He himself, in this moment, is disorderly and creates disorder (as Titania accuses him, 'thy brawls have disturbed our sport' (2.1.87)) and we can see this aspect of him in other moments of the plays as well. His magical acts are just as disordering as those resulting from Titania's 'disobedience'. In letting Puck loose to run amok, he sets off the sexual knots and tangles of the lovers in the Athenian woods, and is just as responsible for the disordered nature of Bottom as is Titania—at least Titania only dressed him in flowers, as opposed to turning him into a half-beast 'monster' (3.2.8-34).[269] And if Oberon has aspects of disorderliness, then so too does Titania have aspects of orderliness. Titania holds her own sway and sense of order within and over a female community. Titania tells us (and Oberon) that she had 'a vot'ress', the boy's mother (2.1.123) and paints an intimate image of the close relationship the two women shared, when 'she gossiped at my side', 'laughed' (125, 28), until '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' (135-7). It is this community which is warped and disordered by Oberon's demands for the boy: in a sense, he destroys this female-centric community and supplants—or at least attempts to supplant— it with his own violent, patriarchal society, with himself at the top. This new, male order, instead of one of communality and love,[270] is an authoritarian power premised on rage and violence—and though it calls itself order, actually creates, as we have seen, in its attempt to supplant the previous order, disorder: 'this same progeny of evils comes / From our debate, from our dissension' (2.1.115-6).

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[269] Technically, it is Puck's actions that 'translated' Bottom into a half-ass monster (3.1.113, 3.2.32, 17), though Oberon offers his whole-hearted approval for his subordinate's initiative: 'This falls out better than I could devise' (3.2.35).

[270] It is important to note, to dispel any too-rosy a vision of female utopia, that Titania's description of her relationship with her 'vot'ress' does depict a distinct form of hierarchy. Titania is, of course, the one with the 'vot'ress', a woman who would 'fetch [Titania] trifles / As from a voyage, rich with merchandise' (2.1.123, 133-4), thus creating a picture of an amalgamated religious hierarchical society with a mercantile economy, with Titania at the top, receiving worship, 'trifles', and, one assumes, the profit of the 'merchandise'—literally, in the case of the boy.

In *Dream*, the female is always aligned with disorderly nature.[271] And this alignment between the two extends beyond this single play. The references in Titania's speech to 'contagious fogs' and 'rheumatic diseases' (2.1.105) link her to the female figure of disordered nature in *The Tempest*, the 'foul witch Sycorax' (1.2.258). In contrast to Prospero's magic of 'spirits' (2.2.3, 4.1.120) and 'garment', 'staff' and 'book' (1.2.25, 5.1.54, 3.1.94), Sycorax's magic is rooted in and expressed through the materiality of a disordered and unhealthy nature. Sycorax's son, Caliban, reports that his mother's magic worked through forms of nature: 'All the charms / Of Sycorax', he claims, are listed as 'toads, beetles', and 'bats' (1.2.339-340).[272] His threatening talk of 'wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed / With raven's feather from unwholesome fen' (1.2.321-2) emphasises that Sycorax's magic is not merely one composed of natural elements, but rooted in a disordered, unhealthy nature. From the malignant creatures (though known to be so in an ordered universe of nature) of 'toads, beetles, bats',[273] we are plunged into the sort of sickening effluence of a disordered nature like that described by Titania, one in which the winds have not swept away the 'contagious fogs' and instead have allowed them to linger, moist in the air, as miasma. This moisture ('wicked dew') from an 'unwholesome fen' in which 'all the infections that the sun sucks up / From bogs, gens, flats' (2.2.1-2) are free to remain and cause harm.

The word 'foul' is repeated many times throughout the play and each time it emphasises unhealthy natural disorder. Sycorax is the 'foul witch' (1.2.258), her witchcraft is that of a disordered nature, but she also called a 'damned witch' (1.2.263). Again, just as we saw in Titania's speech, where the disorder of nature is rendered in the moral terms of pride and injustice, here 'foul' is equated with the ungodly disorderliness of black witch-

[271] Watson, Robert N., 'The Ecology of Self in *Midsummer Night's Dream*,' in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, ed. by Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 33 - 56, notes that, in *Dream*, 'as so often for men in this period—woman is really a marker for nature itself, for an undifferentiated life-force that is under no one's voluntary control', p. 38.

[272] As Sycorax is an absent character in the play, long dead before the narrative begins, we only have reports of her magic, from her son, from Ariel, and from Prospero. That Sycorax is not an embodied character is an interesting point when one considers how rooted in the natural landscape of the idea her magic is. Without an actor portraying her, Sycorax almost becomes a piece of the island's magic herself. Her magic, and herself, is a part of the island itself.

[273] Gillies, John, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) notes that these creatures are 'the creeping or hybrid abominations of Leviticus', p. 143.

craft. It is no surprise that Prospero should claim that Sycorax was immoral, since he also claims that she coupled with the Devil to create her son: he calls Caliban a 'poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam' (1.2.319-320). This invective is of a piece with Early Modern ideas of witchcraft, which included the inverted Sabbath by which witches would gain their powers from the Devil.[274] Just as the witches' Sabbath was an inversion of the Christian Sabbath, so too does Prospero describe Sycorax as his opposite Other, aligning himself with morality and Sycorax with immorality.

'Foul' is associated with other characters in the play, not least Sycorax's own son, whose conspiracy to overthrow the 'tyrant' Prospero (3.2.40) with Stephano and Trinculo is termed by Prospero as 'that foul conspiracy' (4.1.139), and as punishment, he has Ariel lead them unbeknownst into 'the foul lake' (4.1.183), the 'filthy-mantled pool' in order to temporarily confine them (4.1.182, 4.1.178-184). 'Foul' here once again denotes a disordered, disgusting ('filthy') nature, and that Caliban, Sycorax's son, is there ensnared, drives home the point that the witch embodies this disordered nature. Caliban, the only native inhabitant of the island, has returned to an analogue of his disorderly, rotten-natured mother's womb.

The idea of a foul, sickening 'unwholesome fen', particularly those of the New World, to which Sycorax is linked (her god, 'Setebos' (1.2.372) was the name of a Patagonian deity[275]), had an especial currency in Shakespeare's day, one which linked its natural hazards to health with a moral (or rather, immoral) reading of an unregulated, uncultivated, dangerously disordered natural state. John Gillies, reading *The Tempest* alongside traveller and settlers' accounts from the New World of Virginia, finds a link between the 'foul lake' and the '"fen" imagery' in the pamphlets, *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia* and *A True and Sincere Declaration of the purpose and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia* (both 1610).[276] He finds in the *True Declaration* the idea that 'infection from the fens is somehow optional, depending on one's moral fibre and work-

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[274] Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 521 and 529.

[275] Orgel (1994), p. 33

[276] Gillies, John, 'Shakespeare's Virginian Masque,' *ELH*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (1986), 673 - 707, p. 681. See also p. 679 - 86.

rate'.[277] According to the pamphlet writers, it is because the colonists have not properly cultivated the land and brought it into order that the fens have remained in the landscape and can now infect them. Gillies writes that 'it is typical of a strategy [that of the pamphlets] which found rhetorical solutions for real difficulties; there is no suggestion that Jamestown be resited or the "owse" drained'.[278] Instead, it is the *idea* of fens as examples of a disorderly nature, left to fester when it should have been brought under control by man's cultivation, capable of sickening mankind that has been lax in its control that is predominant. In *The Tempest*, Gillies finds that fens, as metaphors, 'contribute to a general idiom of disease and distemper', an idiom which has 'some importance to Sycorax's magic'.[279]

Such disordered nature is part and parcel of Sycorax's reported magic. (She is long dead before the play begins, and thus we only hear of her exploits through the variously biased accounts of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. Her presence in the play is an entirely rhetorical construction.) According to Prospero, Sycorax's magic could 'control the moon' and 'make flows and ebbs', presumably of the tides (5.1.270).[280] The waxing and waning of both moon and tides are a natural process, seemingly imperturbable to man's control, or cultivation. The moon especially was associated with women, and the cycle of menstruation and fertility. As such, Sycorax's power to distort this order roots her magic both with disorder and femininity. Even her magic itself is disordered. As Prospero recounts, though she had the power to lock Ariel away 'into a cloven pine' (1.2.275), she lacked the power or ability to let him out again (1.2.290-91).[281]

Sycorax's disordering natural magic, as epitomised in her 'unwholesome fen', also points to the supposed difference between herself and Prospero, and the difference between their supernatural powers. Where Sycorax creates and uses an uncultivated, disor-

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[277] Gillies (1986), p. 680.

[278] Gillies (1986), p. 680.

[279] Gillies (1986), p. 684

[280] Orgel (1994) glosses the phrase 'make flows and ebbs', 'as the moon does', equating Sycorax and the moon, the symbol of femininity, p. 202.

[281] This, however, is told to us solely through Prospero, when he is furiously demanding Ariel's gratitude and continued service, as the only person who could have given the spirit his freedom. Shakespeare leaves open the possibility that releasing Ariel was within Sycorax's power, even if the will to do so was lacking.

dered nature,[282] Prospero's powers, as evidenced by his masque of spirits, emphasises the importance of natural order and cultivation—and is itself an attempt at control, over both Ferdinand and Miranda's sexuality as well as a further sortie in his overall scheme to marry his daughter into the Neopolitan royal family (1.2.420-1).[283] It is at this point too that we see the sharp divide between Prospero and Oberon. Prospero's creation and evocation of order is enacted through the 'thin air' (4.1.150) of spirits. It is they who extol the virtues and benefits of cultivated nature and orderly conduct, and both they themselves, and beyond them, their master, are far removed from the natural world itself. Oberon, on the other hand, works *through* nature. His magic takes the form of spells chanted over a charmed flower (2.1.148-172), and this magic is never renounced. The finale of *Dream*, in which fairy magic is channelled through the natural blessings for healthy, happy marriages and progeny (5.1.392-413) is very different to the finale of *The Tempest*, in which Prospero disparages and abandons his magical powers, winds up his plots and charms and resolves to live once more as a mortal man. He can do so because Prospero's powers are always at a remove from himself, they are external and can thus be broken up and destroyed without harming himself. He resolves that he will 'break' his staff (5.1.54) and 'drown' his book (57), and so 'abjure' his magic (51).

Prospero's masque, as Gillies shows, sets cultivation and order against the natural disorder as represented by Sycorax and her witchcraft. Prospero calls upon his spirits to enact the roles of the goddesses Iris, Juno and Ceres and to bestow their blessings on the betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand, all organised and arranged by Prospero. Ceres promises

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[282] Gillies (1994) writes that 'Sycorax reduces nature on the island to the state of wilderness and abomination' (p. 143), that 'Sycorax does not so much *find* "a howling wilderness", as *make* one (literally). […] The suggestion of the motif of "temperance" in *The Tempest* is that, for all its remoteness and apparent inhospitability, the island is potentially "temperate" and "fruitful". Under Sycorax, however, such potential (*meliora natura*) is stifled and perverted or "confused". [I would label it disorderly.] Thus Sycorax tries to force an "airy" spirit to perform "earthy" commands. Thus too, she adopts a New World "devil" (another kind of *genius loci*) as a god', p. 142. This god, as Gillies points out, is himself linked with disorderly weather, as he is worshipped 'by the Patagonian Indians of the storm-beaten wilderness of Tierra del Fuego', p. 142.

[283] This attempt at control, like many of Prospero's, is only partially successful. Sexuality—particularly female sexuality—lurks in the wings of the stage occupied by his chaste, 'temperate' goddesses, Ceres and Juno (4.1.132). Venus and Cupid, here related specifically with the rape of Proserpina by Dis, are conspicuously absent (87-101) but the distinct physicality of the 'sunburned sickle-men' (134) precipitate the dissolution of the masque, reminding Prospero of that other attempted rape, of Miranda by Caliban, as well as Caliban's incipient insurrection (1.2.344-50, 4.1.139-42).

Earth's increase, foison plenty,
Barns and garners never empty,
Vines with clustering bunches growing,
Plants with goodly burden bowing;
Spring come to you at the farthest,
In the very end of harvest!
Scarcity and want shall shun you;
Ceres' blessing so is on you. (4.1.110-117)

As Gillies notes, the masque

> works on two levels. At the more literal, it is a celebration of the betrothal[…] But Juno, the marriage goddess, also presides over a metaphoric betrothal of the elements. Earth is reconciled with heaven, land and seas, hot with cold, wet with dry, spring with harvest.[284]

The masque's display and paean to order is precisely what Oberon reinstates after the natural disorder, the sea spilling over onto land, summer's blooms littering the winter ice, associated with Titania's rebellion. Prospero, like Oberon, is responsible for orchestrating order.

As Gillies explains further,

> At both levels, literal and metaphoric, the reconciliations are achieved through temperance and result in fruitfulness. The harvest goddess who presides over a fertile and cultivated landscape represents both fruitfulness and the temperance necessary for the work of cultivation.[285]

It is this temperance and control, as opposed to intemperate disorder, 'distemperature', as Titania calls it (2.1.106)[286] and localised in the fens associated with Sycorax's magic, that Prospero is at pains to demonstrate in his magic show.[287] Ceres is the 'most bounteous lady' (4.1.60), the goddess of the agricultural products brought about by man's ordering, control and cultivation of nature: 'of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and peas' (4.1.61).

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[284] Gillies (1986), p. 686.

[285] Gillies (1986), p. 686.

[286] Holland's (2008) gloss, p. 160

[287] Vaughan and Vaughan (2011), p. 70.

Her domain is similarly that of an orderly, controlled nature: 'flat meads thatched with stover' (4.1.63), the 'poll-clipped vineyard' (4.1.68), and she alights before the couple on 'this short-grassed green' (4.1.83). As Orgel notes, 'this action takes place on a well-tended lawn'.[288] This part of the island, the area within Prospero's magical control, could not be further from the 'unwholesome fen', the intemperate, uncultivated, disease-ridden domain of the 'foul witch Sycorax'.

That Prospero should choose this goddess to create a spiritual show with his magic is apt. As Orgel points out, Ceres was the goddess who 'brought civilization to human society'. She 'presides here because Prospero's masque is a civilizing vision, and, in contrast to the bounty of the island, the fertility it invokes is controlled and orderly'.[289] Most importantly, the civilisation and fertility are under Prospero's control. Prospero's magic has an instructive aim here. He is insistent that Ferdinand pay attention:

> Sweet, now, silence!
> Juno and Ceres whisper seriously.
> There's something else to do. Hush, and be mute,
> Or else our spell is marred. (4.1.124-127)

Ferdinand's attention to and retention of the lessons of the masque are crucial if Prospero is to be able to control how Ferdinand will proceed in his marriage to Prospero's daughter (4.1.13-31). If he should be lax, the 'spell is marred'. Prospero uses his magical masque to warn strenuously against 'discord' (4.1.20), and Ferdinand's response is very telling in terms of the dichotomy Gillies perceived in *The Tempest*'s display of cultivation against wild, uncontrolled nature, what he calls a 'dialectic of civilisation and savagery, of art and nature'.[290] Ferdinand declares his chaste,[291] controlled intentions, and scorns the 'worser genius' (4.1.27), the 'lust' (28), that he localises metaphorically with 'the murkiest den' (4.1.25).[292] This place chimes insistently with Sycorax's 'unwholesome fen', both in the rhyme and its metaphoric corollaries of uncontrolled natural disorder. (We might also note that Prospero's vision of controlled sexuality is a pointed contrast to Sycorax's moth-

[288] Orgel (1994), p. 48.

[289] Orgel (1994), p. 48.

[290] Gillies (1986), p. 686.

[291] Orgel (1994), p. 48.

[292] Lindley (2013), p. 5.

ering of the so-called devil's son Caliban.) Ferdinand shuns the spectre of Sycorax and agrees to obey Prospero's insistent orders, and the masque serves to reinforce this decision. As Orgel notes, 'Prospero's power is exemplified as power over people'.[293] Speaking of the shipwreck victims, traumatised by his harpy spectacle, Prospero claims that 'they now are in my power' (3.3.90): the same could be said of everyone in the play.

Oberon's power is exemplified as the ability to control other characters as well, but it is in how their magical powers are presented that we see the sharpest difference between the Fairy King and the Duke of Milan. Where Oberon operates with two enchanted flowers, 'Dian's bud' and 'Cupid's flower' (4.1.72), working with and through nature, Prospero's magic is constructed as detached from nature.[294] He does not work through flowers, or ravens, or fens, and his only reported direct interaction with nature is when he released Ariel from the tree prison within which Sycorax had bound him (1.2.291-3). And this is an act which constitutes a re-ordering of a female-inflicted disorder of nature. Ariel's 'groans' (1.2.287) from within the tree apparently instigated a calamitous disorder on the island. The sound

> did make wolves howl, and penetrate the breasts
> Of ever-angry bears — It was a torment
> To lay upon the damned (1.2.288-290)

In Prospero's own telling, his rescue of Ariel set the island to order again, reinstating order upon Sycorax's disorder.

The detached, external nature of Prospero's magic is emphasised repeatedly throughout *The Tempest*. Prospero works through spirits, beings which, as he informs Ferdinand,

> by mine art
> I have from their confines called to enact
> My present fancies (4.1.120-122)

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[293] Orgel (1994), p. 50-1.

[294] Garrison, John S., *Shakespeare and the Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) emphasises the control inherent in Prospero's magic: 'It seems that Prospero's way is to put everyone to work. […] The ways in which Prospero displays mastery over the island, the labors of everyone on it, and even the words of others that enable such control underlines how much of this power derives from co-opting the efforts of others', p. 108.

His powers are localised in the props of 'garment', 'staff' and 'book' and, according to Caliban, without these and the control they give him over those spirits through whom he works, he is powerless. Caliban, advising Stephano and Trinculo on how best to oust the island's master, proposes that they should

> First to possess his books for without them
> He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
> One spirit to command — They all do hate him
> As rottenly as I. Burn his books. (3.2.90-93)

Prospero's power is separate from himself, not a part of his corporeal being, and as such he can disclaim it, destroy it (5.1.50-57), and retain his essential humanity. Mowat has suggested a possible reading of Prospero's character as that of the 'wizard' type of early modern magical stage character who, at the end of his narrative, disowns his magical powers in an embrace of Christianity.[295] There are indeed elements of this in Prospero's characterisation, but the crucial fact of his abjuration of his magical powers, I believe, is that it insists Prospero himself is not part of the natural, magical world. Many have noted that Prospero's powers are akin to those of the learned Renaissance humanists. Roulon, taking up the 'alchemical patterns and symbols' that critics have long found in the play,[296] reads Ariel as Prospero's 'alchemical Mercurius'.[297] Even the magic through which he exhorts control, his spirit underlings who perform his masque, are detached and distinct from himself. The 'baseless fabric of this vision' (4.1.151) is an 'insubstantial pageant' (4.1.155), as insubstantial and detachable as his spirit Ariel is from himself, the spirit whom he finally releases to his freedom.

Prospero's detached form of magic does not only appear to distinguish him from Oberon, but from Sycorax too.[298] Within *The Tempest*, Sycorax is his opposite, and Sycorax, like Oberon, differs from Prospero in that her magic is rooted within herself, and cannot be renounced. Throughout *The Tempest*, Sycorax is referred to as a 'hag' (1.2.405).

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[295] Mowat (1981), p. 291 - 93.

[296] Roulon, Natalie, 'Music and magic in *The Tempest*: Ariel's alchemical songs,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 193 - 217, p. 193.

[297] Roulon (2020), p. 193.

[298] Mowat, Barbara A., 'Prospero's Book,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2001), 1 - 33, claims that Prospero is 'a natural enemy of Sycorax', p. 26.

This term is emphasised by the fact that this aspect of the woman is carried over onto her son, almost as if it is a part of her genetic material. Caliban is referred to as a 'hagseed' (1.2.364), Prospero calls him 'hag-born' (1.2.283). Her 'hag' nature is evidence of Shakespeare's literary sources for Sycorax: John Cotta, a 'physician and demonologist' of the early modern era, referred to both Medea and Circe, the ancient supernatural figures whose lineage can be detected in Sycorax, as 'those famous old hags'.[299] 'Hag' is a noun, not an adjective. 'Hag' is the thing itself, as opposed to a facet of a character, and as such it distinguishes her from Prospero who may be a 'sorcerer' (3.2.41), and also 'Duke of Milan' (1.2.54). The *OED* defines 'hag' as, firstly, '[a]n evil spirit, daemon, or infernal being, in female form', second as 'a woman supposed to have dealings with Satan and the infernal world; a witch', and thirdly, as 'an ugly, repulsive woman: often with implications of viciousness or maliciousness'.[300] A 'sorcerer', on the other hand, is defined solely as 'one who practises sorcery; a wizard, a magician'.[301]

Therefore, 'hag' denotes a thing-unto-itself. It is the thing that defines Sycorax's characterisation and being. Like Oberon's fairy nature, it prohibits her from being seen and read as fully human. Sorcery, meanwhile, is an art that is *practised*. Once again, Prospero's magic is defined as something external to himself. This point is reinforced by Shakespeare's insistence on Prospero's learning. In Prospero's own account, he lost his dukedom because he negligently allowed his brother to usurp his civic duties (1.2.66-70). Instead of attending to worldly matters (1.2.89), Prospero spent his time in 'secret studies' (1.2.77). Magic is here denoted as the 'liberal arts' (1.2.73), a studious exercise that requires 'volumes' (1.2.167).[302] A great deal of emphasis is laid on the importance of

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[299] Quoted in Roberts, Gareth, 'The descendants of Circe: witches and Renaissance fictions,' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 183 - 206, p. 190.

[300] *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed online 18/03/2020. All three of these definitions were current at the projected time of *The Tempest*'s composition: the *OED* draws on *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale* for its dating. See also Briggs, Katherine, *An Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), examining the famous list in Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: 'Hags, giants and dwarfs are in the Scandinavian tradition of mythology—that is hags regarded as witch-like but non-human beings', p. 21.

[301] *OED*, accessed online 18/03/2020.

[302] At other times in the play, Prospero refers to his magic in terms of a single volume: 'I'll to my book' (3.1.94). Mowat's article, 'Prospero's Book' (2001) offers an illuminating insight into how an early modern audience would have conceived of a wizard's book of magic. See especially p. 2-3.

these books to Prospero; we may recall Caliban's claim that his book is all the magic Prospero has (3.2.89-93). On the other hand, it is never implied that Sycorax has had to learn her magic or acquire it through 'secret studies', as Prospero claims, in order to become a 'foul witch'. Like Oberon, her magic *is* her person, she is a 'hag', just as he is a 'fairy', and as such neither can claim to be human.

As we have seen, Prospero's narrative and self-fashioning throughout *The Tempest* works hard to separate and distance himself from other supernatural-type characters. Within his own play, he is distanced from Sycorax by the emphasis on the non-natural aspects of his magic, including the fact that it is not internalised but localised in objects separate from his body. This process of differentiation also has effects extraneous to the play Prospero resides in, and thus can be read as separating him from the other supernatural characters of Shakespeare's creation, as if Shakespeare himself were differentiating Prospero from Oberon and Titania, two non-human, supernatural creatures whose supernaturalness is, as a matter of course, a part of their corporeal essence. But, as in *Dream*, following this line of argument is to privilege Prospero's viewpoint over the many others in the play: though Prospero's narrative is the most dominant, we can hear traces of differing interpretations from beneath his lengthy soliloquies. Though Prospero is at pains to differentiate himself from Sycorax, as Shakespeare makes clear, the two share a great deal, most specifically a source for their characterisation: Ovid's Medea.

Medea's lineage in Sycorax is made clear in Sycorax's very name. According to Orgel, her name 'sounds like an epithet for Ovid's witch, the Scythian raven', *korax* being ancient Greek for raven, and *Sy* resulting from Scythia.[303] This also provides a Medean antecedent for Sycorax's charms of 'raven's feather'.[304] Medea is also lurking in the magic of Prospero. The mighty speech in which Prospero discards his magic is, as many scholars have noted, remarkably similar to a speech of Medea's in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[305]

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[303] Orgel (1994), p. 19.

[304] Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 254.

[305] Bate (1993), p. 249. Garrison (2018) notes that 'Shakespeare changes the wording only slightly from Arthur Golding's 1567 English translation', p. 103. He links Prospero's use of Medea with Shakespeare's use of Ovid (via Golding): 'The resuscitation of Medea evocatively transports the language not only across time but also across genders and narratives. Prospero himself seems to embrace the earlier text as a means by which to express his power and, in doing so, reflects Shakespeare's own authorial process. […] Amidst Prospero's claims to resurrect the dead, Shakespeare resurrects an ancient poet and his sorceress', p. 103.

There is evidence that Shakespeare read both Arthur Golding's translation of the work, published in 1567, and Ovid's original.[306] From Ovid, the early moderns received the reading of Medea as a transgressive, morally questionable figure whose powers were primarily those of a witch, including transformation. Her transformations often took the form of natural disruption and disorder. As Bate notes, reviewing her presence in the *Metamorphoses*:

> Occasionally in Ovid, metamorphosis is carried out by someone other than the gods. But the characters responsible are viewed as transgressive and not to be admired, for they interfere with the natural order. The most notable of them is the witch Medea.[307]

The speech that Shakespeare uses as a base for Prospero's speech of renunciation is one in which 'Medea concentrates especially on her power to overturn the normal processes of nature', and Shakespeare carries these powers over to Prospero.[308]

> Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
> And ye that on the sands with printless foot
> Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
> When he comes back; you demo-puppets that
> By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
> Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
> Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
> To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid—
> Weak masters though ye be—I have bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
> And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
> Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
> Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
> With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory

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[306] Bate (1993), p. 254, and see his footnote, 46. Heavey, Katherine, *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558 - 1688* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) writes that '[c]ritics are now united in their acknowledgement of Shakespeare's use of both the Latin and the English versions of the *Metamorphoses*', p. 139.

[307] Bate (1993), p. 249.

[308] Bate (1993), p. 250. Heavey (2015) notes that 'Prospero's detailing of his power recalls Medea's boasts about her control over the natural world in *Metamorphoses 7*', p. 138.

Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar. Graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and when I have required
Some heavenly music—which even now I do—
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book. (5.1.33-57)

The first notable facet of Prospero's speech here is how redolent of natural imagery it is.[309] It evokes an island, and a world, filled with every aspect of nature, almost every element or natural feature included: 'hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves', beaches against the sea ('sands' before 'ebbing Neptune'), pasturelands riddled with fairy circles ('green sour ringlets' where 'the ewe not bites') and forests of 'pine and cedar'. This natural world is heavily and diversely populated, with 'elves' and 'demi-puppets', sheep and 'mushrooms' and the ancient gods ('Jove's stout oak' is present, as is his (super)natural powers, 'his own bolt'). His magic, too, is described as resolutely that of a material nature.[310] He can control through his magic the sea, sky, trees, winds and lightning, and beyond that, his magic itself, his 'book', is also shown to be within the power of the natural world. As is made clear by how he plans to 'abjure' his magic, it too is natural. He will destroy his tools through natural means, he will, in a sense, 'return' them to nature. As Mar-

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309 Cless, Downing, 'Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*,' in *Ecology and Environment in European Drama* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 91 - 118, notes of Oberon, Prospero, Puck and Ariel, '[a]ll four manipulate nature as the major source of their magic throughout', p. 101.

310 Its naturalness has been hinted at before, almost as Freudian slips in Prospero's own narrative. (As Goodland (2020) writes, there are moments in the play 'when the playwright indicates, through the poetic allusions made by his unwitting protagonist, that Prospero and Sycorax might be more alike than different,' p. 232.) Though he has been at pains to divorce himself, and his magic, from the natural world, Caliban states that Prospero's spirits have tormented him

Sometime like apes that mow and chatter at me,
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness (2.2.9-14).

greta de Grazia notes, ‘the robe, staff, and book […] he will eventually return, like Ariel, to their elemental source’.[311] He will ‘break’ his staff, and hide away its remains, ‘bury it certain fathoms in the earth’, where the natural processes of decay and erosion shall complete its destruction. Likewise, his book will also be destroyed by nature. He will ‘drown’ it, ‘deeper than did ever plummet sound’: no-one shall be able to retrieve it before the water has washed away the ink and disintegrated the paper. It seems a more peaceful, ‘natural’ way to remove the book’s existence from the earth, certainly when compared to Caliban’s plan to ‘burn’ his book (3.2.93), or, indeed, Prospero’s dramatic analogue, the scholar Faustus, who, in Marlowe’s play, pleads that he will ‘burn his books’ in a frantic attempt to escape being dragged to hell (*Doctor Faustus*, 5.2.116).[312] As it turns out, despite his self-conscious separation from Sycorax, Prospero’s magic is, at the end, similarly subject to the natural processes of the earth.

Prospero’s linguistic register here is closer to that of Caliban, the ‘hag-born’ son of Sycorax, who has reported the natural magic of Sycorax, and displayed his own facility with lyrical, natural language:

> I prithee let me bring thee where crabs grow,
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts,
> Show thee a jay’s nest, and instruct thee how
> To snare the nimble marmoset. I’ll bring thee
> To clust’ring filberts, and sometimes I’ll get thee
> Young scammels from the rock. (2.2.161-166)

The closest Prospero’s language has previously come to such revelling in the natural world is the speeches of the goddesses in his spirit masque (‘Barns and garners never empty, / Vines with clust’ring bunches growing’ (4.1.111-112)), but there, the nature had

[311] de Grazia, Margreta, ‘“The Tempest”: Gratuitous Movement or Action Without Kibes and Pinches,’ *Shakespeare Studies*, 14 (1981), 249 - 265, p. 255.

[312] Bevington, David and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford World’s Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). All quotes are from the ‘A’ text. Harris (1980) sees this difference as a part of Prospero’s turn away from magic and towards Christian piety, p. 136-7.

been strictly controlled and ordered.[313] In his speech in Act Five, in contrast, the elements are wild, discordant and disorderly. The speech bears more than a little similarity to Titania's speech concerning nature in disarray, with Prospero's vision even more ghastly and hair-raising. Where Titania spoke of 'proud' rivers overrunning their banks (2.1.91), Prospero has 'mutinous winds'. The moral force is even more powerful here. In *Dream*, it is the fairies' 'dissension' that has caused the winds to cease blowing (2.1.86-90) and the rivers to become 'proud', but in *The Tempest*, Prospero lays claim to be the personal cause. He has 'called forth the mutinous winds' and says that it was he himself who 'set roaring war' between the sky and the sea, he alone who has 'made shake' the 'strong-based promontory' and 'plucked up' the forest trees. It is he who has set the natural world into disorder, the sea against the sky, Jove's oak against Jove's lightning, the ever-standing cliffs set to quivering, and wrenched the trees from their soil.[314] This is the female world of disordered nature, the acts of witches, as is made clear by the resemblances to Prospero's claim here to those other female, disorderly supernatural beings, the witches of *Macbeth*. They too claim to raise storms (1.3.25) and predict that trees shall walk (4.1.91-99).[315] Prospero leaves his grandest claim for the very end of his speech extolling his powers. 'Graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth': raising the dead, causing them to live and walk again, is the ultimate inversion of the natural order. Bate calls it the 'most alarming' of Prospero's claims,[316] and it is here that Prospero claims to have gone even further than Sycorax, the 'foul witch'.

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[313] Another example of Prospero's facility with natural imagery comes when he is threatening to imprison Ferdinand. His evocation of

> Sea-water shalt thou drink; thy food shall be
> The fresh-brook mussels, withered roots, and husks
> Wherein the acorn cradled (1.2.463-5)

is to facilitate another of his attempts to control and order the people around him.

[314] His creation of the tempest that begins the play, though he promises (or lies to?) Miranda that it is a mere 'spectacle' (1.2.26, 25-32) is also an example of a feminine-tinged disordering of the natural world, a 'huge disruption of weather,' in Cless (2010)'s wording, p. 98. Harris (1980) notes that 'Prospero's assertions of his control of the elements are exemplified in the creation of such violent and potentially destructive phenomena as earthquakes and thunderbolts', p. 135.

[315] All quotations from *Macbeth* are from Clark, Sandra and Pamela Mason (eds.), *Macbeth* (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[316] Bate (1994), p. 251. Garrison (2018) notes that '[i]t is possible that he describes events prior to the play or that he uses the notion of resurrection metaphorically', p. 103.

Prospero's Medea-inflected renunciation speech is not the only time that Shakespeare has emphasised how these two supposed opposites, Prospero and Sycorax, are also highly similar to each other.[317] Both characters have been exiled from their place of origin.[318] Sycorax was 'banished' from Algiers (1.2.265-6) and Prospero was ousted from his dukedom and spirited away to the island (1.2.121-132). Both have a single child that they carried with them to the island: Prospero brought the infant Miranda (1.2.151-153), and Sycorax arrived at the island pregnant with Caliban, her unborn child, the 'one thing she did' for which the Algerians 'would not take her life' (1.2.266-7). Both Miranda and Caliban are their parents' 'salvation', in de Grazia's term. Just as Caliban was the reason Sycorax was not executed, Prospero calls Miranda his 'cherubim' who 'did preserve me' (1.2.152-3).[319] The two are even linked by the fact of pregnancy: Sycorax arrived at the island pregnant and, in Prospero's re-telling, apparently so did he. As Goodland writes, 'the text indicates that [Prospero] *conceives* of himself as a mother as well as a father', the reference he makes to his 'undergoing stomach', when '[u]nder [his] burden groaned' (1.2.157, 56) 'feminise Prospero, showing his vulnerability, as he groans and weeps under the burden of a raised stomach like a woman giving birth. The poetic play on words aligns him with Sycorax, who was similarly exiled to the island pregnant and vulnerable'.[320] There are elements of similarity in the characterisations of Prospero and Sycorax as well. As de Grazia illustrates, both are defined by their rage. It is the 'same passion' which drives them both.[321] Sycorax imprisoned Ariel whilst in a 'most unmitigable rage' (1.2.276). The anger Prospero directs to Ariel has already been noted but Caliban and Ferdinand are also shown to be on the receiving end of his tirades (1.2.364-370,

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[317] See Orgel (1994), p. 20, and de Grazia (1981), p. 255. Chiari (2019) notes that 'Prospero occupies an in-between position, partly because he has taken up Sycorax's prerogatives, and partly because, in his books, he has learnt how to raise spirits, either good or evil', p. 238. Heavey (2015) argues that Shakespeare points up the similarities between Prospero and Sycorax through his invocation of Medea in Prospero's renunciation speech: 'it is important to recognise that Shakespeare did not need to invoke Medea here at all and that, by doing so, he suggests uncomfortable truths about Prospero's own previously demonstrated capacity for dominance and cruelty: that is, his pre-existing similarity to the fearsome barbarian sorceress. Throughout the play, Prospero has at points seemed troublingly close to Medea and to witches like her, particularly the alarming figure of the absent Sycorax, mother of Caliban', p. 139-40. See also Heavey (2015), p. 141.

[318] de Grazia (1981), p. 255.

[319] de Grazia (1981), p. 255.

[320] Goodland (2020), p. 231 (my italics), 232.

[321] de Grazia (1981), p. 255.

1.2.453-7). Prospero's frequent requests for Miranda's attention during his long monologue in the Act 1, Scene 2 — 'Dost thou attend me?' (1.2.78), 'thou attend'st not! (87), 'Dost thou hear?' (106) — can be read and performed as angry hectoring, and Prospero's fury at Caliban's conspiracy against him is extreme enough to draw comment:

> Ferdinand: This is strange. Your father's in some passion
> That works him strongly.
> Miranda: Never till this day
> Saw I him touched with anger, so distempered. (4.1.143-145)

The similarity in the temperaments of Prospero and Sycorax carry over into similarities in their actions. As Orgel notes, the 'rage, the demand for unwilling servitude, the continual threats of contraction and painful imprisonment are characteristic to both'.[322] De Grazia is sharper: in Sycorax and Prospero's punishments, 'the torment is the same'.[323] Ariel is bound 'into a cloven pine' (1.2.277) by Sycorax, just as Prospero ensnares the Italians on the island through Ariel's creation of the tempest (1.2.193-4). Prospero binds Ferdinand's movements as well, when he attempts to draw his sword: '*He draws, and is charmed from moving*' (stage direction, 1.2.467). In just the same way, he traps the courtiers: 'There stand, / For you are spell-stopped' (5.1.60-1).

However, the key difference that remains between Prospero and Sycorax is the same difference that separates Prospero and Oberon. Prospero's magic is continually kept at a distance from his person. Whereas the presence of Medea is intrinsic to the character of Sycorax, to the extent that the ancient witch can be found in Sycorax's very name, with Prospero, her lineage is expressed in a single speech, and there it constitutes an external, detached reference, a literal translation of her original words. Here we might recall the stress Shakespeare earlier placed on Prospero's learnedness, how he is careful to include the fact that, when exiling the Duke and his infant daughter to the supposedly deserted island, Gonzalo included in the rickety boat (1.2.144-148), 'From mine own library with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom' (1.2.167-8). Mowat notes wryly that Prospero here

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[322] Orgel (1994), p. 20.

[323] de Grazia (1981), p. 255. Heavey (2015) finds in the similarity of Prospero and Sycorax's treatment of Ariel one telling difference: in his threatening of Ariel, Prospero inadvertently collapses the apparent distinction between himself and Sycorax. His words also anticipate his famous allusion to Medea, in which he boasts that he has 'rifted Jove's stout oak' [5.1.45]: here he threatens to imprison Ariel in an oak, rather than the pine used by Sycorax', p. 139-40.

speaks in the present tense.[324] It appears that, at this point in the play, he has not yet learned the error of his time in Milan. Prospero on the island remains the scholar ‘rapt in secret studies’ (1.2.77), and, in this light, we could perhaps view Prospero’s renunciation speech as self-consciously ‘Medean’. The speech could be read as Prospero the scholar lifting and quoting a passage from an earlier practitioner in his field of study, that of magic, a passage perhaps contained in the ‘volumes’ more cherished than a dukedom.[325]

Furthermore, Prospero mentions these disordering powers at just the moment that he decides to denounce and ‘abjure’ his magical powers.[326] Though his powers have been shown to be disorderly—he creates the tempest, or the illusion of it, after all (1.2.25-32)—as well as expressed through the natural world—he has spirits take the form of hedgehogs for Caliban to step on, an animal-esque magic that we wouldn’t be surprised to hear that Sycorax had made use of (2.2.10-12)—he, unlike Sycorax, does decide never to use them again. It appears that it is only in the moment when he has finally decided to completely shun the magical powers that have always, throughout the play, remained external and detachable to his person, that he can revel, at least linguistically, in all their awesome, earth-shaking power. The suddenness of his decision has been noted,[327] and not least because his renunciation so swiftly follows what sounds like the master glorying in his magical abilities. But this seems to be the only time he can revel in, and lay claim to, the full range of his magic’s nature-disordering powers, just when he is about to denounce them. It is the

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[324] Mowat (1981), p. 285.

[325] Garrison (2018) likens Prospero’s Medea-inflected speech to ‘a feat of *sprezzatura*’: ‘Prospero draws upon his learned study to produce this short speech, re-articulating words written by an earlier writer, as one might do in courtly performance. Prospero thereby fashions himself through his capacity to remember others’ words’, p. 107. He also likens Prospero to his author, writing that ‘Shakespeare and Prospero perform ownership over the words and characters of previous authors by way of scant citation.Because they do not overtly name their sources, they implicitly assert that authority to call the power of past figures their own’, p. 108.

[326] Mowat (1981), p. 288. Bate (1994) pinpoints Prospero’s declaration of necromancy as ‘a sign of its [his magic’s] roughness and a reason for its abjuration’, p. 252.

[327] Mowat (1981), p. 288, 292. Lyne, Raphael, ‘Ovid, Golding, and the ‘Rough Magic’ of *The Tempest*,’ in *Shakespeare’s Ovid: The* Metamorphoses *in the Plays and Poems*, ed. by A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 150 - 164, has argued that Prospero’s entire Act 5 speech is an awkward interpolation of Ovid into the text and that it may in fact be read as *Shakespeare’s* abjuration of Ovid and his ‘rough magic’ verse, p. 155 - 60.

only time that he can glory in his powers, when he is about to give them up, so as not to sully his essential humanity.[328]

That Prospero's humanity has been imperilled is made clear within the play. When Prospero's manipulations have brought his enemies low, and his past usurpers are now 'all prisoners' (5.1.9) of their exiled Duke, Ariel brings his empathetic reportage of the prisoners' misery, 'brimful of sorrow and dismay' (5.1.14) to a close with this comment:

> Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender. (5.1.17-19)

Ariel goes on to say that his feelings would become 'tender', 'were I human' (5.1.20). Humanity here is figured as 'pity and forgiveness', as Buccola notes.[329] It is these moral traits[330] that Prospero has forgotten, or declined, to feel in the midst of his magical, spirit-powered manipulations of the shipwrecked Italians. That it is Ariel's prompting that causes him to reclaim it — with a wholehearted agreement that is emphasised by the fact that Prospero's 'And mine shall' completes Ariel's prompting line (5.1.20) — also leaves a decided ambiguity over whether these moral feelings can be solely claimed as human property. If it takes a spirit, a being 'which art but air' (5.1.21) to recall to the human spirit master what should be humane notions, can we claim them solely as the preserve of humanity?[331] This ambiguity is further confused by the fact that 'human' here is a textual crux. As Lindley notes,

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[328] Heavey (2015) argues that Shakespeare included the invocation of Medea in Prospero's renunciation speech precisely in order to demonstrate the incompatibility of Medea's magic with human society: 'in first invoking and then rejecting Medea's power, in 5.1, Prospero is signalling his desire to integrate back into society, as well as his recognition that he must reject his magic to achieve this. Medea's barbarity, her crimes and her final escape to the heavens all reflect the fact that her power is incompatible with human and early modern social mores', p. 141. She argues that Shakespeare wished for 'at least some' of his audience to notice the Medean reference in the speech, p. 139, and through such reference demonstrate Prospero's desire to 'differentiat[e] himself from the Colchian witch, who exults in the power that Prospero is choosing to reject: it is this differentiation, and the resultant quashing of Medea-like power, that is crucial to the happy resolution of the drama', p. 139.

[329] Buccola, Regina, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), p. 26. See also Harris (1980), p. 187.

[330] Buccola (2010), p. 26.

[331] Harris (1980) notes the 'tradition' which held that spirits such as Ariel were 'incapable of human emotion', p. 187.

> In F this word is spelt “humane”; Renaissance spelling and pronunciation did not distinguish between the two words. A modern-spelling edition must choose, and clearly Ariel’s remark turns on the fact that he is a spirit, not a human being. But the secondary meaning is also tellingly present.[332]

Nevertheless, the point remains that it takes a spirit’s promptings for Prospero to remember and regain his humanity, which he does:

> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th’ quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason ‘gainst my fury
> Do I take part. The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel.
> My charms I’ll break, their senses I’ll restore,
> And they shall be themselves. (5.1.25-32)

What is key here is that his decision to ‘break’ up his magical spell, his ‘charms’, follows straight on from Prospero’s forgiveness of the traitors and his claim to ‘virtue’.[333] Humanity (here figured as forgiveness) is the driving impetus of the decision to break away from his magic. His abjuration speech (5.1.33-57), in which he casts off his magical props, follows closely after, with only a half-line from Ariel in between. This grasping of humanity is something that is unique to the character of Prospero. We never hear that Sycorax ever renounced her magic in favour of a kind humanity.[334] In fact, throughout the play, it is her maliciousness which is emphasised (1.2.271-277, 1.2.320-321, 5.1.269). A humane sensibility, or at least the potential for it, is what separates Prospero from his magic. That it takes a spirit to remind him of this is another facet of Shakespeare’s careful examination of

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[332] Lindley (2013), p. 46.

[333] Mowat (1981) views this moral shift in line with the ‘tradition of the wizard’ which Shakespeare is evoking with the character of Prospero: ‘He delights in his magic powers; however, as a human in a Christian world, he must eventually admit the “roughness” of his magic’, p. 290. In her view, this ‘moral imperative’ is influenced by a Christian’s fear for the fate of his eternal soul, p. 292, whereas I argue that Shakespeare is setting up a dichotomy between magic and humanity.

[334] But then, since Prospero is our main source of information about the elusive witch, we might never have heard about it, even if she did. Mowat (1981) points out that Oberon, despite sharing ‘many of the characteristics of the wizard’, i.e., sharing a great many similarities to Prospero, ‘need not recant and give over his power’ due to his, as she writes, ‘not being mortal’, p. 290.

the role of the supernatural in characterising the dramatic potential of human relations and experiences on the early modern stage.

A separation between the supernatural and the person is why Prospero can renounce and, potentially, reform. Such a separation is not possible for a female supernatural character, as for her, the disorderliness is ingrained—it is present in both her body and in her powers because her powers stem from her body. Oberon's status, then, is a potential aberration, or at least an open question. How can he stand for order, which he most certainly purports to do, whilst being disorderly in body, like a woman? Perhaps a male character, no matter how supernaturally-constructed, is always more orderly than his female counterpart? Or perhaps the answer lies deeper, in early modern culture at large, not to mention our own. Oberon may blame Titania for the natural disorder all he likes, but as she makes clear (2.1.115-17), he, in refusing to bend, is at much at fault for the 'dissension' as she (2.1.116): it is his 'brawls' that have 'disturbed our sport' (2.1.87).[335] It is only once Oberon is granted his demand (2.1.120-21, 143) that he ends the play with the encomium to order (5.1.392-413).[336] Or, to put it more colloquially: it is only once he has got his way that he is willing to play. And he has got his way in such a dehumanising, cruel way: tricking his wife, humiliating her, forcing her to obey in such a manner that today it would most likely to be termed coercive control. His actions are violent, tyrannical. Why is this the 'order' on which society depends? It is a rhetorical construction of the play: Oberon places the fault with Titania, and the play, and its critics, follow suit.

Perhaps Prospero's 'abjuration' is thus the key difference between himself and Oberon. Where Oberon, and his tyrannical masculinity, 'wins' the *Dream*, Prospero's renunciation of his supernatural powers is followed by an agreement to return to Milan. He has won back his dukedom from his usurping brother, yes, but this often feels like a poor

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[335] Scott (2014) notes how Titania emphasises Oberon's responsibility for his part in the natural disorder, writing that 'Oberon's "brawls" corrupt a set of conditions which are translated by the fairy queen into something like abnegation. Thwarted husbandry signifies a corruption of both duty and responsibility', p. 21. Phillips (2020) notes that Titania 'does not take the child out of spite or to be mischievous or covetous; she takes it because of the love and duty she owed her mortal companion', and writes of the balance of blame for the natural disorder: 'Oberon's desire for the child, and her refusal to give in, has spread discord, floods and famine throughout the country,' p. 56.

[336] And, as Clare, Janet, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), notes, when Oberon gains the upper hand his viewpoint is endorsed by the play, Titania, on the other hand, 'attracts ominous associations as she is degraded and divested of autonomy and power', p. 116.

consolation prize: he has given up the ability to overthrow death itself in exchange for the rule of a small portion of mortal territory. But perhaps the ambiguous phrase that Prospero uses to describe his prospective smaller-compassed life hints that Prospero has given up more than his magic. He swears that, after his return to the mortal world of Milan, his '[e]very third thought shall be my grave' (5.1.311). What does this mean? Does he mean to accept mortal limits (death), even after he has declared he can overcome them?[337] Or does it mean that he has given up, along with his magic book, the especial masculine-denoted 'orderliness' of violent conquest? His bold claim to 'awake sleepers from *their* graves'—to grasp the power of death's own domain—is of a piece with a tyrant's masculine orderliness that takes all he sees for himself, and in giving up this power, in acceding to the mastery that death has over himself, perhaps Prospero is giving up this type of masculine orderliness and will, upon his return to Milan, look for a new, more peaceable, less violent way of living. 'The rarer action is,' as he says, [i]n virtue than in vengeance' (5.1.27-8).

[337] Heavey (2015) notes that the Medean-influenced-magic that is 'recalled and rejected by Prospero' in his renunciation speech 'works with and against the comic and romantic resolutions of the play, simultaneously being subsumed by the play's move towards harmony and reconciliation, and acting as a disturbing reminder, as the play draws to a close, of the darker forces at work on the island', p. 141. See also previous note 328.

The Disorderly Feminine Encroaches: Macbeth

We have seen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare explicating the early modern gender binary which aligned order with the male and disorder with the female. Titania, the female supernatural counterpart to Oberon, is connected closely to the idea of disorder, especially disorder in the natural world. It is she who articulates the disarray the fairies' quarrel has caused in the natural patterns of weather and climate. Oberon's shared role in the creation of this disorder—the quarrel—is elided. He is the one forcefully going about attempting to 'reconcile' with his wife (though his methods leave much to be desired), to heal the rift and restore order to the natural world. It is Oberon who gives the final speech of the play in which the restored status quo is celebrated with marriages and the renewal of the social order. In this, Shakespeare appears to be hewing closely to the gender binary as explicated in his supernatural characters. In *The Tempest*, however, we see a questioning of, and a blurring between, this male/order, female/disorder binary. This much later play, a romance rather than a comedy, written by a much older and more experienced dramatist, displays a development and sophistication of thinking about this binary. Though Sycorax and Prospero might initially appear as counterposed opposites, male order versus female disorder, akin to Titania and Oberon, Shakespeare develops the character of Prospero in such a way that the gendered binary breaks down. We saw how Prospero shares a literary source with his supposed opposite, the classical Medea. This ancient archetype of magical, female disorder and Prospero's clear debt to her, disrupts the gender binary, bringing female disorder into the supposedly 'orderly' male magician. However, the fact remains that there is a clear difference in how Shakespeare constructs his supernatural characters: for the female characters, the supernatural aspect is rooted in their body, and cannot be separated from the person. For the male characters, their magical ability is located not in their body but is instead figured as an intellectual pursuit, localised in the stage prop of Prospero's 'book' (5.1.57).[338] For this reason, the disorderly magic can be 'abjure[d]' (51) and the male body, now totally severed from any magical, disorderly taint, is free to be used for, and to create and maintain, order once again. This is never an option for female supernatural characters, whose disorder stems from what they share with non-supernatural women: their female body.

[338] All quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

We will now turn to two tragedies, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, to see how Shakespeare treats this supernatural, gendered binary in a genre which does not promise a renewal of order, a 'happy ending'. In *Macbeth*, I argue, the gender of almost every character who disrupts the social order and thus raises havoc and hell is similarly disrupted and disordered. It is this blurring of gender of these characters—the bearded witches (1.3.45-47), the masculine, murder-hungry wife (1.5.39-49, 1.7.49-59) and the faltering masculinity of the title character (1.7.46-7)—which Shakespeare constructs as the cause of the disorder of the natural world of Scotland.[339] More specifically, it is the intrusion of the feminine—the disorderliness of the feminine, of the witches, of the too-forceful wife—that creates such disorder in the state and its mirror, the natural world. Scotland's salvation is to be found in two men wholly separated from the taint of femininity: Macduff who is not 'of woman born' (4.1.94) and Malcolm who has never known a woman's touch (4.3.126). Once again, disorderliness is located in the female body, and, in *Macbeth*, the taint of it in men is just as dangerous.

'Are ye fantastical, or that indeed / Which outwardly ye show?' (1.3.53-4)

Stephen Greenblatt writes,

> There is evidence throughout Shakespeare's works of a peculiarly intense interest in witchcraft; though witches themselves make infrequent appearances on his stage, the subject is invoked constantly. Sebastian's beauty is a "witchcraft" that draws Antonio into danger; the princess of France has "witchcraft in her lips"; Brabantio thinks that Othello must have used witchcraft to seduce his daughter, just as Egeus thinks that Lysander has "bewitch'd the bosom" of his child; the language of conjuring, charm, possession, and fascination is everywhere.[340]

Witchcraft, in these examples, is a metaphor for the unexpected compulsions induced by sexual attraction or love. It is a poetic shorthand for the unexplainable, the unobservable,

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[339] All quotes from *Macbeth* are from Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[340] Greenblatt, Stephen, 'Shakespeare's Bewitched,' in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. by Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 108 - 35, p. 120.

possibly, in the case of Brabantio's bigotry, the unnatural.[341] Witchcraft, here the supernatural, is the name for the incomprehensible, but it is is in *Macbeth* that we find Shakespeare's most famous witch-creations, and they embody, on the stage, this incomprehensibility. As Banquo states rather baldly,

> What are these,
> So withered and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th'inhabitants o'th' earth,
> And yet are on't? (1.3.39-42)

Shakespeare had featured a witch, in a starring role, before: Joan of *Henry VI, Part One*. Ultimately, her role, and her supernatural power, was embodied before the audience in an inarguable proof of her malevolence. The witches of *Macbeth* are, to borrow a phrase from the fairy king, 'spirits of another sort' (3.2.388).[342] There is

> a crucial difference—beyond the quantum leap in theatrical power—between the representation of witchcraft in *1 Henry VI* and *Macbeth*. The demonic in Shakespeare's early history play makes history happen: it accounts for the uncanny success of the French peasant girl, for her power to fascinate and to inspire, and it accounts too for her failure. The witches in *Macbeth* by contrast account for nothing. They are given many of the conventional attributes of both Continental and English witch lore, the signs and wonders that Scot traces back to the poets: they are associated with tempests, and particularly with thunder and lightning; they are shown calling to their familiars and conjuring spirits; they recount killing livestock, raising winds, sailing in a sieve; their hideous broth links them to birth-strangled babes and blaspheming Jews; above all, they traffic in prognostication and prophecy. And yet though the witches are given a vital

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[341] For instance, Brabantio claims that, for his daughter to have married Othello,

> It is a judgement maimed and most imperfect
> That will confess perfection so could err
> Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
> To find out practices of cunning hell
> Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
> That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood
> Or with some dram conjured to this effect
> He wrought upon her. (1.3.100 - 106)

All quotes from *Othello* are from Honigmann, E. A. J. (ed.), *Othello* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Revised Edition) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

[342] All quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Holland, Peter (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

> theatrical *enargeia*, though their malevolent energy is apparently put in act —"I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do"—it is in fact extremely difficult to specify what, if anything, they do or even what, if anything, they are.[343]

What they are, or, at least, what they signify within the drama, is, I would argue, a personification of the role of nature and the supernatural within *Macbeth*. The play posits disorder within the natural world, including the dire incursion of the supernatural into the natural, as a direct result of gender disorder, particularly of the presence of the female within the male, itself linked to the encroachment of the supernatural, within its main characters.

<u>Gender Disorder: 'A strange infirmity' (3.4.87)</u>

In the case of the witches, the note of gender disorder is sounded early. The second thing we hear of them, after Banquo ponders aloud whether they can possibly be 'th'inhabitants o'th' earth' (1.3.41), is a questioning of their gender. Banquo wonders,

> You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so. (1.3.45-47)[344]

As Orgel notes,

> the mystification is built into their physical appearance, which defies the categories: they look like men and are women. The indeterminacy of their

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[343] Greenblatt (1993), p. 122-23.

[344] Rackin, Phyllis, *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) notes that 'Shakespeare transforms his source material to emphasize that they are both unnatural and unwomanly. He places their initial—and never-contested—description in the mouth of Banquo, whom he depicts as a reliable informer, a prudent and sympathetic character who will shortly show the good judgement and moral fortitude to resist the temptations offered by the witches' prophecies', p. 131. 'Banquo's often-quoted reference to their embodied gender ambiguity is entirely Shakespeare's invention', whereas their 'prototypes' in Shakespeare's source, Holinshed's *Chronicles* 'are unequivocally female', p. 131-2.

> gender is the first thing Banquo calls attention to.[345]

This disorder is emblematic of the feminine—as has been mentioned previously, the female was 'thought the disorderly one par excellence in early modern Europe'[346]—and the witches portray it to the hilt. Diane Purkiss writes that the meaning of the witches of *Macbeth*'s *is* their disorderly refusal of interpretation, their inscrutability. Banquo, she notes,

> labour[s] to interpret the witches, and his comments on them stress their indeterminacy. The witches inhabit a borderland between clearly marked states. They are on earth, but they do not look like its inhabitants, they should be women but they have beards. Similarly, their words are ambiguous, inviting a variety of interpretations. The witch-figure can stand for nothing concrete, but must evoke the disorder of the play's notion of order by indeterminacy. Ironically, this failure of interpretation becomes an interpretation: indeterminacy, and hence chaos, *is* the witches' meaning.[347]

There are many further examples of the disorderly female throughout *Macbeth*.[348] Lady Macbeth is an obvious example. Frances Dolan notes the similarities between the lady and the witches. They both embody disorderly femininity. Dolan writes that Lady Macbeth is 'allied' to the witches, because, like them, she both calls up spirits and desires gender ambiguity. Furthermore, Lady Macbeth conflates the two actions: 'Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here' (1.5.39-40), 'Come to my woman's breasts / And

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345 Orgel, Stephen, '*Macbeth* and the Antic Round,' in *Macbeth* (Second Norton Critical Edition), ed. by Robert S. Miola (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), pp. 255 - 270, p. 259. Rackin (2005) notes the emphasis Shakespeare places on the evil nature of the theatrical female witch, especially in contrast to the treatment given them by his fellow dramatists: 'Shakespeare's representations of women often seem less sympathetic than those of other playwrights working at the same time. The figure of the witch, for instance, memorably demonized in *Macbeth*, appears as an amiable charlatan in Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*. The title character in Heywood's comedy, although denounced as a witch by dissolute young gallants, turns out to be the agent for effecting their reform and bringing about the desired resolution of the plot. In Rowley, Dekker, and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton*, the witch is a tragic figure, driven to witchcraft by need and persecution and explicitly stated to be far less guilty than the respectable gentleman who occupies the highest social rank of all the characters in the play', p. 48.

346 Zemon Davis, Natalie, 'Women on Top,' in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 156 - 185, p. 156.

347 Purkiss, Diane, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 211.

348 Orgel (2014) notes that 'the gender ambiguity relates as well to [other] roles within the play', p. 259.

take my milk for gall' (46-7).[349] Her closeness to the witches is made even more apparent by the play's structure. As part of the drama's noted compactness,[350] we do not see Macbeth meet with his wife between his encounter with the witches (1.3) and his lady's first appearance (1.5). She reads his letter, detailing his encounter, as she walks onstage (1.5.1-9) and a messenger arrives to tell her the King is due to visit 'tonight' (30). Once alone again, the first line of the 'fiend-like Queen' (5.7.99) is ominously reminiscent of the witches' cant:

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits […] (1.5.37-9)

Animals and death: these elements are echoes of the witches' first lines of 1.3. The second line of 1.3 is the Second Witch's, who has been '[k]illing swine': death and animals.[351] Both the Lady and the witches then speak of supernatural powers: Lady Macbeth calls up

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349 Dolan, Frances, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 226. And see also: Adelman, Janet, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 134-5. Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) notes that they share a common literary ancestor, one who similarly disorders her gender: 'Lady Macbeth summons the spirits of darkness and is subliminally linked not only to Hecate and the weird sisters within the play, but also to Ovid's Medea, the great classical exemplar of the woman who unsexes herself in an appeal to night and to Hecate. The willingness of the "fiend-like queen" to dash out her baby's brains thus becomes recognizable as Medea's infanticide', p. 200.

350 Burrow, Colin, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) writes that *Macbeth* 'proceeds with a sharp dramatic thrust from Macbeth's desire for the throne to its achievement, and can be performed without an interval as though in a single heated burst of movement after the battle which immediately proceeds the play. Its language is oppressively united in metaphor and theme', p. 194 - 5. Not only are the events of the drama compressed but the seventeen-year-long historical reign of Macbeth is also notably shortened: Carroll, William C., "Strange Intelligence': transformations of witchcraft in *Macbeth* discourse,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 173 - 189, p. 180.

351 Rackin (2005) notes that 'both Lady Macbeth and the weird sisters are associated with infanticide', p. 132. Varnado, Christine, 'Queer nature, or the weather in *Macbeth*,' in *Queer Shakespeare: Desire and Sexuality* (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare), ed. by Goran Stanivukovic (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 177 - 195, notes the complicated nature of the Folio *Macbeth*, which 'contains material from subsequent revisions of the play which post-date, and draw from, Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (1611)'; she emphasises that 'the web of intertextual influences connecting the texts is far from clearly known' but the commonalities between the witch-scenes authored by Shakespeare and Middleton include the 'copious lists of witchcraft ingredients: profusions of animal parts, organic materials and physical phenomena which populate the witches' speeches and songs', p. 189. These aspects are common in a great deal of witch-lore and witch-featuring fictions of early modernity.

the spirits, the ‘murd’ring ministers’ (1.5.47) and it ‘appears to be a conjuration of demonic powers’;[352] the Witches recount their tale of calling up the winds to drive the sailor to shipwreck (1.3.7-25). Thus the Lady seems mysteriously connected to the witches she has not met, and may even appear to be a witch herself, and her wish to disorder her gender is another piece of her connection to the bearded women.

Lady Macbeth’s link to witchcraft extends even further than the witches of the heath: her indebtedness to the arch-sorceress of antiquity, Medea, has long been noted by scholars.[353] This is most obvious in the passage where she calls

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
Stop up th’access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th’effect and it. Come to my woman’s breasts
And take my milk for gall (1.5.39-47)[354]

This, according to Colin Burrow, is an ‘echo’ of ‘the prayers and invocations of Seneca’s Medea’.[355] Burrow notes the strain evident here in Lady Macbeth’s violent will. He writes that ‘Macbeth and his wife are throughout the early acts […] attempting to create a

[352] Greenblatt (1993), p. 124.

[353] Burrow (2013), 192. See also Ewbank, Inga-Stina, ‘The Fiend-Like Queen: A Note on *Macbeth* and Seneca’s *Medea*,’ in *Aspects of Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir and Philip Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 53 - 65, who writes that ‘Lady Macbeth rejects her very nature as a woman, turns her aim from creation of life to its destruction’, with an ‘evocation of natural disorder [that] is all the more horrifying for it. Seneca has one woman whose action, in spirit if not in fact, is identical, and that is Medea’, p. 55, and Bate (1993), p. 200. Heavey, Katherine, *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558 - 1688* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) writes that ‘Lady Macbeth’s ruthlessness is often seen as echoing that of the Senecan Medea, particularly given that both women regard femininity as incompatible with their bloody plots, and call on supernatural forces to help them overcome any lingering mercy in their souls’, p. 108.

[354] Burrow (2013) notes that the ‘language of Lady Macbeth’s speech has more in common with the English translation of *Medea* by John Studley [1566] than with the original’, p. 192.

[355] Burrow (2013), p. 192.

Senecan drama around themselves', with Lady Macbeth grasping for the status of the 'British Medea'.[356]

But they are struggling in their creation. As Orgel notes, this 'unsex[ing]' is not fully successful.[357] Lady Macbeth's two most memorable speeches revolve around her womanly corporality, her request to be 'un-sex[ed]', quoted above and the passage in which she recounts that

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out. (1.7.54-8)

For modern readers, as Rackin points out, the connection between femininity and breast-feeding is so apparent that, watching the play, Lady Macbeth's words here are a shocking aberration from 'natural' womanhood/motherhood.[358] For early modern audiences, however, the link between nursing and femininity was not so elemental, though it was taking hold, with Shakespeare, in Rackin's view, helping to cement it.[359] Rackin has demonstrated how Shakespeare frames the act of breastfeeding, in keeping with the emergent ideas of the early modern era, as 'a distinctly female activity which expresses the gendered gen-

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[356] Burrow (2013), p. 191, 193.

[357] Orgel (2014), p. 259. Burrow (2013) too notes that Lady Macbeth falls short of the Medean ideal: 'The act of violence against her child which she imagines seems in the context of the play to be not just hypothetical but more or less imaginary, since it is performed on a child who, the rest of the play suggests, may never even have been born', p. 193 - 4.

[358] For modern critics too: Adelman (1992) writes that the 'metaphors in which Lady Macbeth frames the stopping up of remorse[…] suggest that she imagines an attack on the reproductive passages of her own body, *on what makes her specifically female*', p. 135, my italics.

[359] Rackin (2005)

tleness that is the natural disposition of all women in every time and place'.[360] So, though Lady Macbeth's claim to disavow breastfeeding and 'the gendered gentleness', the non-murderous femininity, it implies and desires to take up masculine murder instead ('dash[ing]' the child), the fact that she even chooses breastfeeding as her feminine symbol inescapably locates her within the bodily-feminine binary.

Lady Macbeth's desire to transgress the female-male binary fails in other respects as well. Her desire to swap 'milk for gall' is a humoural wish, to have the maternal milk removed from her 'woman's breasts' and replaced with 'gall', or yellow bile. Armstrong notes this and links it explicitly with Lady Macbeth's alignment with the disorderly:

> Lady Macbeth vehemently rejects a model of orderly, harmonious nature when she demands freedom from the "compunctious visitings of nature" — that is, her own supposedly endemic feminine nature, whose material substance is the breast-milk she wishes replaced with yellow bile or choler (gall), the humoral incarnation of ruthlessness. Repudiating the maternal place prepared for her in the naturalized social order, she invokes instead the disorderly form of natural agency that she names "nature's mischief"[.][361]

In 'unsex[-ing]' herself, Lady Macbeth wishes to become man-like, and in the lady's definition, to be man-like is to be 'top-full / Of direst cruelty' (41-2), to be capable of violent murder, as she urges her husband to be (1.7.39-83). However, as Orgel notes, her desire merely 'renders herself, unexpectedly, not a man, but a child, and thus incapable of mur-

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[360] Rackin (2005), p. 125. This is in pointed contrast, as Rackin elucidates, with the ancient Scotswomen of Lady Macbeth's time, of whom Holinshed writes:

> the women… were of no less courage than the men; for all stout maidens and wives… marched as well in the field as did the men, and so soon as the army did set forward, they slew the first living creature that they found, in whose blood they not only bathed their swords … [.]

These women also breastfed:

> would take intolerable pains to bring up and nourish their own children… nay they feared lest they should degenerate and grow out of kind, except they gave them suck themselves, and eschewed strange milk, *therefore* in labor and painfulness they were equal[.] (quoted in Rackin, p. 123-4).

As Rackin points out, breastfeeding is a female act in both Holinshed and Shakespeare, though with radically different connotations: 'In the chronicle it is a means by which the strong mothers of ancient Scotland produced strong offspring' (p. 125), a means of transferring the implicit masculinity of the warlike mothers to their children.

[361] Armstrong, Philip, 'Preposterous Nature in Shakespeare's Tragedies,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 104 - 119, p. 111.

der'. She cannot kill the sleeping king. she says, because he 'resembled / My father' (2.2.3-4).[362] Heavey likens Lady Macbeth to Tamora of *Titus Andronicus*, another murderous woman whose presentation, Heavey argues, is similarly influenced by Medea.[363] Both characters fall short of Medea's blood-thirsty example: 'Like Tamora', Lady Macbeth's 'plot to triumph over her enemies is unsuccessful, and she commits suicide off-stage, thus realising the fate that George Turberville's Hypsipyle wished for her rival, in a tantalising hint at Shakespeare's knowledge of the popular Elizabethan translation' of Ovid's *Heroides* (1567).[364] Heavey argues that this curtailing of Medea's murderous power in these Shakespearean descendants is due to the fact that

> both Lady Macbeth and the witches are, like Tamora, more subject to early modern mores and expectations than they are similar to their Ovidian and Senecan forebears. In fact, Shakespeare's move to silence or punish his Medea-figures (particularly Tamora and Lady Macbeth) argues for his use of Elizabethan translations of the *Heroides* (by George Turberville) and Seneca's *Medea* (by John Studley), both of which […] demonstrate the early modern need somehow to contain or to undermine Medea, even as they describe her worst excesses[.][365]

Eventually for Lady Macbeth, being cut off from the 'compunctious visitings of nature' (1.5.4), only results in sleepwalking and a 'mind diseased' (5.1.4-10, 5.3.39).[366] However, if we accept a rather wider definition of masculinity than does the lady, the idea of masculinity Macbeth articulates when, not wishing to kill Duncan, he says, 'I dare do all that may become a man, / Who dares do more is none' (1.7.7-8), we can see how Lady

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[362] Orgel (2014), p. 259.

[363] Heavey (2015), p. 105-8.

[364] Heavey (2015), p. 109. See also p. 74-77.

[365] Heavey (2015), p. 111-12.

[366] Heavey (2015) writes that 'Miola sees Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare's most obviously Medea-like woman, as inhabiting 'the providentially ordered world of the translator', as opposed to the Senecan world which allows Medea to escape without even the suggestion of punishment', p. 60.

Macbeth does share in aspects of masculinity.[367] Orgel notes ‘the kind of control she exercises over her husband’, a ‘subversive’ inversion of early modern marriage norms.[368] These norms are explicitly delineated by King James, who equated the husband with himself, the King, and the wife with his country: ‘“I am the husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body; I am the shepherd, and it is my flock” (James 1604: 488)’.[369] Lady Macbeth attempts to rule her husband as the King does the country, inverting marital norms. She also famously rejects the maternal (1.7.54-8), and other feminine softnesses are denounced. Macbeth exclaims that his wife should

> Bring forth men-children only:
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males. (1.7.73-5)

‘Mettle’ here refers to Lady Macbeth’s strength of purpose, but it is a homonym for ‘metal’, a hard, unyielding, inorganic substance.[370] In humoural theory, women were predominantly moist, Lady Macbeth’s ‘mettle/metal’ shows her to be the opposite, hard and dry, like a man. Lady Macbeth is shown to desire a disordering of her sex, a desire which is itself disorderly. Her disorderly desire to escape her femininity only further renders her feminine, since the disorderly *is* the feminine. In showing her to be disorderly, the play repeatedly, emphatically locates Lady Macbeth within the feminine binary.

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[367] Orgel (2014) writes that ‘to act’ on the murderous desire, the ‘desire that the witches have called forth’ is 'what it means in the play to be a man’, p. 267. Chernaik, Warren, ‘The paper crown: *1*, *2*, and *3 Henry VI*,’ in *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 23 - 44, notes that Lady Macbeth ‘present[s] her own iron resolution as overriding any bonds of nature, any traditional notions of femininity’, p. 38. He compares Lady Macbeth with another ruthless queen, Queen Margaret of *Henry VI, Parts I, 2* and *3* and *Richard III* (p. 38-9). Both abandon stereotypically feminine behaviour for a ‘masculine’ role that they both define as a state capable of remorseless aggressive and murderous behaviour. Margaret, with her ‘tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide’ (*Henry VI, Part Three*, 1.4.137) is contrasted with Northumberland, both of whom participate in the torture of York. Unlike Margaret, Northumberland is overcome with tearful compassion for their victim—‘his passion moves me so / That hardly can I check my eyes from tears’ (1.4.150-51): this ‘heighten[s] the contrast between “natural” compassion and the stifling of remorse’ (p. 39). Margaret, like Lady Macbeth, ‘wilfully embrac[es] the unnatural, the inhuman’ (p. 39). All quotes from *Henry VI, Part Three* are from Cox, John D. and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), *King Henry VI, Part Three* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

[368] Orgel (2014), p. 266.

[369] Quoted in Carroll, William C., ‘Theories of Kingship in Shakespeare’s England,’ in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume II*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 125 - 145, p. 132.

[370] Brooke (1990) points out further puns in the speech, p. 121.

Macbeth's interrogation of the disorderly does not confine itself to an examination of the female characters. We can also see a disordered gender arising in Macbeth himself. His wife accuses him of lacking masculine virility: 'are you a man?' she demands to know (3.4.57), or perhaps a child (2.2.53-4). Spooked by Banquo's ghost, Macbeth echoes his wife, naming himself not only a child but crossing the gender binary to become a female child: 'If trembling I inhabit then, protest me / The baby of a girl' (3.4.106-7).[371] His potential infancy is further evoked by Lady Macbeth in a reference to his bodily corporality: is he not 'too full o'th' milk of human kindness' (1.5.16), the mother's milk that babies feed upon? Her fierce questioning is strange and elliptical, another link between the lady and the witches: 'When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more then man' (1.7.49-51). Bruce Smith argues that Macbeth's 'masculinity is constantly on the line'.[372] Burrow's stance on Macbeth's masculinity is even stronger: 'Macbeth is more of a woman than his wife'.[373] For Burrow, this is because of the Medean connection both of the Macbeths share. Lady Macbeth, he writes, is not as Medea-like as her husband. He 'takes on the mantle of Medea', and 'plans and more or less instantly performs child murders when he discovers that Macduff is fled to England' (4.1.159-70).[374] The rapidity with which his thoughts are translated into action[375] are in a striking contrast to the 'past conditional' of his wife's own declaration of supposed infanticide ('I *would* … / [have] dashed the brains out').[376] Macbeth, in contrast, like Medea, actually carries out the act: 'by the end of the speech he has stated an intention literally to

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[371] James, Susan, 'Shakespeare and the politics of superstition,' in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. by David Armitage, Conal Condren, and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 80 - 98, notes the 'common associations' the Lady evokes, 'between masculinity and the ability to control the passions'. Because Macbeth fails to overcome his fear and pity, his wife 'upbraid[s] her husband for his cowardice, unmanliness and brainsickliness [2.2.45]', p. 93-4.

[372] Smith, Bruce R., *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

[373] Burrow (2013), p. 193.

[374] Burrow (2013), p. 193. See also Heavey (2015), p. 109-10.

[375] Burrow writes that 'he accelerates towards present and instant violence', p. 194.

[376] Burrow (2013), p. 193.

perform murder, a murder which is seen onstage, instantly, in the very next scene'.[377] Macbeth's gender disorder carries him past 'woman', to the demonic, witch-like, child-murdering (as opposed to child-nurturing) sorceress Medea.

Macbeth is also insistently linked with the witches of his own play, even before they appear on the stage together, further blurring his gender with their own disordered manifestation.[378] As Malcolm Evans notes, 'Macbeth's first words in the play [1.3.38] establish his connection with the sisters before they have even met'.[379] Macbeth declares that '[s]o fair and foul a day I have not seen', the witches had earlier ominously intoned '[f]air is foul, and foul is fair' (1.1.11). As the play progresses and Macbeth's heinous acts begin to take their toll on his psyche, he becomes, in Foakes' phrase 'a quasi-mythical figure', a 'devil'.[380] His speech comes to echo the witches': 'I conjure you' (4.1.64) he declares, sounding rather witch-like himself, before launching into a speech which, though describing the witches' powers, links Macbeth insistently to their natural disorderliness (4.1.64-75). This disorder is evinced by the 'unruly' night Lennox recounts (2.3.55-62). It was a 'rough night' Macbeth ruefully agrees (2.3.61), and Ewan Fernie has noted that the

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377 Burrow (2013), p. 194.

378 Heavey (2015) notes a further connection between Macbeth and the witches: they share a Medean influence. She argues that the 'Weird Sisters wield a Medea-like magical power', and that they, like Medea but unlike Macbeth and his Lady, escape the play unpunished, p. 110.

379 Evans, Malcolm, 'Imperfect Speakers,', in *Signifying Nothing: Truth's True Contents in Shakespeare's Text*, 2nd edn. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), reprinted in *Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Guide to Criticism*, ed. by Emma Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 161 - 184, p. 164. See also Kerridge, Richard, 'An Ecocritic's *Macbeth*', in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, ed. by Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 193 - 210, who notes that in Macbeth's echoing of the witches' lines, '[h]e seems to be contrasting the fairness of his victory with the foulness of the weather[…], but also expressing surprise at the contradiction, as if fine weather were to be expected in recognition of a day of fine deeds. This is his first attempt to find a consistency between natural phenomena and his own actions that would legitimate those actions, and his first puzzled failure to do so', p. 202. The link between Macbeth's actions and the environment of Scotland will be examined further below. Another verbal parallel between Macbeth and the witches is noted by Burrow (2013): '*Macbeth* is[…] a relatively sea-free zone', and the only characters to ever speak of it are Macbeth [2.2.59-62] and the witches [1.3.7-25, 33]', p. 190. Macbeth's speech is another instance of a Senecan influence on the play, this time from *Hippolytus*, p. 190.

380 Foakes, R. A., 'Shakespeare's other historical plays,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 214 - 228, p. 220. Fernie, Ewan, 'Demonic Macbeth,' in *The Demonic: Literature and Experience* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 50 - 68, deems Macbeth 'Shakespeare's most demonic figure', p. 51.

events recounted thoroughly feminise Macbeth in suggesting that he is the cause of them: the ‘lamentings’, the ‘strange screams’, the ‘confused events / New hatched’ give the impression of a ‘terrible birth’.[381] Though Fernie retracts his feminisation charge somewhat by also writing that it is as if ‘Macbeth had strangely *inseminated* the world’,[382] the inarguable connection between the witches and the disorder of the natural world, and now the unchallengeable connection between the witches and Macbeth, entwine him ever more with the disorderly female, who *births* confusion. If Macbeth is, as Hecate says, the witches’ ‘wayward son’ (3.5.11), wayward in his gender, a son who has given ‘birth’ to disorder and natural destruction, he is nevertheless their progeny, willing or no. As the drama plays out, Macbeth becomes increasingly embroiled in the supernatural world of the witches, becomes increasingly entangled with them and their strange methods. As Armstrong notes, after Macbeth’s first murder, ‘he calls on the power of the various elements and organisms of external nature to assist in his next’ [3.2.51-4].[383] It is this encroachment of the witches on Macbeth’s psyche that disorders him, and stirs him on to disturb and disorder the social order by committing regicide.[384] Furthermore, it is not only society that the witches, through Macbeth, disorder but the natural world as well.

‘Infected be the air whereon they ride’ (4.1.153)

One of the first things we learn about the witches is that their gender presentation is disordered. Before that, the witches speak for themselves and it is at this very early stage of the drama that we learn that the witches are aligned with the natural world. The first two lines of the play are spoken by the First Witch; through them, we learn of the connection between the witches and the natural world.

> When shall we three meet again?
> In thunder, lightning, or in rain? (1.1.1-2)

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[381] Fernie (2012), p. 62. He adds that the ‘air seems to scream like a labouring woman, but one who is labouring to produce a monstrous birth of dire combustion and confused events’, p. 63.

[382] Fernie (2012), p. 62, my italics.

[383] Armstrong (2016), p. 114.

[384] Bladen, Victoria, ‘Shakespeare’s political spectres,’ in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 31 - 49, notes that ‘Shakespeare’s interest in returning victims of political violence continued with his later tragedy *Macbeth*, where again the supernatural is concentrated on the political centre’, p. 41.

The witches are consistently and insistently aligned with the natural world throughout *Macbeth*. Every scene in which they appear is a scene enacted in the open air, in the imagined natural world of the 'blasted heath' (1.3.77), in the 'rain'(1.1.2). They enter with the stage direction of '*Thunder*' (4.1, stage direction) as their accompaniment. They are 'midnight hags' (4.1.62), their place beneath the dark night sky is a crucial component of their personae. This is entirely in keeping with the popular conceptions of witchcraft in the early modern era. As we have seen, Shakespeare apparently took note of both Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* and the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, among other sources, in the creation of the witches of *Macbeth*.[385] These witches' powers are defined through their ability to control elements of the natural world, whilst also being defined, in body, by their closeness to it. So, we have the witches who, as Dolan writes, exist only within the natural world, and never amongst the mortal, human population: 'they never enter the world of the other characters'.[386] Theirs is a world of animal familiars ('Graymalkin' and 'Paddock', 1.1.8,9), of malignant weather ('fog and filthy air', 1.1.12, 'Infected be the air whereon they ride', 4.1.153). They have the power to control the elements: 'I'll give thee a wind' (1.3.11), 'it shall be tempest-tossed' (1.3.25), they can vanish 'into the air; and what seemed corporal melted / As breath into the wind (1.3.81-2).[387] Later in the play, Macbeth hints at the true extent of their awesome power over the natural world:

> Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
> Against the churches; though the yeasty waves
> Confound and swallow navigation up;
> Though bladed corn be lodged, and trees blown down,
> Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
> Though palaces and pyramids do slope
> Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
> Of nature's germen tumble all together,
> Even till destruction sicken (4.1.66-74)

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[385] Varnado (2017), notes that '[w]ind- and storm-raising are powers usually attributed *to* witches *over* nature', p. 182. See also p. 192.

[386] Dolan (1994), p. 225.

[387] Varnado (2017), writes that the 'witches transmogrify into the very substance "of" the earth's bubbles', p. 184. They *become* the earth's bubbles, they are subsumed into the natural world, as if they are one with it.

This speech has a remarkable similarity to the speech recounting the disorder of the natural world unleashed by the contretemps between the fairy monarchs of the *Dream* (2.1.82-117). Both Titania's and the witches' power is the power to disorder the natural world. In the drama of Shakespeare, when female supernatural characters are imagined within nature, that nature is disordered. As Orgel notes, the nature in which the witches of *Macbeth* are situated is 'anarchic, full of competing claims, not ordered and hierarchical'.[388] And the witches are the avatars of this disordered nature, the 'embodied agents of storm and disorder'.[389]

'Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles' (5.1.69-70)

Once Macbeth has rent the 'breach', cutting off Duncan's life, crossing the rubicon between loyal subject and murderous traitor, he has effectively aligned himself with the disorderly witches and so Scotland descends into the disorder of civil war and drags the natural world into disarray along with it. He becomes 'unnatural / Even like the deed that's done' (2.4.10-1). Catherine Belsey, in her brief but potent reading of the play in *Critical Practice*, notes that '[i]n *Macbeth* the discontinuity of the ego and the explicit division of the subject have become a structural principle of the play'.[390] 'Subject' becomes a word of doubled meaning: 'Macbeth, loyal and unified *subject* of a king who stands for these ideological (and discursive) norms, becomes a regicide in defiance of his stated beliefs ("I have no spur. …" [1.7.25-8]) and in the process destroys his own capacity to participate meaningfully in the symbolic order of language and culture'.[391] Macbeth's crime disorders his own state of selfhood, and the disarray extends outward: 'The metaphor of a shaken *state* (of man), of insurrection in the social formation, is perhaps not wholly coincidental. *Macbeth* is a political play; but more than that, the metaphor points outward to the parallel be-

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[388] Orgel (2014), p. 260.

[389] Adelman (1992), p. 133.

[390] Belsey, Catherine, *Critical Practice (2nd Edition*) (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 73.

[391] Belsey (1980), p. 73. She elucidates further: 'He has refused the subject-positions offered him by the symbolic order and in consequence meaning eludes him; he has fallen into non-meaning', p. 73-4.

tween crisis in the social formation and the subject in crisis'.[392] Civil war in the state is created by the civil war within one man, his inability to cohere two facets of himself, subject and traitor, into one. But the disorder extends even further from man to social order: it descends even into the soil of the land, to disorder the natural world. Once the Macbeths have murdered Duncan, what Macbeth perceived to be the witches' power to create disorder and destruction seems to come to pass: the natural world of the play becomes rapidly disordered.[393] It appears to function both as a reflection of Macbeth's disordered, unnatural human nature, *and*, at the same time, is also suggested to be the punishment for those crimes. As both mirror and judge, nature is doubled.[394] As Armstrong notes, in the play, 'the disrupted weather provides a first and immediate sign of something badly awry'.[395]

A theory of connection between the moral fibre of a land's rulers and the health of the realm is stated outright by Malcolm. Feigning that he is composed of '[a]ll the particulars of vice' (4.3.51), Malcolm declares:

> The king-becoming graces,
> As justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness,
> Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
> Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
> I have no relish of them, but abound
> In the division of each several crime,
> Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
> Pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell,
> Uproar the universal peace, confound
> All unity on earth. (4.3.91-100)

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[392] Belsey (1980), p. 74. For Evans (2003), '[o]nce the structures of Duncan's kingdom are wrenched from their place in "nature", Macbeth himself becomes a plurality, a process rather than a fixity. In the same movement the bonds between the state, the subject and the unequivocal linguistic mode of "order" and "nature", always suspended in "imperfect speaking", are broken', p. 165.

[393] Scott, Charlotte, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) notes: 'Although the play's representations of the natural world are almost entirely subjective, they are paradoxically comprehensive. As Banquo observes the absence of the moon and the stars, so Lady Macbeth tells the night, "stars hide your fire"', p. 137.

[394] For Speaight, Robert, *Nature in Shakespearian Tragedy* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1955), 'nature is transformed into a mirror and mockery of crime', p. 53.

[395] Armstrong (2016), p. 105.

For Malcolm, this is a strange piece of political sleight of hand. In the case of Macbeth, it is almost a précis of the plot. Before the murder, the Macbeths' home is, according to Duncan, 'a pleasant seat' whose very 'air / Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself' (1.6.1-2). The natural world surrounding their castle is one of peace and harmony, the seasons and the wildlife in pleasant synchronicity. As Banquo describes it,

> This guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
> By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
> Smells wooingly here. No jutty frieze,
> Buttress, nor coin of vantage, but this bird
> Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant cradle:
> Where they must breed and haunt, I have observed
> The air is delicate. (1.6.3-10)

This is the natural mirror of a world of peaceable monarchy, of sure succession, in which the 'guest', whether that be the visiting king or the sanctified 'temple-haunting martlet', can make his 'pendent bed' in the knowledge of safety.[396] It is the nature of 'visible creation regarded as an orderly arrangement' of conventional Elizabethan thought traced by John

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[396] Kerridge (2011), writes that the 'martlet… is a bird associated with light, holiness and the sweetness of clean air. Indeed, it needs "delicate" air for its wellbeing, and could not survive in the "fog and filthy air" […] suggestive of the murk of Hell, in which the witches delight', p. 204. He adds that the 'delicate' air is 'a moral and holy medium, nourishing to the most virtuous and sympathetic faculties', p. 204. According to Speaight, 'Shakespeare establishes a poetic equivalent between the King and the "temple-haunting martlet". Both are guests and both are innocent; it is no accident that the King is seen in relation to a symbol of uncorrupted nature', p. 52. Evans (2003) points out the dramatic irony: 'the situational ironies also tend to strip the rhetoric away from its experiential and "natural" base, revealing that the birds at least, if not Banquo and Duncan, are a little naive in their literal adherence to the "Elizabethan World Picture"', p. 166.

[397] Danby, John F., *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961), p. 15. Kerridge (2011) concurs, arguing that, prior to the Macbeths' crime, 'Nature [in the play] has seemed to confirm and complement the moral order proclaimed by Scotland's social hierarchy', and that after the regicide, 'Nature is now seen to be imitating the shocking reversal of hierarchy that has occurred in the human world', p. 205. As Varnado (2017) notes, when it comes to an analysis of *Macbeth*'s weather and natural world, critics are still heavily influenced by the 'elegant model' of E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) in which violent weather is reflective of crises in social order, p. 181-2.

Danby, the peaceably hierarchical Great Chain of Being of Tillyard.[397] And it is shown to be easy to destroy.[398]

Once this sanctity has been destroyed by the Macbeths' ambition and the 'procreant cradle' is made chaotic by the expulsion of Malcolm, the rightful heir, in favour of the treacherous cuckoo, the new King Macbeth, the mirror of nature takes on a darker pall. Duncan had promised Macbeth that 'I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing' (1.4.29-30). But Macbeth, the seed which has killed the gardener, the son that has killed the father, has fatally disrupted this natural process, disordered the natural procession of time by daring to peer into what Banquo terms the witches' prophecies, the 'seeds of time,' to see 'which grain will grow, and which will not' (1.3.58-9).[399] By looking to the female, the witch, as opposed to the father,[400] Macbeth has given himself over to the femininity that must be staved off, according to the play's logic, and fatally disordered himself. Charlotte Scott writes that,

> [c]entral to the play's erasure of the natural world is its comprehensive destruction of what we might term "natural" impulses. Throughout the play the main protagonists draw attention to the ways in which they must fight their own bodies: Lady Macbeth's maternity, Macbeth's physical responses to fear, his delusions,

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[398] Which is why it is a mistake to extrapolate from scenes such as this that Shakespeare's plays are in full support of this 'Elizabethan World Picture', as Belsey, Catherine, 'Making histories then and now: Shakespeare from *Richard II* to *Henry V*,' in *Uses of history: Marxism, postmodernism and the Renaissance*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 24 - 46, has shown: p. 25, 31-33, 43-45.

[399] For Foakes (2006), 'Duncan had greeted the victorious Macbeth in 1.4 by saying, "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing", but we see Macbeth wither himself ("my way of life / Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf" …[5.3.22-3]), and turn Scotland into a wasteland. When Malcolm orders his soldiers to cut branches from trees at Dunsinane and create a moving forest, this stage image not only marks the end for Macbeth, but also the return of fertility to the country', p. 220.

[400] As Adelman, (1992) notes, Macbeth is 'fatherless', both in that he is not shown to have a biological father and because Duncan as 'ideally protective father is nonetheless largely ineffectual', which means he is 'terribly subject' to the 'witch-mothers', p. 130, 132.

> and, ultimately, that most essential of natural impulses—sleep. The play exposes a radical confrontation with the body as a biologically determined entity: men, women, and witches are systematically shown to be denaturalized and therefore expelled from the cultural expectations of nature.[401]

I would argue that the Macbeths' actions do not merely result in an expulsion from nature, they poison the natural world and its 'natural impulses'. They are not the only ones to suffer; the whole of Scotland is dragged down into the moral mire as well. Lennox's speech is evocative of the turn:

> The night has been unruly: where we lay
> Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say,
> Lamentings heard i'th'air, strange screams of death,
> And prophesying, with accents terrible,
> Of dire combustion, and confused events
> New hatched to th' woeful time. The obscure bird
> Clamoured the livelong night. Some say the earth
> Was feverous and did shake. (2.3.54-61)

From a 'heaven's breath', the breeze is now so strong that it can break apart dwellings. An air once described as 'delicate' now carries the 'strange screams of death'. The cause of this is clear: the 'confused events', birthing a new 'woeful time'. There has been a second Fall[402] and evil now reigns, marked first and foremost by the change in animal signification. Scotland is no longer the home to the 'temple-haunting martlet', now it is the domain of an 'obscure bird'. Is it an owl, as Lady Macbeth thinks (2.2.3), since its call sounded throughout the 'livelong night'? We cannot be sure. The bird's ambiguous identification is of a piece with the disorder of the natural world, in which even the earth will not lie still.[403] There are a great many similarities here to that other great set-piece of natural dis-

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[401] Scott (2014), p. 129-30.

[402] Fernie (2012), p. 53.

[403] Phillips, Chelsea, ''Rudely stamped': supernatural generation and the limits of power in Shakespeare's *Richard III*,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 50 - 69, notes that many of these same ominous sights and sounds of the natural world heralded another entrance of evil into the world, the birth of Richard in *Henry VI, Part 3*: 'Not only did a storm accompany Richard's birth, he had a flock of ill-omened birds for an augury' p. 61.

order in the Shakespearean canon, Titania's speech of woe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There, the disorder in a marriage where a wife would wilfully disobey her husband is reflected in a disordered natural world in which the sea covers the land and 'the seasons alter' (2.1.88-117) . In Scotland, under the reign of the treacherous Macbeths, it is a more animated disorder, exemplified by animals that have refused their proper place in the natural pecking order. Prey have turned on their natural predators:

> A falcon towering in her pride of place
> Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed. (2.4.12-13)

The disorder goes further. Horses have '[t]urned wild in nature' (16), they 'eat each other' (18).

This mirroring aspect of nature may be evidence of a Senecan influence on Shakespeare's drama. Burrow, according to whom 'Senecan drama is old, violent, and strange', argues that both *Macbeth* and *King Lear* are the 'main results' of 'a phase in Shakespeare's career in which he experimented with what might be called British Senecanism'.[404] In *Macbeth* Shakespeare created a dramatic landscape that 'seemed to vibrate with the passions and desires' of the protagonist, as in Senecan drama, 'whose actions and whose words seem often to have shadowy prototypes in Seneca'.[405] This is especially true of murderous deeds: as C. J. Herrington remarks, 'human evil inevitably contaminates the natural world in Seneca'.[406] Macbeth himself notes that the wounds he had inflicted on his king 'looked like a breach in nature' (2.3.114). This corporeal breach, stemming from one man's tragic ambition, has spread to the natural world. The Old Man says of the new, disturbed Scotland, where '[b]y th' clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp' (2.4.6-7), it is 'unnatural, / Even like the deed that's done' (10-11). Night-time darkness has breached its natural bounds and infects the day, as Macbeth himself is drawn further into the moral abyss, bringing Scotland down with him. Burrow argues that the use of dramatic techniques drawn from Seneca, which blur the boundaries between man and the natural world, encourages the audience to view this particular Scotland as deeply '*strange*'. Furthermore, a contrast is demarcated, between a

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[404] Burrow (2013), p. 190, 187.

[405] Burrow (2013), p. 188.

[406] Quoted in Altman, Joel B., *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978), p. 236.

strange barbaric Scotland led and despoiled by a murderer and ‘a more familiar, English world’, the ‘tyrannies of Macbeth’ stacked up against ‘Edward the Confessor’s benign touching of his subjects for the King’s evil’.[407] A further binary can be applied to these sets of contrasts: that of gender, with a feminised, disorderly Scotland set against a thoroughly masculine, orderly England.[408]

‘Why is it so important, for example, at the end of the play, that Malcolm is a virgin?’[409]

As we have seen, then, it is gender indeterminacy, both female characters displaying masculine characteristics and, more troublingly, female characteristics infecting male characters, which creates disorder in both the characters themselves and the wider natural world. It therefore makes sense that order is returned to Scotland through the overthrow of the female-male King by the male-male King.[410] Masculine order re-establishes itself in Scotland with the invading army, with Malcolm at its head. As Orgel has shown, Malcolm’s masculinity is buttressed by his emphatic separation from women: he declares that ‘I am yet / Unknown to woman’ (4.3.125-6). The apparent importance of this is key to the understanding of ‘the place of women in the play’s world’, of ‘how very disruptive they seem to

[407] Burrow (2013), p. 190.

[408] I would note here that, though Malcolm is Scottish, it is telling that he flees to England when escaping Macbeth’s clutches. It is England—orderly, masculine England—with which he is most aligned due to his thorough detachment from women and the taint of femininity. It is because of this that he can bring the masculine order of England across the border, defeat Macbeth and, hopefully initiate a new masculine order in Scotland through his reign (though the ending of the play undercuts this significantly).

[409] Orgel (2014), p. 265.

[410] Carroll (2020) notes that in an alternative, earlier version of the Macbeth saga, reported by Buchanan in 1582, Duncan is ‘an “effeminate and slothful King” (vol. 7, p, 207)’, p. 178. As in Shakespeare’s retelling, the co-existence of the feminine with the male ruler is unacceptable, and ripe for overthrowing.

[411] Orgel (2014), p. 265.

be'.[411] Order can only be restored by a man who has not been tainted, or his masculinity disordered, by knowledge of women.[412]

'What's the boy Malcolm?' Macbeth wants to know. 'Was he not born of woman?' (5.3.3-4). The man who will wrest the crown from Macbeth has not known female touch and the man who sees off the 'abhorrèd tyrant', defying the witches' obtuse promise that 'none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth' (5.7.10, 4.1.94-5), Macduff, is even less marked by the feminine. Macduff 'was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped' (5.7.45-6). What does the play mean by '[u]ntimely'? Before there was the possibility of an infection of femininity in the young son? The phrasing ('ripped') suggests an early modern Caesarian birth and, as Orgel notes, the procedure was such a masculine affair as to completely erase the mother's part in it:

> As for "no man of woman born," maybe the problem is that Macbeth is not a close enough reader: he takes the operative word to be "woman,"—"No man of *woman* born shall harm Macbeth"—but the key word turns out to be "born"—"No man of woman *born* shall harm Macbeth." If this is right, we must go on to consider the implications of the assumption that a Caesarian section does not constitute birth. This is really, historically, quite significant: a vaginal birth would have been handled by women, the midwife, maids, attendants, with no men present. But surgery was a male prerogative—the surgeon was always a man; midwives were not allowed to use surgical instruments—and the surgical birth thus means, in Renaissance terms, that Macduff was brought to life by men, not women: carried by a woman, but made viable only through masculine intervention. Such a birth, all but invariably, involved the mother's death.[413]

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[412] This misogynistic plot turn was also put to use by Shakespeare in *Henry IV, Part One*, in which once again the womanly Celtic fringe is defeated by a conspicuously masculine English King. Highley, Christopher, 'Wales, Ireland, and "1 Henry IV", in *Renaissance Drama*, Vol. 21 (1990), 91 - 114, notes that in *1 Henry IV*, '[r]esponsibility for symbolically overcoming' the castrating, womanly Welsh 'falls to Prince Hall' and '[h]is pivotal role in the recovery of a masculine English identity that has been specifically lost to women depends upon his own conspicuous insulation from them', p. 105.

[413] Orgel (2014), p. 265.

Only those whose masculinity is so untouched by femininity, even to the point of the erasure of the mother, can destroy the 'cursèd' Macbeth (5.7.85).[414] Ultimately, it is the femininity within the man that is 'cursèd', which perverts and disorders the natural world of Scotland, and which is destroyed. It is,

> appropriate for a play, if not a culture, that consistently demonizes female power, a play in which to be not "of woman born" […] is to be invulnerable and to be "unknown to woman" […] is to be virtuous[.][415]

Adelman concurs. She writes that the play, 'concerned to restore natural order at the end', 'bases that order upon the radical exclusion of the female. Initially construed as all-powerful, the women virtually disappear at the end'.[416]

Supernatural power is to be found on either side of the border, and whether it is demoniacal or beneficent seems to be dependent on whether the male wielder of said power is tainted or not by femininity.[417] Unlike the Scottish tyrant, the English king has a magic touch which heals his people:

> A most miraculous work in this good King,
> Which often since my here remain in England
> I have seen him do. How he solicits Heaven
> Himself best knows; but strangely visited people,
> All swoll'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
> The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
> Hanging a golden stamp about their necks
> Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken,

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[414] Phillips (2020): 'In the final balance, of course, Macduff, himself the result of an unnatural, though *medical* birth, overcomes the supernatural generations associated with Macbeth and replaces them with legitimate, fairly formed sovereignty', p. 55-6.

[415] Kastan, David Scott, '*Macbeth* and the "Name of King,"' in *Shakespeare after Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 165 - 182, p. 169.

[416] Adelman (1992), p. 144.

[417] Carroll (2020) reads this good/bad designation for various monarch's mystical powers as related to which of the monarch's reign is orderly and which is one of usurpation: 'Kings, it seems, may have sybils prophesy to them, but tyrants can have only witches. As a supreme example in the play, the saintly King Edward the Confessor, Malcolm reports to Macduff (who has come to the English court to appeal to Malcolm in Act 4, Scene 3), not only possesses the miraculous "touch" that heals the "Evil", but "[w]ith this strange virtue,/He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy" (4.3.148-59). You say demonic, I say heavenly', p. 183. Since the disorderly binary is equated with the feminine, in my reading, I am in agreement with Carroll's analysis.

To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne
That speak him full of grace. (4.3.147-59)[418]

The power is specifically the gift of *kings*: queens are not mentioned, oddly, since the previous incumbent of the English throne before James was Elizabeth.[419] We are told that the gift is passed to the heir, is received by 'the succeeding royalty', and as such, any women involved in the succession are obedient, faithful wives and mothers, pliant creators of heirs, so orderly as to be practically null and void, and certainly beneath mention. It is only the disorderly wife, mother, woman who creates problems that must be solved, and the disorderly female-man, as in Macbeth. His intertwining with the witches and with his wife have created a disorderly tyrant. A tyrant, Macduff tells us, is one without proper boundaries: 'Boundless intemperance / In nature is a tyranny' (4.3.66-7). The English king is defined by circumspection ('How he solicits Heaven / Himself best knows') as is the heir to the Scottish throne, Malcolm: 'modest wisdom plucks me / From over-credulous haste' (4.3.119-20), he declares, he 'never was forsworn', 'would not betray / The Devil to his fellow' (26, 28-9). 'What I am truly,' he declares, '[i]s thine, and my poor country's to

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418 The Scotland of the Macbeths is hellish, in contrast to the sanctified England, a matter emphasised by the debt *Macbeth* owes to the mystery plays. O'Connell, Michael, 'Blood begetting blood: Shakespeare and the mysteries,' in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. by Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 177 - 189, has demonstrated how Macbeth's actions and their bloody consequences constitute the play in which Shakespeare 'makes most explicit allusion to the mystery theatre', p. 187, 178, 187-9. Duncan's spilled blood represents to Macduff 'The great doom's image' (2.3.80), a reference to the 'spectacular mystery play scene of the bleeding Christ of the Last Judgement', a horrific vision of hell on earth before the final salvation, p. 188. In *Macbeth*, this is the land Macbeth has created in Scotland, to be saved only by Malcolm (and his English army's) invasion. Rackin (2005) has shown how Lady Macbeth's wish for the destruction of her breast-milk also linked the Macbeths' (contra Malcolm and England) with hell as figured in medieval thought:

> Medieval images of the lactating Virgin, of the Church allegorized as a nursing mother, and of souls sucked at the breast of Christ, which associated break milk with charity and spiritual sustenance, were still current in the Renaissance and still powerful; and they resonate in the details of the soliloquy Shakespeare wrote. (p. 122)

'The 'smoke of hell' [1.5.50] locates Lady Macbeth's desires in a theological context', p. 123, and may also be another reference to the morality theatre, which made much use of such theatrical effects: see Harris, Jonathan Gil, 'The Smell of "Macbeth"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2007), 465 - 486, p. 476-77, and Harris, Anthony, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 161-3.

419 Foakes (2006) notes that the '"healing benediction", a power to cure scrofula by touching sufferers' was 'still practised by King James', p. 219.

command' (131-2). Controlled to the point of complete separation from the disorderly female, these kings' supernatural powers can be beneficial to the country. Macbeth's influence on the realm, however, infected as it is with the feminine, can only be one of disorder.

'What's more to do / Which would be planted newly with the time' (5.7.94-5)

Such is Malcolm's concern, picking up *Macbeth*'s natural imagery for time's progression and the conception of the future. Malcolm might hope that Macbeth, 'this dead butcher' (5.7.99), and his reign of terror, can be forgotten, in favour of his own reign 'planted newly with the time', but the play does not follow along with his wish for closure. Adelman notes Malcolm's attempt to reconfigure the natural world, removing it from the domain of women to the subject of men. The ruse of the walking Birnam Wood is a mere 'military maneuver' which leaves 'little room for suggestions of natural fertility or for the deep sense of the generative world rising up to expel its winter king'.[420] That is, Malcolm wishes it to become aligned with *male* order, with an army of men carrying cut, dead leaves in perfect, marching synchronicity, as opposed to the feminine disorder of women, witches and the poisonous cooking pot (4.1.4-5). For David Scott Kastan, *Macbeth*'s finale initially presents the reign of Macbeth as an 'aberration', a

> savage tyranny is powerfully envisioned by the play but is seen to exist, in De Quincey's phrase, as "an awful parenthesis" in nature, a hideous aberration that at once opposes and legitimizes the moral order. Duncan's gracious sovereignty is shattered and replaced by Macbeth's increasingly gratuitous brutality, but Scotland is eventually released from the nightmare of Macbeth's rule by an army of English troops and disaffected Scottish nobles who come "to dew the sovereign flower, and drown weeds" [5.2.30-1] With Malcolm's restoration of the line of Duncan, the forms of power are returned to legitimate hands and legitimate uses, the royal house and sovereignty itself successfully renewed. After a monstrous interregnum, authority is again natural and benign.[421]

Macbeth's reign has been 'monstrous'. In my reading, it has been monstrous because of the gendered disorder he has created by taking in the feminine of the witches and his wife.

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[420] Adelman (1992), p. 145. She notes that '[w]ith the excision of all the female characters, nature itself can in effect be reborn as male', p. 145.

[421] Scott Kastan (1999), p. 165-6.

The ending that the play initially sketches would suggest that the taint of femininity has been excised from Scotland's new ruler, and thus the disorderly feminine has been banished from the land. Malcolm's vanquishing of the tyrant should allow us to see order replacing disorder, should see nature re-envisioned as the preserve of masculine-compelled order. However,

> the play is more disturbing than this would suggest. This insistent principle of moral contrast, wonderfully unconditional and reassuring, is not stable but is unnervingly unsettled by the text's compelling strategies of repetition and resemblance.[422]

Kastan points to the commonalities we can see between Macbeth and Malcolm, with an emphasis on their violence, as well as the fact that, just as Macbeth is hailed thrice by the Witches (1.3.48-50), so too is Malcolm by his cadre of men (5.7.84, 89).[423] 'These mirroring effects', Kastan writes, 'insist that the radical difference asserted by its fierce moral oppositions is both tendentious and insecure', that 'apparent opposites are discovered to be dismayingly similar, and, more dismaying still, even implicated in one another'.[424] We might also wonder whether Malcolm doth protest too much in his innocence. Isn't the vision of himself as a tyrant rather too vivid for an innocent mind to create—and is it not almost too close to the behaviour of Macbeth?

This should be enough to give an audience pause, to delay the acceptance of a vision of restored male order. However, Shakespeare goes further, pressing the issue, and demonstrates that the disorderly feminine has not, in fact, been quelled, killed or banished, that the threat of feminine disorder lingers on, despite the deaths of Macbeth and his lady. As Greenblatt notes,

> It would have been simple enough to have the victorious Malcolm declare his determination to rid his kingdom of witches, but he does no such thing. Instead, with none of the questions their existence poses answered, they simply disappear: ['*The Witches dance, and vanish*.' (4.1.147, stage

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[422] Kastan (1999), p. 166.

[423] Kastan (1999), p. 174. These correspondences, he writes, means that 'Malcolm's coronation at Scone either returns the nation to health and order or provides the conditions for a new round of temptation and disorder', p. 174. Fernie (2012) also notes a demonic correspondence between the two: Malcolm is aligned with the English King whose supernatural power is presented to be saintly. Why, then, Fernie asks, 'is it known as the "King's Evil" …?', p. 67.

[424] Kastan (1999), p. 166.

direction)].[425]

We never know who or what they truly are—'the ambiguities of demonic agent are never resolved'[426]. Like Iago, who takes the unspoken motives for his malice with him to the grave (5.2.300-01), their evil is, rather than located in a person who can be expelled, dissipated into the wider play, converted into the wider question of evil within society.[427] The feminine disorderliness can never, of course, be excised from a functional society. Mothers, wives, women of all kinds must be accommodated alongside male society, and with it the threat of disorderliness that they pose. Disorder and order exist alongside each other, disorder can never be wholly dispelled, and this is what the lingering threat of the witches to Scotland symbolises.

'Confusion now hath made his masterpiece' (2.3.68)

Malcolm Evans has delineated the bi-focal nature of *Macbeth*. He reads *Macbeth* as a play of two competing linguistic modes, a battle which 'results in a potentially baffling opacity'. The first mode is an 'attempt to construct an unequivocal idiom in which the theory of the divine right of kings and its place in the Great Chain of Being is made one with nature'. This language renders anything that stands aside from, or pushes against, the hierarchical structure of ordered society 'unnatural'. The second linguistic mode is constituted of the 'inescapable undertow of negation', the 'hurly-burly of language which precedes the construction of these sealed hierarchical categories'.[428] Ross's speech, in which he recounts the King's receiving of the news of Macbeth's successes against the traitors and Macbeth's subsequent elevation to 'Thane of Cawdor' (1.3.89-107, 106) is in

> the first mode, affirming a positive metaphysical 'order' which can somehow, magically, exist outside language and ideology, appears in the attempt to conjure up a grateful, generous king and his loyal, heroic subject. Its negation is the intractability of language, which intimates a more deeply rooted disorder than the one that has just been quelled, and a potentially unending circulation of subjects

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[425] Greenblatt (1993), p. 111.

[426] Greenblatt (1993), p. 126.

[427] Greenblatt (1993) writes that Shakespeare 'manages to implicate [the Witches] in a monstrous threat to the fabric of civilized life', p. 125.

[428] Evans (1989, 2003), p. 163.

> through hierarchical positions that only *seem* to be fixed and sovereign — of king and thane, of author, reader and protagonist.[429]

These two modes, and 'the baffling opacity' that is their consequence, is not settled in the play with the death of Macbeth. 'The Macbeths, with the sisters, spill over the limits of "character"', a multiplicity that in its disorderly, overlapping, collectivising mass 'constitute[s] the text's "nothing" which, in turn, constantly erodes and undermines the hierarchies of irreducible "somethings"'.[430] It would be easy for this 'nothingness' to be simply rendered as a negative, as 'bad', the creation of the 'butcher' and 'tyrant' (5.7.99, 10), but the play does not allow us this reassurance.

> To define this space of "nothing" quite simply as "evil" is to reprocess the text through a moral discourse it renders problematic. Even in orthodox Christian doctrine, if "nothing" is identifiable with sin or chaos it is also the ground of all creation, and *Macbeth* also signifies nothing in this paradoxically positive sense.[431]

It is this 'nothing' that is turned over and over in Shakespeare's subsequent tragedy of a king who, fatally, cannot know himself: *King Lear*. In this play, too, 'nothing' is paradoxically both emptiness and incipient plenitude. There too nature has been plunged into disorder by a man who fears his own innate womanliness: 'O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!', Lear cries, trying to fend off an incoming attack of hysteria, the '*Hysterica passio*' (2.2.246-7).[432] Again, the natural world is aligned with the feminine. The disorderly feminine is evident in the persons of Goneril and Regan, but there is too an attempt at a feminine *orderliness*, in the character of Cordelia and her failed attempt to restore the masculine order of her father.

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[429] Evans (1989, 2003), p. 163.

[430] Evans (1989, 2003), p. 165. He adds, that '[t]he two modes proceed side by side until the end of the play, never fully resolving themselves into a unity', p. 167. Varnado (2017) finds that the witches' magic, their disordering spells, 'blur any easy distinction between natural and unnatural forms of generation; they signal that this fragmented, dismembered, bubbling chaos *is how nature works*, by demonstrating the thorough inter-dependence of destruction and generation, and of nature and artifice', p. 192.

[431] Evans (1989, 2003), p. 165.

[432] All quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997).

Everything and Nothing: Nature in King Lear

In no other play did Shakespeare so relentlessly interrogate 'nature' (1.1.172, 213, 1.2.104, 177, and many, many more).[433] As Danby notes, the 'words "nature", "natural", "unnatural" occur over forty times in *King Lear*'.[434] Marcus writes that this play's preoccupation with the natural world, 'its complex, repeated evocation of a mysterious "Nature" […] a teeming world of shrubs, trees, barren heath, rats, dogs, pond-slime, thunder, whirlwinds and other elemental forces' is 'yet another way in which *King Lear* is unique among Shakespearean tragedies'.[435] This single word encompasses a great deal: the natural world, the nature of men and women, of fathers, daughters and sons, the nature of familial bonds, of fate, of the gods, and of the supernatural.[436]

In *King Lear*, nature is both on display and discussed, argued and theorised about by the characters on stage, sometimes whilst they are being buffeted by nature's blows.[437] Shakespeare interrogates nature through his characters and their perceptions and ideas of it.[438] These ideas are argued most arrestingly on the storm-lashed heath where, as Gloucester laments, 'for many miles about / There's scarce a bush' (2.2.491-2). Here dra-

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[433] All quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997).

[434] Danby, John F., *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961), p. 19.

[435] Marcus, Leah S., '*King Lear* and the Death of the World,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 421 - 436, p. 422. She adds that it is a 'presence that is so palpable to its characters that it almost deserves the status of an additional member of the cast. At least four characters—Lear, Edmund, Cordelia, and Edgar—address elements of nature directly and with more sustained, colloquial vigour than the brief and formulaic apostrophes to Night, Sun, or Moon characteristic of early Shakespeare', p. 422.

[436] See Mentz, Steve, 'Tongues in the Storm: Shakespeare, Ecological Crisis, and the Resources of Genre,' in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, ed. by Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 155 - 172, p. 165-6.

[437] Marcus (2016) writes, '*King Lear* is the only tragedy in which characters make a habit of conversing both with nature herself and with elements of the natural world, and in which that world, on occasion, may be said to talk back to them. Indeed, the word "Nature" is almost always capitalized in the folio text as though to signal its unique status in this particular play', p. 422.

[438] 'As Robert Watson has said of *King Lear*, "Every definition of nature produces an equal and opposite one,"' quoted in Gerrard, Greg, 'Foreword', in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, ed. by Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. xvii-xxiv, p. xxiv

matic staging itself expresses the contradictory portrayals of nature in the play. The heath, as Scott shows, was, for those in the seventeenth century, a landscape whose significance was in its lack of nature. It exemplified barrenness and wasted space. Speaking of the heath in *Macbeth*, Scott writes that in 'seventeenth-century England [the phrase] a "blasted heath" was notoriously redundant'.[439] Such a landscape 'is neither cultivated nor habitable but a stark introduction to the absence of growth'.[440] This aspect of the heath's geography is also present in *Lear*, but, crucially to the play's evocation of the natural world, it is also the site where the storm hits the earth. This storm is perhaps the most palpably expressed act of nature in Shakespeare's entire play corpus. 'Blow winds,' Lear howls,

> and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
> You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o'the world (3.2.1-7)

The storm here, as has been noted by many scholars, is animated by the decidedly human emotion of rage. Christine Varnado, for instance, writes that the 'wind has not only action but language, even rhetoric[…] with palpable affective and cosmological content. The earth not only shakes, it can be felt to have a fever, like a person'.[441] Lear's delusion of grandeur it may be, but describing the weather as possessing emotional force has the effect of fixing in an audience's mind the 'blow[ing]', 'crack[ing] and 'spout[ing]' of the 'cataracts and hurricanoes' far more palpably than a mere, though frantic, description of the weather's effects can. We have all felt those fitful flares of anger and felt their power

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[439] Scott, Charlotte, *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 124. As evidence, she turns to contemporary husbandry manuals, including 'Markham's *Farewell to Husbandry* (1620)' which 'goes into some detail about this hostile landscape, describing it as barren and unfruitful' (p. 124). Colie, Rosalie L., *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) writes that the heath in *Lear* is 'too stark for such workaday considerations; this heath is, simply, the minimal ground for existence, the plainest possible area on which men may work out such justifications as they can for their bare existence', p. 304.

[440] Scott (2014), p. 125.

[441] Varnado, Christine, 'Queer nature, or the weather in *Macbeth*,' in *Queer Shakespeare: Desire and Sexuality* (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare), ed. by Goran Stanivukovic (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 177 - 195, p. 188.

add to our strength. In bequeathing the natural world this anger, in descriptive speech, the storm becomes not only part of Lear, but part of us all. That this fiercely felt storm is enacted on the same stage space as the place where, earlier, we are told 'there's scarce a bush', too much nature above so little, where 'high winds / Do sorely ruffle' (2.2.490-1) without any natural protection or shelter, is key to the play's evocation of the bifold aspects of the natural world.[442]

Before discussing those aspects, however, it is important to note that the play's evocation of the natural world is also gendered. Crucially, it is the men of the play who articulate what 'nature' is, men who name it, frame it, who impose their version of what 'natural order' is upon it. The two most elaborately argued versions are diametrically opposed and come, unsurprisingly, from two characters who are at odds from the very beginning, though one fails to *see* so until far too late: Gloucester and his 'whoreson' Edmund (1.1.22). Gloucester's view is the traditional Elizabethan idea of 'nature', as Danby explains it: one of order and stability and loving bonds that arise *naturally* from familial relationships. Edmund's conception of nature, on the other hand, is of a 'goddess' with no care for 'the plague of custom' (1.2.3): the old order beloved of his father is a superficial construct and true believers (such as Edmund) can both see through it and manipulate said superficial custom for their own 'lusty' purposes, as shown through his trickery and his manipulation of his father's quaint notions (1.2.11). For Danby, this highlights a schism in Elizabethan and Jacobean society between the medieval notion of hierarchy and stability and the 'New Man', epitomised by Edmund, along with Goneril and Regan, of emergent capitalism.[443] For myself, I don't think we can find too much evidence of that in Edmund's words. As Macfaul writes, 'the doubleness of nature identified by […] Danby, who sees a conflict between old notions of a harmonious, kind nature and a proto-Hobbesian selfishness in Shakespeare's work' is 'attractive but oversimplified, avoiding the sense of real un-

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[442] Marcus (2016) notes the importance of the bare stage to this play's evocation of the natural world: 'the barer the stage the more freedom the audience has to engage with the pervasive fluidity of "Nature" evoked through the language of its characters', p. 422.

[443] Danby (1961), p. 52. He writes, '[t]his society is that of the medieval vision. Its representative is an old King ("Nature in you stands on the very verge of her confine"). It is doting and it falls into error. The other society is that of nascent capitalism. Its representative in chief is the New Man—and a politic machiavel' (p. 52).

certainty that pervades Shakespeare's age; the sense that nature's two sides operated simultaneously'.[444]

In this, I agree with Macfaul. *King Lear* seems to me to examine the two sides of nature's coin: order and disorder. Inherent in both is the other, one cannot exist without its opposite. This, I think, is why there can be a storm on a heath: everything and nothing, too much and too little, at one and the same time. Simon Estok similarly sees in *Lear* a paradoxical natural world, writing of 'a construct of a full but empty, a silent but dangerously noisy, nature' and Elena Violaris as well notes that 'the word "all" is the counterpart to "nothing" in the play'.[445] For Estok, the paradox of nature is figured in the character of Edgar, who, in throwing away his identity after being cast out by his father, 'becomes part of [the] environment, a thing devoid of human identity, and complains "Edgar I nothing am"'. It is this 'natural environment, so full of so many fearful things' which 'is a space of nothing that disempowers and "make[s] nothing of" … those banished within it'.[446] I would add that this natural world is full of more than 'fearful things': it is also the place where Edgar can become so many more people than the dispossessed heir he once was.[447] 'The country,' he declares, 'gives me proof and precedent / Of Bedlam beggars' (2.2.184-5). 'Country' here may refer to either the countryside or the realm of Britain at large: it could mean both together (the countryside being, of course, part of the country). Either way, he draws on what he has seen in the world to become Tom o' Bedlam, as well as to play the part of the earthy witness to Gloucester's 'fall' ('Ho, you, sir! Friend, here you, sir' (4.6.46)) and the 'West Country yokel'[448] who argues with Oswald ('Ch'ill not let go, air, without vurther 'cagion' (4.6.231)). The natural world is not only a place where he loses himself, it is also the place where, after much experience and pretence, he can claim his new identity

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[444] Macfaul, Tom, *Shakespeare and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 15.

[445] Estok, Simon C., 'Dramatizing Environmental Fear: *King Lear*'s Unpredictable Natural Spaces and Domestic Places,' in *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 19 - 32, p. 28, and Violaris, Elena, 'An Undoing of Pattern or a Pattern of Undoing? Sin, Folly and Chaos in Shakespeare's *King Lear*,' *Shakespeare*, 17:2 (2021), 165 - 183, p. 176.

[446] Estok (2011), p. 29-30.

[447] This may be part of the 'fullness in emptiness' that Estok (2011) discusses. He does not include Edgar's disguises in his argument.

[448] Foakes (1997), note to lines 231-40, p. 345.

before the duel with Edmund: 'O know my name is lost, / By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit; / Yet am I noble as the adversary' (5.3.119-21), 'My name is Edgar' (67). The natural world is both a void of nothingness where the self cannot hold, and the fecund nurturer of diversity, where a new self can be cultivated.

The idea of nature as two diametrically opposed opposites holding each other together is exemplified by Lear's cry '[c]rack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once' (3.2.8). Inherent in the incipient natural order (the 'germs' of nature, that have created everything), there is the potential to 'spill', the awaiting disorder, just ready to burst out.[449] Sophie Chiari too points to this paradox: 'Ironically, atoms in the play are not just endowed with a generative power but they are also seen as an utterly destructive force'.[450] The Fool likens Lear's decision to halve his kingdom to the splitting of an egg, telling him that

> Why, after I have cut the egg i'the middle and eat
> up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou
> clovest thy crown i'the middle and gav'st away both
> parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. (1.4.139)

Elizabeth Harper points to this reference to the egg, once full, now emptied by Lear's own foolish behaviour, noting that the 'Fool's quibbling on the two crowns of the hollowed egg and the kingly crown Lear has given away, reminds us that the egg is emblematic of the paradox of everything and nothing that animates the play's tragic universe'.[451] For Macfaul, in Lear's cry to crack the moulds, the 'creative power of Nature turns destructive as its central figure turns upon himself'.[452] And it is the man who cries out for this chaos in his madness, the King himself, who from the top of the ultimate hierarchy has called forth the

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[449] Danby (1961) writes here that 'Shakespeare's thought seems to follow the second of Bacon's theories. Lear's "germens" are Bacon's "seeds", his "moulds" Bacon's "forms". The sinister thing is the undertone—the suggestion that there is an explosive power that can smash the forms', p. 22-3.

[450] Chiari, Sophie, *Shakespeare's Representations of Weather, Climate and Environment: The Early Modern 'Fated Sky'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 160.

[451] Harper, Elizabeth, '"A Disease That's in My Flesh Which I Must Needs Call Mine": Lear, Macbeth and the Fear of Futurity,' *English Studies*, 100:6 (2019), 604 - 626, p. 614.

[452] Macfaul (2015), p. 122.

disorder that has led to him toppling down to the bottom to sit with the 'poor naked wretches' (3.4.28), who embodies this two-sided nature.[453]

As mentioned earlier, in *King Lear*, it is the male characters who define how nature, and the natural order, is constituted. The drama itself shows nature to be, at its core, paradoxical. The female characters of the play are shown to inhabit nature, in contrast to the men who stand aside from it and evaluate it from the outside (or so they would like to think), to be naturally disorderly and to embody its paradoxes. According to Estok, the 'identities for nature and for women this play imagines are accommodated in impossible paradoxes. The empty but full paradox characterizing the space of nature patterns the subjectification of women in this play'.[454] What of the women of *King Lear*? They do not get the chance to pontificate on their theories of the nature of the world as their male counterparts do. Instead, they serve as the cruxes around which Lear's desperate questioning of the truth of the world revolves. They do not think about nature, they *are* nature, mysterious, wilful and inscrutable. 'Then let them anatomize Regan', Lear rails, 'see what breeds / about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that make / these hard hearts?' (3.6.73-5) The aura of the supernatural also swirls around their depiction, another facet in the disorder of nature that they seem to represent.[455] 'Dog-hearted' (4.3.46), they are chimeras, humans born of Lear's flesh but so cruel in their treatment of him that he cannot believe it of them. They must be 'pelican daughters' (3.4.74), who, monstrously, cannibalise their father and feast on his blood.

But this is Goneril and Regan. Cordelia, as always, stands aside from them. The true daughter of her father, she also represents a doubleness in nature: 'sunshine and rain' are the smiles and tears of the daughter thought to be traitorous but is in fact the most loyal (4.3.18). She 'redeems nature from the general curse' (4.6.202) and offers a vision of a natural world distinct from the supernatural disorder epitomised by her sisters. Danby too sees Cordelia as, in Simon Estok's words, the 'third position in the middle', nestled be-

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[453] Here, again, I disagree with Danby (1961), for whom Lear sits alongside those who believe in the traditional view of nature: see pp. 42 and 52.

[454] Estok (2011), p. 29.

[455] McEachern, Claire, 'Shakespeare, religion and politics,' in *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 185 - 200, writes that '*King Lear* is the play that most presses these questions of the relations between humans and the supernatural', p. 198.

tween the '"orthodox" view in which nature is orderly, benign (but punitive), and connected with custom, reason, and religion' and those 'who are associated with a nature that is at best indifferent to social order and customs and at worst amoral and rapacious'.[456] She is 'a kind of beneficent [g]oddess of Nature',[457] but, as Steve Mentz points out, her 'role as earth-redeemer failed in plot terms'.[458] Unfortunately, in *King Lear*, there is no ultimate reconciliation or peaceful harmonising of nature's dualities.[459]

The male characters in *King Lear* attempt to impose their control on the world through their theorising of its nature.[460] In this, they are like Oberon and Prospero, and, like them, opposed to their female counterparts. Goneril and Regan are akin to Titania, both in that they resist male control and because they too represent a disordered nature. This is figured in abnormal winds (in the *Dream*, Titania speaks of winds bringing the sea onto the land (2.1.88-92); in *Lear*, it is those 'cataracts and hurricanoes') and societal chaos (the 'indistinguishable' tread in the mortal's maze (2.1.99-100) of *Dream* and the inconceivable ingratitude of the pelican daughters and what Lear calls the 'handy-dandy' of a confused social order (4.6.149)).[461] However, in *Lear*, unlike in the *Dream*, there is no reconciliation between the warring genders. Goneril and Regan die whilst still at odds with their father and fighting for their control of his realm. Cordelia, she of the 'sunshine and rain', is dead. Lear dies grieving for her. It is unclear who will take over the ruling of the realm. Albany appears to be the successor in the Quarto, Edgar in the Folio. Will the kingdom be reunited, under one king, or will it continue to be divided? Shakespeare does not say, and so leaves us with the ominous sense that the natural world, like its disorderly

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[456] Estok (2011), p. 19.

[457] Danby (1961), p. 134.

[458] Mentz (2011), p. 167.

[459] Such an ending will be reserved for the Romances, in which those other '[g]oddess[es] of Nature', Perdita and Marina and Imogen, are more successful than the tragic Cordelia.

[460] Marcus (2016) writes that the 'striking opening salvos by Edmund and Lear establish "nature" as an important principle in the play, but as the action proceeds their oversimplifying personifications erode in favour of a conception of nature as a more immanent and fluid force', p. 427. I would point out the gendered binary here: Edmund and Lear (and Gloucester, I would add) are the masculine characters attempting to enforce their version of natural 'order' onto the natural world, and the 'fluid force' of nature which escapes their grasp could be read as their opposite, feminine disorder, as aligned with Goneril and Regan.

[461] All references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are to Chaudhuri, Sukanta (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

avatars, Goneril and Regan, has not been re-harnessed to male order and control. References to the weather become scarcer and scarcer once Cordelia arrives back in her native homeland. Will her harmonious union of sunshine and rain endure after her death? Or will the storm return to batter and blast the realm's inhabitants once more? The characters are silent on this matter: perhaps Shakespeare intended for us to hear the wind howling as the play draws to a close instead.[462]

Gloucester's Nature, or The Nature of Gloucester

Edmund's lie about Edgar's treachery has such an effect on their father that, in the hearing of it (and instantly believing the truth of it), he sees in it the ruin of the world:

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon
> portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature
> can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself
> scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship
> falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in
> countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond
> cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine
> comes under the prediction — there's son against father.
> The King falls from bias of nature — there's father
> against child. We have seen the best of our time.
> Machinations, hollowness, treachery and all ruinous
> disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out
> this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing. Do it
> carefully. — And the noble and true-hearted Kent
> banished, his offence honesty! 'Tis strange, strange! (1.2.103-17)

The crucial setting-off point for this disastrous fall into chaos and disorder is 'the bond / cracked 'twixt son and father'. Gloucester's vision of the natural world is one held together

[462] Violaris (2021) includes in her article a quote from Charles Marowitz, who was 'involved in Peter Brook's famously nihilistic film' of *Lear*, in which he states that there was an idea that as the film ended, 'it might be disturbing to suggest that another storm — a greater storm — was on the way. Once the final lines had been spoken, the thunder could clamour greater than ever before, implying that the worst was yet to come. Brook seconded the idea, but instead of an overpowering storm preferred a faint, dull rumbling which would suggest something more ominous and less explicit', p. 180.

by fixed relationships, ‘love’, ‘friendship’ and brotherhood, bonds between people which are pre-emptively mourned when he fears that they are imminently about to be sundered. Danby is especially eloquent on this worldview: ‘This is the society of the sixteenth century and before. The standards Edmund rejects have come down from the Middle Ages. They assume a co-operative, reasonable decency in man, and respect for the whole as being greater than the part: “God to be worshipped, parents to be honoured, others to be used by us as we ourselves would be by them.”’[463] Moore points to the literary history of this view of nature:

> In medieval and Renaissance literature, Nature serves as God’s vicar, controlling the movement of various heavenly bodies, the weather on earth, and the life processes of birth, growth, ageing, sickness, and death. She also instils in humanity the classical concept of natural law or law of nature, that aspect of human behaviour which, among other things, causes us to love our kin and revere our parents.[464]

But this order is, as with Shakespeare’s depictions of nature in this play, shadowed by its opposite. There is a brilliant irony in the fact that the man lamenting this loss of orderly relations is the only character to have sired a bastard son. The bond of *marriage* is conspicuously absent from the bonds whose breaking Gloucester laments (friendship, brotherhood, those between parents and children, subjects’ loyalty to the crown), though, perhaps tellingly, we are told that ‘love cools’. The fact that Edmund has such a crucial part to play in the disorder that Gloucester foretells—‘Machinations, hollowness, treachery and all ruinous / disorders’ might as well be a pithy summation of Edmund’s actions—is another pointer to the fact that, in *Lear*, every description of the natural world holds within it its opposite.

The opposite of Gloucester’s order is described with a fretful clarity. Once sons no longer honour their fathers, ‘Love cools, friendship / falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mu-

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[463] Danby (1961), p. 46.

[464] Moore, Peter R., ‘The Nature of *King Lear*,’ *English Studies*, 87:2 (2006), 169 - 190, p. 169.

tinies; in / countries, discord; in palaces, treason': in short, chaos.[465] A similar precipitous fall can be seen in *Macbeth*, where, in killing Duncan, the rightful king, the Macbeths set off a chain of discord and disruption that infects the natural world with its sinful rebellion (2.4.5-10).[466] Bate reads these passages through a classical prism, arguing for the influence of Ovid on Shakespeare's work. For him, the 'Age of Iron is made […] into the archetype of the time of tragedy, that in which justice has fled the earth. It is characterized by the breaking of sacred bonds—the bonds between host and guest, as in *Macbeth*, and above all those within the family. The divisions between kin described here are analogous to those of which Gloucester complains'.[467] It is part of Shakespeare's ingenious, almost mischievous, examination of the order and disorder of the natural world in the play that these things do indeed come to pass, but not because Edgar has betrayed his father, but because Edmund has. It is a critical cliché to say that Gloucester was blind before he was blinded, and I think the truth lies somewhat to the side of the old saw: Gloucester sees well enough what will occur in the realm but his eyes are too fixed on watching the stars for their guidance. As Shakespeare will demonstrate with Gloucester's bastard who scoffs at the stars, celestial portents are useless unless you have a keen awareness of the earth on which they exert their influence. Society may crumble, as Gloucester predicts, but the natural world of *Lear* does not so closely mirror the disorder in human society as it does in *Macbeth*. Gloucester speaks of 'late eclipses', and many scholars have pointed to contemporary phenomena in early modern England at around the time of the play's composition.[468] But nobody else in the play seems to have noticed them or, if they had, thought them worth remarking upon. Likewise, Lear may, in his madness, think he can command the storm—'Rumble thy bellyful! Spit fire, spout rain!' (3.2.14)—but other characters see

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[465] Moore (2006) notes how, for Gloucester, this 'upheaval of nature' leads quickly to 'the severing of all natural bonds uniting humanity' p. 183. For my use of 'chaos' here, I follow Violaris's (2021) elucidation of the word's etymology: 'Classically defined, "chaos" refers to the primordial matter out of which the world was believed to have been shaped, appearing in ancient Greek, Latin and biblical Old Testament discourses. This primordial matter was conceived of as a kind of nothing — "a void; a gulf, an abyss" (*OED*) — recalling the proverbial doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Tracing the chronology of chaos as a concept, Katherine Hayles describes how "[d]uring the Renaissance there are […] frequent references to chaos as a lack of differentiation, a gaping void, a confused mass, an 'undisgested lump'" ("Chaos Bound" 20)', p. 165.

[466] All references to *Macbeth* are to Clark, Sandra and Pamela Mason (eds.), *Macbeth* (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[467] Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 172. 'The correspondence', he adds, 'is made explicit in *The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir*', p. 172.

[468] See, for instance, Foakes (1997), p. 91.

not an awe-inspiring god-like figure with the elements at his fingertips but a white-haired old man (3.1.7) who ‘strives in his little world of man to outscorn / The to and fro conflicting wind and rain’ (10-11) Once again, Shakespeare leaves ambiguous the role of nature. The characters cannot contain it within theories and neither can the audience grasp a firm idea of its role within the play.

A crucial point here is that within this ordered, hierarchical natural society of ‘bonds’ the possibility exists for the disorder that will overtake it: ‘the wisdom of Nature,’ Gloucester muses, ‘can reason it thus and thus’. The effects are still ruinous (nature will be ‘scourged by the sequent effects’) but the fact that the disaster is predicted by natural phenomena (the ‘late eclipses’) shows that the disorder, in fact, lies latent within the natural world, even in the supposedly super-ordered structure of the stars by which the measure of a man’s life could be read. As Laroque argues, Gloucester’s ideas about the potent wisdom held within the stars were not an outlandish proposition for the early modern mind. ‘Gloucester’s insistence on the portentousness of eclipses was a view that was often professed,’ he writes, and was a stance that countered the ‘naturalistic positions’ that Edmund espouses. Thus, ‘the opening of *King Lear* presents multiple mirrors and perspectives for viewing its action. The Renaissance dilemma is here poised between two rival cosmic explanations: supernaturalism in the astrological determinism of Gloucester, and naturalism in Edmund’s materialistic views’.[469] There were many competing theories about astrology, and about the nature of the world in general, with which the early moderns had to contend. *King Lear* is a play in which these theories are explored and the natural world is shown to be capacious enough to accommodate them all. Shakespeare’s non-didactic curiosity has space for the opposing, ‘naturalistic’ position as well, as we shall see in an examination of the contrarian cast of Edmund’s theories.

Nature According to Edmund, or The Nature of Edmund

Edmund stands in opposition to Gloucester throughout the play and so we should not be surprised to find that his idea of the world differs sharply from that of his father.

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[469] Laroque, François, ‘The ‘Science’ of Astrology in Shakespeare’s Sonnets, *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*,’ in *Spectacular Science, Technology and Superstition in the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. by Sophie Chiari and Mickaël Popelard (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 29 - 42, p. 41-2.

Hearing his father's nervous prediction of a shattered order and incipient disorder, he scoffs in a soliloquy,

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that
> when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our
> own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun,
> the moon and the stars, as if we were villains on
> necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves
> and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards,
> liars and adulterers by an enforced obedience of
> planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a
> divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of
> whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the
> charge of a star. My father compounded with my
> mother under the dragon's tail and my nativity was
> under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and
> lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am had the
> maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my
> bastardizing. (1.2.118-133)

Edmund, Danby writes, is 'the antithesis to the benevolent thesis Shakespeare's age inherited from the Middle Ages'.[470] Where Gloucester's argument about nature was underpinned by analogical thinking, wherein the movement of the stars affected the lives of the people living on earth, and thus could predict or cause disorder amongst human society, Edmund here expresses the opposite view. According to Estok, this 'speech is a direct challenge, unequivocally verbalized, and it reflects the erosion of analogical thinking under the early modern winds of mechanistic change'.[471] Danby's analysis agrees: 'Edmund […] admits of no connections in Nature save connections of material cause and effect. And Nature is a closed system. For him, as for us, it is a structure laid down, devoid of intelligence, impervious to Reason. This being so it is ridiculous to blame the stars for one's misfortunes'.[472] For Edmund, there is no reason for man's actions beyond man's

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[470] Danby (1961), p. 50.

[471] Estok (2011), p. 26. Analogical thinking, 'of which a decreasing majority in early modern English society was so heavily enamoured,' he writes, is here 'intensely disputed', p. 25.

[472] Danby (1961), p. 38.

own actions: it is the ‘surfeits of our / own behaviour,’ the consequences of which we attempt to ‘make guilty’ the stars when, according to Edmund, the guilt is our own. This paean to the individual is at the root of his other great set-piece speech on the nature of the world:

> Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me?
> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous and my shape as true
> As honest madam’s issue? Why brand they us
> With base? With baseness, bastardy? Base, base?
> Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth within a dull stale tired bed
> Go to the creating of a whole tribe of fops
> Got ’tween a sleep and wake. Well, then,
> Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
> Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund
> As to the legitimate. Fine word, ‘legitimate’!
> Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
> And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
> Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper:
> Now gods, stand up for bastards! (1.2.1-22)

This is not a natural world built upon 'bonds'.[473] This nature, in fact, stands in haughty perplexity towards the hypocrisies of 'custom' and the 'curiosity of nations' that would make Edmund an outcast for not being 'legitimate' when his natural form, the creation of nature, is 'as true / As honest madam's issue'. This is a Nature, a 'goddess' whose 'law' is both above and beneath that of man: above, because it is both more honest—Edmund is just as 'true' as his brother, despite the petty laws of a society that would label him 'base' for being born outside of the marriage that 'custom' dictates—and more vigorously strong and active—nature is associated with 'lusty stealth', as opposed to the 'dull stale tired' society—and beneath because it is so closely intertwined with those who society has rejected: 'Now gods, stand up for bastards!'.[474] That Edmund views this natural world as more hospitable to himself is clear in the natural language he employs: with his goddess Nature, he will 'grow' and 'prosper', as if he were a plant in its natural environment. Society, the 'curiosity of nations', on the other hand, will serve only to 'deprive' him. The only bonds Edmund mentions are those that exclude him, that of 'honest madam's issue', and those which he will trick his way into and then manipulate:'our father's love'. It is as if, in writing off all analogical thinking, there can be no other sort of correspondences either.

Again, one evocation of nature contains its opposite. In this passage, Edmund points to both his 'bastardy' and the fact that he is 'some twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother'. Both exclude him from inheritance of the 'lands'. Edmund may write off the 'plague of custom' as irrelevant and yet his words betray how he is still infected with it. Even if he were legitimate, as the younger brother he still would not inherit and the mention of it here in a passage that otherwise sweeps aside all other societal considerations

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[473] Moore (2006), interrogating how *King Lear* conflates pagan theology and Christian teaching finds that, in this speech, Edmund's view of nature is clear 'if set against the Ten Commandments, five of which he tramples in his soliloquy and its immediate aftermath: he dishonours his father by deceiving him, he exalts adultery, he steals, he bears false witness against his brother, and he covets their father's estate. According to medieval and Renaissance theologians, including Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin, the six non-religious commandments—the second table—epitomized natural law'. 'When Edmund swears allegiance to the goddess Nature in his opening soliloquy, seeking her aid in his intended crimes,' he writes, 'he [Edmund] really refers to the depraved state of nature which consists in rejecting the divine law of nature, including the fifth through tenth commandments', p. 175. This 'depraved state of nature' is the one tainted by original sin, p. 174.

[474] Schulman, Alex, '*King Lear* and the State of Nature,' in *Rethinking Shakespeare's Political Philosophy: From* Lear *to* Leviathan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 97 - 125, notes that 'Edmund is unlike other Shakespearean figures of immoralism and nihilism, unlike Iago or Macbeth. There is no mystery about motivation. He judges the social order unjust, and it is hard to disagree', p. 111.

perhaps suggests that the thought still rankles. In addition, though Edmund may sneer that the 'dragon's tail' and 'Ursa Major' had nothing to do with his character, yet, in the very next sentence after his contemptuous 'Fut!', he argues that 'I should have been that I am had the / maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my / bastardizing', arguing that he is *not* maidenly at all and is, in fact, the opposite of maidenly… 'rough and / lecherous', perhaps? Schulman notes of this that, though 'Edmund mocks Gloucester's habit of blaming astrological signals for human misfortune' it is 'an ironically sceptical rationalism inasmuch as Edmund considers himself over-determined by his exogenous authority, nature'.[475] Schulman also notes some more paradoxical thinking in Edmund's theorising, for although Edmund 'eagerly disturbs the social order', he still 'thinks himself beholden to the untraduceable 'law' of goddess 'nature' — there are still laws to follow, despite his disavowal of 'custom'.[476] Furthermore, the fact that Edmund's idea of nature requires Gloucester's own idea of it, to argue with and define itself against whilst also subconsciously sharing some of its assumptions, suggests, as Danby argues,

> the vague notion that Edmund and Richard [III] are somehow *caused*, as they claim to be, by the society they react against. They are both anti-social and an expression of society. Their corruption is a breaking out of corruption hidden below the surface, implied in the conduct of the average people around them, but incapable of being brought to consciousness except by such experts in self-consciousness as the villains are.[477]

Again we see a bifold nature, each half containing the other. Edmund was created out of the hypocrisies of the old nature, by a man who depends upon, and vaunts the importance of, the 'bonds of society' but nevertheless manages to father a bastard, who, because his birth places him beyond those bonds, cannot depend on them and must fashion a new idea of the world in order to survive. Like Edmund himself, those ideas are born out of the old.

The Nature of Lear

[475] Schulman (2014), p. 114.

[476] Schulman (2014), p. 112. In Braganza, V. M., 'The Danger in Metaphor: "Dismembering Resemblances" in *Dunbar* and *King Lear*,' *Shakespeare*, 16:2 (2020), 145 - 159, Braganza points out 'the archetypal correlation between legitimacy and morality embodied in the contrast between Edmund and Edgar, which Edmund both rails against and contributes to', p. 153.

[477] Danby (1961), p. 64-5.

Elements of both Gloucester's and Edmund's understanding of the natural world are evident in Lear's conception of nature. Like Edmund, he appeals to 'Nature' as a goddess but he does not follow Edmund in the throwing out of the medieval bonds and hierarchy to which Gloucester clings. After cursing Goneril, he turns to Regan, who, he claims, 'better knows / The offices of nature, bond of childhood, / Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude' (2.2.366-8). She, he incorrectly believes, is more a natural daughter than her sister, more obedient to the 'offices of nature' and thus she 'shalt never have my curse' (2.2.359). Both Edmund and Gloucester's thoughts are present in Lear's 'prayer' to his goddess:

> Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear:
> Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend
> To make this creature fruitful.
> Into her womb convey sterility,
> Dry up in her the organs of increase,
> And from her derogate body never spring
> A babe to honour her. If she must teem,
> Create her child of spleen, that it may live
> And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.
> Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
> With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
> Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
> To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
> How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child. (1.4.267-281)

Lear's conception of nature here is alike to Gloucester's in the assumption that his goddess regulates proper fertility.[478] 'Thy purpose' he calls it, and the terms 'creature' and 'fruitful', instead of, say, 'woman' and 'fertile', insistently link Goneril and the goddess with the natural world of beasts, that world below humanity. Lear pleads that Nature 'suspend' this in Goneril and disorder what is, usually, under the natural world's orderly care to create a 'child of spleen' instead of a 'babe to honour her'. Key here is 'disnatured': Lear wants the goddess Nature to bring about what is 'disnatured', unnatural. He wants her to

[478] Moore (2006) writes of the medieval and Renaissance view that nature guided 'the life processes of birth', p. 169.

break the bonds that Gloucester thought were integral to natural society: the child will age her unnaturally fast ('stamp[ing] wrinkles in her brow of youth'), and meet her 'pains and benefits', of labour and child-rearing, the 'natural' reward of which, in an orderly society, should be love and obedience, with 'laughter and contempt' instead. Gloucester's fear of the 'bond / cracked 'twixt son and father', the broken bond which will instigate chaos and disorder, is here called for by Lear, in a cry that is not dissimilar from Edmund's rebellious cry for the goddess to 'stand up for bastards!'.[479]

But Lear, of course, has already felt the 'serpent's tooth' of a child's ingratitude, three times over, according to his sensibility at least, before the play is out. Like Gloucester, he rails against the breaking of the bond, not between father and son, but father and daughter. As Danby notes, 'Lear does not take the ingratitude as an offence against himself. It is a violation of Nature'.[480] It is 'monster ingratitude' (1.5.37): such a breaking of the bonds is beyond nature. Estok, examining monstrousness in early modern drama, writes that monsters are 'a constant threat to the category of the human', they 'crowd the early modern stage and are essential to delineating the reach of the natural, as well as the moral and ethical limits of the human'.[481] It is this 'reach of the natural' that Lear so desperately wants to understand and he attempts to grasp it in his interrogation of the nature of his daughters, Goneril and Regan.

In his articulations of nature, Lear encompasses, the most distinctly of all the male characters of the play, the duality of Shakespeare's evocation of the natural world. He calls on nature to dis-nature Goneril, in revenge for her own disordering of the supposed natural order that would cause her to love and honour her father. His wished-for punishment is the same as her offence and neither disordering should, in his own conception of the natural world, be possible. He is the focal point in this play of political, cultural and climatic disordering, encompassing both the supposed order of the world and, at the same time, its inherent disorder. He also goes further than both Edmund and Gloucester in his attempts at imposing control on the natural world. Where they merely articulate their thoughts on the

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[479] Schulman (2014) sees further evidence of Lear taking on Edmund's thinking in the mock-trial scene, in which 'he has adopted Edmund's philosophy', p. 121.

[480] Danby (1961), p. 29. Estok agrees, writing that 'it goes against nature, in Lear's way of thinking, to have a child who is hostile to the domestic spaces he imagines, a child as obstinate, silent, and inexpressive as Cordelia, or as thankless as Goneril', p. 24-5.

[481] Estok (2011), p. 134.

nature of the world, from within the safe and enclosed interior of homes and royal residences, Lear strides out into the storm and attempts to control its winds. Again, in trying to impose order, Lear's aim is to create *disorder*. Asked by Kent what the King is doing out in the storm, the Knight replies:

> Contending with the fretful elements;
> Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
> Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,
> That things might change, or cease; tears his white hair,
> Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage
> Catch in their fury and make nothing of,
> Strives in his little world of man to outscorn
> The to and fro conflicting wind and rain;
> This night wherein the cub-drawn bear would crouch,
> The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
> Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,
> And bids what will take all. (3.1.1-15)

Bidding 'the wind [to] blow the earth into the sea' recalls Titania's lament in the *Dream* that the fairy monarch's 'dissension' has caused the winds to bring the sea water onto the land (2.1.116, 2.1.89-92). The unnaturalness of Lear's own behaviour is emphasised: so disordered is his thinking that he cannot follow the 'natural' instincts of the beasts: unlike the 'crouch[ing]' bear, lion and wolf who seek shelter, Lear bares himself 'unbonneted'. But, crucially, it is not at all clear whether the storm is listening to Lear's commands.

<u>The (Super)Nature of Goneril and Regan</u>

If the male characters of the play discuss nature, the female characters are discussed, most often in terms of nature. This is especially true of the 'bad' daughters of the play, Goneril and Regan, who are consistently described in animalistic language. Goneril is 'like a vulture' (2.2.324), 'most serpent-like' (2.2.349), Gloucester refers to her 'boarish fangs' (3.7.57), Albany calls his wife and sister-in-law 'tigers, not daughters' (4.2.41), Kent calls them his King's 'dog-hearted daughters' (4.3.46). This is entirely in keeping with predominant early modern conceptions of women, who were viewed as closer to the animal world than men, and, in being more changeable and less steadfast, were also consistently linked with the unpredictable natural world. Simon Estok sees the female characters and

the natural world of the play as interconnected: ‘So much of what is going with women in this play engages with notions about and ethics toward the natural environment’.[482] I would add that these women are wholly products of men: the male characters who scrutinise their bodies and actions through ideas of animals and monsters, and, of course, the male writer beyond them all.

The unpredictability of nature and its reflection, the ‘unnatural’ behaviour of Lear’s daughters, may have been influenced by contemporary climatic conditions. According to Brian Fagan, ‘[s]torm activity increased by 85 per cent in the second half of the sixteenth century, mostly during cooler winters’.[483] The effects of the ‘Little Ice Age’ brought about changes in weather patterns which made the natural world, already a place of risk and unpredictability, even more undependable.[484] Markley writes that Lear represented ‘an all-too recognizable figure who registers the complex connexions between climatic instability and its potential consequences: the loss of agricultural harvests and the fracturing of ideologies of national unity, patriarchal authority, and socioeconomic stability’.[485] There was a sense that the world was becoming an increasingly disordered place which could no longer be counted upon to act in the order it once had, and this is a sense that is reflected in *Lear*, in both the storm and the female characters.[486]

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[482] Estok (2011), p. 28.

[483] Fagan, Brian, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300 - 1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 91. See also Chiari (2019), p. 162-3.

[484] See Fava, Sergio, *Environmental Apocalypse in Science and Art: Designing Nightmares* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 11, Lamb, H. H., *Climate, History and the Modern World* (2nd Edition) (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 229, and Armstrong, Philip, ‘Preposterous Nature in Shakespeare’s Tragedies,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 104 - 119, p. 107 - 8. He notes that ‘[i]t is precisely this sense of lability that dominates Shakespeare’s tragedies. The storm language in King Lear, Macbeth, and Othello repeatedly evokes the possibility that nature’s elemental agencies might suddenly overflow their proper locations and usurp each other’s places, and even tear apart the constitution of the natural world at its foundations’, p. 108.

[485] Quoted in Chiari (2019), p. 164.

[486] Armstrong (2016) notes that the ‘conviction, that an ordered and harmonious nature has been disrupted by a climate of unprecedented unruliness, pervades the tragedies’ portrayal of the internal worlds of their characters. Which comes as no surprise given that, as Gail Kern Paster has compellingly argued, Shakespeare and his contemporaries perceived the continuities between human nature (what we now call human biology) and the larger and material, rather than merely rhetorical as we have (from our modern perspective) too often assumed’, p. 108.

The three female characters of the play are most clearly associated with the natural world through their alignment with the very earth of the kingdom. Lear frames the 'love contest' of the opening act, in which his three daughters are asked to compete for a portion of the realm through proclamations of their love for their father, as a competition 'where nature doth with merit challenge' (1.1.53). 'Nature' here is ambiguous: does it refer to Gloucester's 'natural bonds', and whoever is most dutiful in her obedience to her bond with her father will be most amply rewarded? Or does it refer to the 'nature' of the individual women, and the one with the 'best' nature (how the 'best' is conceived is unclear) will win? Or is it intended to signify the nature, the natural environment, of the land that they are vying over? It is unclear and Shakespeare perhaps intended this. If one meaning does not predominate, then all can be communicated at the same time. Nature is, once again, multiple.

Multiple it may be and yet the natural world of Britain as described by Lear here is resolutely gendered female. Goneril's portion contains 'wide-skirted meads' (1.1.65), and Regan's share is an 'ample third of our fair kingdom' (80): skirts, ampleness and fairness could all refer too to women. Already a commonplace in early modern literature, Shakespeare here compounds the correlation between women and the natural world, and this idea is only reinforced by the fact that Lear's attempt to divide his kingdom and retire fails. His daughters rebel and the natural world, too, proves uncontrollable. As Estok notes, 'women remain, in many ways, unconfined, ultimately out of the reach of male control in this play, and, therefore, within the ethical framework of the play, undomesticated, untamed, and unpredictable'.[487]

One of the clearest motives for Lear's attempts to control the natural world is to punish his two eldest daughters.

> You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
> Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
> You fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun
> To fall and blister! (2.2.254-357)

This passage shares a great deal with *The Tempest*. That the lightning is 'nimble' resembles the 'dainty', darting Ariel and the 'blinding flames' share much with the spirit who

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[487] Estok (2011), p. 28-9. He also notes that the 'contorted logic defining nature and women operates on an ethics of anxiety about material predictability', p. 28.

‘flamed amazement’ (5.1.95, 1.2.198).[488] ‘Infect’, ‘blister’ and ‘fen-sucked fogs’ are alike to the curses that Caliban calls down on Prospero. ‘As wicked dew,’ he intones,

as e’er my mother brushed
With raven’s feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye
And blister you all o’er! (1.2.321-4)

And, furthermore,

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inchmeal a disease! (2.1.1-3)

Caliban’s invocations are in service of a revolution: he wants freedom from the slavery that his wizard-master has forced upon him (2.2.156-7). As such, the resemblances in their oaths is of a piece with Lear’s encompassing of both the order and disorder of the natural world, a King sharing the words of a monstrous slave. But the object of his curses is not his master but his daughter Goneril. Both Goneril and her sister Regan are, in Lear’s words, ‘unnatural hags’ for refusing him obedience (2.2.467). ‘Hag’, ‘an evil spirit[…] in female form’ and ‘a witch; sometimes an infernally wicked woman’[489] calls to mind the witches of *Macbeth*, those ‘black and midnight hags’ (4.1.47), *The Tempest*’s witch Sycorax, the ‘blue-eyed hag’ (1.2.269) and the ‘gross hag’ Paulina whose ‘art’ brings a dead queen back to life (2.3.107, 5.3.110).[490] All are associated with the supernatural, all appear to operate beyond the bounds of nature. The language which swirls around Goneril and Regan is insistent in its linking of them to the supernatural.

Albany warns his wife Goneril,

That nature which contemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.
She that herself will sliver and disbranch

[488] All references to *The Tempest* are to Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World’s Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[489] Both quotations from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* [accessed 20/05/2021]. The first is definition 1.a, first identified in 1552, the second is 2, first identified in 1587; the word, insistently linked to the feminine supernatural, was taking on its form both prior to and concurrently with Shakespeare’s compositions.

[490] All references to *The Winter’s Tale* are to Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Winter’s Tale* (Oxford World’s Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

From her material sap perforce must wither (4.2.33-6)

His admonishment frames Goneril as the epitome of the early modern dramatic monster, defined by Simon Estok as 'the embodiment of […] broken boundaries, confusion, and chaos'.[491] It is Lear's aim, in his call to 'anatomize Regan' (3.6.73), to see if there is 'any cause in nature that make / these hard hearts?' (74-5). Any cause *in* nature: what about beyond it? In 'contemn[ing her] origin' Goneril is going beyond her 'bordered' nature and beyond what human nature can compass. She is, in short, becoming monstrous. As Albany later laments, if her behaviour, and that of the sister who follows Goneril's moral path, continues, 'humanity must perforce prey on itself, / Like monsters of the deep' (4.2.50-1). Danby points to the disorder inherent in Albany's image of a tree twisting itself into deadly knots:

> She is a branch violently tearing herself away from the tree, Nature, and thence withering and becoming poisonous. Her action will be that of a river overflowing its banks—formless and destructive. Having denied her participation in the limiting, realizing, organizing community of Nature she will lose human identity. … Shakespeare saw her as a bit of chaos.[492]

Supernatural language links Goneril and Regan with monsters. As Chiari demonstrates, they are also likened to the demonic.

> Interestingly, Lear associates the "sulphurous and thought-executing fires, / Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts" […] with women's "sulphurous pit" […], that is, to the vagina, which he presents as being "all the fiend's" […]. Such a correlation brands women as devilish creatures and establishes a link between cosmic phenomena at large and female anatomy and sexuality.[493]

The connection expressed in Lear's rhetoric between the weather, particularly harsh weather that is felt to be disordered, women and diabolic forces is also present in early modern ideas of witchcraft. Most clearly expressed in *Macbeth*, in which the three witches discuss plans to drown a sailor by raising a storm (1.3.11-25), it was a common belief that

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[491] Estok (2011), p. 83

[492] Danby (1961), p. 137.

[493] Chiari (2019), p. 152.

witches had the power and requisite ill will to bring about harmful or disastrous weather.[494] In *Newes from Scotland* (1591), alleged witches asserted their power to raise storms.[495] Though Goneril and Regan are never expressly called witches—though, as highlighted above, the phrase 'unnatural hags' comes pretty close to such an accusation—the relentless compounding of their rebellion—shutting their father out of the house—with the hostile natural world of the storm that he must contend with because of their 'ingratitude' places them securely within the bounds of early modern thinking about witches. And witches, as in *Macbeth*, were firmly associated with disorder in all realms, including the domestic, the political and the natural world.[496]

The image of 'those pelican daughters' (3.4.74) perhaps most clearly illustrates the shift in Lear's imagistic thinking about Goneril and Regan, the move from animal to monster, and it is another instance of Lear's disordered view of nature as expressed through the relentless disordering of Goneril and Regan. Female pelicans were believed to nurture their young with their blood.[497] As such, as Macfaul points out, this made the Pelican an apt metaphor for Christ.[498] But Lear's use of the image is disordered and this disorder turns Goneril and Regan into monsters. Because Lear does not give his blood willingly to these 'pelican daughters', or, in any case, that is not the spirit in which it is received or, to put it in more active, vigorous language, *taken* by his daughters. The full quote for this reference to the pelican is 'Judicious punishment, 'twas this flesh begot / Those pelican daughters' (73-4). It is part of Lear's raving out in the storm, his mad meandering towards a fuller understanding of his position and its relation to his family, his realm and the natural

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[494] Adelman, Janet, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 110.

[495] Clark and Mason (eds.), *Macbeth*, (2015), n.0.1, p. 128. Adelman (1992) too points to 'storms [which] witches were commonly suspected of raising' p. 110. She refers to Jonson, whose 'learned note to l. 134 gives his classical sources for the witches' association with storm in Jonson's *Masque of Queens*; see *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel', p. 299.

[496] Dolan, Frances, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) writes that '[a]lthough *Macbeth* locates its witches in a space apart—at the margins that are also a locus of power separate from and in competition with the throne—the play also offers, in the figure of Lady Macbeth, the drama's most vivid manifestation of the witch as a dangerous familiar and her witchcraft as "malice domestic," as an invasion of the household and its daily life', p. 225-6.

[497] Foakes (1997), note to line 74, p. 276.

[498] Macfaul (2015), p. 124.

world. His blood is not offered up in love and sacrifice but is his ‘punishment’ for begetting such ungrateful daughters. As punishment, there is a suggestion of pain, ‘judicious’ or not. And this suggestion of pain does not, in turn, suggest delicate new-born chicks, but instead creatures that would *attack* their father to drink his blood: the ultimate disordering of the bond between father and daughter, cannibal children.[499] As Estok writes, ‘The play posits domestic disharmony both as monstrosity and as a form of cannibalism’.[500] And it is Goneril and Regan who are the locus of this. Monstrous daughters, they bring together the play’s examinations of disorder—disorder in both the family and disorder in the natural world.

Supernatural Nature as Saved Nature - The Nature of Cordelia

Like Lear, Cordelia encompasses the full range of the natural world.[501] The bifold nature that she symbolises, however, is portrayed as positive, even divine. Violaris analyses Cordelia’s role within the play through the prism of Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, in which he writes of a ‘golden mean’, defined as ‘“a point equally distant from either extreme” of “excess and deficiency”’.[502] This sense of balance, of Cordelia holding two opposites together within herself, is evident from her first appearance in the play:

> Her remark that she will share her love with her husband — “Half my love with him, half my care and duty” [1.1.102] — anaphorically enacts the balance she describes, recalling Aristotle’s halfway point between extremes.[503]

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[499] Macfaul (2015), p. 124.

[500] Estok (2011), p. 24.

[501] For Danby (1961), ‘[t]he impression Cordelia makes is emphatically one of unity. She seems to reconcile opposites: she is passion and order, innocence and maturity, defencelessness and strength, daughter and mother, maid and wife’, p. 133. Mentz writes that ‘Cordelia connects opposites’, p. 167.

[502] Violaris (2021), p. 171.

[503] Violaris (2021), p. 172

[504] Violaris (2021), p. 173-4.

In banishing Cordelia, and her innate sense of balance, Lear banishes 'proportion itself',[504] and it is only with her return that 'the play abruptly transitions from chaos to emergent self-organisation, resolving itself into the proportional structure of the golden mean'.[505]

Such a sense of balance can be felt as a relief for the audience after the chaos of the storm scenes and Cordelia, as the source of this balm, can be seen as a saviour-type figure. Macfaul writes that, returning, Cordelia is 'Christlike [in the] saving of her father'.[506] The Gentleman says of her, awestruck, '[y]ou have seen / Sunshine and rain at once, her smiles and tears / Were like a better way' (4.3.17-9). The positivity of her return is emphasised by the weather she is associated with. 'Sunshine and rain' are a long way from the weather Lear is surrounded by, 'the pelting of this pitiless storm' (3.4.29). Cordelia's divine-like status has been much remarked upon by scholars. Danby is particularly effusive:

> The imagery of the passage is the imagery of Nature, of the Nature whose essential expression is an ideal humanity, and of the Nature which—as human—combines also with the nature of weather and seasons, pearls and diamonds. We are soon to see Cordelia as a kind of beneficent [g]oddess of Nature, whose tears (different from the rain that once wet Lear) can renew and quicken the virtue of earth.[507]

Needless to say, the '[g]oddess of Nature' that is Cordelia is very different from the relentlessly selfish deity invoked by Edmund and the wrathful, disordering goddess called upon

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[505] Violaris (2021), p. 178. Violaris, in reading the play through the lens of chaos theory, ultimately finds in the denouement some sense of order, though it is an 'unpalatable' one, p. 181. As will be explored later in the chapter, I do not share this reading of the play's ending.

[506] Macfaul (2015), p. 124. Moore (2006) notes the echo of Christ's words in Cordelia's claim that 'O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about' (4.4.23-4), p. 175. How this can be in a supposedly pagan kingdom, he explains, 'King Lear occurs in pagan, pre-Christian Britain, but its inhabitants know right from wrong by the law of nature which God inscribed in their hearts. Edmund rejects natural law in favour of the depraved state of nature into which humanity fell by the sins of Adam and Eve. So Edmund chooses to become a servant of the devil—or an heir of Cain. Cordelia, on the other hand, is a paragon of virtue, which, in the pagan context, means that she perfectly adheres to the law of nature, which makes her, wittingly or not, the servant of almighty God', p. 181.

[507] Danby (1961), p. 134. Marcus notes that 'Danby['s] … gendering of nature in the play is, by now seriously dated', writing that 'for most of us, Cordelia does not symbolize "Nature" in any direct way', p. 433. She does, however, write that Cordelia is '*associated* with curative plants', p. 433, my italics, so her real issue with Danby's reading of Cordelia may be one of emphasis.

by Lear. Cordelia is associated with the beneficial aspects of the nature. To aid her father, she calls on the natural world,

> All blest secrets,
> All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
> Spring with my tears. Be aidant and remediate
> In the good man's distress. (4.4.15-8)

Marcus notes that, here,

> Cordelia shows herself here to be acquainted with early modern medicine and its doctrine of "signatures", based on the idea of hidden sympathies among things, by which a plant or mineral might offer some physical indicator of the disease against which it was potent. But her version goes even further, suggesting that her tears and the healing substances of the earth may "Spring" forth together and as part of the same network of sympathy.[508]

Not only does she possess the knowledge of and ability to use the healing powers of nature, her tears are the tears of a loyal, loving daughter. In this way, she is following the bonds of nature that Gloucester thinks so crucial to the proper functioning of the world and the breaking of which by Goneril and Regan drives Lear to madness. The earth 'spring[ing]' to attention and sympathising with this demonstration of Cordelia's love for her father is evocative of the laws of sympathies and analogical thinking that Gloucester's theory of the world is dependent upon. Marcus, writing from an argument that views the natural world of *King Lear* as 'steeped in early modern vitalism, which we will define as a belief in some type of invisible, immanent force or network of forces, whether material or immaterial, that operates within and between things, linking them and determining their relations with each other', sees Cordelia as the focus of 'the vitalist intelligence', who 'embodies through her solicitude for the fallen king the quasi-medical power of love and sympathy, according to the theory of the time'.[509] Cordelia represents the opposite of Gloucester's fears of what will happen if the bonds between people are broken. She is the opposite too of her sisters. Janet Adelman points up the difference that Shakespeare creates between the natural world associated with Cordelia and that associated with Goneril and Regan: 'with her return, the storm indeed fades, its landscape of deprivation replaced by the re-

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[508] Marcus (2016), p. 430. She adds that in the folio, where Lear is treated by a 'Gentleman', as opposed to the quarto's 'Doctor', p. 430, 'in the absence of the medical accoutrements of Q, Cordelia becomes a more central "cause" of Lear's recovery', p. 431.

[509] Marcus (2016), p. 423, 430.

newed vision of kind nursery that springs with her tears […] the witch-nature of the storm is replaced by the figure of Cordelia as Ceres'.[510]

But Shakespeare is not here lapsing into a single, beneficent view of nature, a sort of saving grace in which Lear and the land will be rescued. As Mentz states, Cordelia's 'role as earth-redeemer fail[s] in plot terms'.[511] Her army is defeated, she and her father are taken prisoner and she is killed. The 'unpublished virtues of the earth' do not rise up to save her. In fact, the announcement of her death destroys any notion that these 'virtues' exist at all: she is, her father says, 'dead as earth' (5.3.259).

So what is the 'earth' in *King Lear*? Never one thing. For every theory about it, whenever we feel ourselves on 'safe ground', another contrasting viewpoint is exemplified with just as much authority as that stated before. It is in Lear that these competing views come together, and Lear, of course, is mad. For Robert Heilman, 'the tragedy as a whole affirms the pre-eminence of order; the paradox of tragedy is that order comes out of a world wracked by disorder, that chaos proves order'.[512] But, for me, the denouement of *Lear* is not so simple. Throughout the play Shakespeare had demonstrated how, in nature, order and disorder are two sides of the same coin, and it remains so at the finale, with the disorder of unclear succession, Albany or Edgar, just as palpable as any new order.

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[510] Adelman (1992), p. 120.

[511] Mentz (2011), p. 167.

[512] Quoted in Violaris (2021), p. 177.

The Orderly Woman: All's Well That Ends Well *and* The Winter's Tale

In Act Four of *The Winter's Tale*, a disguised King and a princess who believes herself a shepherdess discuss one of the quintessential early modern binaries, 'art' and 'nature'. Though their conversation is initially grounded in horticulture, concerning Perdita's disavowal of the 'streaked gillyvors / Which some call nature's bastards' (4.4.82-83), since they are, to her mind, unnatural for being created by man ('There is an art which in their piedness shares / With great creating nature'(4.4.87-88)), their debate quickly broadens its scope.[513] Polixenes declaims,

> Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean; so over that art
> Which you say adds to nature, is an art
> That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend nature—change it rather—but
> The art itself is nature. (4.4.89-97)

His conclusion was already a rote one by the time *The Winter's Tale* came to be written. Pitcher writes that the 'debate about art and Nature was very old indeed', that '[m]ost thinkers had concluded that the two weren't separate', and that Polixenes' speech, quoted above, would have been heard by 'early audiences' as 'a set-piece dialogue, straight from the schoolroom'.[514] It is perhaps the argument's unoriginality which leaves Perdita singularly unmoved. 'Then make your garden rich in gillyvors, / And do not call them bastards', Polixenes cajoles, to which Perdita replies, with devastating simplicity, 'I'll not put / The dibble in earth to set one slip of them' (4.4.98-99, 99-100). (Perhaps Polixenes' later anger at his son's desire to marry such a 'fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft' (4.4.419-20) also stems from a touch of injured pride at so obviously failing to convince his opponent of his argument.)

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[513] All quotes from *The Winter's Tale* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[514] Pitcher, John, 'Introduction,' in *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by John Pitcher (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), pp. 1 - 135, p. 54, 55.

It is unsurprising, in view of the overlay of the binary of male and female onto the binary of art and nature that the two debaters should take up the positions that they do here. Perdita aligning herself with 'great creating nature' is in keeping with a thematic structure that aligns female supernatural characters with the natural world, such as *The Tempest*'s Sycorax and the witches of *Macbeth*. Though she herself is not a supernatural figure, she does, however, dress up as one, appearing to Florizel as 'Flora', a nymph. Perdita is less glowing in her endorsement of the costume than is Florizel. She feels that she is a 'poor lowly maid', '[m]ost goddess-like pranked up' (4.4.2, 9, 10).[515] And even if she did not re-appear after the play's leap forward in time (4.1.1-15) as a goddess, the alignment in early modern thought between women and nature (and men and art) was strong enough to place Perdita on that side of the binary without the costume. Just as it is fitting for Perdita to be aligned with nature, it is similarly expected that Polixenes should favour art, alongside the male supernatural characters whose powers are conceived as an art-form, be it medicine or dramatic stagecraft, such as Prospero, the dramatist-wizard, and the priest-like magus Cerimon of *Pericles*.

However, it would not be a Shakespearean drama if the binary were presented in such a straightforward manner. Threaded keenly throughout Perdita and Polixenes' debate is a fine dramatic irony. We, the audience, know very well that these two characters' convictions, however elegantly put forward, are only a small part of the story. Though Polixenes may sing the praises of the art that creates a 'nobler race' through the marriage of 'gentler scion' with 'wildest stock', when it is his own son who is the gentle party to a union with a 'low-born lass', his hypocritical outrage is almost as dryly amusing as it is disturbing in its parallels to Leontes' own lunatic rages.[516] And we know too that the Perdita who

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[515] Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) glosses 'Flora' as 'the nymph Chloris, transformed into the goddess of flowers by the love of Zephyrus, the west wind', p. 168.

[516] For Felperin, Howard, 'Our Carver's Excellence: *The Winter's Tale*,' in *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 211 - 245, 'Polixenes will soon belie his own argument for marrying gentle scions with wild stocks by reenacting the insane rage of Leontes', p. 238.

slanders the 'bastard' gillyvors was herself slandered as a bastard (2.3.73, 75, 92-93).[517] The irony is made pointed by the fact that 'bastard' had almost the same meaning when applied to plants as it did to human children.[518] As Rosalie Colie puts it, 'As often happens in Shakespeare's versions of pastoral, the nature-nurture debate is skewed and ultimately denied, as received dialectical opposites are shown to be fused in the person'.[519] It is this ironic 'fusion' that blurs what had seemed a clear-cut binary between the female character aligned with nature and the male character aligned with art.

This blurring of the male/female and art/nature binary continues in *The Winter's Tale* most prominently in the character of Paulina. As Hermione's confidant and protector, she speaks the truth to the raging tyrant Leontes in a way that, as many critics have noted, goes far beyond the expected gendered behaviour for a female character, and Leontes' rages at her suggest the same (2.3.90-5, 107-9, 120-23).[520] Her words are her weapon, as she says herself:

> I'll use that tongue I have; if wit flow from't
> As boldness from my bosom, let't not be doubted
> I shall do good. 2.2.50-53[521]

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[517] Orgel (1998), reading the irony from a different perspective, writes that 'ironically, the child who is prejudicially called "natural" provides the prejudicial epithet for the art that usurps nature', p. 46. Schalkwyk, David, '"A Lady's 'Verily' Is as Potent as a Lord's": Women, Word and Witchcraft in *The Winter's Tale*,' *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Studies in Shakespeare (1992), 242 - 272, too notes the irony, writing that it 'renders her critique ambivalent' and 'promises a resolution, once everything is revealed, that will not run counter to the metaphysics of blood', in other words, a restoration of the status quo, the patriarchal state of Sicilia, p. 264.

[518] Myers, Katherine, ''Men as plants increase': Botanical Meaning in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 40:2 (2020), 171 - 190: 'The term "bastard" applied to vegetation denoted, as R. W. Chambers put it, "some flower of plant which only half belongs to the family — an inferior or less proper kind, which has only a partial resemblance to its legitimate kinsfolk"', p. 178.

[519] Colie, Rosalie L., *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 260.

[520] Orgel (1996) argues that 'though Paulina's behaviour is certainly vindicated, the instrument of restoration and reconciliation, the play's ambivalence about her is clear—even her admirers impugn her shrewish tongue and her harsh manner', p. 27-8.

[521] Snyder, Susan and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino, 'Introduction,' in *The Winter's Tale* (The New Cambridge Shakespeare), ed. by Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1 - 72, note that '[a]s *The Winter's Tale* ends, a man may speak the final words, but it is a woman who acts: as leader, director, and chief dispenser of information. The result is a twist on the patriarchally inspired adage "Fatti maschii parole femine" ("Deeds are for men, words for women")', p. 58.

Her subversive behaviour earns her the moniker, from Leontes, of a 'mankind witch' (2.3.67). And though Leontes is wrong about a great many things, his charge here at least has the excuse that it is of its (early modern) time. Witches' supernatural power was believed to be concentrated in their words.[522] Orgel reads 'mankind' as 'mannish', and the moniker as denoting Paulina as 'at once masculine and the essence of feminine evil'.[523] We have seen this disordering of gender within a notionally female character before, both in Joan in *Henry VI, Part One* and the witches in *Macbeth*, who should be female except, as Banquo notes, their 'beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so' (1.3.45-47).[524] And witches, in both early modern thinking on the supernatural as well as on Shakespeare's stage, were defined by their relation to the natural world. This was their domain, where they exercised their powers, whether that be spoiling livestock,[525] or creating storms and winds to disorder the natural world.[526] Paulina's presentation as a 'hag' (2.3.107) is more nuanced, more ambiguous. Paulina is not as straightforward a witch as the 'secret, black and midnight hags' (4.1.62) of *Macbeth*. What has led many critics to label her a supernatural, or at least quasi-supernatural, figure is her supposed resurrection of the supposedly dead Hermione. Though it is later revealed that Hermione never actually died and was only hidden and kept '[l]onely', 'apart' by Paulina (5.3.18), the characters are led to believe

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[522] As Dolan, Frances, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) notes, '[t]he "border between tongue-lashing and witchcraft" was perceived to be narrow; further, the common association of women and words enabled an association of witchcraft with both', p. 198. See also Gaskill, Malcolm, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 'Witchcraft was rooted in language as well as feeling, and words could constitute witchcraft without need for any act to have occurred. Speech, seen as a female counterpart to male physical force, possessed destructive or otherwise transformative power,' p. 33.

[523] Orgel (1998), p. 58. For Snyder and Curren-Aquino (2007), the charge denotes Paulina as 'a woman arrogating male power and force', p. 7.

[524] All quotes from *Macbeth* are from Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[525] Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 519.

[526] Anonymous, *Newes from scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of doctor fian a notable sorcerer, who was burned at edenbrough in ianuary last. 1591*, *EEBO The Huntington Library records — unstructured*, STC (2nd ed.) / 10842.3 (London: Printed by [T. Scarlet] for William Wright, 1592), p. 8.
https://www.proquest.com/books/newes-scotland-declaring-damnable-life-death/docview/2248504197/se-2 (accessed May 4, 2023); Shakespeare had used this idea previously in *Macbeth*: 1.3.11, 25, 4.1.66-74.

that Hermione is dead, as is the audience. And if we follow Garrison in using an 'expansive definition of *resurrection*', one which includes instances of 'characters discover[ing] that someone they believed dead is in fact alive',[527] then Paulina joins the (male) ranks of Cerimon and Prospero in potential necromancy. Leontes, who accuses her of witchcraft, eventually comes to view her magic as 'lawful', in part, at least, because her supposedly supernatural dealings in restoring his supposedly-deceased wife to life are disguised within the male art of the male sculptor, 'that rare Italian master Giulio Romano' (5.2.95). As Roberts has written, '[f]emale witchcraft is always bad, but there is a chance that male magical art might just be allowable, and it is as an "art" that the king legitimises Paulina's magic'.[528] In enacting the charade of the male artist, whose 'statue' is actually the living Hermione (5.3.99-111), Paulina lays claim to a male art, the opposite of female nature both within the play and greater early modern English society.[529] Her portrayal is thus broadened out from the (super)natural female 'hag', and she becomes a more ambiguous figure.

Lucy Munro has noted this broadening and her reading of *The Winter's Tale* situates Paulina's characterisation within the continuum of Shakespeare's supernatural male characters: 'In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare reworks the figure of the male magic-worker as it appears in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*; in *The Winter's Tale*, he reacts against its pa-

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[527] Garrison, John S., *Shakespeare and the Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 96-7. He adds that, '[i]n addition to *Twelfth Night*, several of Shakespeare's other plays involve a realization that a character is in fact not dead. These include Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Marina in *Pericles*, Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Innogen in *Cymbeline*[…] we should note that the notions of afterlife and resurrection provide the working vocabulary with which the characters make sense of their situation', p. 99. In the case of *The Winter's Tale*, he argues that the 'play that leaves it ambiguous whether we are witnessing a reunion or an actual resurrection from the dead,' p. 100.

[528] Roberts, Gareth, ''An art lawful as eating'? Magic in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*,' in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 126 - 42, p. 133.

[529] Roberts (1999) has noted how Paulina's use of Giulio Romano parallels Rosalind-as-Ganymede's claim, in the earlier play *As You Like It*, to have 'conversed with a magician' (5.2.59). 'Although the gender roles in *As You Like It*, especially Rosalind's, are extremely complicated', Roberts writes, 'in Rosalind we have a female figure appropriating the authority of a male magician'. '[W]e can see in *The Winter's Tale* an analogy to Rosalind's relationship with Ganymede's uncle in another female character's pretence to magical power and her relation to a male author, in the sense of originator or constructor. This is the joint authorship of Hermione's statue by Paulina with "that rare Italian master Giulio Romano" […] Julio Romano has the same odd ontological status as Ganymede's uncle: he is cited as equivocal authority for a feat of art which seems to become magical, but that does not actually exist', p. 129-30.

triarchal structures by developing a woman who appears to wield magic'.[530] Shakespeare does this, according to Munro's reading, by incorporating into Paulina the aspects of earlier male magic-wielders of the early modern stage, including their claims to resurrect the dead as well as their roles in matchmaking and arranging marriages.[531] In this way, Paulina's gender is blurred. Though she is a 'witch', like the witches of *Macbeth* and Sycorax of *The Tempest*, the way she uses her supposed supernatural abilities is more akin to the way previous *male* magic-users have operated. Munro reads this aspect of Paulina to be 'an important, perhaps radical, reconfiguration' of 'the figure of the magic-worker in the repertory of the King's Men', as well as 'a revision and recuperation of the female magic-worker'.[532] Here, I would push back a little on Munro's argument, for she labels Shakespeare's treatment of previous female magic-wielders, the witches and Sycorax, as 'stereotypical'.[533] This may well be true of these two characters—though, as I have argued earlier in the case of Sycorax, she is closely aligned to Prospero, the male magus—but Shakespeare had also created another figure, another supernaturally-inflected female healer of a King, Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well*, and she is far from the 'stereotypical' witch.[534] Like Paulina, she is labelled a witch, like Paulina, she practices a male art, and lastly, like Paulina, she creates a male 'front' for her magic in order to evade praise, or

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[530] Munro, Lucy, 'Men, Women and Magic: Shakespeare, the Merry Devil and the Prophetess,' in *Shakespeare in the Theatre: The King's Men* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2020), pp. 123 - 144, p. 124.

[531] Munro (2020), p. 138-9.

[532] Munro (2020), p. 139, 138. Munro also compares Paulina to the female magic-user of Fletcher and Massinger's *The Prophetess* (1622). She notes that both female characters are 'threatened with the stereotype of the witch' (p. 141), and that for both, the 'accusations of witchcraft' are combined 'with sexual slurs' (p. 142), a fact that is also shown to be true for Helen, as I will later demonstrate. As Roberts (1999) notes, Leontes' slurs here 'place [Paulina] in a long tradition of witch-bawds, and in a context of grotesque and unruly female practices associated with the supernatural and female sexuality', p. 132. This treatment, as Munro notes, is in despite of the fact that both Paulina and Delphia (the titular Prophetess) 'appropriate[…] the male magic-worker tradition of Fabell and Prospero' (p. 142)—the same magic is viewed very differently when emanating from a female character. This has been shown to be true with iterations of stage and screen Prosperos when they are played by female actors and become 'Prospera': see Goodland, Katherine, 'From Prospero to Prospera: transforming gender and magic on stage and screen,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 218 - 241, p. 225 - 6.

[533] Munro (2020), p. 138.

[534] Roberts (1999): 'Rosalind, Helena and Paulina produce their wonderful effects by accessing the skill of an absent male artist with almost miraculous powers, and in the two later plays this is manifested as the raising of the dead, a sort of necromancy', p. 131.

more likely, castigation, for her supernatural talents. Because of these many similarities, I would like to begin my examination of Paulina with a sideways step into examining another, earlier Shakespearean heroine who acts in much the same manner: Helen of *All's Well That Ends Well*.

'Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie' (1.1.212)
Helen: Male art in a female body

As Lisa Jardine has termed it, Helen is the 'borrower/appropriator of male knowledge'.[535] Her cure for the King's illness is explicitly stated to be the product of her 'much famed' father, the great physician, Gérard de Narbon (1.2.71), as well as, more generally, the male art of medicine.[536] When Helen makes use of her father's scientific knowledge to cure the King and so win the hand of her beloved Bertram, it seems initially that she is to be presented in the same mode as Shakespeare's male supernatural characters, that she is 'explicitly *accomplished* in a manner that is "achieved" (i.e., taught) rather than "derived" (i.e., innate)'. As Jardine elucidates, it is 'that *upbringing* (education) which subsequently makes it plausible for her to borrow/appropriate the male medical skills of her father'.[537] As we shall see, however, Shakespeare's presentation of Helen does not show her to be a mere 'borrower' of a male art. Instead, this presentation develops a nuanced ambiguity which takes in both male art and a female supernatural power that is perceived to be rooted within a sexually-transgressive body as well as imbued with the natural world.[538]

To begin with, however, Helen's power within the play is initially presented as derived wholly from her father. The King's illness is presented as resolutely physical, 'a fistu-

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[535] Jardine, Lisa, 'Cultural Confusion and Shakespeare's Learned Heroines: "These are old paradoxes,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1987), 1 - 18, p. 5.

[536] All quotes from *All's Well That Ends Well* are from Gossett, Suzanne and Helen Wilcox (eds.), *All's Well That Ends Well* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[537] Jardine (1987), p. 6.

[538] Snyder, Susan, '"The King's not here": Displacement and Deferral in "All's Well that Ends Well,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1992), 20 - 32, writes that '[i]t is tempting to see this miracle talk as a way of rationalizing a woman's success in a male province where men had failed', p. 26. Again, it is the disruption caused by the bringing together of two supposed binaries that has to be 'rationalised' away.

la', according to the courtier Lafeu (1.1.32), and as such requires a medical cure. This he receives, indirectly through Helen, from the 'prescriptions' left by the physician Gérard de Narbon (1.3.218). This 'medicine' (2.1.70) and 'remedy' (1.3.217) is the result of a scientific process: it is 'of rare and proved effects, such as his reading / And manifest experience had collected' (1.3.219-220). As Snyder puts it, the cure is 'the product of rational thought and experiment'.[539] The reference to Gérard's 'reading' immediately puts one in mind of Prospero, whose magical art is contained within and represented by his 'books', without which '[h]e's but a sot … [who] hath not / One spirit to command' (3.2.90-92).[540] Lehnhof, linking the famous French physician with the folk healers of early modern England, suggests that the cure may have consisted of 'herbal remedies'.[541] If we continue this line of thought, we can link Gérard to that other male figure with expertise in the art of herbal concoctions, Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, who knows:

> O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
> In plants, herbs stones and their true qualities
> […]
> Within the infant rind of this weak flower
> Poison hath residence and medicine power (2.3.11-20).

As these two comparisons demonstrate, scholarly study and medicine are shown to be male activities. Indeed, as Lehnhof points out, Helen could never be one of the 'congregated college' (2.1.115), since the universities did not accept women.[542] Medicine is explicitly referred to as an art within the play, and set up in an oppositional dichotomy with nature. The King laments that he

> […] may not be so credulous of cure,
> When our most learned doctors leave us, and
> The congregated college have concluded
> That labouring art can never ransom nature

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539 Snyder (1992), p. 25.

540 All quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

541 Lehnhof, Kent. R., 'Performing Woman: Female Theatricality in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *All's Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Gary Waller (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 111 - 124, p. 113.

542 Lehnhof (2007), p. 115.

From her inaidable estate. (2.1.113-117).

It is Helen's task to convince the King to allow her to 'tender' her father's 'labouring art', to bridge the seemingly 'inaidable' gap between the 'art' of her father, and the other 'learned doctors', and the 'nature' of the King's illness that is stubbornly refusing to submit to masculine cure. Though Helen could never be one of the 'congregated college', she is, as Shakespeare goes on to demonstrate, as a woman, 'inaidabl[y]' wedded to the natural, and as such, the only character by whom this bridging could be enacted and the King healed.

The cure, though it is, as exemplified here, resolutely medical and derived from a wholly male art, metamorphoses before the French court when Helen is the one to administer it. Lafeu's effusive response to Helen's arrival shows how her father's art, when performed by her, becomes rooted in the natural, most specifically her body:

I have seen a medicine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock and make you dance canary
With sprightly fire and motion; whose simple touch
Is powerful to araise King Pépin, nay,
To give great Charlemagne a pen in's hand,
And write to her a love-line. (2.1.70-76)

The language, as has been pointed out by many scholars, is redolently sexual. As Susan Snyder puts it:

> He presents Helen to the ailing King less as a doctor to treat him than as a woman to arouse him … She quickens, she gives fire and motion, she could produce tumescence even in kings long dead.[543]

Gone are any reference to empirical science: all the proof that Lafeu requires for Helen's abilities he has already 'seen', a perfect example of the male gaze creating the sort of woman it wishes to perceive. Catherine Field's work on the hierarchical status of the different types of medical professional in early modern England has demonstrated that those physicians in the highest status positions were demarcated by the fact that they would not touch the patient, an act which would sully their profession by aligning it with that of manu-

[543] Snyder (1992), p. 24.

al labourers.[544] As such, Lafeu's claim that Helen must 'simpl[y] touch' thoroughly debases her standing within the medical profession, to that of empirics,[545] and, as we shall see, sexually transgressive prostitutes.

This 'simple touch' also points to Lafeu's refashioning of the cure. It is no longer a 'receipt' or a 'prescription'. He has 'seen a medicine', a sexually arousing 'medicine': this is not a medical concoction or procedure but the woman, Helen, herself. Field notes that 'a "medecine" or, in French, "médecin,"' was 'a word connoting both medicine and physician'.[546] If we remember that *All's Well That Ends Well* also contains a braggart-soldier character by the name of Paroles, the French term for 'words',[547] Field's argument is strengthened: Helen, here, *is* the medicine. Furthermore, Helen being termed 'médecin' further emphasises that it is her body that has become the cure. The point is further emphasised by the King's reply to Lafeu's breathless praise of 'Doctor She! … one that in her sex, her years, profession, / Wisdom and constancy, hath amazed me' (2.1.77-82): 'Bring in the admiration' (2.1.86). Gosset and Wilcox refer to the *OED* for *admiration*: 'A cause of wonder […] a marvellous or astonishing thing'.[548] This 'thing' is not the cure, which as Lehhof notes, how could Lafeu have seen?[549] He has seen Helen, however, and it is she, and most particularly, her 'sex', the first of her amazing attributes that Lafeu mentions, which is 'cause for wonder'. In this act of gendering through spectatorship, we see how early modern society could solve the potentially disruptive bringing together of two supposed binaries. A male art being enacted by a woman is refashioned to prioritise the 'naturalness' of the woman's actions by erasing the art and refocusing her abilities to her body.

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[544] Field, Catherine, '"Sweet Practicer, thy Physic I will try": Helena and her "Good Receipt",' in *All's Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. Gary Waller (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 194 - 208, p. 197.

[545] Howard Traister, Barbara, '"Doctor She": Healing and Sex in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 333 - 347, p. 335 - 336.

[546] Field (2007), p. 202.

[547] Wilcox, Helen, 'Shakespeare's Miracle Play? Religion in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *All's Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Waller, Gary (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 140 - 154, p. 149.

[548] Gossett, Suzanne and Helen Wilcox (eds.), *All's Well That Ends Well* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), p. 180.

[549] Lehnhof (2007), p. 114.

Helen herself also takes up this naturalisation of her father's art into her body. When deciding on her course of action, to heal the King and become Bertram's wife, Helen declares that '[o]ur remedies oft in ourselves do lie' (1.1.212). Often taken to be an eschewing of the ideas of predestination, of 'heaven' and the 'fated sky' (1.1.213), the term 'remedies' is, I believe, key here. It is also the term used of her father's medical cure (1.3.225-227). Her father's medical findings, his cure, his 'prescriptions', now reside *within* her, literally if we are to believe court gossip. Helen's naturalisation has a different emphasis than that of Lafeu. In his speech, it was an attempt to reconstitute Helen's masculine knowledge into the natural sexual power of her body, but for Helen it is a process of self-actualisation, the taking on of her father's legacy to enable her to get what she wants.[550] However, as shall be seen, Helen's version of the naturalisation of her father's male art will also, ultimately, be rendered sexually suspect.

As noted by Howard Traister, Helen's 'gender alone would disqualify her from consideration as a licensed physician'.[551] Hence her knowledge of the male body and her willingness to administer to it becomes something more suspect and sexually transgressive.[552] As Field explains,

> A reason for the slippage in the play between the empiric and the prostitute is that both acquired intimate knowledge of the interior workings of the male body, private knowledge which would have been considered off-limits to chaste, virtuous women.[553]

Lafeu is again on hand to suggest that Helen has done more than simply cure the King's fistula: when she returns to the stage on the healed King's arm, he remarks that 'your dolphin is not lustier' (2.3.26). 'Lusty' may refer to the King's newly restored 'lust' for life, but it of course contains the sense of the sexual sin of lust. That he is now 'able to lead her a coranto' (2.3.43-44) seems to endorse both meanings: the King is now well enough, and

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[550] For Field (2007), Helen 'challenges the popular, superstitious belief that the stars determined destiny and instead celebrates the remedy, which enables the individual to prove or "show" her merit', p. 205.

[551] Howard Traister (2003), p. 335.

[552] Field (2007), p. 119.

[553] Field (2007), p. 201.

willing, to dance, and the coranto, 'as Frank Whigham notes, [was] "a standard slang reference to vigorous sexual action."'[554]

Helen herself makes reference to her potential presentation as a sexually transgressive woman. If the cure fails, she tells the king, she will endure the

> Tax of impudence,
> A strumpet's boldness, a divulged shame;
> Traduced by odious ballads, my maiden's name
> Seared otherwise; nay, worse or worst, extended
> With vilest torture let my life be ended. (2.1.168-172)

It is the punishment of the prostitute, the sexually knowing woman, a woman whose knowledge of the male body, in defiance of the strictures of women's modesty and silence of the age, has become known. It is perhaps unnecessary to note it would have been unlikely that her father would have had to risk his reputation in such a way to provide healing for the King: in fact, his reputation is unimpeachable. As Helen says to the King, who agrees that he knew the man, '[t]he rather will I spare my praises towards him: / Knowing him is enough' (2.1.101-102).

Women with medical knowledge were commonly linked with sexual transgression, from which it was a short hop to a link with supernatural transgression:

> Helena the "wise woman" (the woman within the community with knowledge of healing — always precariously placed), is allowed through her oath to become associated with the stereotypically lewd form of contemporary defamations of a woman's reputation — defamations which, as the depositions of the sixteenth-century ecclesiastical courts show, if allowed to stand, ostracize the knowing woman from the community, recasting her wisdom as witchcraft.[555]

As Jardine goes on to remark, the 'very act of swearing is already damagingly close to woman's curse'.[556] Women's learned language was always supernaturally suspect, and we can see Shakespeare toying with this ambiguity in his presentation of Helen. The male art of healing within the female body of Helen does not merely leave her as a quasi-prostitute

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[554] In Field (2007), p. 198.

[555] Jardine (1987), p. 10.

[556] Jardine (1987), p. 10.

figure, triumphant in her cure of the King and yet tarnished by her reputation as one whose 'simple touch / Is powerful to araise King Pépin'. The cure of the King is not presented as a straightforward medical procedure. It is called a 'miracle' (2.3.1), 'a showing of heavenly effect in an earthly actor' (2.3.23-24). Helen is not merely a 'Doctor She', there is a hint of the supernatural about her as well. There was a difficulty, as Kerrigan notes, 'of establishing a boundary between witchcraft and medicine'.[557] Especially so, I would argue, when the *médecin* was a 'Doctor She'.

For Lafeu, despite his speeches of 'pure bawdy',[558] Helen's successful curing of the King's disease represents nothing less than a shift in his world view:

> They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical
> persons to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and
> causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors,
> ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we
> should submit ourselves to an unknown fear. (2.3.1-6)

Helen says simply that 'Heaven hath through me restored the King to health' (2.3.64). This abrupt shift in the tone of the play, from 'King Pépin' to the 'greatest grace lending grace' (2.1.158) has necessitated some wrangling on the part of critics as to what, exactly, Helen's cure represents. Many scholars believe that Shakespeare is suggesting a holy act, following Helen's own claims for God's grace and his power working through her. She is the 'weakest minister' (2.1.135), she tells the King, through whom 'He that of greatest works is finisher' is acting (134). Helen Wilcox points out that Helen, when she claims that '[s]o holy writ in babes hath judgement shown / When judges have been babes' (2.1.136-137), is aligning herself with the biblical Daniel 'who, when still a child was found "ten times better" in wisdom and judgement by King Nebuchadnezzar than all the wise men in his realm'.[559] The 'parallel with the situation in the French court', she adds, 'where the "most learned doctors" have given up any hope of the King's recovery, is unmistakeable'.[560] As Wilcox states, the connection is unmissable, which perhaps may be read as Helen being *too* clear about who is responsible for the preternaturally effective

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[557] Kerrigan, John, 'Knots, Charms, Riddles,' in *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 313 - 335, p. 314.

[558] Jardine (1987), p. 11.

[559] Wilcox (2007), p. 141.

[560] Wilcox (2007), p. 141.

cure. Helen's Christian-posturing has never sat well with critics, who, historically, have found her a difficult heroine to praise, in this as well as her other actions throughout the play. Ellen Belton points to Howard C. Cole's scornful appraisal of Helen's spiritual language:

> Whether we call this inflated stuff "cloudy incantation" or "priestly puffery," matter and meter both work toward a high-comic treatment of divine direction.[561]

David McCandless also reads Helen's invocation of herself as an instrument of God cynically, tying it to her willingness to be branded a prostitute:

> Her willingness to suffer a prostitute's punishment if her cure fails seems designed to dispel any lingering suspicions of unchastity, to distance her holy magic from wanton witchery.[562]

It is an astute point, and supports Jardine's argument, quoted above. Perhaps another reason that critics have been unwilling to accept Helen's claim that she is acting under the 'greatest grace lending grace' is made apparent if we consider the claim as part of the speech that it initiates:

> The greatest grace lending grace,
> Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring
> Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring;
> Ere twice in murk and occidental damp
> Moist Hesperus hath quenched her sleepy lamp;
> Of four and twenty times the pilot's glass
> Hath told the thievish minutes, how they pass,
> What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly,
> Health shall live free, and sickness freely die. (2.1.158-166)

From the 'grace' of the Christian god, the speech develops, or descends, into the world of pagan, classical myth. The deities invoked shift from the 'greatest grace' to the sun god Apollo's horses, to Hesperus, goddess of the evening star. As Kiernan Ryan points out:

> The universe this spell conjures up with no sense of incongruity is pagan. Its chanting rhythms, chiming rhymes and ritual repetitions would not sound amiss on the lips of Oberon or Prospero. Helen metamorphoses from "the weakest

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[561] Quoted in Belton, Ellen, '"To make the 'not' eternal": Female eloquence and patriarchal authority in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *All's Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. Gary Waller (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 125 - 139, p. 127.

[562] McCandless, David, 'Helena's Bed-trick: Gender and Performance in *All's Well That Ends Well*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1994), 449 - 468, p. 453.

minister" of the Almighty into a formidable sorceress.[563]

The 'chanting rhythms, chiming rhymes and ritual repetitions' can also be applied to the archetypal Shakespearean witches: the three 'Weïrd Sisters' of *Macbeth* (1.3.32). Like those three, Helen's power is presented as a superior facility with ambiguous, riddling speech. To take the above speech as an example, we can see how the invocations of both the Christian God and those of pagan mythologies obfuscate the true source, if there is one, of Helen's power. Is she a divine instrument, or a pagan witch? We would not be able to tell from her own words, just as we, like Banquo, cannot tell whether the witches are 'fantastical, or that indeed / Which outwardly ye show?' (1.3.53-54).

Helen's ability with such obfuscating, equivocal statements is most pronounced in her answer to Bertram's letter. Having been married to her against his will, Bertram resolves that

> *When thou canst get the ring upon my finger,*
> *which never shall come off, and show me a child*
> *begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me*
> *husband. But in such a 'then', I write a 'never'.* (3.2.57-60)

Helen does not accept this 'never'. Instead, she takes on and re-writes Bertram's commands. In the final scene, she tells Bertram,

> … There is your ring,
> And look you, here's your letter. This it says:
> *When from my finger you can get this ring*
> *And are by me with child*, etc. This is done. (5.3.308-311)

A great deal in that 'etc'. Most notably in the speech, Bertram's 'child' has become Helen's 'are by me with child'. Helen's re-appearance, 'quick' with child (5.3.301) was a significant change to the Boccaccio source-tale for the play, in which the Helen-figure Giletta presented her errant husband with twin boys who bore a striking resemblance to their father.[564] For Snyder, this 'recast[ing] the original sentence of banishment or death into an obstacle course' is 'a kind of conjurer's trick, a sleight of hand that displaces the signifi-

[563] Ryan, Kiernan, ''Where hope is coldest': *All's Well That Ends Well*,' in *Spiritual Shakespeares*, ed. by Ewan Fernie (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 28 - 49, p. 32-33.

[564] Snyder (1993), p. 2.

cance of Bertram's original letter of dismissal'.[565] The same sort of verbal 'sleight of hand' can be seen in the witches' prophecies to Macbeth. Just as they assure Macbeth that 'none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth' (4.1.94-5), the fact that Macduff was born by cesarian section, 'was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped' (5.7.45-6), is neatly palmed away, out of 'sight'. For Kerrigan, who links Helen's use of riddles and riddling language with the witches' equivocating pronouncements,

> The riddle is a verbal trap that crushes Macbeth inside it. Likewise, Bertram is caught by his promise to Helena, which becomes a riddling prophecy of the bed-trick.[566]

Both Helen and the Witches take control of language, using it to their own ends and hiding away and obfuscating the parts that will not serve. Helen's manipulation of language is exactly akin to the power of the witches. As Kerrigan writes,

> Her quotation from Bertram's letter turns what it seemed could not be (Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane) into a conditional prophecy.[567]

Helen's 'capacity to juggle and palter', as Kerrigan has termed it,[568] is not only evident in her recasting of Bertram's dismissal but on show throughout the play. Her ability to invest multiple meanings into a seemingly straightforward phrase is pointedly displayed when she twice speaks the title of the play, and each time it appears to deliver a similar, though pointedly different message. In Act 4, Helen declares that 'All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown. / Whate'er the course, the end is the renown' (4.35-36). Snyder reads this as Helen 'trying to hearten Diana and the Widow'.[569] The upthrust of the phrase is certainly cheery, with the forward-driving rhymes (crown, renown), and the nouns strongly emotive of noble ambition. Yet, when Helen next repeats the phrase, the mood is more sombre, and the implications more suspect. The second phrase occurs after the three have missed the King at Marseilles, in a scene that contains little more than the fact that 'the King's not here' (5.1.22) and seems designed for little more than the chance for Helen

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[565] Snyder (1992), p. 28.

[566] Kerrigan (2016), p. 317.

[567] Kerrigan (2016), p. 333.

[568] Kerrigan (2016), p. 332.

[569] Snyder, Susan, 'Introduction,' in *All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. by Susan Snyder (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 1 - 65, p. 49.

to repeat her mantra with a different cast to the words, and thus highlight her ability to manipulate equivocal language.[570] Here, Helen says that 'All's well that ends well yet, / Though time seems so adverse and means unfit' (5.1.25-26). This 'yet' is the first instance in the last act of the play of an increasingly frequent series of evasions and deferrals, and here it adds a hint of Helen's growing desperation. 'Adverse' and 'unfit' emphasise the strained atmosphere and add to the mood of grim endurance. As Snyder writes, the 'message [is] more Machiavellian, that the desirable end justifies the questionable means used to achieve it'.[571]

Helen's riddling, equivocal speech is the most defining aspect of her character. There is a notion of impenetrability to her persona, she is a figure that the other characters consistently misread.[572] In her first soliloquy, after the other characters have observed her tears and remarked upon the grief they believe her to be feeling after the death of her father, she immediately reveal to the audience that they have read her wrong:

> O, were that all! I think not on my father,
> And these great tears grace his remembrance more
> Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
> I have forgot him. My imagination
> Carries no favour in't but Bertram's. (1.1.79-83)

The characters had read Helen's tears as grief, the Countess warning her, '[n]o more of this, Helena. Go to, no more, lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have' (1.1.49-51), and Helen had answered in her distinctive riddling fashion: 'I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too' (1.1.52). As with the witches of *Macbeth*, the obfuscation of the two meanings is key. Helen does mourn her father, but she is crying for Bertram: she both admits this to the Countess, and does not, in just the same way that the witches' equivocal language allows for the existence of one not 'of woman born'. Helen's remarkable similarity with the witches is reinforced by her reappearance at the end of the play

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[570] Snyder, (1992), believes that the scene's purpose is to 'stand as an emblem for the persistent tendency of *All's Well* toward displacement', p. 21.

[571] Snyder (1993), p. 49.

[572] Leggatt, Alexander, 'Introduction,' in *All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. by Russell Fraser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1 - 43, p. 40.

flanked by both the Widow and Diana: three women, sisters, there to enact the final entrapment of a man with their words.[573]

The three witches of *Macbeth* are not the only female supernatural figures to which Helen bears more than a passing resemblance. Despite labelling Helen a 'sorceress', Ryan stops short of linking her to the sorceress whom the language in that passage most clearly gestures toward: the 'foul witch Sycorax' from *The Tempest* (1.2.258). The insistent focus on natural imagery which characterises the speech of both Helen and Sycorax is unmistakable, and further emphasises Shakespeare's recurrent alignment of female magic users with the natural world.

Sycorax, like Helen, is presented as sexually transgressive and her supernatural power, like Helen's, is depicted in language redolent of natural imagery. A notable feature of Helen's speech quoted above (2.1.158-166) is the focus on the dark, water-logged night: 'murk', 'damp', 'moist', 'quenched'. Sycorax's magic, as described by her son Caliban, is similarly liquid:

> As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
> With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
> Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye
> And blister you all o'er! (1.2.321-324)

'Dew' and 'fen' and the wet south-westerly wind: such damp features of nature also reinforce the bodily aspect in the presentation of both Sycorax and Helen's power. In humoral theory, the cold and wet humours were believed to be more predominant in women's bodies, as opposed to men's bodies which were warmer and drier. The damp supernaturalism of Sycorax and Helen reflects and emphasises the cool, dampness of their female bodies. As such, Helen's language in this speech links her to Sycorax in a way that reinforces both the natural foundation of her power, and the fact that such power is rooted in her body.

As has been noted by many scholars, Helen takes on a far more active role in her 'wooing' of Bertram than was the norm for Shakespearean heroines, even those within

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[573] On Shakespeare's linking of Helen with these two women, see Bergeron, David M., '"The credit of your father": Absent Fathers in *All's Well, That Ends Well*,' in *All's Well That Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. Gary Waller (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 169 - 182, p. 177-178 and Snyder, Susan, '"All's Well that Ends Well" and Shakspeare's Helens: Text and Subtext, Subject and Object,' *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Woman in the Renaissance II (1988), 66 - 77, p. 77.

romantic comedies. As Susan Snyder puts it succinctly, Helen's character is in a 'peculiar situation as subject, the locus of active desire, rather than the usual "woman's part" as pursued object'.[574] Such 'forwardness' was a sexual transgression, and it is a further link between Helen and Sycorax. Sycorax's sexual transgression is represented by the on-stage character of Caliban, her 'hag-seed' child (1.2.364), 'got by the devil himself' according to Prospero (1.2.319). Sexual union between the witch and the devil was a common early modern belief, a further linking of the witch's power with her body.[575] Such errant worship is a further link between Helen and Sycorax. Caliban refers to 'Setebos', his 'dam's god' (1.2.372-373), and Helen claims that she similarly errs in her choice of worship:

> … Thus, Indian-like,
> Religious in mine error, I adore
> The sun that looks upon his worshipper,
> But knows of him no more. (1.3.201-204)

Helen's description of Bertram as a pagan god, and herself as 'Indian-like', heathenish in her misguided worship of the 'sun', Bertram, links her yet again to Sycorax as a pagan-like witch, and the sun god Bertram once again reformulates the pair as rooted in the natural world. And finally, even their powers are emphatically alike: Sycorax had entrapped Ariel, 'in her most unmitigable rage, / Into a cloven pine' (1.2.276-277), and Helen traps Bertram in marriage: presenting him with both his ring, tricked off his finger as part of the bed-trick, and her pregnant body, she claims him as 'doubly won' (5.3.312). The emphatic, consistent parallels between the presentation of Sycorax and Helen shows that even in this final glimpse of Helen's otherworldly power, her triumphant claiming of Bertram, can be viewed as of a piece with Shakespeare's common presentation of female supernatural power as rooted in the natural world.

As we have seen then, *All's Well That Ends Well* initially presents Helen's quasi-supernatural ability to revive the King as the product of a 'male' art, medicine. However, both the characters of the play, most prominently Lafeu, as well as the drama itself then refocuses the presentation of Helen's powers, shifting the emphasis from male art to witch-like

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[574] Snyder (1988), p. 72.

[575] Roberts, Gareth, 'The descendants of Circe: witches and Renaissance fictions,' in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. by Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 183 - 206, p. 200.

supernatural powers, conveyed through natural imagery and insistently located within her body, not her learning.

From 'Doctor She' to Doctor Paulina

Like Helen, whose initial presentation of her quasi-supernatural ability to heal a King is conveyed through the language of the male art of medicine, Paulina too is frequently framed as a healer, in both medical and spiritual senses, of the soul-sickened Leontes. She says that she comes to correct Leontes' mistaken opinion of his wife as 'your physician' (2.3.54). She will 'remove / The root of his opinion, which is rotten' (2.3.88-90) and her phrasing might almost describe a medical procedure (the pulling of a rotten tooth, perhaps). Earlier her words were her weapons, now she comes to Leontes 'with words as medicinal, as true—/ Honest as either—to purge him of that humour' (2.3.37-38). She speaks the words of a professional physician ('purge', 'humour'), something which Myers, reading *The Winter's Tale* through a botanical and alchemical lens, also acknowledges as a link between Helen and Paulina. The 'prescriptions' that Helena takes up from her famed physician father in *All's Well* are a 'hint', according to Myers, of the promise of alchemists that 'through intense study and experiment a […] powerful elixir' might be developed that could 'preserve life at least temporarily, and even, it was hoped, indefinitely'. The 'rare and proved effects' of these 'prescriptions' are enough to restore the French King to life and Myers points to Leontes request that Paulina also 'tenderly apply' 'remedies for life' to Hermione (3.2.150, 51), who has been brought to the point of death by news of Mamillius's sudden demise. Though 'these are apparently ineffective', 'Shakespeare's audience,' Myers writes, because of the allusions to alchemical art, and perhaps the memory of his own earlier work in which another intrepid female physician brought a royal back to life, 'would not have been surprised to learn that means might later have been found to bring her back from death'.[576] Indeed, Paulina's medicinal words are shown to be effective for the King: 'Good Paulina,' he laments, in a marked change of address,

> Who hast the memory of Hermione,
> I know, in honour, O that ever I
> Had squared me to thy counsel! Then, even now,
> I might have looked upon my Queen's full eyes (5.1.49-53)

[576] Myers, p. 176-77.

Like Helen, the so-called 'Doctor She' (*AW*, 2.1.77), this medical role aligns Paulina not only with female-gendered roles of mothering and nurturance,[577] but with the male-gendered medical profession. Schalkwyk draws attention to the impact of this gender blurring: 'We should certainly not underestimate the dramatic and ideological import of Paulina's transformation from the grotesque figure on the margins of power and legitimacy—whether as the comic "Dame Partlett" or the more ominous "mankind witch"—to the King's counsellor, physician [and] marriage-broker'.[578] Her calls, during the statue scene, for 'Music' to 'awake her—strike!' (5.3.98) recalls the 'musical therapy' also to be heard in the scene in *Pericles*, in which the master-physician Cerimon restores another queen to life: 'The rough and woeful music that we have, / Cause it to sound, beseech you', 'The music there!' (*Pericles*, Sc. 12, 86-87, 88).[579] Peterson, reading the revivals of Thaisa and Hermione through a historical-medical investigation into the early modern theory of the suffocating, wandering womb, writes that, like 'Thaisa in *Pericles*', 'the postpartum Hermione has swooned in an apparent attack of womb suffocation. Retention of the afterbirth after parturition was believed by early modern medicine to be most grievous, and post-parturition pollution was a leading cause of hysterical suffocation'. Though she reads Paulina's actions as a 'joke', a 'parody of the hysterical device' as opposed to the serious role of Cerimon who 'is presented as an ideal physician, praised for his charity, unmatched medical skill', the fact remains that a parody must follow the lines of the act out of which it makes a jest.[580] For an audience inclined to enter into the 'faith' Paulina calls for (5.3.95), her actions are almost indistinguishable from those of Cerimon, the masculine 'ideal physician'.

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[577] For Snyder, the 'epithet of "midwife" once applied to Paulina plays out in her long dominance over him [Leontes] and his court, a much-extended parallel to the temporary supremacy of the midwife in the patriarchal household during and after childbirth', p. 7.

[578] Schalkwyk, p. 259. I would argue that the two roles, 'mankind witch' and 'physician', are not so much two points at opposite ends of a character arc, that Paulina does not leave one behind her in her assumption of the other. Indeed, the very fact that she consistently has to deny the charge of witchcraft, right to the end of the play during the statue scene, more than hints at the fact that she is dogged by this slander throughout her time on stage.

[579] Peterson, Kaara L., 'Shakespearean Revivifications: Early Modern Undead,' *Shakespeare Studies*, Volume 32 (2004), 240 - 266, p. 254. Hart, Elizabeth F., 'Cerimon's "Rough" Music in *Pericles*, 3.2,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51, 3 (2000), 313 - 331, reads Cerimon's music as an essential element of his portrayal as an allusion to the priests of Diana of Ephesus. Quotes from *Pericles* are from Warren, Roger (ed.), *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[580] Peterson (2004), p. 249-53. I do not read Paulina's role as a male-gendered physician as a 'joke' on Shakespeare's part.

Many scholars have noted the correspondences between Paulina and Cerimon. Both restore a supposedly dead woman to life, a woman thought dead by both the characters and the audience,[581] a medical ability that, given the emphasis urged by the drama that these two are really dead, seems supernatural in its power.[582] Given this supernatural aura, Paulina's resemblance to Cerimon again has the effect of, as Munro has noted, bequeathing to Paulina a decidedly male supernatural tradition. Moseley refers to her, along with Prospero and Cerimon as a 'magus', a term most usually applied to supernaturally-gifted men.[583] Roberts writes that Paulina, in acting as Cerimon does, 'practises… a male art', and notes that the classical archetype for 'the animation of statues', which is 'usually described as a feat of male priests or male magical technicians' is 'of course Ovid's account of the male artist Pygmalion'.[584] He writes that both Paulina and Cerimon (and, indeed, Prospero) make a great use of music in their magic-making, and notes that in 'respectable Renaissance theory', certain music was believed to have the power to 'heal the sick'.[585]

It is perhaps Paulina's physician-like aspect that motivates Leontes' sudden decision of who she will wed at the end of the play. 'I'll not seek far' he says, 'to find thee / An honourable husband' as he appoints Camillo to the task (5.3.141). Leontes' own reasoning, that he 'partly know[s] his [Camillo's] mind' (142), has not much impressed critics, but there is a thematic similarity between Paulina and Camillo that unites them far more close-

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[581] Lamb, Mary Ellen, 'Engendering the Narrative Act: Old Wives' Tales in *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*,' *Criticism*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1998), 529 - 553, writes that Shakespeare's audience is 'as ignorant' as Paulina's on-stage audience that 'Hermione still lives', p. 535-6.

[582] Roberts (1999) writes that 'Cerimon's revival of Thaisa and Paulina's of Hermione both appear as operations which transcend nature', as well as 'operations of a magic which often seems to produce events so wonderful that they are beyond nature and seem miracles', p. 137.

[583] Moseley, Charles, 'The literary and dramatic contexts of the last plays,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. by Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 47 - 69, p. 52.

[584] Roberts (1999), p. 132-3.

[585] Moseley (2009), p. 57. Though as Roulon, Natalie, 'Music and magic in *The Tempest*: Ariel's alchemical songs,' in *Shakespeare and the supernatural*, ed. by Victoria Bladen and Yan Brailowsky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 193 - 217, points out, the number of female characters in Shakespeare's plays who heal through music begin to outnumber their male counterparts: 'in Shakespeare's works, the characters whose role it is to tune someone's *musica humana* or effect musical cures are women more often than not — witness Helena, Marina and Paulina,' p. 199.

ly than the fact that they are the last two, uncoupled people left at the denouement of the drama. Felperin notes this similarity: 'Camillo', like Paulina (and behind her, Cerimon), has been characterized throughout as "priest-like" [1.2.234] […], "clerk-like experienced" [1.2.387] […], "the medicine of our house" [4.4.584] […], as spiritual and physical healer to both troubled kings'.[586] It is this "priest-like" aspect of Paulina, another masculine role which is incorporated into her characterisation, that I shall examine next.

Father Paulina

The very genre of *The Winter's Tale* would seem to require a priest-like role, but that Paulina is the one to fill it is still surprising. Critics have long been divided on what, precisely, to term the play. The First Folio lists it among the comedies, but its very tragic-seeming first half has meant that few scholars have been happy to place it amongst the sunnier romantic comedies and farces. Edward Dowden grouped the play with his 'romances' and, more recently, following Fletcher, it has been called a 'tragicomedy'.[587] According to Fletcher, '[a] tragi-comedie is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie'.[588] Moseley notes that 'Guarini and Torquato Tasso, moreover, saw tragicomedy as a specifically Christian form', and that we 'might be well to remember this when we consider its use on the Jacobean stage.'[589] That tragicomedy was seen as a Christian genre may be because it grew out of another very Christian form of drama: the mystery plays.[590] These religious plays, staging events both Biblical and

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[586] Felperin (1972), p. 239-40. Felperin also writes that Camillo 'takes on the role of stage manager of the subsequent action', much like Paulina's role during the reveal of Hermione-as-statue, p. 238.

[587] Mowat, Barbara A., '"What's in a Name?" Tragicomedy, Romance, or Late Comedy,' in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 129 - 149, writes: 'By 1910 those scholars wanting to emphasize theatrical influences were beginning to suggest that Dowden's name for the plays should be replaced with the name "tragicomedies," emphasizing in this renaming the perceived resemblances to Beaumont and Fletcher's works (some of which had been called "tragicomedies" in the 1679 Folio)', p. 132

[588] Quoted in Moseley (2009), p. 48.

[589] Moseley (2009), p. 48.

[590] Mowat (2006) notes that 'the family of works with which the plays share the most numerous and most intriguing connections is that set of dramas that trace back to the English miracle plays', p. 135.

apocryphal, were lavish civic productions featuring amateur actors from the medieval craft guilds. Schreyer notes that '[a]lthough the mysteries have often been narrowly defined as annual "Corpus Christi plays," they were in fact a broad tradition that took many shapes and sizes on a variety of occasions, not necessarily seasonal or annual, and in different localities throughout fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England', and both Schreyer and O'-Connell stress the ongoing relevance of the mystery plays to Shakespeare's audience.[591] O'Connell writes that '[w]hile the mystery plays constitute a fifteenth-century institution, their performed reality was of a continuing and evolving dramatic tradition',[592] and goes on to elucidate the number of ways Jacobean theatre was indebted to this earlier form of drama. Following Helen Cooper, O'Connell writes that the mystery plays, as well as other types of medieval drama, including, 'saints' or miracle plays, [and] morality interludes',

> provided the model of "total theatre", a theatre unlimited by the constraints that would characterize humanist understandings of what was possible for an audience's imagination. The freedom with which Early Modern theatre conceived of place, of the ability of theatre to encompass large tracts of time as well as simultaneously unfolding time, its "mingling of kings and clowns" (which so exercised Sir Philip Sidney in the *Defence*), its use of prologues, epilogues and choric figures were all part of that inherited dramaturgical ground, a ground that is especially evident in the mystery theatre. A two-hundred-year tradition of theatre in England had formed the acceptance of such wide-ranging freedom of representation, both in audiences and among playwrights.[593]

For Gillies, *The Winter's Tale*'s debt to the mystery plays is most obvious in the last act, a 'patently sacred form of theatre. While the discovery of Perdita is like a ballad or old

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[591] Schreyer, Kurt A., 'Introduction,' in *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 1 - 11, p. 1.

[592] O'Connell, Michael, 'Blood begetting blood: Shakespeare and the mysteries,' in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. by Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 177 - 189, p. 179.

[593] O'Connell (2013), p. 180-81. Schreyer (2014) also points out that 'the two theaters share more than stage properties. Their performances spaces and stage architecture incorporate the same, three-tiered cosmography of Heaven, Earth, and Hell. The mysteries and professional London theaters also shared sound effects and sound-making technology. One [more] material carryover … is scent', p. 8.

tale “to be hooted at,” the statue scene is a kind of Miracle play’.[594] It is here that an audience’s ‘acceptance’ is explicitly called for, in Paulina’s request that ‘[i]t is required / You do awake your faith’ (5.3.94-5). As did the mysteries, Shakespeare ‘transcends literal mimesis’,[595] and in this overwhelmingly religious atmosphere, given the debt to the mysteries, the return of Hermione may indeed have a flavour of the resurrection, if not of Christ himself, then of the miraculous preservation of saints. These ‘*inventiones*, that is, narratives concerning the finding or discovery (*inventio*) of a saint’s relics’ were ‘popular throughout Europe for the duration of the Middle Ages’.[596] One of their ‘major plot elements’ was ‘the body’s miraculous preservation, its odor of sanctity, and its subsequent *translatio* to a shrine’.[597] Hermione says that she has ‘preserved’ herself (5.3.127) throughout her exile and in her guise as a statue, and it is not only this that has likened her, in critical view, to a saint. Marion O’Connor, citing the historical revisionism that has taken place in Leontes’ court since the announcement of Apollo’s oracle and Hermione’s supposed death, writes that ‘[b]y the final scene of *The Winter’s Tale* Hermione has been effectively canonized, a saint in all but name’, that she has become one of ‘sainted spirit’ (5.1.57). [598] Her statue stands in Paulina’s ‘chapel’ (5.3.86), in ‘the similitude of a female saint’.[599] If Hermione is saintly, if the unveiling of the statue is akin to an *inventione*, if *The Winter’s Tale* bears the hallmarks of a mystery play, then Paulina’s role has much of the priest who perseveres

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[594] Gillies, John, ‘Place and Space in Three Late Plays,’ in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 175 - 193, p. 187.

[595] Schreyer, Kurt A., ‘Toward a Renaissance Culture of Medieval Artifacts,’ in *Shakespeare’s Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 12 - 42, p. 23.

[596] Schreyer, ‘Toward a Renaissance Culture’ (2014), p. 16.

[597] Schreyer, ‘Toward a Renaissance Culture’ (2014), p. 16.

[598] O’Connor, Marion, ‘“Imagine Me, Gentle Spectators”: Iconomachy and *The Winter’s Tale*,’ in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 365 - 388, p. 374.

[599] O’Connor (2006), p. 376.

and preserves for the healing and restoration of the royal family.[600] That the priesthood was an entirely *male* community goes without saying: again and again Shakespeare presents to us a female character who partakes of and aligns herself with male characters who have access to beyond-human powers.[601]

Like Helen, Paulina is shown to take on the masculine role of healer and, again like Helen, Paulina must constantly evade and deny the charge, frequently levelled against her throughout the play, of supernatural and sexual transgression. In Paulina's case, the charge she must evade is that of witchcraft. It is there in the statue scene in which she takes charge as officiating priest. O'Conner notes that 'Leontes hypothesizes reverse necromancy to explain the effect of the pseudo-statue upon himself and Perdita: black magic was commonly constructed as a diabolical parody of true religious worship': Paulina-as-priest can all too easily slip into Paulina-as-witch.[602] Leontes' accusations, Kaplan and Eggert write, which also include those of 'bawd (either a prostitute or a purveyor of prostitutes) [2.3.68], a traitor [2.3.72], and, by implication, a heretic [2.3.113]' are 'charges of sexual or hierarchical transgression'.[603] She is called a witch due to her subversion of gender roles: as Orgel writes, '[t]he charge of witchcraft is evoked both by her sharp

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[600] Staging can also emphasise the religious tone of the final scene. Tatspaugh, Patricia, '*The Winter's Tale*: shifts in staging and status,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. by Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 113 - 134, offers a chronological reading of the various ways the statue scene has been performed. She notes a turn toward the religious with Charles Kean and up to the present day with Gregory Doran's 1999 RSC production: 'the penitent [Leontes], coaxed by Estelle Kohler's Paulina, pored over a *religious* text. … There was an emblematic resemblance between the trial scene, where Hermione in filthy prison shift and chains defended herself from a railed dock, and the statue scene, where she stood *Madonna-like* on the same railed platform, now encircled by burning candles', p. 124-25 (my emphasis).

[601] Roberts (1999): 'In the Renaissance magic is the male art *par excellence*, as many of its practices and theories model themselves upon those of an exclusively male coterie, Roman Catholic priests', p. 134. He also notes that '[I]t is something of this magical power of the old religion that Shakespeare is carefully negotiating in the two late plays. Prospero's cell and Paulina's chapel are sites of magical operation which suggest, but not too specifically, Catholic locations,' p. 134-5.

[602] Roberts (1999), p. 378. For the witches' sabbath as a supposed inversion of the Christian sabbath, see Thomas (1971), p. 521. Garrison (2018) agrees, citing '[t]he repetition of "lawful" across Paulina's description and Leontes' response underscores that this magic should be interpreted as good or "holy." We see a play on "art" here as it describes both nature and the artist's creative process. This is not the necromantic meddling with dead bodies that made Glyndwr such a troubling (or perhaps laughable) character', p. 102.

[603] Kaplan, M. Lindsay and Katherine Eggert, '"Good queen, my lord, good queen": Sexual Slander and the Trials of Female Authority in *The Winter's Tale*,' *Renaissance Drama*, New Series, Vol. 25, Renaissance Drama and the Law (1994): 89 - 118, p. 107.

tongue and her denial of her place within the patriarchy, her refusal to be silenced by her husband and her defiance of the King himself. It implies in a larger sense that women constitute a subversive group, a threat to the social and political order'.[604] Her most successful evasion strategy comes in Act Five, at the denouement of the play, with the strange introduction of the character of 'that rare Italian master Giulio Romano', of whose work, a statue of the late queen, it is said that,

> had he
> himself eternity and could put breath into his work,
> would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly he is
> her ape. (5.2.95-98)

In this description, art and nature are opposed once again, as they were in the debate between Polixenes and Perdita. It is this convention, of men and art opposed to women and nature, that Paulina uses to evade the charge of witchcraft. Through the 'statue', she and Giulio, who never appears on stage, merge into one. (The same technique can be seen in Helen's rhetorical construction of the power of her father's medicine. Like Giulio Romano, he too never appears on stage.) Both are responsible for the 'statue', for the 'witchcraft' that has brought Hermione back to 'life' (or rather, brought her out of her seclusion and back into the world of the play) and as such, Paulina, the 'mankind witch' cannot be charged as a sorceress. 'If this be magic,' says Leontes, gazing up at the artistic achievement that is Hermione's statue, 'let it be an *art* / Lawful as eating' (5.3.110-11, my emphasis). If it is *art*, not nature, not the natural magic of typical female-gendered witchcraft, but the masculine artistry of the supposed Giulio Romano, then it can be 'lawful', beneficial, *orderly*.

The unveiling of the statue is the grand flourish, the dramatic spectacle that caps Paulina's powerful role in the play. In this scene, as many critics have noted, Paulina's role is one of a stage manager, a director, a dramatist. Munro writes that 'in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* [Paulina] directs the gaze and controls the narrative through her careful display of the statue of Hermione, and her stage-management of the statue's awakening'.[605] For Mary Ellen Lamb, when 'Hermione steps down from her pedestal,

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[604] Orgel (1996), p. 58.

[605] Munro (2020), p. 143.

Shakespeare's stagecraft merges with Paulina's'.[606] The statue scene is Paulina—and Shakespeare's—crowning triumph.[607] Once the royal family, sans Mamillius, has been restored, however, Paulina's power, and her stage presence, diminishes. 'O peace, Paulina,' Leontes cries, beginning the last speech of the play, during which Paulina is married off, without the chance to verbally accept or deny (5.3.135, 143-46). Most critics of the play argue that, though Paulina does subvert female gender roles, this is only in service of restoring Sicilia's patriarchal system, in recuperating its male head, Leontes, and that, once this task is complete, she is once again subsumed within the system and silenced.[608] Kaplan and Eggert argue that 'rather than destabilizing the social order, Paulina's "offenses" serve, ultimately, to restore order and succession to Leontes's realm'.[609] Orgel writes that, once her work is done, she 'acknowledges her proper status to be that of the obedient wife—to somebody, to anybody, to whomever the king chooses'.[610] For Schalkwyk, we 'witness' in Paulina's reincorporation into the status quo 'the reappropriation and repression of [women's] power by men'.[611] This is all true—up to a point, which I will examine further in the next paragraph—it is still very significant that Paulina is the one female quasi-supernatural character to work in aid of the re-creation of order. Helen, Paulina's precursor, similarly works to maintain patriarchal order. She heals the King, after all, the head of patriarchal society. However, Helen's ultimate aim is explicitly selfish—she wants the husband of her choosing, and she gets him (1.1.82-98, 2.3.102-5, 5.3.307-14)—and the

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[606] Lamb (1998), p. 535. Tatspaugh (2009) cites Coghill in drawing attention to Paulina's dramatic antics in unveiling the statue: 'Coghill, moreover, looks closely at the skill with which Shakespeare created the statue's "long stillness" — Coghill times it at four minutes — and the suspense created by Paulina's "long, pausing entreaty" that it "be stone no more" (p. 40). In Paulina's five lines, "the most heavily punctuated passage" Coghill could find in the folio, he calls attention to twelve colons, to which we may add the further pauses indicated by two commas, a semi-colon and a parenthetical sentence (p. 40)', p. 132.

[607] Snyder and Curren-Aquino (2007) refer to Paulina as 'Shakespeare's surrogate', p. 49.

[608] Erickson, Peter B., 'Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*,' *PMLA*, Vol. 97, No. 5 (1982), 819 - 829, writes that 'Paulina is less of an exception to the general rule of female obedience than she appears to be. Her challenge to Leontes' tyrannical authority is sharp, but it is also limited. Since her anger is in the service of the maternal function, she does not seriously violate the code for appropriate gender behavior', p. 826. She is also 'clearly working in Leontes' best interests' and 'her domineering role is only temporary', p. 826.

[609] Kaplan and Eggert (1994), p. 110.

[610] Orgel (1996), p. 79. 'What is restored', he writes, 'in this quintessentially Jacobean drama, is royal authority', p. 79

[611] Schalkwyk (1992), p. 264.

restoration of patriarchal society is almost a side effect of her monomaniacal ambition. Paulina's ultimate aim is the restoration of a wife, a queen and the reunion and healing of the royal family. Unlike Titania, Sycorax and the witches of *Macbeth*, Paulina is very much *not* disorderly: indeed, it is only through her supernatural power, tellingly labeled 'lawful', that the royal family may be restored, a wife returned to her husband, and a dysfunctional family remade as functional. Order is restored to Sicilia, through Paulina's art, which, ultimately, is *Shakespeare*'s art, that of drama. Paulina is thus the author-stand in for *The Winter's Tale*, much as it has been claimed for *The Tempest*'s Prospero. But Paulina marks the first time that the supernatural author-stand in has been female, and thus it makes sense that Paulina should also mark the first time that a female supernatural character should stand for and create order. Her role as author stand-in, moreover, once again complicates the male/female, art/nature binary within the play. As Shakespeare's stand-in, as the dramatist and stage-manager of the Act 5 revelations, Paulina once again takes on a masculine art, and shows herself to be the master of it, not statuary but drama. To the very last, Shakespeare complicates the male/female binary, creating ambiguity by merging the two together.

And even if Paulina herself is silenced, as the critics above argue that she is, Paulina is not the only female character in the drama to subvert female gender roles, and their subversion does not end with Paulina's silencing. Schalkwyk argues that Perdita offers 'significant parallels with Paulina'. Both, he writes, are characterised as 'strikingly independent figure[s], especially in speech' and both, of course, are accused of witchcraft (2.3.66-8, 4.4.419-20).[612] Her 'independent speech' is marked by a desire to speak frankly to Polixenes, even once she knows him to be a King, to 'tell him plainly / The selfsame sun that shines upon his court / Hides not his visage from our cottage, but / Looks on alike', even if she does not actually do so (4.4.440-43). She is robust in contradicting Florizel as well (4.4.5-7, 16-18), an attitude that does not seem likely to change upon their marriage.

<u>'As is the spring to th'earth' (5.1.150-51)</u>

In closing, I would like to return to the debate in Act Four between art and nature. I argued earlier that it was dramatic irony which disrupted the easy gender binary between

[612] Schalkwyk (1992), p. 260-61. He notes that, again, like Paulina, Perdita's 'witchcraft threatens the established degree and health of the patriarchal state itself' since Florizel 'persists in his devotion to Perdita, thereby embodying the upside down world of disobedience', p. 263-4.

male/art and female/nature in this speech. The speech between Perdita and Polixenes is only one instance of the play as a whole, which continually problematises these two binaries in its conception of Paulina, the 'mankind witch'. The only supernatural female character in the Shakespearean corpus who is aligned with order, she is not the only character in the play to work to create a new type of order, and a new conception of women, a conception which allows them to be incorporated within the idea of the 'orderly'. Florizel's response to his father, I argue, forms a riposte as damning to Polixenes's misguided conception of Perdita as Paulina's response is to Leontes' demand that the infant Perdita be killed. When Polixenes has declined to give his blessing to Florizel's proposed marriage to Perdita (to put it mildly), Florizel turns away from him and his lineage, to give himself wholeheartedly to his beloved. To do anything else, the 'violation of [his] faith', would be to '[l]et nature crush the sides o'th' earth together, / And mar the seeds within' (4.4.474, 75-76).

It is an apocalyptic image, highly reminiscent of Lear's call to the 'all-shaking thunder' to '[s]trike flat the thick rotundity o'the world, / Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once' (*King Lear*, 3.2.6-8).[613] To disallow the marriage of the 'gentler scion' with 'wildest stock', to deny the pure love between Florizel and Perdita, risks the destruction of the natural world. And Perdita, as Schalkwyk has argued, is the continuance of Paulina's gender subversion into the next generation. To deny her marriage is also to deny the plot mechanics which her marriage constructs within a tragicomedy, it is to deny her return to Sicilia, her family and her original status as princess.[614] It is to deny the finale of reconciliation and reparation. Florizel and Perdita do not allow Polixenes to halt their marriage and instead flee to Sicilia (4.4.540-2). Her return to Sicilia is the arrival of a new conception of women and their roles, different from and distant to Leontes' (and Polixenes') poisoned theorisation. It is a conception that allows for women like Paulina, who may not only stand for disorder, but instead help to create and maintain a *new* type of order, one in which women

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[613] All quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997).

[614] As Munroe, Jennifer, 'It's all about the gillyvors: Engendering Art and Nature in *The Winter's Tale*,' in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, ed. by Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 139 - 154, notes '[t]o restore both kingdoms to their proper positions relative to each other and the environment', thus 'restoring a sense of order in both kingdoms', 'Florizel and Perdita must return to Sicilia, thus enacting a symbolic re-grafting of the tree (Polixenes and Leontes) whose branch had been severed sixteen years earlier as a result of Leontes's poor husbandry', p. 151.

are conceivably capable of constancy and fidelity, in which wives need not be slandered and imprisoned and bastards need not be destroyed. It is the introduction of a new chapter in the perception of women, one that is, in Leontes' own words, as 'Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th'earth' (5.1.150-51).

Conclusion

It is perhaps unsurprising that Shakespeare—and his contemporaries—thought *through* fictional manifestations of the climate. As is well known, Shakespeare lived through a particularly volatile time, both politically *and* climatically, as sometimes these two were combined: as Hulme points out, the particularly stormy summer and autumn of 1588 'famously disrupted' the Spanish Armada.[615] The late sixteenth-century was a time of 'unprecedented storm activity'.[616] Not only that, but the 1590s were also 'the coldest decade of the sixteenth century'.[617] Even sunlight was no longer guaranteed.[618] Not only was the weather of 'Elizabeth's reign and Shakespeare's lifetime […] significantly colder and more unpredictable', as Armstrong notes, this was a recent change, with many alive still who had memories of a time when the climate was calmer, less fickle and more peaceable, *orderly*:

> The sharpness of this contrast between the climate of Elizabeth's reign and that of her father's means that Shakespeare would have grown to maturity surrounded by a generational sense that a previously fecund, temperate, and

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[615] Hulme, Mike, 'Climate,' in The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare: Shakespeare's World, 1500-1600, Volume I, ed. by Bruce R. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 29 - 34, p. 32. He adds that the 'timing of these storms was interpreted by many at the time — and subsequently — as a sign of God's providence for a threatened nation, an example of the signifying role[…] that extremes of weather played in the early modern period', p. 32.

[616] Armstrong, Philip, 'Preposterous Nature in Shakespeare's Tragedies,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 104 - 119, p. 107. Fagan, Brian, The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300 - 1850 (New York: Basic Books, 2000) notes that '[s]torm activity increased by 85 percent in the second half of the sixteenth century, mostly during cooler winters. The incidence of severe storms rose by 400 percent', p. 91.

[617] Armstrong (2016), p. 108. He adds that 'out of the entire second millennium the coldest century was the seventeenth; its coldest year was 1601', p. 108. See also Fava, Sergio, Environmental Apocalypse in Science and Art: Designing Nightmares (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 11 and Fagan (2000), p. 90 and Hulme (2016), p. 31-2.

[618] Chiari (2019), p. 4. She highlights this natural occurrence was noted by at least one early modern playwright: 'Those natural disasters went hand in hand with a general lack of sunlight, a deficiency cogently pointed out in Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, a comedy probably written in 1592 to be performed at Archbishop Whitgift's Palace in Croydon. The play presents a dying Summer who, having to make his will, designates Winter as Autumn's overseer. His efforts are somewhat complicated by the behaviour of one of Winter's sons, the acerbic Backwinter, who gives a cataclysmic and outrageously exaggerated illustration of the adverse weather conditions that plagued the "Little Ice Age"', p. 4.

> reliable natural environment has been replaced by freezing temperatures, blighted harvests, and sudden, wild storms.[619]

What had once been orderly had suddenly become disorderly. And this would have been noticed, and worried over, by all members of early modern society.[620] Fava notes that

> From the early fourteenth century, the number of wet summers, very cold winters, storms, and floods increased with no perceivable pattern, disrupting most sectors of life across Europe. Varying limits have been attributed to this period, with the wider limits set at 1315 and 1850.[621]

This sense of trouble afoot in the natural world, a sense of a 'world out of joint', of disorderliness was heightened by the unknowability, the unpredictability of these extremes. How to make sense of a world in which the hottest summers could occur within the coldest century?[622] This sense of disarray was, of course, reflected in Shakespeare's dramatic evocations of the natural world.[623] His imaginative landscapers are a place of storms, 'cataracts

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[619] Armstrong (2016), p. 107. See also Chiari (2019), p. 4. Fagan (2000) writes that '[a]s climatic conditions deteriorated, a lethal mix of misfortunes descended on a growing European population. Crops failed and cattle perished by diseases caused by abnormal weather. Famine followed famine bringing epidemics in their train, bread riots and general disorder brought fear and distrust. Witchcraft accusations soared, as people accused their neighbors of fabricating bad weather', p. 91.

[620] Lamb, H. H., Climate, History and the Modern World (2nd Edition) (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) details the effects of climatic unpredictability: 'The difficulties imposed by the climate in the Little Ice Age time were not only due to the lower temperatures, to which any generation could no doubt adapt, even if with some effects on health, fertility, length of life, etc. But, as the harvest results mentioned in the last two paragraphs have implied, there was an enhanced variability of the temperature level, which must have badly upset harvest expectations and posed a need for storage of reserves of foodstuffs beyond the resources of the community at that time', p. 229.

[621] Fava (2013), p. 11.

[622] Lamb (1995) writes of '[t]he well-known occurrence of very hot summer weather in the two summers of 1665 and 1666, when London experienced its last great epidemic of the plague which ended with the great fire that burnt the city in September 1666, occurred in the middle of the coldest century of the last millennium', p. 229.

[623] As Hulme (2016) notes, 'Shakespeare wrote of joys and fears mediated through an English climate', p. 34.

and hurricanoes' (*King Lear*, 3.2.2),[624] floods caused by 'every pelting river made so proud / That they have overborne their continents' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.11-12),[625] heat waves when the sun is a 'burning eye' (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.5),[626] 'bitter cold', which 'bites shrewdly' (*Hamlet*, 1.1.5, 1.4.1).[627] Never still, never one, his plays conjure multiple worlds filled with forests which are both green and fecund, where 'birds chant melody on every bush', and deadly, depraved pits of darkness, full of 'A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes, / Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins / Would make such fearful and confusèd cries / As any mortal hearing it / Should straight fall mad or else die suddenly' (*Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.12, 2.3.98, 100-104).[628] There are green worlds that are both airy and pleasant, pastoral palaces for deer and dangerously exotic wild locales where a 'green and gilded snake' and 'lioness' 'with catlike watch' lurk (*As You Like It* 4.2, 4.3.104, 110, 111). There are seas and oceans that turn from tame to 'tempest-tossed' with a flick of a hand, or pen (*Macbeth*, 1.3.25):[629] Prospero and Ariel put 'the wild waters in this roar' (*The Tempest*, 1.2.2), and it seems providence itself sinks the ship attempting to abandon Perdita, *The Winter's Tale*, 3.3.2-6, 80-83).[630]

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[624] All quotes from *King Lear* are from Foakes, R. A. (ed.), *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series) (Surrey, South Melbourne and Scarborough: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997). Armstrong (2016) notes that '[i]t is precisely this sense of lability that dominates Shakespeare's tragedies. The storm language in *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello* repeatedly evokes the possibility that nature's elemental agencies might suddenly overflow their proper locations and usurp each other's places, and even tear apart the constitution of the natural world at its foundations', p. 108.

[625] All quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Holland, Peter (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[626] All quotes from *Romeo and Juliet* are from Connor, Francis X. (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 997 - 1077.

[627] All quotes from *Hamlet* are from Jowett, John (ed.) *Hamlet* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1993 - 2099). Armstrong (2016) reads this line as a reference to the cold of 1601, p. 108.

[628] All quotes from *Titus Andronicus* are from Taylor, Gary, Terri Bourus, Rory Loughnane, Anna Pruitt and Francis X. Connor (eds.) *Titus Andronicus* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). pp. 183 - 249.

[629] All quotes from *Macbeth* are from Brooke, Nicholas (ed.), *Macbeth* (Oxford World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[630] All quotes from *The Tempest* are from Orgel, Stephen (ed.), *The Tempest* (The World's Classics) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

This connection, between a disorderly climate and suspected supernatural women had a real world correlation too: as Fagan notes, ‘Witchcraft accusations reached a height in England and France in the severe weather years of 1587 and 1588’.[631] Whether any ‘real’ witchcraft occurred is irrelevant: the stresses of unpredictable poor weather, and its consequences for the food economy and the risk of starvation,[632] were inflicted disproportionally on women. As Lamb notes, the variability of the weather experienced by those in the late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-centuries is ‘a characteristic which seems to have recurred in recent years’.[633] This changeability has been hard to escape these past few years as I have researched for and written this thesis, not to mention the climate change-aggravated pandemic with which we are still grappling. As my thesis has demonstrated, climatic changeability was likened to female changeability in the early modern era. Modern women aren’t (so very much) stigmatised with weather-like disorderliness but the effects of climate change will be most hazardous to the most vulnerable members of the global population, and women are far more likely, still to this day, to be vulnerable than men.[634]

Throughout this thesis, I have examined the orderly-disorderly binary as it has manifested throughout Shakespeare’s depictions of nature, of the supernatural and the supernatural men and women who populate his drama. In *Henry VI, Part One*, we saw how the one constant of Joan la Pucelle’s chaotic multiplicity was her disorderliness. This disorderliness was defined by her female body: the early modern archetypal feminine disorderliness. Her disorderly body, in turn, was what powered her supernatural abilities: she and

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[631] Fagan (2000), p. 91. He adds that ‘[a]lmost invariably, a frenzy of prosecutions coincided with the coldest and most difficult years of the Little Ice Age, when people demanded the eradication of the witches they held responsible for their misfortunes’, p. 91. Fava (2013) concurs: ‘witchcraft was a space of social disputes that reflected the fluidity and urgency of stability in a world mired with uncertainty. The multiple attributions and displacements of agency and initiative (responsibility, if one wishes) for uncertain catastrophic events to demons witches, God, or human sin were part of the urgency in determining the limits and possibilities of human action in the face of famine, plague, war, and deadly storms’, p. 22.

[632] See Fava (2013): ‘An important element in the difficulties faced at this time was the weather, severely affecting crops, livestock, travel, and the price of basic goods, especially grain. The floods and famines claimed many thousands of human lives, and have been factored in the general crisis theory’, p. 11, and Fagan (2000), p. 91.

[633] Lamb (1995), p. 229.

[634] Fava (2013) notes that ‘[t]he Royal Society expects the twenty-first century might be a century of crises: climatic, political, economic, environmental’, p. 11.

the other supernatural women who follow her in the Shakespearean corpus are defined by their bodies, in contrast to Shakespeare's depictions of male supernatural characters, who are not. This contrast was developed in the two plays I examined next, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. There I posited that perhaps a binary of male order versus female disorder was not the best way to read Shakespeare's supernatural characters, that, instead, a spectrum should be imagined, which allowed for characters who partook of both extremes. The use of this became apparent when examining the supposed contrast between Prospero and Sycorax who were found to share a literary ancestor, Ovid's Medea. However, a binary remained: Prospero's supernatural abilities were figured as the result of his intellectualism, and as such as separate from his body, incorporeal, whereas the female supernatural characters' powers were rooted in their body. As such, Prospero may abjure his powers and return to human society; Sycorax never had this option. It was in these two plays that I began to question the notion why the patriarchal society stood for 'order', when its reality was one of violence and repression. I read *Macbeth*'s tragedy as one in which society and the natural world is disordered by the encroachment of the disorderly feminine, figured in the witches, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth himself, into the ruling class. In *King Lear*, I explored the inherent doubleness of nature, with nature containing both order and disorder, each depending upon and growing out of each other. This was replicated in the female characters of the play, all of whom are associated with the (super)natural world. Goneril and Regan stand for the disorderly in nature and Cordelia attempts to stand for order, but ultimately fails. In *The Winter's Tale* and *All's Well That Ends Well* I found two supernatural women who shield themselves from charges of transgression through the rhetorical creation of a male artist. Paulina, I argue, is the one female supernatural character in the Shakespearean corpus who is aligned with patriarchal order and the finale of *The Winter's Tale* can be read as the introduction of a new conception of the feminine, as not only disorderly but capacious enough to contain women like Paulina (and Helen, and Cordelia) who may also stand for order.

There is still far more to be addressed and understood about the ways in which Shakespeare plays with the constructs of male order, female disorder, corporeality and incorporeality. I would especially like to contain an investigation into the rhetorical construction of 'order' within these plays. As a masculine prerogative, the order they concoct is necessarily a patriarchal society. But there are many suggestions that Shakespeare understood that this society was unfair, violent, oppressive. Neither Oberon nor Prospero is a

wholly benign character and Paulina (and even Helen) are presented positively. I would like to continue investigating these occurrences in future research.

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