Domestic Relations in Shakespeare

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other University for a degree.

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Textual Note

Unless stated otherwise, all Shakespearean quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans, ed. 2nd edn (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997) and are included in the text.

Summary

This thesis investigates how the size, structure and function of the family presented in Shakespeare's plays relates to an early modern understanding of the importance and function of the family. By examining domestic manuals, pamphlets, treatises and diaries from the early modern period, I establish what was considered normative domestic behaviour at the time and analyse Shakespeare's plays through these contemporary attitudes, specifically their treatment of privacy, household structure and medical beliefs surrounding reproduction and gynaecology.

This thesis seeks to focus on the way in which people's positions in the family change over time, from infancy to adulthood, and how these relationships are represented in Shakespeare's plays. Beginning with marriage, where the family is first formed; I examine *Othello* and *Macbeth*, and show how the marriages in these plays, while tragic, are cherished and valued. Succession was integral to the legacy and sustainability of a family, which is the topic of the next chapter, in which I explore the notions of how children are conceived and raised in *Richard III* and *The Winter's Tale*. The transition from childhood into adulthood was fraught with change in both housing and legal circumstances, and this struggle in adolescence is clearly depicted in *Romeo and Juliet*, which comprises the third chapter. Aside from the familial relationships of husband and wife and parent and child, the most influential relationships were those of siblings, which I investigate in a number of plays in the fourth chapter. Finally, I focus on the traditional and complicated nuclear families in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus*, and analyse how the family is highlighted and valued in each of these plays. The thesis concludes that throughout Shakespeare's work, the family is privileged over war, nobility and absolute patriarchal control, emphasising that it is vital to understanding and analysing Shakespeare's plays.

Introduction: Early Modern Family

Early modern drama is rooted in the everyday lives of early modern people. Shakespeare repeatedly alters his source materials in order to stage these everyday, domestic issues that everyone in his audience could relate to and understand. Since theatre companies were never sure how long these plays would run or how successful they would be, the connection to the everyday household was a way of keeping the audience interested and invested. In early modern England, social hierarchy ensured that various classes were rigidly separated, yet one thing that all people had in common, from aristocracy to beggars, was family. The family was constructed as necessary to the public commonwealth, a microcosm on which the structure of government and social hierarchy rested. Robert Cleaver began his popular domestic manual by stating that 'a household is as it were a little commonwealth, by the good government whereof, God's glory may be advances, the commonwealth which standeth for several families, benefited and all that live in that family may receive much comfort and commodity.'[1] Thus, family was not merely a shared bloodline or household, but the means by which people could implement social and religious ideals, maintain their reputation in the community and garner respect and business from their neighbours. Consequently, the significance of family in the early modern period far outweighs its role in society today. While much recent scholarship has focused on the political aspects of Shakespeare's canon, not as much work has examined the day to day issues that appear in all of his plays. This thesis will investigate how the size, structure and function of the family presented in Shakespeare's plays correlates to the importance and organisation of the family during the early modern period. Since the household functioned as both a model for the hierarchy of the government and a method of regulating disruptive behaviour in

[1]Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Form of Household Government* (London: Thomas Creede for Thomas Man, 1598), 1.

the community, many contemporary manuals, treatises and diaries establish what was considered normative domestic behaviour at the time. By evaluating Shakespeare's plays through these contemporary attitudes, specifically their treatment of privacy, household structure and medical beliefs surrounding reproduction and gynaecology, this thesis aims to gain a better understanding of the characterisation and purpose of the families in his plays.

Although volumes have been written on relationships in Shakespeare's plays, much of this work has focused on absent mothers or over-bearing fathers. Seminal works such as Janet Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers* and Carol Thomas Neely's *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* have led these discussions. Adelman's work psychologised the role of the mother in Shakespeare's plays as a source of tragedy, arguing that even where mothers are absent, the negative associations with the maternal body manifest themselves in the plays. Her pre-Oedipal reading of the mother accounts for the constructs of masculinity in Shakespeare's plays, as the male characters find themselves suffocated by the influence of and dependency on their own mothers. While Adelman's argument has foregrounded the importance of maternal relationships in Shakespeare's plays, it does nothing to analyse the remainder of the relationships in the family. My thesis departs from Adelman's work in considering other inter-familial connections, but also in establishing the family as important to various characters in Shakespeare's canon and not symptomatic of deformity or death as Adelman argued. Neely also discussed the broken aspects of the family, beginning with the marital bond in both social and dramatic contexts. She explored the contradiction between the idealisation and degradation of Shakespeare's heroines in the prelude to marriage, and argues that the unequal roles for men and women in society at this time lead to unusual or postponed ceremonies in the plays. In analysing various tragedies and comedies,

Neely asserts that love is disassociated from sex and even marriage in Shakespeare's plays to render the women powerless under men's control. Although her work establishes important criticism on betrothals and matrimony in the plays, she only analyses these roles as problematic and debasing, whereas my work identifies the emphasis placed on marital unions, even in the tragedies. Although both of these works were ground-breaking when they were originally published, they are now mainstream in contributing to our understanding of Shakespeare's plays, and this thesis seeks to offer a differing view of family life portrayed in Shakespeare.

These scholars formed an older feminist tradition that was strident and pioneering, but only discussed women as being oppressed or fighting against early modern social etiquette in examining their roles and relationships in Shakespeare's plays. Defining the household only in terms of gender, hierarchical positions and resistance to the patriarch, these scholars identified what Kathleen McLuskie termed 'the patriarchal Bard,' or the focus on women misogyny in Shakespeare.[2] In this thesis, I will think through the insights of these scholars and build on this body of work by considering the interest in the domestic prevalent in Shakespeare's plays. Instead of focusing on the culmination of the patriarchal tradition in analysing these plays, I will make way for the domestic Bard by considering how Shakespeare explores the household in his canon with respect to various relationships in the household.

In more recent years, publications discussing the household and early modern drama have considered domestic interiors and material culture in approaching the texts, as exemplified by the work of Catherine Richardson, Sasha Roberts, Lena Cohen Orlin and Tara Hamling. The work of these scholars has been characterised by analysing the history of domestic objects such as clothing, personal items and furniture and their

[2]Kathleen McLuskie, "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*" in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 106.

practical and performative use in the early modern period. They have explored personal attachment to items, the manufacturing process and the way objects were interpreted and used. These scholars have also questioned the relationship between objects and the space that they occupy, and how this would have been interpreted both in the household and on stage when props were used to signify specific spaces. While these scholars have greatly contributed to our understanding of household items and their significance, this thesis instead focuses on household relationships both in Shakespeare's society and drama. Works such as *Shakespeare and Childhood* have laid the groundwork for this thesis in examining the multi-faceted view of children in Shakespeare's plays and culture, where this area of scholarship has been previously underdeveloped.[3] The book calls for more scholarship to be completed on child figures in Shakespeare's canon, and questions their agency and autonomy, which I explore in this thesis. By reading passages of Shakespeare's texts closely alongside those of early modern social history, medicine and culture, I will investigate the way in which family relationships are subject to early modern notions of the household, reproductive system and social etiquette. This thesis contains an inter-textual approach, which will consider both popular writing of the period as well as recent criticism in social history in formulating a more comprehensive understanding of the early modern family. It combines rich, new research on the medical and social aspects of family life with close-reading of Shakespeare's plays to provide an overview of the representation of the family in his canon.

The thesis engages with social history and its findings, drawing on the work of Peter Laslett, Lawrence Stone and Keith Wrightson, who began a new wave of interest in the social history of the family by exploring the complexity of a series of kinship

[3]Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy, eds. *Shakespeare and Childhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

networks. These scholars identified the hierarchy within the family and explored how it changed over time due to population growth and cultural practices. Laslett investigated the relationships in the rural and middle-class household, including attitudes towards children, servants and spouses. Stone considered how marital negotiations and family formation evolved over the early modern period. Wrightson explored the family in relation to society at large, and provided evidence to contradict Stone's theory that the family did not include many emotional ties at this time. This thesis will explore what early modern people understood about the formation of families and will build on social historians' analysis of familial ties and unity. My work will take the ideas posited in these works about the interaction between family members and compare the social reality to Shakespeare's portrait of the nuclear family.

More recently, David Cressy considered the rituals and celebrations surrounding three key moments in life: birth, marriage and death. In addition, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford furthered our knowledge of early modern social history by considering the woman's place in society, medicine and the family. All of these works will help mould the concept and construction of the family that I will discuss in this thesis. Instead of merely duplicating these findings, I will apply the knowledge acquired from these works on social history, specifically in their treatment of marital formation, parent-child relationships and sibling relationships to Shakespeare's plays, while considering what Shakespeare's audience was aware of while watching them. Social historians have provided an understanding of the ways in which the nuclear family was formed and functioned, which I seek to explore. While we may not be able to definitively argue the thought process behind each individual in early modern society, we can certainly surmise what was thought to be conventional when discussing social relationships and reproduction. I will investigate social conduct manuals and personal

effects in order to determine the early modern concept of the family, using published, textual works. Given the advancement of medicine and social attitudes in the past 400 years, we, as modern readers, have lost the ability to determine the full meaning of some of Shakespeare's texts, particularly in relation to familial relationships. The early modern interpretation of some of the passages can only be understood when examining Shakespeare's texts in light of his culture's medical and social beliefs, which this thesis seeks to do. In doing so, I will offer re-readings of some familiar Shakespearean plays, while examining some lesser known works through the same early modern social, cultural and medical lens. By evaluating Shakespeare's plays in this way, this thesis makes significant contributions to both Shakespearean scholarship and the representation and understanding of the early modern family.

In order to explore the importance of the family in Shakespeare's canon, we must first define how the family was constructed at this time. Two overlapping and conflicting definitions of the family—one defined by household and the other by bloodline—existed concurrently in early modern England.[4] While this notion of family may seem complicated to our modern sense of the word, it is important to consider the family as early modern English people would have: as a series of kinship networks with various people including extended family and household occupants. In his treatise entitled *Christian Economy*, Cambridge theologian and Puritan minister William Perkins outlines the various delineations of family at the time. He explains 'kindred is of two sorts, consanguinity, or affinity. Kindred in consanguinity are those which issue

[4]For an overview of the definition of family, see Peter Laslett, 'The Comparative History of Household and Family' *Journal of Social History* 4:1 (1970), 75-87 and Naomi Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England' *Past & Present* 151 (1996), 111-140.

from out, and the same common blood or stock.'[5] He later defines what he has previously introduced as 'kindred of affinity' by stating that

> kindred in affinity, is that, whereby the terms of two kindreds, are brought into the society of one and the same family; or whereby persons that are not of blood, are by marriage allied each to other. Hence it is termed affinity, because it makethan unity of terms in kindred, which before were distant. Affinity or alliance groweth by mixtion or participation of blood, in the coupling of man and wife together in lawful marriage.[6]

These two seemingly contending views of the family were amalgamated in early modern England to create a concept of family that included generations of blood relations along with household cohabitants. Perkins establishes the family as producing one another and sharing blood, emphasising the importance of reproduction and the bond it creates between parent and child. These quotations depict the family as being both born into and formed throughout life, showing that members of one family were not always connected by both blood and household. They also share a sense of similarity between family members, as the word used to describe the family is *affinity*. Perkins takes pains to delineate the process by which members are joined after previously being detached, showing that family members were expected to be united with one another. When the term *family* was used, it could evoke a sense of shared ancestry or residence, including members of the household who were not related by blood such as servants, apprentices and lodgers. This thesis will focus on the roles and relationships of the nuclear family: husband and wife, parent and child and brother and sister in Shakespeare's plays by analysing them in light of the expectations and experiences of his contemporaries. What follows is a brief outline of the various ways in which the family was considered and invoked during the early modern period.

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[5]William Perkins, *Christian economy: or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a family according to the scriptures*(London: Felix Kynstong, 1609*),* 25.
[6]Ibid., 40.

People were taught that a family is 'a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned.'[7] The way that this household manual uses the family as a preparatory method for government and church life in adulthood shows the responsibility placed on the family to instigate societal regulations and practices. Since the family was the first example of hierarchal order that people were given the opportunity to witness and experience, copious amounts were written about the arrangement and management of the family. Manuals at the time stressed the importance of Biblical instruction to the family from a young age.[8] Ministers argued that the family is privileged in the Bible, since Adam is given a family to accompany him and Noah's family were the only people saved from the flood. Accordingly, it was considered necessary for the preservation of the commonwealth that a 'housekeeper must well see to his house, bring up his children and family in Godliness, and govern them in decent order.'[9] This focus on the systematic ordering of a family appears in numerous works, often describing in detail how a household should operate. For example, men were instructed to

> Order your family and household virtuously and according to God's word. Let nothing appear in the and in thy wife, that may give any occasion of evil to them that be under them. Remember that God hath made thee a Bishop in thine own house, and that therefore thou must be a diligent overseer and circumspect in the governance of them. For if any of them that be in household with the perish through thy fault, their blood shall be required of thy hand at the dreadful day of judgement. These things to fore considered, and in thy daily conversation practised, faul thee and thy wife to labour, every one of you, as god hath called you and pray to God it he will bless, prosper, fortunate and bring your labours unto good effect.[10]

Householders were also encouraged to be discrete in their governance of the family in order to uphold their family's reputation and credibility in the community. It was

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[7]William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treaties* (London: John Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), 18.
[8]Cleaver, 6. A prymer in English with certain prayers (London: Johan Byddell, 1534), 175. Edmund Bonner, A profitable and necessary doctrine with certain homilies adjoined thereunto (London: John Cawoode, 1555), 110.
[9]Ferrarius, 57.
[10]Heinrich Bullinger, *The golden book of christen matrimony* (London: 1543), 14.

believed that 'a wise master will instruct his servants and family with discretion: the governance of a prudent man or woman is well ordered.'[11] The specificity of this advice given to men in order to encourage prosperity in their households was abundant at the time. Given the amount of authority the church had during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the fact that they endorsed the governance of households in such a particular manner suggests that it would have been considered customary to act accordingly. Catholic theologians and political writers emphasised the importance of the family to the functionality of the state during the period. It was believed at the time that 'a house or family where discord is, doth never prosper, but by little and little it commeth to misery.'[12] Ralph A. Houlbrooke argues that the family was especially important because it 'was upheld, its life influenced, by religion, literature, law, custom and a variety of exterior social pressures.'[13] Not only was order in one's family seen as the example for the country, but it was also used to determine the family's reputation and status in society.

Social historians have surmised that 'during our period "family" denoted above all the body of persons living in one house or under one head, including children, kinsfolk and servants.'[14] The family was defined 'as a synonym neither with "household" nor with "kin" – persons related by blood or marriage. It is taken to mean those members of the same kin who live together under one roof.'[15] In fact, social historian Peter Laslett has suggested that the reconfiguration of the household was the most significant change that people underwent during the coming of age because it

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[11]Thomas Bentley, *The sixth lampe of virginitie* (London: 1582), 49.Thomas Salter, *A mirror met for all mothers, matrons and maidens* (London: for Edwards White, 1579), 19.
[12]John Christopherson, 215.
[13]Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1984),, 18.
[14]Houlbrooke, 19.
[15]Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 28.

consequently restructured all relationships as well.[16] The family was often constructed in terms of the household in various literatures from this period, including domestic manuals, personal diaries, religious doctrine, political pamphlets, portraits and private letters. Even the illiterate knew of the expectations of the family, as the tales from pamphlets and ballads 'passed easily into oral culture, and lent themselves to a variety of uses' in everyday life.[17] In his treatise, topographer John Norden declares 'every family is a body, where is a father, and where commonly are children, where are masters, there are servants. All these having several offices and places in this standing house of our Common weal.'[18] The fact that his list consists of all members of the household, encompassing servants and other domestic relations, demonstrates the conceptualisation of the family as cohabitants.

The family is also described as synonymous with house at times, which shows its direct correlation to the residents of a household.[19] In fact, some writers even used the word *family* to denote when they were welcomed as a prolonged guest in someone's home.[20] Lady Ann Halkett states in her memoir, 'I cannot omit to mention what was remarkable the time I was in that family;'[21] and John Foxe records his attentiveness to his guests was due to the fact that he was 'considering you were one of my family.'[22] These examples suggest that the early modern idea of family was not as stringent as our

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[16]Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: Further Explored* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 94.
[17]Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 57.
[18]John Norden, A progresse of pietie. Or the harbour of heauenly harts ease to recreate the afflicted soules of all such as are shut vp in anye inward or outward affliction (London: J. Windet for J. Oxenbridge, 1596), 84-5.
[19]John Christopherson, An exhortation to all men to take heed and beware of rebellion wherein are set forth the cause (London: John Cawood, 1554), 67. Thomas Smith, De republica Anflorum: The manner of government or policy of the realme of England (London 1583), 14. Aristotle's Politiques or discourses of government (London, 1598), 4.Juan Luis Vives, *An introduction to wisdom* (London: 1544), 57.
[20]Thomas Becon, *A new postil containing most godly and learned sermons upon all the Sunday Gospels* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1566), 21.
[21]John Loftis, ed., ed. *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe*.(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 41.
[22]John Foxe, Acts and monuments of matters most special and memorable, happening in the Church with an universal history of the same (London, 1583), 1728.

definition is today; alternatively, it was construed as household inhabitants. Early modern people adopted Aristotle's notion of the family that 'the children and offspring of one family being multiplied, disperse themselves abroad, and of one create many families.'[23] His assertion that many families are formed and disband in this manner demonstrates how family was not merely considered in terms of biology, but often in terms of place.

Despite the understanding of the family as members of one household, it is evident that heredity was integral to people as well. This thesis will focus on relationships that were formed with blood relations as a way of focusing on the medical beliefs regarding the family. During the early modern period, it was widely believed that one of the purposes of matrimony was to procreate and form a family.[24] This not only confined sexual activity within marriage, but also allowed for the newlyweds to distinguish themselves as their own nuclear unit, distinct from that of their parents. The fact that women became worried if they failed to conceive within ten months of their nuptials indicates that people generally desired to produce a family immediately after marriage at this time.[25] In fact, lineage was elicited to encourage men to marry, 'for without a wife, the name cannot continue, nor the progeny endure, nor the stock increase, nor a family be, nether a father of household named, nor a house called, nor a common wealth stand, nor any empire endure.'[26] By using the promise of descendants in this way, it is clear that prolonging the family name was imperative to the construction of masculinity during the period.

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[23]Aristotle's Politiques,10.
[24]Anon, *The Order of Matrimony* (London: Anthony Scoloker, 1548), page that begins 'mes as they be and let God's most.'
[25]Ibid., page that begins 'mes as they be and let God's most.' Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 150-1; and David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35.
[26]Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, The commendation of matrimony (London: 1540), 18.

This is exemplified by Lady Anne Fanshawe's personal memoir, which begins, 'I have thought it convenient to discourse to you (my most dear and only son) the most remarkable actions and accidents of your family, as well as those of more eminent ones of your father and my life.'[27] She imparts to her son the names and deaths of his father, grandparents and great-grandparents on both maternal and paternal sides. But the purpose of this practice is not merely to record ancestors' names, since she provides details about each person's temperament as she lists them, including whether or not s/he was a moral person in the transcription of each family member. Her recounting of their names, ages and personalities acts as a form of preservation of her family, as her son now possesses information about his ancestors that would otherwise have been lost. Her interest in narrating this family history to her son is demonstrative of the significance of lineage during this time, because her account serves no other purpose. Shakespeare shows a similar concern for genealogy in *Henry IV, Part I*, when Lord Talbot states, 'In thee thy mother dies, our household's name' (4.6.38); and in *Titus Andronicus* when Saturnius states, 'Titus, to advance thy name and honourable family, Lavinia will I make my empress' (1.1.238-40). It is clear that the family bloodline was important to people inearly modern England, as these sources signify people's interest in both its persistence and conservation. The desire to preserve a sense of family history can also been seen in domestic objects bequeathed in dowries and wills; as often the history or sentiment that the item encapsulates is relayed along with the item itself.[28] The way in which commodities adopt such an identity in the exchange from one family member to another has been examined in terms of material culture, but the language of bequests also demonstrates the yearning to preserve a sense of family history and identity among its members.

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[27]Loftis, ed., 101.
[28]For analysis on material objects in families, see Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester: University Press, 2006), 69-74.

Perhaps one of the most significant appearances of the family in writing at this time was its habitual occurrence in political pamphlets and treatises. The household was frequently used as a microcosm for the state in early modern literature, emphasising the importance of its function and subsistence. In his writing about the Commonwealth of England, Thomas Smith states that 'in the house and family is the first and most natural (but private) appearance of one of the best kinds of a common wealth.'[29] Numerous other writers did the same, thus, the general consensus at the time was that 'every man in his own family is as a king, whose office is not only to make laws for his family, but to provide also all necessaries for the same. And when want shall come, to whom shall the wife go but to her husband, to whom shall the children go but to their father?'[30] However, the order of the family was more than just an analogy used in government writings, as it became embedded in the nation's collective consciousness at the time, available in personal diaries, domestic manuals, church documents and political advice books alike. While domestic manuals presented an ideal state of the nuclear family, personal effects such as diaries and letters offer a more realistic portrayal of familial life. Householders were informed that 'in nothing more than this can you show love to your country, nor discharge your duties to your sovereign.'[31] Similarly, it was held that 'marriage is a deed which you owe to nature, to your country and to God.'[32] In fact, this concept was so ingrained in early modern thinking about the family that it was even written that if not for the family, 'there would be no domestical government, neither is

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[29]Thomas Smith, The commonwealth of England and the manner of government thereof (London: John Windlet for Gregory Seton, 1589), 13. L. Stone, 28.
[30]William Burton, A caveat for sureties (London: Richard Field, 1593), 49. See also Cleaver, 1; Gouge, 17; John Northbrooke, *Spiritusest vicarious Christ in terra: A treatise wherein dicing, dancing, vain plays or interludes with other idle pastimes* (London: H. Bynneman for George Byshop, 1577), 31; Dudley Fenner, *The Order of Household: Certain Godly and Learned Treatises* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrane, 1592); and Johannes Ferrarius, *A work of Johannes Montanus, touching the good ordering of a common weal wherein as well magistrates, as private persons, be put in remembrance of their duties* (London: John Kingston, 1559), 10.
[31]E. Nisbet, *Foode for Families* (London: G. P. for R. Jackson, 1623).
[32]*A Glass for Householders* (London: Richard Graftoni, 1542), after c iiii.

that man fit to govern anywhere, or to bear authority, that cannot govern his own house.'[33] The fact that political discourse repeatedly constructed the family as subject to and exemplary of a successful government demonstrates its importance in the mind-set of early modern people.

Domestic manuals instructing householders how to govern their families generally stated that the family consisted of three couplings: husband and wife, parent and child and master and servant. In each of these three relationships, the latter was subordinate in order to facilitate a harmonious household.[34] Since the family was often appropriated to establish a sense of political and social structure, much was written on how to assemble and enable an effective household. It was endorsed 'for the credit of every one that is a governor or master thereof: for a family consisteth either of those things which are to be ordered or governed, or else of them which are the Lords, Masters or governors thereof, who have authority of all things thereunto appertaining, as of wife, children and servants.'[35] Each person knew his/her place in the household and was assigned specific duties accordingly. The fact that household roles were so stringently defined throughout the period meant that relationships within the household were instrumental in constructing a collective familial identity. Consequently, for the head of the household, 'there was no sharp distinction between his domestic and his economic functions' as they were intertwined.[36] While conduct manuals prescribed appropriate behaviour in the household, they do not necessarily provide a nuanced picture of actual domestic interaction in the period. From personal diaries, anecdotes and literature, we can deduce that behaviour often differed from this doctrine. While aristocratic women were often kept under surveillance to ensure that their purity was

[33]Thomas Floyd, *The picture of a perfect commonwealth* (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), 95.
[34]Fenner, 56; Cleaver, 4; Gouge, 17.
[35]Floyd, 94.
[36]Laslett, *The World We Have Lost,* 2.

above reproach, it seems that anxieties about sexual relationships were more fervent than the reality of early modern behaviour. Many household manuals dealt with women's positions in society in particular, as any role for a woman outside of the accepted virgin, wife or widow was viewed as threatening and unstable in a patriarchal society. However, these extracts are valuable in offering the expectations for everyday household conduct at this time. Regardless of whether they offer an accurate portrayal of the reality of early modern familial life, they certainly provide us with a sense of what was then considered the ideal circumstance within the household. We can deduce that women were expected to be obedient, chaste and silent. While diaries and personal accounts certainly offer other examples of domestic relations, it is clear that marital fidelity and female subordination were important to maintaining a patrilineal society.

Wives frequently managed the domestic chores, while their husbands were traditionally liable for financial and other social duties throughout the community. Lady Anne Fanshawe writes of the respective responsibilities in her family, stating 'though he would say I managed his domestics wholly, yet I ever governed them and myself by his commands.'[37] This statement offers insight into the reality of household management in the early modern period. While domestic manuals describe the husband as the governor of the household, Fanshawe shows that it was often the wife who dealt with day to day affairs. Lady Anne Fanshawe's remark reveals that despite the fact that the husband was considered the head of the household, the daily chores such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, gardening and overseeing servants were often under the wife's charge.[38] Because women were not permitted to participate in governmental or societal decisions at this time, they began to develop occupational identities outside of these realms. While

[37]Loftis, ed., 103.
[38]See Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78-9; Mendelson and Crawford, 303-7; and Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 26.

some turned to teaching, midwifery or farming, others still wrote of their experiences in letters to friends or children, diaries or even manuals advising other women on domestic and female issues. Consequently, many writings from women during this time discuss the household and a woman's role within this space, because she was negated from the political realm.[39]

While the family was essential as a political analogy for order and submission, we must also consider whether or not a family was as important to the individual. The sense of family legacy manifested itself in numerous works at this time, yet emotional attachment that people felt to their families (if any) remained vague. In his influential book on the family, Lawrence Stone famously asserted that

> there was no sense of domestic privacy, and inter-personal relations within the conjugal unit, both between husbands and wives and between parents and children, were necessarily fairly remote, partly because of the ever-present probability of imminent death, partly because of cultural patterns which dictated the arranged marriage, the subordination of women, the neglect and early fostering out of children and the custom of harsh parental discipline.[40]

His argument that families were not as emotionally connected to one another as we might presume has since been disputed by most social historians of the period.[41] Stone based his argument on the premise that affection was seen as feminine and therefore, weak during this time. In fact, people believed that 'the overmuch cherishing, cockering and suffering of many parents and guardians given occasion many and most times to great and incurable vices' in their children.[42] Parents were encouraged to use a stern and stoic demeanour with their children to prevent them from becoming spoiled. Certainly

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[39]Mendelson and Crawford, 313-331. See also Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 19.
[40]L. Stone, 408-9. See also Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960).
[41]See Houlbrooke, 14-5. David Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England' *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 38-69. Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), 46. Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Ch 2.
[42]James M. Osborne, ed. *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 3.

in many of Shakespeare's comedies, such as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, parental figures come across as demanding and stern, particularly in reference to marital negotiations. However, these fathers are often attempting to make the most advantageous match for their daughters, and provide for them throughout their adult lives given the restrictions for women in this society. While Shakespearean parents often do not coddle their children, they typically act out of interest for their welfare and future contentment. Nevertheless, in the writing of the period, many references to love and affection occur, but often for other purposes than mere emotional connection. This is exemplified by Puritan minister William Gouge, who ordered his congregation to 'let a husband be churlish to his wife, and despise her, he ministreth an occasion to children and servants to contemne her likewise, and to be disobedient unto her' and states that 'husbands by virtue of their place should love their wives, as that Christ by virtue of his place should love the church.'[43] While he discusses the love that a husband ought to show to his wife, it is only expressed in terms of obligation permitted by the Bible. Furthermore, his comment mainly considers the impact on the structure of the household and does not confer over intimacy in marriage at all. He stresses that if a husband loves his wife, she will earn respect and obedience from other members of the household, and as a result, he will be living in accordance with the Bible; both of which assist the husband in maintaining order in his household. Such writing makes it difficult to ascertain whether or not affection was solely solicited because of its consequences, or if it was regularly considered important in marital and familial relations.

[43]Gouge, 21 and 44.

This can be seen elsewhere in the writing of the period. It was thought that 'O than this is an happy family and kindred which hath been ordained of God to the helping' to promote prosperity.[44] Accordingly, the family was described as

> so loving one to another, firmly joined together with an unfeigned bond of amity, which committeth no wranglings, strifes, debates, quarrels, partialities, divisions, tumults or seditions to arise amongst them, they doe hold so together, and live all in amiable love and concord. Is there likewise anything more to be desired, then to see a family well ordered, where the father and mother, the children, and servants, do live together in the fear and obedience of God.[45]

All of these examples demonstrate how happiness and fondness in a family was considered important to its longevity, maintenance and affluence. Similarly, Christopher Hegendorph encourages children in his household manual 'with all their heart not only to love them: but also to have a fervent heart toward' their parents.[46] He also states that 'God doth give us a wise wife, we must love her with all our heart, and to be content only with her, and to desire none other,' based on Biblical examples.[47]

Outside of this obligatory love and duty that was prevalent in early modern writing, we must consider what connection people habitually felt towards their families, if any at all. By tracing the experienced connection to family members during this period, we can distinguish between the prescription and practice of familial affection. Erasmus stated that 'often times he exhorted with a vehement desire, his family to love one another.'[48] This suggests that family members *should* love one another, but perhaps this was only to achieve order and control in the household. Erasmus also comments, 'You love your children. This deed is of no merit. For so doth unchristian men also, or else you love them for their beauty or contentation of your mind: Now is your love

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[44]Lorenzo Valla, *A treatise of the donation or gift and endowment of possessions* (London: 1534), 11.
[45]Jean de L' Espine, The sickman's comfort (London: John Wolfe, 1590), 112.
[46]Christopher Hegendorph, *Domestical or household sermons for a godly householder*, trans. Henry Reiginalde (London, 1548), 27.
[47]Ibid., 33.
[48]Desiderius Erasmus, *Ye dialogue called Funus* (London: 1534), 20.

carnal. But if you love them for that you perceive in them the image of Christ, as piety, soberness, Constance and such other virtues.'[49] Additionally, children were instructed to love their parents as well.[50] It seems that people were concerned with their ability to act lovingly towards their families, since they were advised that 'you are commanded to love your children, and your wives, you are bound to do this, if you had no natural affections in you, only having these affections in you.'[51] The fact that this is stated demonstrates apprehension surrounding this topic, but it also provides evidence for the desire for, or at least encouragement of, affection between family members.[52]

Aside from these remarks, it seems that the most expressive form of personal feelings towards family members is found in reactions to familial deaths, particularly those of children. Lady Anne Fanshaw writes that

> upon the 20th of July, in 1654, at 3 a clock in the afternoon, died our most dearly beloved daughter Ann Fanshawe, whose beauty and wit exceeded all that ever I saw of her age. She was between 9 and 10 years old, very tall, and the dear companion of our travels and sorrows; she lay sick but five days of the small pox, in which time she expressed so many wise and devout sayings as is a miracle from her years. We both wished to have gone into the grave with her. She lies buried in Tankersly Church, and her death made us both desirous to quit that fatal place to us.[53]

One week later, she and her family moved in with her sister Bedell for six months, as they couldnot bear to stay where their daughter had passed away. Her strong emotional reaction to her daughter's death, especially considering the formality of her memoir, is indicative of the trauma of this event. Lady Anne's son had died the previous year and her mother a few years before that as well, so it is not as though she was unfamiliar with losing a loved one as Lawrence Stone concedes. However, the emotion that she

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[49]Desiderius Erasmus, *A godly book wherein is contained certain fruitful, godly, and necessary rules to be exercised and put in practice by all Christ's soldiers* (London, 1561), 57.
[50]Ibid.,55.
[51]John Preston, *The deformed form of a formal profession, or, the description of a true and false Christian either excusing, or accusing him, for his pious, or pretended conversation* (Edinburgh: John Wreittoun, 1632), 5.
[52]L. Stone, 217-224; Keith Wrightson states that this was the ideal situation, 90-3; Houlbrooke argues that it was important since the Reformation,102-6.
[53]Loftis, ed., 136.

expresses shows the impact of this event, even though she has experienced loss beforehand, suggesting her strong connection to her children. Certainly plentiful emotion is felt by parents in Shakespeare's canon whose children also die, as exemplified by Hermione at the loss of Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*, King Lear after Cordelia's death in *King Lear* and various figures in the history plays as well. The moments following their children's deaths are usually when emotion is expressed most lucidly by Shakespearean characters, and these dramatic and sometimes even fatal responses to the loss of their children demonstrates the treasured bond between family members in the plays. Similarly, in a religious text discussing the consequences of various sins, Thomas Beard records that a 'father hearing the death of his only son, died within three days with grief, and was buried in the same grave with his son: the Shoomakers' mother died also with grief.'[54] The fact that both parents died over the death of their son demonstrates the emotional bond that they shared with him. It was stated that 'a man may love his house, and yet not ride upon the ridge of it; his child, yet not always be muching of it; his wife, and yet not still be fondling her upon his knee: Love them as the wise man would have you love your children.'[55] Ralph Josselin was moved 'with the thoughts of my dear mother and two sisters who were buried' during his visit to Stortford on 18 June 1649, over twenty years after their deaths.[56] The sorrow of their passing, regardless of the time that has lapsed, continued to overwhelm him, demonstrating the fervour of his sentiments. Despite the reserved or unfeeling reputation of early modern society, these examples show that love between family members was encouraged and seemingly expected. The emotional ties within the family

[54]Thomas Beard, *The theatre of God's judgement wherein is represented the admirable justice of God against all notorious sinners* (London: Thomas Whitaker, 1642), 427.
[55]William Beech, *A view of England's present distempers occasioned by the late revolution of government in this nation* (London: for William Raybould, 1650), 94.
[56]Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth Century Clergyman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 101.

demonstrate its importance to the early modern individual, not only as a way of understanding the structure of the government and society, but also in a personal manner as well. Shakespeare explores the roles of the family in his plays as a way of captivating his audiences, as it was a common link between them, regardless of their class.

This overview of social attitudes towards the family in early modern England provides a context for the culture and time in which Shakespeare produced his plays, and serves as an introduction for this thesis in establishing what was normative with respect to the family at this time. Families appear in every Shakespearean play, and I have selected plays across genre and career span to examine a cross section of Shakespeare's writing, while trying to focus on relationships that have not previously been discussed in this light. Although these plays are not typically grouped together, this thesis seeks to investigate them as a unit in order to establish a pattern throughout Shakespeare's canon, irrespective of genre or date. Shakespeare's sustained focus on the family, even when his source materials neglect it, emphasises its vitality to understanding and analysing his plays.

This thesis seeks to explore familial roles and relationships in Shakespeare's plays, and will therefore follow the cycle of the nuclear family. This is a way of recognising the progression of the configuration of the family, but also shows the bonds that were already in place once the next series were formed. For example, by the time parents and children formed relationships together, a marital bond had already been formed, further contributing to our knowledge of the impact on each of these relationships. Beginning with marriage, where the family is first formed; I will examine *Othello* and *Macbeth*, and how the marriages in these plays, while tragic, are simultaneously cherished and valued. Often Shakespeare subversively values marriage

by using it to express the most impactful bond that two people can make to one another. Marriage was often constructed as the method of starting a family, and therefore, children are important to the study of these relationships. Succession was integral to the legacy and sustainability of a family, which is the topic of the next chapter, in which I explore the notions of how children are conceived and raised in *The Winter's Tale* and *Richard III*. Shakespeare's roles for children are greatly expanded upon from those of his source materials, demonstrating their importance in his plays. The transition from childhood into adulthood was fraught with change in both housing and legal circumstances, and this struggle in adolescence is clearly depicted in *Romeo and Juliet*, the focus of the next chapter. The tension between the dependency of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood is felt by both titular characters, as they attempt to segregate themselves from their families and create their own family, but are unable to do so. Thus, the household becomes an important signifier of their position within society in this play. Aside from the familial relationships of husband and wife and parent and child, the most influential was that of siblings, which I investigate in a number of plays. Brothers and sisters are crucial to forming identity in Shakespeare's plays, particularly in his portrayal of twins. Finally, I focus on the traditional and complicated nuclear families in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus*, in order to analyse how the family is emphasised and valued in each of these plays, even when it is unexpected. Instead of focusing on political or regal relationships in these plays, Shakespeare highlights the everyday lives of the nuclear family. This thesis seeks to explore the ways in which the family functions and is cherished in Shakespeare's plays, and how it compares to the understanding of these relationships in early modern society. While he often uses monarchs and politics as the backdrop for his drama, Shakespeare sustains his concentration on domestic interactions throughout his canon.

Chapter 1: Marriage

'Is thy union here?' (Hamlet 5.2.326)

This chapter will argue that marriage is valued in Shakespeare's plays, particularly in comparison to his source materials' treatment of wedlock. While marital unions are not always harmonious in his plays, the characters use the vows made explicit in marriage as a way of expressing the most significant bond between two people, and expect marriage to be upheld and honoured by both parties. I will primarily discuss marriage in two tragedies, with some analysis of the way marriage works in the comedies for contrast. More than ninety percent of adults in sixteenth-century London were married, thus the topic of wedlock that Shakespeare explores in *Othello* and *Macbeth* would have been relevant for virtually all of his audience.[57] The rationale for analysing marriage in *Othello* and *Macbeth* is twofold; first, the complex relationships depicted in the tragedies have previously been studied to argue the broken nature of families in Shakespeare's plays, and I wish counteract this by exploring not only the characters' actions, but also their expectations and treatment of marriage overall.[58] Secondly, these plays represent some of the most tragic in Shakespeare's canon, yet by exploring their treatment of the family, they still highlight the importance of the marital union and emphasise its significance to characters in these plays. Therefore, I plan to show that the formation of a family is integral in even the most horrific of tragedies. I will begin by outlining the early modern understanding of marital roles and relationships found in contemporary manuals and writings before relating them to marriages in these Shakespearean plays.

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[57]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 285.
[58]See Carol Thomas Neely and Janet Adleman.

'Why did I marry?' Othello contemplates when presented with the possibility of his wife's infidelity (3.3.242). While spoken in a moment of passionate rage, the frustration in this question reverberates throughout the entire play. Unlike the regal subject matter of Shakespeare's other tragedies, the focal point of *Othello* is domestic life and relationships. Instead of sabotaging Othello's command or reputation, which prove consequential in this play, Iago attacks Othello's marriage, suggesting this to be the most effective and destructive form of agony to instigate in Othello's life. The fact that Shakespeare considers of the dissolution of marriage as the ultimate form of obliteration for Othello demonstrates its significance in and to the play. In the prominent domestic ideology of the early modern period, a man was considered the 'chief governor' of his household, superior to his wife in all affairs.[59] Committing adultery was not only indicative of an incongruous marriage, as it is in today's culture, but was also a manifestation to the community that the husband was unable to control his wife's actions and maintain a systematic household.[60] In fact, the very purpose of marriage was associated with regulating sexual activity, since religious teachings proclaimed that 'God ordained matrimony to prevent whoredom.'[61] Our grasp of Othello's mindset when learning of his wife's supposed affair rests on notions of masculine dominance and wifely chastity of the period. While Othello reacts vehemently to the news of Desdemona's infidelity, he 'is intensely focused on himself, on the consequences for him' and his occupation, but not his marriage.[62] Othello subscribes to the early modern belief that a wife was able to underpin her husband's identity as head of household through her chastity, thus establishing her sexual betrayal as equivalent to tarnishing his entire masculine identity. In efforts to regain the authority

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[59]Cleaver, 9.
[60]Gouge, 217. See also Cleaver, 218.
[61]William Whately, *A Bride-Bush, or Direction for Married Persons* (London: Felix Kyngston for Thomas Man, 1619), 13. See also Gouge, 217.
[62]Ewan Fernie, 'Shame in *Othello*' *Cambridge Quarterly* 28:1 (1999): 19.

that was ostensibly eradicated by Desdemona's actions, Othello exchanges vows of murder with Iago in a perverse marriage ceremony, igniting Othello's fixation with bloodshed. Othello's compulsion to spill Desdemona's blood carries with it a sexual connotation, and acts as the retribution for his inability to command his wife, marriage and household.

The play's setting in Venice, a city notorious for excessive sexual behaviour and lack of restrictions or morals, has produced ample discussion as to whether Shakespeare intended the audience to associate contemporary notions of the Italian city with the characters and events in his play.[63] Although the setting is important, I believe Shakespeare presents his English society's normative attitudes towards marriage throughout the play, by providing numerous examples that reinforce his culture's views on marriage and sexuality. He deliberately undermines the notion of careless sexual relations with his depiction of Bianca, who, uncharacteristically for a courtesan, admonishes Cassio for his cavalier treatment towards her when taking another lover.[64] Shakespeare also displays an English attitude towards female behaviour, demonstrated through Desdemona's comments regarding marriage. Desdemona explicitly defines her role as a wife when she informs Othello, 'Be as your fancies teach you: Whate'er you be, I am obedient' (3.3.88-9). Her proclamation of deference to her husband demonstrates her adherence to society's standards to be unwavering in her duties, regardless of his actions.[65] She reiterates this resolute image of herself as a subservient wife during the willow scene, as she sings, 'Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve' before realising that she has misremembered the words to the song (4.3.52). The line

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[63]Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, Vol. 2 (London: For W. Cater, 1611), 48. See Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 232-4.
[64]See 3.4.169-202.
[65]For this debate, see E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *Othello:The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 213; and Irene G. Dash, *A Woman Tamed: Othello* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 113. For Desdemona's understanding of her obligation, see 1.3.181-9.

that she incorrectly sings suggests that she does not hold Othello accountable for his actions,[66] a resigned acceptance of her fate that casts her as a patient Griselda figure.[67] While critics have argued that Desdemona is 'determined to hold onto her idealised image of her husband and of herself as the perfect wife,' I believe that she epitomises the instructions that were disseminated to wives at this time.[68] In particular, Desdemona follows domestic manuals' guidelines for women that 'in all reverence and humility to submit and subject herself to her husband.'[69] Even Emilia acknowledges the expectation for a wife's obedience to her husband as she pleads, 'Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak. 'Tis proper I obey him — but not now,' exposing Iago's villainy (5.2.195-6). Emilia references such regulations and requests permission to disregard them despite resisting submission to her husband by speaking against him. Shakespeare created an obsequious wife to call attention to Othello's demand for complete submission from Desdemona; a desire that he makes clear throughout the play. Both Emilia and Desdemona demonstrate the contemporary English attitude to marriage despite the Venetian setting.

During this time, the state 'reinforced the pre-existent patriarchal hierarchy' through the publication and distribution of household manuals that instructed men on

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[66]See 5.2.124-5.

[67]For Desdemona's similarities to Griselda, see Fernie, 'Shame in *Othello,*' 44; Denise A. Walen, 'Unpinning Desdemona,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58:4 (2007): 487; and Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 142.

[68]Bernard J. Paris,*Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 91. See also Kay Stockholder, *Dreamworks: Lovers and Families in Shakespeare's Plays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 92; John Middleton Murray, 'Desdemona's Handkerchief,' in *Othello: Critical Essays*, ed. Susan Snyder (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988), 94; Phillip Edwards, *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (London: Methuen, 1968), 123; G. Bonnard, 'Are Othello and Desdemona Innocent or Guilty?' *English Studies* 30 (1949): 175-84; Robert Dickes, 'Desdemona: An Innocent Victim?' *American Imago* 27 (1970): 279-97; Carol Thomas Neely, 'Women and Men in Othello: "What should such a fool/Do with so good a woman?"' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Greene Gayle and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 211-214; and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 111.

[69]Cleaver, 115.

how to establish their definition of an orderly and Godly household.[70] These manuals dictated that a married woman 'unto her husband [was] in all things obedient' in order to impose the structure of the government on the household.[71] Since chastity was of the utmost importance for women, they were instructed to

> endeavour to increase a perfection of love and above all embrace chastity. For the happiness of matrimony doth consist in a chaste matron, so that if such a woman be conditioned in true and unfaned love to her beloved spouse, no doubt shall their lives be stable, easy, sweet, joyful and happy.[72]

Chastity was necessary in an early modern wife and constructed as tantamount to her identity. This ideology can also be seen in *All's Well That Ends Well*, when Diana contends, 'my chastity's the jewel of our house,' demonstrating its importance not only to her reputation, but also to that of her family (4.2.46). By assigning authority to men in all domestic matters, the state ensured that its citizens followed the conventional model for social hierarchy. Such ideas of masculine supremacy in the household are present from the very first scene of this play, when Iago awakes Brabantio, yelling, 'Look to your house' (1.1.80). The fact that Desdemona's deceit and subsequent elopement is conveyed through the use of the word *house* demonstrates how intertwined the notions of household and social order were in the play's society. This concept is repeated in Brabantio's reaction to Desdemona's defiance, as it is easier for him to believe that his daughter is bewitched by Othello than disobedient to him, emphasising the strict, masculine authority of the household.[73]

Due to such restraints placed on female behaviour, the means by which a woman could subjugate a man was to cuckold her husband. Domestic manuals stated:

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[70]Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 3.
[71]Edmunde Tilney, *A Brief Discourse on Marriage, or The Flower of Friendship* (London: Henry Denham, 1568).
[72]Ibid., 59.
[73]See 1.3.60-4.

> The married women must also be very careful and circumspect of her good name. For a good name is the flower of estimation and the pearl of good credit, which is so delicate a thing in a woman, that she must not only be good, but likewise must appear so. For you men are naturally so malicious that you will judge as well of that you suspect, as of that which you be. The chiefest way for a woman to preserve and maintain this good fame is to be resident in her own house.[74]

Male expectations of marriage were predicated on female subordination, and as a result, numerous contemporary writings emphasise the jealousy experienced by men when a woman subverted this expected submissive role. A lusty woman subverted the conventional patriarchal society by exerting her dominance over her husband.Therefore, 'female modesty was essential to domestic order,' with the social system modelled on an orderly household.[75] It was not merely a couple's marriage that relied on the woman's chastity, but her entire household's honour and esteem. Society taught that 'it is to be noted, and noted again, that as the provision of household, dependeth only on the husband: even so the honour of all, dependeth only on the woman: in such sort that there is no honour within the house, longer than a man's wife is honourable.'[76] Because privacy was considered a threat to public welfare, even domestic relations were known throughout the community.[77] Given public involvement in marital relations, a wife's adultery was interlinked with her husband's authority and masculinity. The 'honesty, fidelity and modesty of a wife, and the honesty and diligence of servants, all contributed to the credit or reputation of a family,' which people relied on when considering whether or not to engage in both social and economic relations with a particular

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[74]Tilney, 72.
[75]Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 34. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800*, 101-3 and Mark Britenberg, 'Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England' *Feminist Studies* 19:2 (1993), 378.
[76]Cleaver, 169.
[77]Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 192. See also Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18; and Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 33.

household.[78] It is important to understand the prevailing notion of adultery and chastity in early modern England before examining Othello's relationship with Desdemona.

Manuals noted that adultery was an act against one's family, its alliances, neighbours, and even the town, city and nation where the act was committed because it promoted a lustful and sinful nature, discrediting all members of the household in the process.[79] Not only was the principle of chastity integral to the wife's position in society, it was considered to be the very definition of her role. Robert Cleaver states 'we call the wife housewife, that is, house-wife, not a street-wife, [...] to show that a good wife keeps her house, and therefore, Paul biddith Titus to exhort women that they be chaste, and keeping at home; presently after chaste, be faith, keeping at home: as though home were chastity's keeper.'[80] In understanding the wife's modesty as part of her role as a housekeeper, we gain a better notion of the severe implications for herself, her husband and her entire household if she was unfaithful.

Emilia draws attention to the double standard of female and male sexuality in her famous speech when she questions, 'What is it that they do when they change us for others? Is it sport? I think it is.' (5.1.95-6). Lisa Hopkins has argued that Emilia acts as the 'sustained counterpoint to her husband, defending female sexuality in contrast to his attacks on it.'[81] However, I believe that while Emilia attempts to resist the binary of virgin and whore to which women are confined in the play, she perpetuates it herself by ridiculing Bianca by cruelly cursing, 'O fie upon thee, strumpet' (5.1.121). Despite the liberation of women from misogynistic ideology in the willow scene, Emilia participates in this discourse in the scene directly following. Her actions suggest that

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[78]Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1998), 158. See also L. Stone, 313-6; and Gowing*Common Bodies,* 24, 208.
[79]Gouge, 220.
[80]Cleaver, 218.
[81]Lisa Hopkins, *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy Husbands* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1998), 157.

this classification of women prevails throughout society in *Othello*, even in the minds of women who attempt to circumvent it. Over the course of the play, women are thought to be equivalent to jewels that men must possess.[82] Emilia expresses her derision of this opinion, demonstrating men's cruelty towards women. She asserts, ''tis not a year or two shows us a man. They are all but stomachs, and we all but food: they eat us hungerly, and when they are full they belch us' (3.4.104-7). Her vulgar analogy of women as only valuable so long as they satisfy men's sexual appetites demonstrates her disenchantment with her own marriage.

The audience catches another glimpse of Emilia's marriage after she steals Desdemona's handkerchief. She admits, 'what he will do with it, heaven knows, not I, I nothing, but to please his fantasy' (3.3.301-3). Her confession exhibits the type of relationship that Iago and Emilia have: one filled with distance and mere male sexual fulfilment. When receiving the stolen token, Iago calls her 'a foolish wife' and does not thank her for her efforts, only belittling her in the process (3.3.308). She later concedes that Iago had begged her to steal the handkerchief 'often, with a solemn earnestness' (5.2.225). This statement suggests that intimate conversations are rare between the two of them, and her motivation in stealing the handkerchief was gaining her husband's attention. This scene shows that Iago and Emilia do not share a companionate, intimate marriage, a fact that Emilia attempts to salvage as it appears to disturb her. Emilia's connection with her husband is indicative of the way in which marriage is upheld in this play in a subversive manner. Emilia's desire for a better relationship with her husband demonstrates that marriage is respected and appreciated within this play.

The concern for marital bliss is particularly poignant considering that Shakespeare amended his source materials' characterisation of Emilia, creating a more

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[82]Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 40.

discerning and sensible character for his own play. In Giraldi Cinthio's *Gli Hecatomminthi* (1566), Iago steals the handkerchief from Desdemona while she is visiting Emilia and playing with their infant daughter.[83] Shakespeare omits the child in his play, clearing reconstituting the relationship between Iago and Emilia in terms of husband and wife rather than mother and father. By making Emilia take the handkerchief in place of her husband, Shakespeare emphasises their marriage as the motivation for this action as well. Emilia is also aware of her husband's plan in Cinthio's work, but is too afraid to reveal it to Desdemona for fear of her husband's recrimination.[84] Shakespeare re-characterises Emilia for his play, making her more assertive and courageous, in her defiance of her husband and her declaration of his villainy to Othello, an act for which she is consequently murdered. These changes to Cinthio demonstrate how Shakespeare was reshaping the play to highlight marriage. Furthermore, Shakespeare allows Emilia to transgress the boundary of obedient wife by instilling her with cynicism and pragmatism. However, Emilia is not completely reticent toward her husband, as she takes Desdemona's adored handkerchief in order to please her husband. Her attempt to win favour from him demonstrates to us that at this point in the play, she still cares about her own marriage and Iago's opinion of her. She demonstrates that the characters value marriage and desire it to be a dedicated and amicable relationship through her frustration that her own union is not.

While Iago and Emilia's marriage 'occupies far less space in the play than Othello-Desdemona, it is the determinant of that relationship,' because it illustrates that scepticism towards wives is endemic to the society in the play.[85] The men in the play display an inherent, consuming distrust of women, which is apparent not only in Othello's marriage, but in Iago's as well. Janice Hays has written about the 'sexual

[83]Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* vol. 1 (London: Methuen, 1965), 124.
[84]Ibid., 124.
[85]Ralph Berry, 'Pattern in Othello' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23:1 (1972), 13.

distrust of woman, and her subsequent testing and vindication' that can be found in many of the comedies, especially *Much Ado About Nothing*, where Hero is tested by Claudio's accusation of her chastity.[86] Yet, in this play, Desdemona is not vindicated and allowed to enjoy her restored honour, but instead killed for her supposed crime. However, even considering these circumstances, I believe that marriage is still upheld as the most important bond two people can make to one another in this play.

Iago shares his suspicions that Othello has cuckolded him with the audience, proclaiming, 'I hate the Moor and it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets he's done my office. I know not if't be true, but I for mere suspicion in that kind will do as if for surety' (1.3.384-389). Despite the fact that Iago admits that he has no proof of an illicit relationship between his wife and his General, Iago intends to treat the matter as proven; solely because suspicions of a sexual nature should be dealt with seriously. While the play makes little of his accusation (of which he later accuses Cassio, as well), it is significant to our understanding of marriage in the play. Men's implicit distrust of women and suspicions of adultery, with little or no proof, permeate their attitudes towards women and their sexuality.[87] This inherent wariness of women pervades the play's marriages and demonstrates why Othello is so hasty to believe in his wife's infidelity when Iago raises the idea. Iago explicitly states this prevailing opinion about women when he informs Othello, 'Yet 'tis the plague of great ones, prerogative are they less than the base; 'tis destiny unshunnable, like death—even then this forked plague is fated to us when we do quicken' (3.3.277-81). The use of *we* assumes all men are together in experiencing the inescapable shame brought on them by women. His statement reveals the pervasive notion of women within the play as untrustworthy

[86]Janice Hays, 'Those "soft and delicate desires": *Much Ado* and the Distrust of Women' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, 79.
[87]See 2.1.293-297 and 2.1.305.

because of their insatiable sexual appetites. This unsettling treatment of women is foreign to modern audiences, but represents beliefs found in early modern discourse.

Early modern contemporaries taught 'that the wife is the husband's flesh and bones,' deriving from the creation of Eve from Adam's rib in the Judeo-Christian tradition.[88] The fact that even women's existence relied on men's demonstrates how ingrained the notion of masculine control was at the time. Since the male and female body were believed to unify after marriage, masculine possession over the feminine body was expected. Social conduct manuals dictated that 'they cannot cut of consanguinity by which we are knit together from our nativity: Because nature only and not the laws hath laid that foundation, and perfected the work.'[89] The conceptualisation of the female body as derivative of and controlled by the husband saturates *Othello*, wherein Iago relies on this ideology to overcome Othello's relationship with Desdemona. It is important to reconstitute the marriages in these plays in the world in which they were originally written to better understand their meaning.

Othello admits his lack of knowledge about women and illustrates his continued commitment to men throughout the play. The military world depicted in the play magnifies homoerotic desires from the male characters, namely when Iago relates a scene to Othello in which he and Cassio are in bed together 'and then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand, cry "O, sweet creature!" and kiss me hard as if he plucked up kisses by the roots that grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh, and sigh, and kiss' (3.3.423-7). This sequence replaces the anticipated sex scene between Othello and Desdemona, as the audience is only ever given this intimate scene between two men. Modern critics have noticed that 'the familiar psychoanalytic interpretation suggests, it

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[88]Geoffrey Bullinger, chapter 1 and 2; Tilney, 18; *The Order of Matrimony*, page that begins 'that they marry for riches' sake.'

[89]Etienne Pasquier, *Monophylo, A philosophical discourse and division love*, trans. Geffray Fenton (London: Henry Denham for William Seres, 1572), 21.

may be argued that Iago uses this heterosexual competition as a way of getting closer to men, his real sexual objects.'[90] I believe that Iago's sexual preferences are irrelevant because he is using them to manipulate Othello, and therefore, they cannot be trusted. Early modern England did not subscribe to the binary idea of sexuality that is typically used today, which conceives of two distinct realms: homosexuality and heterosexuality. Instead, people maintained a more fluid notion of sexual identity and in fact praised male friendship.[91] While sodomy was condemned by the church and society, it was then defined as any sexual act which was considered horrifying or depraved, including bestiality, adultery and witchcraft, as well as buggery. Thus, Iago's description of Cassio's dream would have been troubling for both its adulterous and homoerotic nature, and correlates Desdemona and Othello's sexual relationship to acts of licentiousness and degeneracy in relating it, since it is given in lieu of the consummation of their marriage. Iago's sexual desires are only important insofar as they affect Othello, contributing to an understanding of women and marriage in the play.

Given Othello's inexperience with women and his reliance on his military subordinates to instigate his relationship with Desdemona, Iago's sexual desires become crucial to understanding Othello's view of marriage. Previous to the opening of the play, Cassio wooed Desdemona in Othello's place. The homosocial triangle created by this act, in which two men display their own love to one another in negotiations for a woman, demonstrates the constructs of desire in the play.[92] Therefore, the 'same-sex desire may rather be seen to participate in the same troubling of the normative

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[90]Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), 142.

[91]Arthur L. Little, '"An Essence that's Not Seen": The Primal Scene of Racism in *Othello*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44:3 (1993), 318; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), 14-15; Robert Matz, 'Slander, Renaissance Discourses of Sodomy, and Othello' *ELH* 66:2 (1999), 262; Alan Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England' *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990): 2-8; and Valerie Traub, 91-116.

[92]For homosocial triangle generally, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 21-27.

institutions of marriage and the traffic in women that determines both the subordination of women and the regulation of any unmarried sexuality.'[93] In exhibiting homoerotic desire even in wooing a future bride, Othello's marriage to Desdemona is predicated on his hierarchical relationships with his military subordinates. Nevertheless, modern critics have pointed out that Shakespeare does not explore homosexual relationships in the family as readily as other contemporary playwrights such as Jonson, Chapman, Middleton or Fletcher do, but instead focuses on the normative heterosexual definition of the family across the canon.[94] By highlighting the rampant homoeroticism in this military world, Shakespeare undermines the relationships between men and women in the play. In this Venice, men's relationships with men far exceed their relationships with women, as they determine their social status, occupational accolades and reputation. Nonetheless, men are required to interact with women throughout the play, and when they do, they show themselves to be inexperienced and unsuccessful.

Once assured of his wife's deceit, Othello succumbs to Iago's torments and pledges to violently avenge her actions byswearing his allegiance to Iago in a mock matrimonial ceremony. This scene overtly shows the inevitability of a tragic outcome, as Othello discards any alternative conclusion by affirming himself to Iago. Historians have suggested that 'friendship and marriage made competing demands on seventeenth century English men.'[95] Before marriage, a couple was warned that a husband and wife must 'forsake parents, friends, and all, cleaving only to [each other], for no shorter time, than during life'to demonstrate the imperativeness of the bond between a husband and

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[93]Robert Matz, 266.
[94]Mario DiGangi, 'Queering the Shakespearean Family' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47:3 (1996), 270.
[95]Karl E. Westhauser, 'Friendship and Family in Early Modern England: The Sociability of Adam Eyre and Samuel Pepys' *Journal of Social History* 27:3 (1994), 530. See also Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin,' 38-42; and Katharine W. Swett, '"The Account between Us": Honour, Reciprocity and Companionship in Male Friendship in the Later Seventeenth Century' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 31:1 (1999), 4-5 and 24-5.

wife.[96] Despite this convention, Othello allies himself with Iago, privileging his friend over his wife, which results in a tragic ending for Othello and Iago, as well as both of their wives. Even though Othello is comfortable in the company of men due to surrounding himself by them in the military, the words that he and Iago exchange are extremely potent in their similarity to nuptials.[97] Shakespeare suggests that the bonds of marriage, even the corrupted version offered in the play, is the strongest commitment two people can make to one another by writing their exchange reminiscent of a wedding. That ceremony reconstitutes illicit homoerotic desire in the normative marital space of heterosexuality. Bruce Smith has argued that this parody of marriage is 'grotesque because Iago will use Othello's trust to destroy him,' yet it still encompasses many traditions associated with marriage.[98] It is as though the proclamations and sentiments made explicit in marriage aid our understanding of their renewed and strengthened bond to one another at this point, and henceforth they are intrinsically linked to one another.

Kneeling, Othello commits himself to Iago, swearing that he will not waiver in the horrific course of action they intend to undertake. Although he claims that heaven is indifferent to his sufferings, he still uses the sacredness of it to solidify his oath to his friend.[99] The image of Othello kneeling before his ensign physically demonstrates his submission to Iago's control, which renders him defenceless in both mind and body. Despite the audience's knowledge to the contrary, Othello believes that *he* chooses to make such an oath, and that Iago reciprocates out of sincere loyalty. Imitating Othello's stance, Iago asserts:

Witness that here Iago doth give up

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[96]See Tilney; and Thomas Gataker, *A Good Wife God's Gift and A Wife in Deed: Two Marriage Sermons* (London: John Haviland for Fulke Clifton, 1624), 12.
[97]See 1.3.76-94.
[98]Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 63.
[99]See 3.3.460-2.

> The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
> To wronged Othello's service. Let him command
> And to obey shall be in my remorse
> What bloody business ever (3.3.465-9).

Shakespeare's audience would have been aware, especially withcompulsory attendance in church and the contention that Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity generated, that this wording is deliberately evocative of nuptial vows.[100] In the 'Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony' section of the 1559 *The Book of Common Prayer*, the bride and groom knelt during sections of the ceremony.[101] As part of the vows, the woman was asked, 'Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, in sickness and in health?'[102] When placing the ring on his wife's hand, the husband was instructed to affirm her, 'with my body I thee worship.'[103] This scene's close impersonation of these specific qualities unique to wedding ceremonies emphasises the importance of this bond made between the two men. Othello, humiliated by his lack of control in his own marriage, desperately searches for a bond in which he is permitted to dominate, and as Iago's General, he enacts this ceremony with an already established subordinate.

The very act of pledging their lives to each other removes their wives from this position of devotedness, as vowing twice would be considered bigamy. Just as Othello replaces Cassio with Iago as his lieutenant in this scene, he also reassigns the role of his wife to Iago.[104] Their choice to indicate their bond to one another through matrimonial vows negates the previous promises that they made to their respective wives beyond the homoerotic connotations of their words discussed by other critics.[105] Marriage vows

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[100]See B. J. and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 81-3; and Alan Powers, 'Meaner Parties: Spousal Conventions and Oral Culture in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*' *The Upstart Crow* 8 (1988), 29.
[101]*The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacriments and Other Rites and Ceremonies in the Church of England* (London: Officina Edos Vardi, 1559), 17.
[102]Ibid., 14.
[103]Ibid.,15.
[104]See 3.3.479.
[105]See Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Othello* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 182; J. M. Stewart, *Character and Motive in Shakespeare: Some Recent Appraisals*

represented a sacred and binding union, thus Othello and Iago consciously retract the previous vows made to their wives, whom they both murder by the play's conclusion. In this way, Othello removes Desdemona from her position of power over him through her sexuality, thus redefining his relationship to her after this point in the play.[106] Instead of the affectionate terms Othello uses to describe her previous to this scene, he now viciously labels her 'that cunning whore of Venice' (4.2.88); and boldly claims, 'I have no wife' (5.2.97). This exchange of vows forces Othello to re-evaluate Desdemona's relationship to him, because he has already replaced her previous role as his inferior with Iago. It is my contention that this marital ceremony—even though it is presented in parody form—establishes marriage itself as everlasting and durable. The fact that Iago and Othello opt for this oath rather than one of similar military prestige demonstrates the significance of the marriage vow itself.

The strong interconnection that Iago and Othello share during this scene is even hinted at in their language. While kneeling, Othello and Iago continuously pick up the metre of one another's lines, a symbiosis of verse that Desdemona and Othello never share, even in the best of times. The linguistic similarities that the two exhibit in this scene are not evident in the preceding scenes, but certainly become a predominant feature afterwards. Before this, Iago is preoccupied with sexualised images and bawdy jokes when describing marriage; while Othello uses a public and removed demeanour when delineating his relationship with Desdemona to the courtiers in the beginning of the play.[107] In fact, Othello dismisses any physical rationale for his marriage outright when he requests approval for Desdemona to accompany him, asserting, 'I therefore beg

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Examined (London: Longman, 1949), 143; and David Suchet, 'Iago in *Othello*' in *Players of Shakespeare 2: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 194.

[106]Gayle Greene,'"This That You Call Love": Sexual and Social Tragedy in *Othello*' in *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*, ed. Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 50-2. Also see Lisa Jardine, '"Why Should He Call Her Whore?": Defamation and Desdemona's Case' in *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 31.

[107]See Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 597-9.

it not to please the palate of my appetite, nor to comply with heat, (the young affects in me defunct) and proper satisfaction' (1.3.261-4). Not only does Othello portray his marriage in a decorous and desexualised way, he also claims that his appetite for sexual passion is extinct, contrasting his language to Iago's at the onset.

Conversely, Iago litters the first half of the play with graphic depictions of marriage and love. When he tells Cassio of Othello's marriage, his language carries numerous sexual connotations: 'Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carrack: If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever' (1.2.50-1). Instead of plainly informing Cassio that Othello has married, Iago implies that Othello is merely sexually attracted to Desdemona, and that marriage amounts to a bond that is purely physical. For a couple whose consummation of marriage is critically debated, Desdemona and Othello are portrayed by Iago with a bestial propensity towards sexual activity.[108] Even when describing the soldiers' relations with one another, Iago's obsession with their intimacy is explicit, reporting that the men were 'in quarter, and in terms like bride and groom divesting them for bed' (2.3.180-1). Even when Desdemona and Othello are not present on stage, the audience is reminded that the tragedy unfolding before them is primarily between a husband and his wife through Iago's constant musings about sex.

When conjuring the animalistic imagery that he associates with love, Iago repeatedly returns to the specific image of bloodshed. Despite the fact that *Othello* depicts soldiers during wartime, the majority of the uses of the word *blood* refer to sexual conquest. Blood was often used as a 'general synonym for sexual desire' in contemporary thought, which Iago makes plain by referring to this connotation of the

[108]For critics who believe their marriage is left unconsummated, see R. N. Hallstead, 'Idolatrous Love,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19:2 (1968): 107-24; and T. G. A. Nelson and Chales Haines, 'Othello's Unconsummated Marriage,' *Essays in Criticism* 33 (1983), 1-18. Arguments in favor of consummation can be found in E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *Othello*, 41-3; and Norman Nathan, 'Othello's Marriage is Consummated,' *Cahiers Elisabethians* 34 (1988), 79-82.

word in *all* of his uses of it.[109] The fleshy nature of love that Iago vividly invokes continues throughout his discussions with Roderigo and creates an invective that blurs the boundaries between love and lust. Iago tells Roderigo: 'When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite' (2.1.226-9). His only justification for the dissolution of their marriage is indeed a sexual one; namely, that Desdemona will tire of her husband physically and seek gratification elsewhere, which he relates using the term *blood*.

During this time, semen was thought to be 'nothing else but blood,' and therefore carried throughout the body in the bloodstream.[110] In fact Shakespeare is preoccupied with this meaning in *The Winter's Tale*, when Leontes exclaims, 'Too hot, too hot! To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods' at the thought of the friendship between his wife and Polixines (1.2.107-8). Given the physiological aspects of this term, *blood* would have elicited a much more graphic portrayal of sexuality to Shakespeare's audience than it does today. The vulgarity of Iago's language provides a correlation between the consummation of Othello and Desdemona's marriage and a desire for bloodshed not fully realised until later in the play, when Othello yearns for his wife's blood as retribution for her actions. Iago's lascivious descriptions of their marital relationship contains a savage bloodthirstiness that Othello quickly embraces once he is cheated out of the blood—from both himself and his bride—that his wedding night would have provided.

During his ceremonial oath with Iago, Othello adopts Iago's particular fascination with blood. He shouts, 'O blood, blood, blood!' at the thought of Cassio in

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[109]Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 43.
[110]Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951), 129. See also Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 38; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 58-63; Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health Made for the Comfort of Students* (London: Henrie Midleton for William Norton, 1584), 240-1; and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, 45-7.

possession of his wife's handkerchief (3.3.451). In light of the contemporary perception of blood, Othello's exclamation could be referring to the blood expelled by Cassio during intercourse with Desdemona; the blood from eroding Desdemona's hymen; the blood of either Cassio or Desdemona that Othello demands as vengeance; or even Othello's blood (or passion) that is boiling and a result of their adulterous actions. Any of these meanings demonstrate Othello's outrage at his wife's affair and leave the audience to decide which meaning of *blood* is evoked in this scene. Othello's new obsession with 'bloody thoughts' is a desperate attempt to resume his domination over his household, through his relationship with his wife, as he has been robbed of the bloodshed that he expected in the consummation of their marriage (3.3.457). He henceforth assumes Iago's preoccupation with blood, and the majority of the uses of this word after their 'nuptials' come from Othello. Unable to maintain his authority over his wife's actions, Othello becomes so immersed in his hunt for blood that he cannot consider any alternative. A.C. Bradley argued that Othello has a 'bestial thirst for blood' throughout the play; however, it is clear that Othello's desire for blood only occurs from this scene onwards, brought on by his insatiable need for power when he is at his most vulnerable.[111] Othello adopts Iago's language and preoccupation with blood during his mock nuptials with his lieutenant.

While considering Desdemona's murder, Othello claims, 'Thy bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted'(5.1.36). This 'lurid metonymy for murder' associates murdering his wife in their bed with intercourse.[112] Othello identifies Desdemona's death with a sexual search for blood, correlating the act of killing her with the consummation of their marriage. Because Othello is unable to acquire Desdemona's blood through intercourse with her on their wedding night as they suffer from recurring

[111]A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1904), 132.
[112]Michael Neill, 'Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40:4 (1989), 406.

interruptions, he must seek out her blood elsewhere. He believes that Cassio has deprived him of his wife's chastity, thus spilling her blood where he has not. In order to avenge himself, Othello looks for other methods of drawing her blood, attempting to assert his masculinity through a brute hunt to prove his ability to enforce patriarchal standards upon Desdemona in one final act. By planning to spill Desdemona's blood in death, Othello is finally able to resume his position of authority over his wife, thus re-establishing the integrity of the household structure that, in his eyes, Desdemona has destroyed. In his thirst for blood, two symbols—the handkerchief and their wedding bed along with its sheets—are integral to Othello's perception of Desdemona's fidelity.

The handkerchief is not introduced until Act Three, but it quickly becomes the most powerful prop in the entire play. It is of great significance to Othello, as he believes that it represents his ability to possess his wife's loyalty and chastity. Iago realises the vitality and tangibility of the handkerchief and exploits it, asserting, 'Her honour is an essence that's not seen; they have it very oft that have it not. But for the handkerchief—' (4.1.16-18).Iago's 'voyeuristic imagination' presents Desdemona's relationship with Cassio provocatively, yet only the handkerchief can fulfil Othello's demand for 'ocular proof' of his wife's affair (3.3.363).[113] Othello echoes this thought pattern, asserting 'he had my handkerchief' as if to suggest that the very possession of Desdemona's handkerchief alone implicates Cassio in an affair (4.1.22). The handkerchief is not only used as a symbol of their affair, but is ascribed the same credibility as proof of the affair itself, and hence becomes a corporeal item to Othello. Keith Thomas has noted that men expected 'absolute property in women, a desire which cannot be satisfied if the man has reason to believe that the woman has once been possessed by another man,' and Cassio's custody of the handkerchief signals this to

[113]Celia R. Daileader, 'Shakespeare: Balconies and Beds' in *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage: Transcendence, Desire, and the Limits of the Visible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35.

Othello.[114] Othello places such value on this item that he believes its absence, regardless of the circumstances surrounding it, is equivalent to Desdemona committing adultery.

Handkerchiefs were 'most visible in the period as love tokens' and were often viewed as signs of wealth.[115] A suitor traditionally bestowed a love token on a lady to denote his intentions towards her, and at times even to announce that espousal contracts had been reached. Since women were afforded little 'privacy and physical intimacy with their suitors,' a love token was a sign between the couple, as well as to the community, of the intentions of the two parties.[116] Bianca's outrage that Cassio has taken another lover, a supposition based solely on the sight of the handkerchief in his hand, shows how the exchange of tokens indicated intimate relationships to society.[117] In this way, presenting a lady with a handkerchief was also a form of ownership and declaration to other suitors, because it was 'recognized as a marriage accessory, presented to the bride as a token of betrothal or a wedding gift, and displayed, as embroidered gloves often were, as part of the trousseau.'[118] Since the handkerchief was a measure barometer of courtship to the community, Othello interprets Desdemona's carelessness with his token as symptomatic of her indifference towards him and more potently, a denial of his possession of her.

As a stage property, 'the handkerchief registers the theatre's participation in English society's fetishized trade in textiles.'[119] Linens were considered commodities in their own right, with links to female domesticity in their production. Shakespeare's audience would have instantly associated a handkerchief with this history, even before

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[114]Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2:2 (1959), 216. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination,* 103.
[115]Juana Green, 'The Sempster's Wares: Merchandising and Marrying in the *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607)' *Renaissance Quarterly* 53:4 (2000), 1090.
[116]Mendelson and Crawford, 108.
[117]See 3.4.180-2.
[118]Stephanie S. Dickey, '"Met een wenende ziel . . . doch droge ogen": Women Holding Handkerchiefs in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraits' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995), 334.
[119]Paul Yachnin, 'Wonder-effects: Othello's Handkerchief' in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 324.

realising its deeper symbolic meaning in the play.[120] Furthermore, handkerchiefs and sheets contained a fiscal value to early modern acting companies. Phillip Henslowe recorded paying almost twenty shillings in 1594 for lending 'a hancher,' 'a chyllde bed sheet eadged with lace' and 'ten pices of linen tyde in a apkine.'[121] While his records pertain to the Lord Admiral's Men, it is important to note the financial weight these items possessed to all people in early modern England. Furthermore, their value of love tokens was heightened by their 'connection to the previous generation,' as the item became part of a familial discourse and identity.[122] Othello informs Desdemona of this when he relates the history of the handkerchief to her: 'She, dying, gave it me, and bid me, when my fate would have me wiv'd, to give it her' (3.4.63-5). In giving Desdemona his mother's handkerchief, Othello conveys her acceptance into his family's history, as she now carries a valuable emblem of his heritage. Handkerchiefs were not only important as stage properties, but as domestic commodities as well. The presence of the handkerchief in this scene would have been understood as transmitting a sense of domestic space that Othello and Desdemona shared.

The red strawberries on white cloth have long been thought to symbolise blood on wedding sheets, an idea that Othello introduces in his description of the handkerchief 'dy'd in mummy which the skilful conserv'd of maidens' hearts' (3.4.74-5).[123] The presence of virgins' blood on the handkerchief in the form of strawberries pertains to the proof that husbands were given that their wives were virgins upon consummating

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[120]Dympna Callagham, 'Looking Well to Linens: Women and Cultural Production in *Othello* and Shakespeare's England' in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. Jean E Howard and Scott Cutter (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 60.
[121]Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 254; 156; 256.
[122]Richardson, *Domestic Life,* 69. See also Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantacies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 69.
[123]See Linda Boose, 'Othello's Handkerchief: "The Recognizance and Pledge of Love"' *English Literary Renaissance* 5:3 (1975), 363 and Lawrence J. Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare' *Studies in Renaissance* 7 (1960), 238-9.

their marriage.[124] The audience is repeatedly told that the handkerchief was her first gift from Othello, further alluding to their wedding night as the first act between husband and wife, solidifying their contract to one another.[125] It is this handkerchief which stands in place for the consummation of their marriage, instigating the release of her virgin blood, a right that Othello believes he is cheated of when Cassio takes the token, and thus, his wife's virginity from him. The fact that it is also referred to as *napkin*, a synonym for handkerchief, 'emphasises the domestic functionality of the object,' because it recalls a table napkin used in the household.[126] Therefore, the handkerchief is of utmost importance to Othello, because it symbolises his family history, his wife's domesticity and her fidelity.

Before killing Desdemona, Othello pictures her skin as 'snow and smooth as monumental alabaster,' referring to effigies used at funerals (5.2.4-5). But the simile he uses to describe the colour of her skin also carries with it connotations of purity: snow that has not been tainted by any blemish or bloodshed. In contrast, the handkerchief is a physical reminder to him of his wife's infidelity because it is white with red spots on it, evoking the image of her bloodshed, as has already been discussed. In viewing her skin in this way, Othello conceptualises Desdemona in connection with the handkerchief, desiring her to regain the purity of her white skin by not shedding her blood. In his confrontation with the significance of the handkerchief, he forces his wife's image to become entirely white, and thus concludes to smother her without obtaining her blood for himself. The handkerchief symbolises the marriage and family that Othello hoped for in marrying Desdemona, in its ties to domesticity and sexual purity.

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[124]For a discussion on the uses of mummy, see Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 196-7.
[125]See 3.3.291, 3.3.436 and 5.2.214.
[126]For use of *napkin,* see 3.3.287 and 3.3.321. Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 126.

In its initial appearance on stage, the handkerchief is used in Desdemona's attempts to cure her husband's headache, saying, 'Let me but bind it hard, within this hour it will be well' (3.3.286-7). Othello strangely remarks, 'let it alone,' resulting in admonishment from some modern critics for his hasty change in attitude towards the handkerchief (3.3.288).[127] However, it seems that once the idea of adultery has been introduced to Othello, he is so encumbered by his cuckoldry that he cannot perceive an alternative option but to reject his wife. Othello's denial of the handkerchief demonstrates that he no longer desires her, or the token, since he believes she is no longer chaste. Instructing her to leave the handkerchief on the ground further imparts this message to her, as he discards her honour and loyalty to him once he believes it has been offered to another.

The other symbol that pervades the play is the marriage bed and its sheets. However, the bed starts as a place of comfort and safety, and as the play progresses, it is assigned increasing significance as well as tension. In the opening sequence, Brabantio utters that dealing with his daughter's marriage 'hath rais'd me from my bed' (1.3.54). This offhand mention of the bed associates it with a sense of protection and reassurance that the court lacks. Later, Othello requests Desdemona to 'Come away to bed' after they have been awakened by the soldiers' brawl (2.3.253). Again, the bed is a symbol of security and normalcy after an unwelcome dispute. The characters confess a desire to remain in or return to bed instead of dealing with other matters, as might be expected. Desdemona refers to her bed in such a way when she promises Cassio, 'His bed shall seem a school' when discussing Othello (3.3.24). The fact that she uses her bed as a place of confidence with her husband shows that she, too, feels the bed is a protected and personal place, even if she is using it to argue for the reinstatement of another man.

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[127]See Harry Berger Jr., 'Impertinent Trifling: Desdemona's Handkerchief in *Othello*' in *Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 105-6.

As the play draws to a close, the audience, along with Iago, is invited to 'look on the tragic loading of this bed' (5.2.363). The dead bodies of Othello, Desdemona and Emilia bring a particularly cruel reversal of the 'fertile marriage bed' that is anticipated in the comedies. Instead of the intimacy of matrimony and eventually the children that result from it, the bed at the conclusion of *Othello* is full of jealousy, anger and death.[128]

While many occurrences in *Othello* take place off stage, the murder in the final scene is shocking in part because it is entirely depicted on stage. In 1610, Henry Jackson described the audience's reaction to a performance of *Othello* by the King's Men at Corpus Christi College, Oxford: 'assuredly that rare Desdemona, killed in front of us by her husband, although she consistently pleaded her cause eloquently, nevertheless was more moving dead, when as she lay still on her bed, her facial expression alone implored the pity of the spectators.'[129] Jackson recorded that original audiences were moved by Desdemona's placement on the bed, presumably because of the privacy and sexuality it evoked. Certainly the bed becomes an object of fascination and desire for the audience with the various attempts to consummate the marriage, culminating in its significance in the final scene. The bed transforms from a place of comfort into a location for maliciousness and deceit, which is first hinted at when Iago playfully claims that women are 'players in your huswifery, and huswives in your beds' (2.1.112). The apprehension surrounding the bed increases from an innocuous joke to a harsh reality that none seem to escape. Once she realises that something is awry with Othello's conduct towards her, Desdemona instructs Emilia, 'Prithee, to-night lay on my bed my wedding-sheets' and ominously asks for her wedding sheets to be made into a shroud for her (4.2.104-5). Desdemona attempts to rectify the problems with her

[128]Neely, 'Women and Men in Othello,' 234.
[129]Corpus Library's Fulman Papers, vol 10 ff. 83^{v}-84^{v}. Cited and translated from Latin by Geoffrey Tillotson, 'Othello and The Alchemist at Oxford' *TLS* (1933), 494. For modern reactions to this quote, see Thomas Clayton, '"That's she that was myself": Not-So-Famous Last Words and Some Ends of Othello' *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1994), 62-3.

husband through the use of the bed and her wedding sheets, but is unsuccessful since her bed is now a place of trepidation. Wedding sheets were a visible symbol of 'female cultural and material production' because they were sewn by women, making them not only important to the wedding night, but also in their value as domestic commodities.[130] Placing these sheets on the bed introduces Desdemona's marriage, along with her role as a woman and the duties this entailed, into the scene.

Most significantly, it is the bed where the murder takes place, since Iago recommends, 'Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated' to Othello (4.1.207-8). The symbolism of the bed as the setting for Desdemona's murder is evident to Iago and Othello as a form of punishment for destroying its traditional sanctity. In Cinthio's *Gli Hecatommithi*, the ensign and Othello kill Desdemona by beating her and causing the ceiling to collapse to make her death seem unintentional.[131] Shakespeare removes all pretence of accidental death and co-conspirators, instead writing Othello as the sole murderer of his wife on their bed. The alteration from an extravagant murder scene to a private affair between husband and wife reconstitutes the relationships in the play, as it shows Othello frantically trying to affirm his power over Desdemona alone. The bed is 'afforded a level of privacy that set it apart from other pieces of domestic furniture' because of the enclosing curtains and bed posts, creating a separate world inside and outside of the bed frame.[132] In fact, a four poster bed was even known as a *sealed bed* in part because it contained panels used in sealing off the walls and ceilings, but also for its inherent privacy.[133] Only by killing

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[130]Dympna Callaghan, 55.
[131]Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1973), 251.
[132]Sasha Roberts, '"Let me the curtains draw": The Dramatic and Symbolic Properties of the Bed in Shakespearean Tragedy' in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, 157. See stage direction to draw the curtain: 5.2.118 in E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *Othello*.
[133]Ivan G. Sparkes, *Four-poster and Tester Beds* (Haverfordwest: Shire Publications, 1990), 6.

can Othello finally confront her sexuality in the place that she disgraced him most.[134] She is—quite literally—killed because of her marital bed, as this is both Othello's motive and murder weapon. The bed changes from a safe space that is desired to a public spectacle in the final scene where *dramatis personae* and audience are witness to the ramifications of the misuse of the marriage bed.

While Shakespeare litters his plays with the language of beds and bedchambers, the physical presence of the bed on stage is unusual. Of the 350 allusions to beds in Shakespeare's canon, only five plays require a bed as a stage property for a production: *Henry IV Part I and II*, *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*.[135] In all of these plays, the bed occupies a disturbing place that evokes images of rape, murder and death. Other plays call for a bed to be used on stage, such as in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* or Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*; yet in these cases, the bed would have been placed in a discovery space or alcove, as the architecture of the Rose, Red Bull and Theatre would not have allowed for a bed to be brought onto the main stage. It was only with the construction of the Globe in 1599 that a full scale bed would have been brought onto centre stage, emphasising its significance.[136] While this variance in the positioning of the bed certainly relied on the practical concerns of the theatre, it is clear that the bed and its materiality are prioritised in *Othello*, especially when considering that this is the first instance that Shakespeare would have been able to bring the entire bed onto centre stage, as it was initially performed at the Globe.

Since 'household properties turned the stage into a (representation of) domestic space, their material presence on the stage may also have reminded playgoers that their

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[134]John Russell Brown, 'Representing Sexuality in Shakespeare's Plays' in *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172.
[135]Sasha Roberts, 153-160. Roberts states that one would also be needed for the induction in *The Taming of the Shrew*, yet the bed is merely talked about in this scene but not called for in stage directions.
[136]Ibid., 158. See also E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vols I-IV (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1945), 111.

own households had come to function as domestic stages for the display of status-objects.'[137] The early modern bed was a noteworthy material possession that was among the most expensive items in the house.[138] Catherine Richardson has shown that there was 'a perceived ability to carry and transfer identity' in household commodities through her examination of wills and inventories; thus, a bed would have carried far more emotional weight to an early modern audience than it does today.[139] A bed would have recreated a domestic space on stage, making this scene more meaningful to audience associating the stage property with their own furniture at home. Shakespeare's specific placement of the bed in this scene allows his audience to contemplate the role of marriage in the play overall, and its impact on their own lives. Beds at this time evoked a sense of economic power since they were so costly. Perhaps more importantly, the bed was involved in the marital ritual of 'throwing the stockings,' where the bridal party would escort the couple to their bedchamber and engage in sexual innuendo with stockings, which symbolised four naked legs. One traveller observes the English tradition: 'the bridesmaids carry the bride into the bed chamber, where they undress her and lay her in bed. The bridegroom, who by the help of his friend is undressed in some other room, comes in his night gown as soon as possible to his spouse, who is surrounded by mother, aunt, sisters and friends, and without any further ceremony gets into bed.'[140] While this bawdy celebration of the bed suggests it was a public locale at the time, it seems that this occasion was unusual in its publicity. In actuality, the bed afforded a level of privacy which people were expected to uphold.[141] Since rooms lacked structural integrity at this time and were typically only separated by light screens

[137]Natasha Korda, 210.
[138]Sasha Roberts, 154.
[139]Richardson, *Domestic Life*, 72.
[140]F. M. Mission, *M. Mission's Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England*, trans. John Ozell (London: for D. Brown, 1719), 352-3. Also cited by Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death,* 375.
[141]Lena Cohen Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 174.

or panels, the bed became a place of privacy simply because of its enclosing structure. The fact that Shakespeare turns to the bed for the locale of this scene would have been even more shocking to an early modern audience, as it was a metonym for inherent intimacy and sexuality. The 'capacity of household objects on the stage to invite audience members to make connections between what they see in the theatre and their own domestic practice' creates a sense of the personal or intimate nature of this scene, as theatregoers could have correlated their own private experiences in the bed chamber with what was occurring on stage.[142] Thus, the presence of the bed on stage in this scene would have created a powerful tableau on the early modern stage with its suggestions of sexuality, privacy and intimacy. Furthermore, the bed becomes symptomatic of the marital relationship and its consequence to the play.

Shakespeare wrote *Othello* around 1602, in a period when many domestic tragedies were produced, including Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*(1603) and the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (1592).[143] All three of these plays investigate the consequences of marital infidelity, but Shakespeare differs from his contemporaries is in his treatment of the wife. Both Alice in *Arden of Faversham* and Mistress Frankford in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* are actually unfaithful, whereas Desdemona is falsely accused. Shakespeare alters the conventional plot of the domestic tragedy by including an innocent wife and overzealous friend to convince the husband of betrayal, where none has actually occurred. This change from other traditional narratives of the domestic tragedy of the time allows the audience to view Othello's anger as equivalent to the fury that a deceived husband feels, as it is inevitably irrelevant if Desdemona is guilty, since Othello acts in spite of the facts. Ultimately,

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[142]Catherine Richardson, 'Properties of domestic life: the table in Heywood's *A woman killed with kindness*' in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, 130.
[143]E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., 1. A. K. McIlwraith, *Five Elzabethan Tragedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 326; 242.

Shakespeare reverses the early modern concern surrounding paternity by writing a faithful wife and distrusting husband. Thus, the play is deliberately provocative by showing the husband as deluded in this way. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*, Shakespeare uses the threat of cuckoldry to consume and corrupt the husband, despite the chastity of all the wives in these plays. Since female adultery was capable of destroying the nuclear family unit, there was a great amount of anxiety surrounding it. However, Shakespeare dramatises the *threat* of cuckoldry, without making his female character culpable. By writing a blameless wife, yet still including her murder, Shakespeare demonstrates that her fate is not derivative of her actions, but the tragedy itself.

The early modern view of marriage was predicated on patriarchal supremacy, and the wife's role both in the household and society was subject to this. Othello expects Desdemona to act according to these regulations, and when he surmises that she does not, it cripples his view of marriage, as well as his masculine authority. Only in cuckolding their husbands could women truly overpower men, as the entire social hierarchy was premised on the respect and obedience that women gave their husbands.[144] Othello's loss of his wife's fidelity is indicative of his lack of control in his household, which would have been publicised throughout the community. Othello invests himself in a search for Desdemona's blood in hopes that it will allay the lack of blood he received on their wedding night. While he is vicious towards his wife despite her efforts, Othello ultimately demonstrates the vitality of the relationship between man and wife. The women in this play, while distrusted by nature, voice the importance of the marital union and bond. Despite the tragic portrayal of marriage in this play, Shakespeare subversively demonstrates its significance by parodying the solemnisation

[144]Gouge, 258.

of marriage to strengthen the vows that Othello and Iago make to one another. *Othello* shows that familial relationships are innately more significant than any others by using the rhetoric confined to nuptial vows to solidify Othello's relationship to Iago. The bond that these ceremonial traditions reinforce makes clear how imperative marriage is in the play, even when the characters neglect it themselves.

Macbeth

Marriage is examined again in another of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Macbeth*. While neither of these plays sees a happy conclusion, the sanctity and weight of marriage is underscored in both of them. I have argued that marriage is shown to be the most important promise or vow two people can make to one another in *Othello*, and now I will demonstrate how this vow is upheld as precious to Lady Macbeth in the Scottish play. I will offer a reappraisal of Lady Macbeth's character in light of the common medical knowledge that permeated early modern culture. When her actions and speeches are immersed in the kind of medical awareness that was prevalent in this period, we will be forced to think differently about her characterisation and desires. The play demonstrates that Lady Macbeth is invested in her marital role by providing markers of her mental state that would have been obvious to an early modern audience. By unearthing the contemporary notions of medicine, privacy and illness, this article seeks to demonstrate the way in which Shakespeare's audience would have understood Lady Macbeth's character.

The household is extremely important to *Macbeth*, because it serves as the setting for many of the scenes, but also because it is depicted in a way that shows its valued position in early modern society. Parallel to the political subject matter of the play, domestic activities are highlighted throughout with the Macbeths entertaining guests and hosting banquets; Lady Macduff talking to her children, where they expect to be protected from the repercussions of war; and even in scenes with the witches, who attempt to corrupt this familiar space. Early modern households were considered a 'microcosm and guarantor of the wider social and political order,' and in this play the household exhibits the chaos that occurs in the world outside of it.[145] Although viewed

[145]Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 381.

as a haven, a place of comfort and concord, the household becomes the site of murder, cruelty and injustice. By reversing the expected safety of the confinement of the household, Shakespeare shows how valuable this space is to the characters in the play, as well as to his society.

The play's catalyst, Duncan's murder, takes place in the Macbeths' home, while Duncan is asleep, trusting the safety of Macbeth's hospitality towards him. The detailed description that Shakespeare provides surrounding the murder, including the Macbeths' discussion regarding how it should be executed and the reactions afterwards deliberately domesticate this scene. His source material, Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, gives little detail regarding the specifics of the murder, informing the audience that Macbeth 'slue the king at Enuerns, or (as some say) at Botgosuane, in the sixth year of his reign. Then having a company about him of such as he had made privy to his enterprise, he caused himself to be proclaimed king.'[146] By placing regicide in the domestic sphere, Shakespeare perversely associates the home, a place thought to be shielded from war even in the play, with murder.[147] In a domestic tragedy, 'the central characteristic shared by the plays as departure from Aristotelian definitions of the tragic as involving the actions of kings and princes,' yet in this play, Shakespeare differs from this pattern by including a king's murder, [148] intentionally domesticating an otherwise political murder.[149] Duncan's death is not merely a household issue, since it empties the throne and introduces the possibility of an impending war. The decision to

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[146]Bullough, vol. 7, 496.

[147]Duncan goes to sleep easily by all accounts, suggesting that he feels safe at Macbeth's castle. See 1.7.61-3 and 2.1.13-17.

[148]Richardson, *Domestic Life*, 5. See also Henry Hitch Adams, ed., 1-5; Keith Strugess, ed. *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 7; Orlin, *Private Matters*, 12; and Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994). For the history of domestic tragedies, see Ada Lou and Herbert L. Carson, *Domestic Tragedy in English: Brief Survey*, Vol. 1 (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982).

[149]See Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness* and the anonymous *Arden of Faversham*, which both include marital infidelity as the main motivation for domestic tragedy.

surround the events of this political travesty with a married couple's discussions in their own home suggests a conscious choice to domesticate the murder, emphasising the importance of the household in this play.

At the play's conclusion, Malcolm describes Lady Macbeth as a 'fiend-like queen' due to her culpability in Scotland's tumult (5.9.35). The criticism of Lady Macbeth has permeated modern criticism, in which she has been judged harshly, specifically for her role as a woman or a wife.[150] She has been labelled the 'real witch' of the play;[151] the 'most disturbing example of an interfering wife' who destroys her husband; and a failure at her most significant task: producing a male heir.[152] Despite this overwhelming disapproval of her competence as a wife, I believe that Lady Macbeth fully participates in the domestic duties of an early modern woman and actually exhibits many qualities that make her an encouraging, dutiful and compatible wife to Macbeth. Carolyn Asp argues that she 'consciously attempts to reject her feminine sensibility and adopt a male mentality because she perceives that her society equates feminine qualities with weakness.'[153] It is my contention, however, that Lady Macbeth actually displays many qualities and actions that early modern society associated exclusively with femininity. She is portrayed only in a domestic setting, and therefore, regarded as a feminine character both in terms of how she conceives herself and is interpreted by those around her. Unlike many of Shakespeare's tragic heroines, Lady Macbeth is only ever depicted in her own home, never entering the war zone that encompasses the play. Early modern women were encouraged to stay at home because 'the chiefest way for a

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[150]See Walter Dias, *Love and Marriage in Shakespeare* (Ram Ragar, New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1977), 235; Leslie A. Fielder, 74; G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (London: Methuen, 1951), 135-6; and Frances E. Dolan, 226.
[151]Leslie A. Fielder, 71.
[152]Sarup Singh, *Family Relationships in Shakespeare and the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 125. William T. Liston, '"Male and Female Created He Them": Sex and Gender in *Macbeth*' *College Literature* 16:3 (1989), 234.
[153]Carolyn Asp, '"Be Bloody, Bold and Resolute": Tragic Action and Sexual Stereotyping in *Macbeth*' *Studies in Philology* 78:2 (1981), 153.

woman to preserve and maintain this good fame, is to be resident in her own house. For an honest woman in soberness, keeping well her house, garner thereby great reputation.'[154] Lady Macbeth acts accordingly, and is not assigned any scenes with friends, waiting women or any form of confidant in the play. By sharing her thoughts and scenes with her husband, unaccompanied, Lady Macbeth is cast without a multitude of relationships to convolute her allegiance, opinions or role. Even her name, which is her husband's surname alone, cements her identity as his wife, with no autonomy of her own outside of this position. She is 'fully interpolated into patriarchal ideology,' only regarding and presenting herself as a wife, and devoting her time to her domestic chores and issues.[155] When comparing Lady Macbeth's actions to that of an early modern wife, she consistently models the idea behaviour for women at this time.

In early modern England, a wife was instructed to 'keep the house' in order while her husband was absent, and Lady Macbeth is seen fulfilling this duty throughout the play.[156] Contemporary manuals taught: 'Therefore the husband without any exception is master over all the house, and hath as touching his family, more authority than a king in his kingdom. The wife is ruler of all other things, but yet under her husband.'[157] Lady Macbeth is able to welcome numerous guests to her home with little notice, command servants and host banquets; all indicators of her capability to manage the household affairs while her husband is at war. It seems that Lady Macbeth's character is intentionally given scenes devoted to household duties traditionally expected of wives. Shakespeare was interested in her characterisation, and even included the reactions of others to show how she is understood by those around her. The audience is frequently told of her ability to entertain guests and provide hospitality, as

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[154]Tilney.
[155]Lisa Hopkins, 148. For a discussion on her femininity, see Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 3rd edn. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 284.
[156]Tilney. See also Cleaver, 52-3; and Thomas Gataker, 14-27.
[157]Cleaver, 176.

Duncan calls her a 'fair and noble hostess' when he is graciously received at her home with little warning (1.6.24). Banquo reiterates this sentiment, referring to her as a 'most kind hostess' (2.1.16), and when Macduff finds Duncan murdered, he laments that he cannot report the news to a 'gentle lady' (2.3.83). Hosting was not merely a household chore in Shakespeare's time, but a method for a couple to display their unity to their neighbours. William Gouge stated that hosting guests 'will be an especial means, as to manifest their mutual affection, so to hold the hearts of man and wife firm and close together, and make them the better like and love one another.'[158] In this context, entertaining guests is a method for Lady Macbeth to both inhabit the domestic space and advertise her contentment in matrimony to her community. Lady Macbeth epitomises the behaviour expected of wives when Shakespeare was writing this play, and continuously places her marriage above all other concerns.

Lady Macbeth also conveys womanly behaviour in her attitude towards cleanliness, a wife's duty in seventeenth century England.[159] Her solicitude for her house is even evident, albeit in a disturbing way, after Duncan's murder when she comforts her husband with 'a little water clears us of this deed' (2.2.64). On one level, this anxiety over their blood-stained hands is to remove any incriminating evidence, but it becomes a 'frightening perversion of Renaissance woman's domestic activity' as she is primarily worried with cleaning up after their deed.[160] A deep rooted concern for cleanliness is repeated in her famous sleepwalking scene, when she continuously rubs her hands, bewailing 'Out, damn'd spot!' in efforts to remove the metaphysical blood from her hands (5.1.35). The fact that her uneasiness and guilt manifests itself in a domestic manner demonstrates the way in which Lady Macbeth considers herself the

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[158]Gouge, 232. See also Karl E. Westhauser, 519-20.
[159]Thomas Gataker, 27-8; Cleaver, 52-3; and Mendelson and Crawford, 229.
[160]Joan Larsen Klein, 'Lady Macbeth: "Infirm of purpose"' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carol Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 245.

lady of a house with the responsibilities that entails. When the murder is officially reported by Macduff, Lady Macbeth's meagre response is, 'What, in our house?' (2.3.88). Although she is surrounded by soldiers receiving news that carries with it solemn political ramifications, Lady Macbeth immediately interprets it as a domestic issue.[161] Her initial concern is always for her house and her obligations as a wife.

Most importantly, Lady Macbeth only encourages her husband to be ambitious, never jealously seeking power for herself, a quality which led A. C. Bradley to deem her 'a perfect wife.'[162] Her lack of distinction between the goals of her husband and herself shows her mindset as her husband's aide and partner. Holinshed's *Chronicles* includes a wife who is 'burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a queen,' yet Lady Macbeth is solely concerned with her husband's ascendancy.[163] Despite being criticised for not adhering to her husband's authority, Lady Macbeth in no way attempts to question his superiority, instead heeding manuals' instructions to 'be a help unto' her husband.[164] By analysing some of her most well known speeches in an early modern medical context, I will show that Lady Macbeth's primary concern is maintaining her identity as Macbeth's wife above all else.

L. C. Knights' landmark essay, 'How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism' famously examined Lady Macbeth's maternity as a means of questioning the custom of critics to construct a fictional biography of Shakespearean characters. Notwithstanding the influence of Knights' article, I will show that Lady Macbeth's history is important to our understanding of her character as well as the play overall, not in asking *if* she has a child; instead, *why* she has explicitly chosen to forgo motherhood. In this section, I will

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[161]Ibid., 246.
[162]A. C. Bradley, 288.
[163]Bullough, 496.
[164]Cleaver, 115.

reconstitute her position as Macbeth's wife by analysing her actions through an early modern understanding of female anatomy and domestic interiors. While her marriage paradoxically sustains and destroys her over the course of the play, recent criticism has neglected to fully realise its significance; evident when some of her most famous speeches are analysed through a historical context. In her most notorious and widely debated speech, Lady Macbeth shows the depths of her determination to execute Duncan's murder through a reference to infanticide.[165] She claims:

> 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 pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this (1.7.54-9).

Critics have argued that this cruel depiction of her child displays 'a crime against both person and lineage,' assigning her a wanton and deviant nature unbefitting of a mother, and therefore, a woman.[166] While this merciless illustration has been interpreted as a lack of affection and compassion on her behalf, it can actually work to achieve the direct opposite.[167] Since murdering her child is the *most* gruesome act that she can fathom, Lady Macbeth employs it in order to assure her husband of her devotion to him. While she does not appear to have a child in the play, Lady Macbeth's speech certainly creates a dramatic moment on stage that invites the audience to consider her maternity, or lack thereof. Given her high status, it is unlikely that Lady Macbeth would have been employed as a wet nurse, and her statement explicitly states that she has experienced motherhood. In her attempt to prompt her husband to act, Lady Macbeth relies on the

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[165]For main arguments regarding this issue, see: Stephanie Chamberlain, 'Fantasizing Infanticide: Lady Macbeth and the Murdering Mother in Early Modern England' *College Literature* 32:3 (2005), 72-91; L. C. Knights, *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?* (Cambridge: Gordon Fraser: The Minority Press, 1933); and Jenijoy La Belle, '"A Strange Infirmity": Lady Macbeth's Amenorrhea' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31:1 (1980), 381-86.
[166]Stephanie Chamberlain, 75. Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 135.
[167]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 105.

horrific detail of this analogy to demonstrate the strength of her resolve. Since this speech is often used to determine Lady Macbeth's brutality as a mother or woman, its intended purpose has typically been ignored by critics. Rather than destroying her femininity, this disastrous version of events for her child solidifies her unwavering allegiance to Macbeth, as she expresses her desire to be understood solely in terms of *wife*.

When examined in light of English notions of breastfeeding from the early modern period, this speech is unusual in that Lady Macbeth portrays herself nursing her own child, an uncommon duty for a woman of her elite status.[168] In fact, Shakespeare's other mothers of similar rank hire wet-nurses to breastfeed their children, as seen with Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* and Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*.[169] Renowned midwife Jane Sharpe noted in her manuals that in England 'the usual way for rich people is to put forth their children to nurse' because aristocracy considered it lowly and subordinate.[170] However, English contemporaries noted that in Scotland, women 'eschewed strange milk' because of the presumed transmission of lower class attributes and other harmful effects that a wet-nurse could potentially spread to her children.[171] Similarly, in John Bellenden's translation of Boece's *Scotland Historae*, with which Shakespeare was familiar as he used it as a source material in writing *Macbeth*, a distinction is made between Scottish and English mothers with regards to their breastfeeding practices. Scottish women were advised by domestic manuals to breastfeed their own newborns because of the 'many advantages the child may receive by taking its nourishment whence it derived its substance' and they believed that

[168]See Mendelson and Crawford, 154-6; Lisa Picard, *Elizabeth's London* (London: Phoenix, 2003), 205-6; Houlbrooke, 132-3; L. Stone, 269-70; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*,87-89.
[169]See *The Winter's Tale* 2.1.56-8 and *Romeo and Juliet* 1.3.24-34.
[170]Jane Sharpe, *The Midwives Book: Or the Whole Art of Midwifery Discovered* (London: Simon Miller, 1671), 353.
[171]Rapaell Holinshed and John Hooker, *The Second Volume of Chronicles Conteining the description, conquest, inhabitation, and troblesome estate of Ireland, Wherevnto is annexed the description and historie of Scotland* (1586), 21. Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 136-7.

'whatever rank the mother is of, the child is of proportion to it.'[172] Given that breastfeeding one's own children was the accustomed behaviour for women of gentry in Scotland and that one of the motives for writing *Macbeth* shortly after the unification of England and Scotland may have been to 'vindicate the king's public image' as Scottish, Shakespeare's audience would have understood Lady Macbeth's claims of breastfeeding her own child as part of her identity as a Scottish woman.[173]Society was greatly concerned with childrearing practices at this time because they were perceived to be indicative of people's religious beliefs; hence debates surrounding the issue became mainstream even in England. Puritan ministers such as William Gouge and Robert Cleaver began to urge women to nurse their own children because they maintained that the milk was provided by God, and consequently, it was a Biblical and ethical necessity for the mother to utilise this provision for her newborn.[174] According to William Gouge, 'the chiefest question of doubt is concerning the party who is bound to this duty; namely, whether the mother be bound to do it herself or no.'[175] Since the discourse of breastfeeding practices gained prominence throughout the early modern period and was used to construct a national identity in Boese's work, Lady Macbeth's speech would have resonated with theatregoers to early performances of the play at the Globe. It is clear in this speech that Lady Macbeth's rejection of breastfeeding is part of a refusal to be portrayed as anything other than a wife, highlighting the importance of marriage to her character and in this play.

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[172]Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts* (Edinburgh: James Glen, 1675), 215; 214. See also John Mitchell, *The Way to True Honour and Happiness: A Friendly Address to Parents, Masters of Families and Landlords* (Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson, 1699), 27-8.
[173]David Norbrook, '*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography,' in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Keven Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987), 104. See also Christopher Highley, 'The Place of Scots in the Scottish Play: Macbeth and the Politics of Language' in *Shakespeare and Scotland*, ed. Willy Maley and Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 53-66; and Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 106.
[174]See Gouge; Cleaver; Daniel Rogers, *Matrimonial Honour, The Mutual Crowne and Comfort of Godly, Loyal, and Chaste Marriage* (London: Thomas Harper for Edmund Minshew, 1650).
[175]Gouge, 508.

As this topic was part of the collective consciousness at the time, refusing to nurse a child was indicative of much more than the bonds of a mother-child relationship to Shakespeare's audience. Thus, Lady Macbeth's capitulation must be understood as both a method of substantiating her resolve and emphasizing her commitment to her husband as his wife. Women were advised 'to abstain from venery or man's company' for the duration of breastfeeding, as medical guidance manuals such as Eucharius Roesslin's popular *The Birth of Man-Kinde* warned that sexual activity soured the breast milk, and as a result, harmed the baby.[176] Scottish society prohibited intercourse while breastfeeding, even stating it was

> a cause of suspicion of the mothers fidelity toward her husband, to seek a strange nurse for her children (although her milk failed) each woman would take intolerable pains to bring up and nourish her own children. They thought them furthermore not to be kindly fostered, except they were so well nourished after their births with the milk of their breasts, as they were before they were born with the blood of their own bellies, nay they feared least they should degenerate and grow out of kind, except they gave them suck themselves.[177]

This description of nursing practices falls under Holinshed's heading, 'Of the manners of the Scots in these days,' clearly demarcating their actions from those of the English.[178] Furthermore, Holinshed's *Chronicles* was read by Shakespeare and used for many of his plays, indicating he would have been familiar with this distinction between Scottish and English mothers. Since women were expected to refrain from intercourse for the duration of breastfeeding, Catholic theologians habitually recommended wet-nursing 'as the solution for the incompatibility of breastfeeding and conjugal functions,'

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[176]Eucharius Roesslin, *The Birth of Man-Kinde; Othewise Named The Woman's Book*, trans. Thomas Raynol, (London: 1604), 14. See also Sharpe, 363-5; Henry Newcome, *The Complete Mother: Or An Earnest Persuasive to all Mothers (especially those of Rank and Quality) to Nurse their own Children* (London, 1695): 48-9; L. Stone, 52; and Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 23.

[177]Raphaell Holinshed and John Hooker, 21. See also Hector Boece, *History and Chroniklis of Scotland*, trans. John Bellenden (Edinburgh: W. and C. Tait, 1540), section headed 'Ane prudent doctrine maid be the auctoure concerning birth of new maneris and the auld of Scottis.'

[178]Raphael Holinshed, *The Second Volume of Chronicles* (London: John Hooker, 1586), 19.

based on Galen's medical teachings from the second century.[179] Recent analysis in early modern social history confirms that babies were customarily nursed for twelve to eighteen months after birth, thus women were required to risk their child's health or 'adultery by the sex-starved husband' if they chose to breastfeed their children themselves.[180] By figuratively killing a breastfeeding child in this speech, Lady Macbeth declares that she is more invested in her husband's fidelity than she is in the life of her own child.

Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have shown that mothers who chose to nurse their newborns 'could be overruled by their husbands, whose preference may have been for the resumption of sexual relations.'[181] One such example is Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, who wrote a treatise encouraging women to decline from employing a wet nurse, despite the common practice to the contrary in England due to her strict religious beliefs. She recounts that she wished to breastfeed her own children, but admits 'I was overruled by another's authority' on the matter.[182] While publically admonishing her husband's decisions would oppose the patriarchal hierarchy of the household, Elizabeth Clinton's statement makes her situation plain to her reader. She intended to warn other expectant mothers of her plight which suggests that this type of domestic quarrel occurred with some regularity in society. While I am not suggesting that Lady Macbeth was overruled by her husband, it is evident from Elizabeth Clinton's account that early moderners heeded the traditional advice to abstain from intercourse while breastfeeding. Aware of the implications of breastfeeding, especially for Scottish

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[179]Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 105. See also Mendelson and Crawford, 29. Margaret Healy, 'Dangerous blood: menstruation, medicine and myth in early modern England' *National Healths: Gender, Sexuality and Health in a Cross-Cultural Context*, eds, Michael Worton and Nana Wilson-Tagoe (Portland: Cavendish, 2004), 86.
[180]See L. Stone, 53. See also Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 88.
[181]Mendelson and Crawford, 155.
[182]Elizabeth Clinton, *The Countess of Lincolness Nurserie* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short, 1622), 15-6.

mothers, Shakespeare's audience would have interpreted Lady Macbeth's claim as indicative of her relationship with her husband. Lady Macbeth removes this battle between baby and husband, choosing instead to reinforce her position as a wife, thereby enhancing the importance of her singular role in the play. In doing so, she assures Macbeth of her dedication to him and strengthens the significance of their marital relationship over everything else.

Lady Macbeth's sexual prowess is apparent throughout her discussion with her husband, particularly when she correlates his ability to murder with his capacity to perform sexually, asking, 'Art thou afeard to be the same in thine own act and valour as thou art in desire?'(1.7.39-41). By conflating copulation and murder, Lady Macbeth makes it evident to Macbeth that his aptitude for killing Duncan is equivalent to his manly duty to her as her husband.[183] Moreover, the sexual connotation of the word *be* allows the audience to associate intercourse with their murderous plan.[184] Across the canon, Shakespeare frequently uses *be out* to signify abstinence, yet here, he evokes the opposite effect through his use of *be*.[185] Instead of luring him with the power of the position of ruler, Lady Macbeth calls on his role as a man and husband to entice him to fulfil the witches' prophecy. John Turner has argued elsewhere that she 'seeks to arouse her husband by the *double entendre* of her reference to act, valour and desire.'[186] I believe that the couple's propensity for sexual innuendo in their language demonstrates their highly erotic relationship. This is evidenced by the fact that Macbeth's relationship with his wife absorbs his concentration before committing regicide and propels him to act. The way in which she places their relationship at the forefront of his motivation

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[183]See Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 56; William Whatley, 14; and Gouge, 130-1.
[184]See A. R. Braunmuller, ed., *Macbeth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134; William T. Liston, '"Male and Female Created He Them": Sex and Gender in *Macbeth*' *College Literature* 16:3 (1989), 232; and Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England*, 83.
[185]Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 1968), 77.
[186]John Turner, 'Macbeth' in *Shakespeare: The Play of History*, ed. by Graham Holderness, Nick Porter and John Turner (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1987), 138.

shows that they share a 'collusive intimacy,' even when plotting murder.[187] Lady Macbeth not only manipulates his desire to prove his masculinity, but also his relationship to her through her reference to sexual intimacy in their conversation. In addition, the Macbeths are one of Shakespeare's most affectionate couples, frequently using terms of endearment towards one another. Among Macbeth's names for his wife are: 'my dearest love' (1.5.58), 'dear wife' (3.2.36), 'love' (3.2.29), 'my dearest partner of greatness' (1.5.11) and 'dearest chuck' (3.2.44). These recurring phrases from a husband to his wife show the audience the tender rapport they share with one another. They have an intimacy and connection unique to Shakespeare's couples. The audience observes that their sexual relationship is prioritised in their communication with one another, as it is used as justification for Duncan's murder. In predicating their relationship on intimacy, Shakespeare demonstrates the ramifications that a breastfeeding child would bring to their marriage, as intercourse plays a vital role in their marriage.

The incongruity of breastfeeding and sexual activity is crucial to understanding of Lady Macbeth's infamous 'unsex me here' speech. In this speech, she is generally taken to be rejecting her femininity, except she ignores her gender entirely, instead, discussing her physiology. She commands:

> 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 the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief! (1.5.40-50).

[187]Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 113.

The use of the word *spirits* in this passage has often been crudely interpreted by critics as Lady Macbeth summoning supernatural beings, in large part due to the witches' presence in the play.[188] Not only are the witches generally not referred to as *spirits* in the text, but many critics have characterised the witches a nymphs, based on their similarities to Middleton's play, and as such, not considered supernatural in any sense. Furthermore, the word was frequently used to signify a humour in the body throughout early modern writing.[189] The OED defines spirit as 'one or other of certain subtle highly-refined substances or fluids (distinguished as *natural*, *animal*, and *vital*) formerly supposed to permeate the blood and chief organs of the body,' with the most frequent use of the word in this context occurring during the 15th to 17th centuries.[190] Galenic humoral theory taught that the body was comprised of a variation of four distinct humours, with men considered hot and dry, while women were cold and moist. Several works on bodily functions of the time define the term *spirit* in relation to humours in the body. One medical text even delineates the term:

> by spirit here we understand not an incorporeal substance, or the intellect of man [...] but by spirit we mean a thin and subtle body. Because nature is not wont to copulate one contrary to another, unless it be with some medium, not unlike a band: for mortal and immortal, do differ more than in kind; and therefore an incorporate being, is not consentaneous to a brittle body, and immortality cannot be united to the intellect of man without the concurrence of a medium: and this is no other then a spirit, which doth bring mortality to the body.[191]

Instead of referring to the witches, *spirits* here can also delineate the humours in Lady Macbeth's body. Contextually, Lady Macbeth's use of the word in conjunction with her

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[188]See W. Moelwyn Merchant, 'His "Fiend-Like Queen"' *Shakespeare Survey 19* (2007), 75-78.
[189]John Floyer, *The Preternatural State of Animal Humours Described by the Sensible Qualities, Which depend on the different degrees of their Fermentation* (London: W. Downing for Michael Johnson, 1696); Thomas Brown, *Nature's Cabinet Unlocked: Wherein is Discovered the natural causes of Metals, Stones, Prescious Earths, Juices, Humours and Spirits* (London: Edward Farnham, 1657); and Daniel Sennertus, N. Culpeper and Abdiah Cole, *The Sixth Book of Practical Physik of Occult or Hidden Diseases* (London: Peter Cole, 1662); and Samuel Purchas, *Microcosmus, or The History of Man* (London: William Stansby for Henry Fetherstone, 1619), 482.
[190]See OED entry for the word 'spirit.'
[191]Thomas Brown, 154-5.

allusion to gynaecology suggests this early modern definition of the word; and Shakespeare's audience would have understood this usage as her primary meaning in this passage. It was the prevalent belief that 'in the stones, womb and the veins and arteries that contain blood and Spirits, when they are distempered, suffer the blood and Spirits to corrupt' these parts of the body.[192] Moreover, manuals show that the ubiquitous view concerning spirits inside the body was that they had the ability to heat the blood, control one's temper and expel excrements.[193] This denotation of *spirit* is seen elsewhere in Shakespeare's canon, in *King John*, where King John tells Hubert, 'that surly spirit, melancholy, had baked thy blood and made it heavy-thick, which else runs tickling up and down the veins' (3.3.42-4). The personification of *spirit* as melancholy, or in Lady Macbeth's case, as possessing the ability to execute 'nature's mischief' by passing through the blood and causing damage to the body, was widespread during the period. Thus, Lady Macbeth's language when dealing with the spirits affecting her bodily functions would have been considered customary to Shakespeare's audience in their understanding about humours' affect over the body. Given the early modern medical understanding of gynaecology, it is clear that Lady Macbeth discusses the bodily humours as a way of extending the conversation to her menstrual cycle.

While figuratively Lady Macbeth declares that she wishes to become less compassionate and remorseful, the manner in which she envisions doing so requires drastic, painful alterations to her body. Her soliloquy refers to menstruation and lactation, two intrinsically female qualities deeply correlated in early modern thought. Contemporary medical belief followed Aristotle in stating that milk was 'nothing but

[192]Daniel Sennertus, N. Culpeper and Abdiah Cole, 53.
[193]John Floyer, 10.Thomas Brown, 157.

the menstruous blood made white in the breasts.'[194] Medical literature on the female reproductive system taught that all of the fluids in the body were fungible; thus, the blood released from a woman's body during menstruation was the same substance expelled whilst nursing an infant. Writing to her sons, Dorothy Leigh noted of breastfeeding, 'will she not bless it every time it sucks on her breasts, when she feeleth the blood come from her heart to nourish it?'[195] Accordingly, Lady Macbeth's command for her body to stop the 'compunctious visitings of nature' and cause the blood to 'come to my woman's breasts' must be analysed through this early modern medical grasp of female anatomy. Her speech acts as a request for her body to cease menstruation and commence lactation in its stead, as the two were unable to coexist since they were believed to be the same substance. The uterus and its physiological functions were integral to the early modern understanding of a woman, so much so that the organ was considered explicative of the etymology of *woman*. Samuel Purchas states in his *Microcosmus, or The History of Man* that 'our language calls her woman, quasi womb-man.'[196] The use of the womb in defining and interpreting the woman at this time demonstrates its significance when discussing female ailments. Consequently, Lady Macbeth's request to 'unsex' herself must be read through her attempt to rid herself of all that physically makes her a woman, namely, menstruation.[197]

She uses this soliloquy to show the audience that she is prioritising intimacy with her husband over any nurturing obligations that she has to her child. This interpretation does not suggest that Lady Macbeth is requesting to be filled with poison, rather that her milk be rendered futile in its thickness, subsequently removing her from her duty to

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[194]See Eucharis Roesslin, 73; Sharpe, 356; John Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636), 10; *The Problemes of Aristotle* (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1597); and Thomas Moffett, *Health's Improvement* (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1655), 119.
[195]Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing, or The Godly counsaile of a gentle woman* (London: John Budge, 1617), 10.
[196]Samuel Purchas, 474.
[197]Jenijoy La Belle has suggested this elsewhere. See '"A Strange Infirmity": Lady Macbeth's Amenorrhea, 381-86.

nurse her own child. Renowned midwife Jane Sharpe taught that 'if the milk be much, and stay long in the breasts, it does curdle, when the thinner part evaporates and the thick stays behind and turns into kernels and hard swellings, which being the chiefy part of the milk will soon grow hard.'[198] This thickening of the milk in a woman's breasts was considered to be a part of a humour, or spirit, in the female body. Jane Sharpe also asserts 'Nature, that useth to send forth good blood by veins, casts forth these ill humours [...] and the womb falls out in time, they make thick veins.'[199] When a mother's milk was congealed, midwives instructed women to withhold breastfeeding because it would harm the baby and injure the mother as well. Therefore, society permitted a wet nurse if the mother's milk had hardened, to ensure the safest sustenance for the infant.[200] As Lady Macbeth divests herself of the physical aspects of womanhood, she attempts to destroy her compulsion to act as a mother, requesting 'make thick my blood' to her body. If she is unable to suckle her own child due to thickened and hence detrimental milk, then she would no longer need to concern herself with her husband's fidelity, which has previously been discussed. With this speech, she demonstrates to the audience that she is willing to undergo traumatic, corporeal changes in order to maintain her sexual relationship with her husband. Her instruction to 'take my milk for gall' refers to this coagulated, unusable milk. Since people considered breast milk a poisonous substance once it solidified, it would be considered bile to her baby. As Scottish behavioural norms dictated that she hire a wet nurse if this was the case, Lady Macbeth pleads with her bodily humours in order to dedicate herself exclusively to her husband, removing all concern for his loyalty to her sexually. Given the early modern grasp of the female body and breastfeeding practices at this time, Lady Macbeth's soliloquy would have been interpreted as an attempt to eradicate conflict

[198]Ibid., 357.
[199]Ibid., 303.
[200]Eucharis Roesslin, 156-161; Valerie Fieldes, 136.

between her baby's nutrition and her husband's sexual happiness. I have analysed this speech against contemporary medical beliefs circulating in the early modern period to show that Lady Macbeth prioritises her role as a wife over all others.

In order to produce ineffective breast milk, Lady Macbeth first requests for her menstruation to cease. Her appeal to do so indicates her preference to copulate with her husband instead of feed her child; a decision that stipulates drastic physiological consequences. During the early modern period, physicians frequently wrote about the detrimental effects that resulted from amenorrhea. Different doctors labelled this medical condition various names, but among its most common were 'frenzy of the womb,' 'the suffocation of the mother' and 'uterus hysteria.'[201] Regardless of its nomenclature, this disease was certain to produce 'fainting and swounding fits, the passion of the heart, anxiety of the mind, dissolution of the spirit' among its ailments and 'proceed[ed] from the retention or stoppage of their courses.'[202] Medical pamphlets typically described the symptoms as frightening to behold, with many onlookers 'ascribing these accidents either to diabolic possession, to witchcraft, or to the immediate finger of the Almighty.'[203] A great deal of anxiety surfaced during this time about the female body since it differed from that of the male, particularly in its reproductive system. Since women were deemed inferior even in the physical form, men utilised demonology to explain the female body's diversion from the perceived perfect bodily form of the male. Accordingly, there was a strong link between the disease of the

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[201]J. Pechey, *A Collection of Chronical Diseases* (1692), 32-3 and 49; Lavinas Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (London: Joseph Streater, 1658), 18; Ludovic Mercatus, 'On the common conditions of women' in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 51-4; and Mendelson and Crawford, 25.
[202]Nicholas Fontanus, *The Woman's Doctor* (1652), 52-3.
[203]Edward Jorden, *A Brief Discourse of the Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London: John Windet, 1603), 2;

womb and mental illnesses and delirium.[204] Nicholas Culpeper wrote in his *Directory for Midwives* that 'it is a horid disease, curable at first, but if neglected, it turns to madness.'[205] Women suffering from this disease were also believed to self-mutilate or commit suicide, as Simon Foreman observed upon visiting one of his patients. He noted that Sir William Monson's wife, who was suffering from the cessation of menstruation, 'thinks the devil doth tempt her to do evil to herself.'[206] The fact that womb frenzy was thought to be derivative of amenorrhea, which Lady Macbeth powerfully summons, has strong implications for her ensuing madness. When she presents what the doctor calls an 'infected mind' in her sleepwalking scene, modern critics have had difficulty justifying her sudden onslaught of madness if she is truly as cruel and unfeeling as they suggest (5.1.69). Her ailing mind presents an example of a common disease in Shakespeare's day. Given the medical explanation of womb frenzy and her desire to conjure amenorrhea, Lady Macbeth demonstrates the consequences of this unnatural course for her body.

During this scene, the doctor notices the peculiarity of 'how she rubs her hands' as though she were continuously washing them while sleepwalking (5.1.23). Early modern physician and philosopher John Bulwer states in his manual on the significance of hand gestures that 'to wring the hands is a natural expression of excessive grief [...which] provokes by wringing of the mind, tears, the sad expressions of the eyes; which are produced and caused by the contraction of the spirits of the Braine.'[207] An early modern audience would have understood Lady Macbeth's hand motions as a visual signifier of her mental illness given her previous unusual conduct on stage. Later,

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[204]Ian Maclean, 41; Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Directory for Midwives: or, A guide for women, The Second Part* (London: Peter Cole, 1662), 115; Mendelson and Crawford, 24; and Patricia Crawford, 'Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth Century England' *Past and Present* 91 (1981), 54.
[205]Nicholas Culpeper, 116.
[206]A.L. Rowse, ed., *The Casebook of Simon Forman: Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age* (London: Picador, 1974), 177. See also Crawford, 'Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth Century England,' 54.
[207]John Bulwer, *Chirologia, or, The natural language of the hand composed of the speaking motions* (London: Thomas Harper, 1644), 28.

Malcolm informs the audience this ‘’tis thought, by self and violent hands took off her life’ (5.9.37-8). Whether or not Lady Macbeth commits suicide has long been debated since Malcolm’s assertion is left unsubstantiated by the text. However, understanding that suicide was an expected and frequent outcome of madness resulting from frenzy of the womb, Malcolm’s statement is given credibility. In essence, when Lady Macbeth calls for her body to be physically altered, she expresses her profound desire to act as a loyal and gratifying wife, placing her husband’s sexual needs before her own physical comfort. However, over the course of the play, Macbeth withdraws from her, acting without consulting or even informing her of his plans, a divergence from his conduct during the first half of the play. Instead of acting as the means to sustain her marital happiness, Lady Macbeth’s endeavour to destroy all of her competing, expected roles as a woman and mother only works to alienate her from all other characters in the play. Therefore, Shakespeare provides his audience with these indicators that they would have commonly associated with womb frenzy, and as such, our comprehension of them is crucial to our interpretation of Lady Macbeth’s behaviour and characterisation.

Long before their deaths, the Macbeths show the audience the unparalleled intimacy and collaboration they share with one another. The private and exhaustive union that the two of them share at the beginning of the play immediately establishes the Macbeths as a united couple to the audience. This relationship is integral to our understanding of Lady Macbeth’s character who continuously places her husband’s wishes before her own, seen in their conversations previous to Duncan’s murder. In fact, the Macbeths are in such a single frame of mind that the two hardly even need to fully articulate their murderous plans to one another before the details of their plot are developed. After reading her husband’s letter, Lady Macbeth proceeds with the arrangements for Duncan’s murder as if it was already the decided course of action. It is

as though Macbeth anticipates her reaction and the two 'inhabit each others' minds' in an intimate way.[208] When they meet, she asks if he will 'put this night's great business into [her] dispatch,' with no further specificity as to their intentions (1.5.67-8). This scene demonstrates that they share a connection and understanding that is difficult to establish between two people.

William Gouge stated in his popular domestic conduct manual: 'the first, highest, chiefest, and most absolutely necessary common mutual duty betwixt man and wife, is matrimonial unity, whereby husband and wife do account one another to be one flesh.'[209] While Lady Macbeth acts as one with her husband in their shared mindset, she establishes a more literal interpretation of this idea when she initially comes on stage. Alan Stewart has shown that the letter that she reads aloud 'presents the two characters as one' to the audience, because their voices and beings are merged.[210] Acting as both her husband's report of his encounter with the witches and Lady Macbeth's own understanding of these events, the recital of his letter essentially obscures the distinction between man and wife because they are amalgamated. Lady Macbeth's first entrance is staged in such a way that it introduces her character to the audience first and foremost as a wife, literally voicing her husband's ideas and explanation of events, providing the audience with the sense that the two are inherently combined. The letter itself only contains incidents that have previously been dramatised; therefore, Shakespeare's inclusion of this passage works only to characterise Lady Macbeth as a wife. Almost all of her scenes and the entirety of her ideas and speeches have no precedent in Shakespeare's source material, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, so Shakespeare's focus on her personality and role as a wife underscores the importance of her character to our

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[208]Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004), 139.
[209]Gouge, 214.
[210]Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 33.

analysis of his play.[211] Shakespeare expands on Lady Macbeth and in doing so gives her speeches and scenes to highlight her identity as an early modern wife.

During their first scene together on stage, the Macbeths converse in private, without any servants or other attendants present. Alan Stewart and Lena Cowen Orlin have persuasively argued that the closet and gallery were the only places in the early modern household that ensured privacy. Thus, the Macbeths' decision to retreat into either a closet or gallery in order to facilitate this solitude would have alerted both their attendants and Shakespeare's audience to the clandestine nature of their conversation. Although this confinement is necessary to conceal the content of their discussion, household structure required that they go to great lengths in order to solidify their privacy at this time. Neil Carson has argued that distinct places can 'materialise and then melt away in the imagination of the spectators,' inviting the audience to make links between the material objects or atmosphere on stage and the physicality of a particular space in the household.[212] When the scene begins, the stage direction in the First Folio reads: *Enter* MACBETH'S WIFE *alone, with a letter* (1.5.0). Nowhere else in the play is it specified that someone enters *alone*, even when only referring to a single person coming on stage. Lady Macbeth's presence without any servants is significant, as a Countess would have had numerous individuals at her dispatch. Her seclusion shows that she rejects the expected lifestyle for her status emphasising her investment in her marriage. Once Macbeth arrives, the two of them converse privately, abnormal in a time when 'it was usually assumed that household walls had ears, [and] it was also generally accepted that the domestic interior could not be trusted' for confidentiality.[213] I believe that the fact that the couple is alone in their house would have alerted Shakespeare's audience to the fact that they were either in a closet or the gallery as these were the only

[211]Bullough, 448.
[212]Niel Carson, quoted by Richardson, *Domestic Life,* 8.
[213]Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 231.

rooms in which isolation could be found. Both of these locations necessitate a public withdrawal from other people's company in other populated rooms of the house. While this seems a minor difference to today's audiences since domestic interiors are often considered private, such was not the case when *Macbeth* was first performed. Privacy between two people was so uncommon that Robert Cleaver proclaimed, 'the husband and the wife have their secret counsels and communications of matters concerning their profit and commodity.'[214] Cleaver's statement suggests that privacy was rare and often regarded as inappropriate due to its stigma of improper behaviour.[215] The inclusion of the stage direction for Lady Macbeth to enter unaccompanied would have been conspicuous to Shakespeare's audience in terms of the choice that it indicated on Lady Macbeth's behalf to retreat into a specific section of the house. Even in the play, it is clear that seclusion from the court party is considered a breach of traditional etiquette. When Macbeth withdraws from the ceremonial dinner, Lady Macbeth asks, 'why have you left the chamber?' (1.7.29) and later questions, 'why do you keep alone?' when Macbeth contemplates Banquo's murder (3.2.8). Her concern for the way in which his isolation will be interpreted by their guests and servants demonstrates the negative connotation of privacy present not only in early modern England, but in the world dramatised in the play.

The need to withdraw to a closet or gallery in order to achieve seclusion from servants and guests has led many historians believe that the closet was 'the only room in which its occupant could be entirely on his own,' with servants routinely present in all

[214]Cleaver, 187.
[215]See Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631), 48-9; Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 176-7; and Diane Shaw, 'The Construction of the Private in Medieval London' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996), 460.

other rooms.[216] The deliberate location of the Macbeths in their house—and in a specific room within that house—provides an early modern audience with a point of identification. The closet was 'constructed as a place of utter privacy, of total withdrawal from the public sphere of the household—but simultaneously it functions as a very *public* gesture of withdrawal, a very public sign of privacy' because one had to deliberately seek it out in order to experience its solitude.[217] Similarly, the gallery's 'main connection to the rest of the house was not a room but a staircase,' making it difficult to accidently find, subsequently providing more concealment from the remainder of the household.[218] The way that Shakespeare depicts the Macbeths' relationship as personal and private is rare in terms of the construction of the household during this time, signifying to his audience that they interact on an intimate level that was atypical in his society.

Since the Globe stage was not divided as houses were, the theatre audience would have relied on different cues to signify the physical spaces that the characters inhabited. Andrew Gurr concedes that *Macbeth* is one of the few Shakespearean plays that would have utilised the two flanking doors on the opposite sides of the stage to indicate indoor and outdoor realms.[219] By differentiating these spaces on stage, the audience would be able to recognise the indoor space introduced in this scene. On stage, the scene would likely have been performed in a 'curtained alcove or discovery-space in the tiring house wall, which served as a shop, tomb, cell, study or closet,' so that the

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[216]Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 56. See also Alan Stewart, 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered' *Representations* 50 (1995), 80-1; and Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 296-7.
[217]Stewart, 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered,' 81.
[218]Orlin.*Locating Privacy*, 236.
[219]Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 122. See also Tim Fitzpatrick, 'Shakespeare's Exploitation of a Two Door Stage: *Macbeth*' *Theatre Research International* 20:3 (1995), 208.

audience could easily identify the Macbeths' location.[220] The early modern theatregoer could easily understand the indoor, closet aspects of the Macbeths' discussion because of the staging of this scene although they were not inside a typical house while watching these scenes unfold. Catherine Richardson has argued that certain scenes 'build up a sense of family and the mutual relations of the household through a mimetic relationship between different domestic spaces within the same house' with respect to *Romeo and Juliet*.[221] Similarly, the intimate aspects of this scene between the Macbeths contrasts with other, more public scenes within their domestic space that undoubtedly take place elsewhere. Even in the theatre, the audience would have recognised the uniqueness of the Macbeths' seclusion from the remainder of their household. Given the implications of privacy in the early modern period, Lady Macbeth's decision to retreat into a specific space that provided isolation from her servants merely in order to read her husband's letter and converse with him is demonstrative of her continued focus on her marriage. By physically alienating her character from the remainder of the characters, Shakespeare strips Lady Macbeth of all other expected roles and relationships, permitting the audience at the Globe to view her purely as a wife.

Shakespeare deliberately domesticates an otherwise political and demonic play to include episodes of cooking, cleaning and feasts, in order to elevate the importance of the family to the play. Furthermore, the sustained focus on the distinctive intimacy that the Macbeths share, whether shown through their location within their house or the emphasised importance of intercourse in their relationship, is established through Lady Macbeth's speeches and actions. Her seclusion from her household attendants; her interaction with her husband in private conversation; her powerful rejection of her child

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[220]Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 4th edn.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 183.
[221]Catherine Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105.

and the physicality of womanhood are all part of a visceral pledge of loyalty to her husband alone. In analysing her in light of the expectations and practices of the early modern period, it is clear that, despite her vicious reputation, Lady Macbeth rejects the expected role of motherhood in order to express her desire to be understood solely in terms of *wife* through her unwavering commitment to her husband's ambition and sexual satisfaction above her own comfort and desires. In both *Macbeth* and *Othello*, Shakespeare shows portraits of marriage that are at times problematic and volatile, while keeping the significance of wedlock and its inherent bonds intact. Even when marriages are ultimately destroyed, the union that it signifies is emphasised as the most important and unifying of all relationships in these tragedies.

It seems that in the comedies, men are continuously attempting to evade marriage and its confinement. Many of the comedies utilise similar tropes and plots, and many Shakespearean comedies strive for a wedding as comedic closure. In many of the comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *All's Well that Ends Well* in particular, the characters try to escape this convention by rejecting the confinement of marriage as an antiquated, restrictive tradition. While these plays provide the most complete portrayal of marital contracts and ceremonies that occur on stage, they explicitly question the very notion of marriage and its meaning in society.[222]

In *All's Well*, Helena enacts an espousal with Bertram using the marriage liturgy of *per verba de futuro* present in Elizabethan England.[223] When permitted to chose her husband, she declares, 'I dare not say I take you, but I give me and my service, ever whilst I live into your guiding power.—This is the man' to Bertram, the King and the court(2.3.103-5).Her speech is not merely indicative of her choice, but reveals the process in which betrothed couples performed a ceremony to declare their future

[222]Lisa Hopkins, 76.
[223]Peggy Muñoz Simonds, 'Sacred and Sexual Motifs in *All's Well That Ends Well*' *Renaissance Quarterly* 42:1 (1989), 33-59. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 267-8.

nuptials to one another and the surrounding community. The King instantly recognises this when he comments, 'Good fortune and the favour of the King smile upon this contract, whose ceremony shall seem expedient on the now-born brief and be performed tonight' (2.3.178-81). His use of the word *contract* notes the formality with which this proceeding has taken place, and highlights the weight that it carries. In early modern England, couples often underwent a betrothal to solidify their contract with one another and their respective families. Cambridgeshire pastor Richard Greenham, who also wrote *Treatise of a Contract before Marriage* (1599) advised his parishioners:

> Now further as concerning the nature of this contract and espousage, although it be a degree under marriage, yet it is more than a determined purpose, yea more than a simple promise. For even as he which delivereth up the estate of his lands in writing (all conditions agreed upon) is more bound to the performance of his bargain, than he that hath purposed, yea or made promise thereof by word of mouth, although the writings be not yet sealed: even so there is a greater necessity of standing to this contract of marriage, than there is of any other purpose or promise made privately by the parties. These things observed, I purpose (as God shall give me grace) to give some lessons, how you must prepare your selves to live in the estate of marriage.[224]

Numerous other ministers discuss espousal as a stage on the road to matrimony, recognising it as integral to the marriage contract itself.[225] While an espousal was not required for a union to be recognised as lawful, ministers strongly urged citizens to enact them as a means of controlling and regulating marriage.[226] In fact, William Gouge states that 'so firm is a contract, as the law calleth a betrothed maid, a wife: and a betrothed maid might not be put away without a bill of divorce.'[227]

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[224]Richard Greenham, *The works of the reverend and faithful servant of Jesus Christ M. Richard Greenham* (London: William Welby, 1612), 123.
[225]Caleb Grantham, *The godly mans choice, or, A direction how single godly persons, who intend marriage, may make choice of a fit* (London: Matthew Simmons for Henry Overton, 1644), 66-8; Henry Swinburne, Treatise of Spousals *or Matrimonial Contracts* (London: S. Roycroft for Robert Clavell, 1686), 194; T. W., *An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles* (London: Thomas Man, 1585), 177; Cleaver, 54-5; Gouge, 196; Rogers, Matrimonial Honour, 104-5; and *The Christian State of Matrimony*, fol 54.
[226]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 319-321.
[227]Gouge, 186.

Despite the legality of these proceedings, Bertram is affirmatively against marriage in his letter to Helena, in which he states, '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 gather to, then call me husband. But in such a "then," I write "never."' (3.2.57-60). The seemingly impossible conditions Bertram sets for Helena to achieve are of course met by the play's conclusion; but it is Bertram's fierce rejection of marriage in the face of punishment from the king that is so astounding. Bertram makes plain his reasoning: Helena's low status, and specifically the ramifications this will have for their future children. His scorn is evident in his response to her choice: 'She had her breeding at my father's charge. A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain rather corrupt me ever' (2.3.115-7). His speech 'abominates the thought of mingling his rich blood with her poor blood in the production of offspring: two fine strains make fine children.'[228] His refusal to wed Helena on these grounds is perhaps reflective of the ingrained social hierarchy at this time yet Shakespeare reverses this structure through the king, the highest ranked character. Notwithstanding the importance of social class to the king's own authority, he refuses to accept this as appropriate behaviour and vows to eradicate the class disparity.

While this scene presents Bertram in a negative light, there is a preoccupation with lineage in the play. Learning of her son's refusal of Helena, the Countess states, 'He was my son, but I do wash his name out of my blood, and thou art all my child' (3.2.66-8). The King asserts, 'Strange is it that our bloods, of colour, weight, and heat poured all together, would quite confound distinction, yet stands off in differences so mighty' (2.3.118-22). Helena herself tells another lord, 'You are too young, too happy, and too good to make yourself a son out of my blood' (2.3.97-8). The idea that blood is mingled between family members and can be corrupted or altered by family member is

[228]David S. Berkeley and Donald Keesee, 'Bertram's Blood-Consciousness in *All's Well That Ends Well*' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31:2 (1991), 248.

evident in this play, not only from Bertram, but from other characters as well. In a play where the title focuses on its conclusion, the final scene is integral to our understanding of the play.[229] Ultimately, Bertram and Helena marry and reunite on stage in the final scene. The fact that Bertram and Helena are eventually united demonstrates the inevitability of marriage in this play, regardless of the characters' desires or actions. Yet again, Shakespeare upholds the sanctification of marriage by structuring it as the conclusion to this play, even though it has been fiercely avoided previously. Bertram's hesitancy and questioning of marriage only works to heighten its importance by the play's conclusion since even a notorious bachelor succumbs to the tradition eventually.

Much Ado portrays a similar distrust in or reluctance with regard to marriage as characters carefully weigh their options before committing themselves, unlike the hasty declarations of love seen in other comedies. Speaking to her uncle about the possibility of marriage, Beatrice states

> Not till God make men of some other mettle than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmaster'd with a piece of valiant dust? To make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none. Adam's sons are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sin to match in my kindred (2.1.59-65).

As one of the only comedies without a liminal green space, 'unanchored idealisation turns to degradation here, nuptials are shattered more violently and irretrievably than in the other comedies.'[230] The realism of the play and the characters' inherent distrust of marriage are consistently voiced throughout the first two acts. Despite their disdain for marriage, the characters eventually wed, demonstrating its importance in the play. The fact that the 'play's vociferous mockers of marriage and the mores of Messina at large, prove as gullible as the butts of their quips and finally succumb to the yoke of

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[229]Gerard J. Gross, 'The Conclusion to *All's Well That Ends Well*' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 23:2 (1983), 257-276.
[230]Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 51.

matrimony, is the most compelling testimony to the hold convention has over the characters.'[231] In both of these comedies, marriage is the eventual outcome despite the adamant protest of the characters. By voicing these concerns and distaste for marriage, Shakespeare expresses the importance of the ritual in forcing his characters to accept it in these plays. Marriage acts as the commencement of the nuclear family, as it provides the formation and structure for the household to exist. Shakespeare focuses on the development of marriage in the comedies to evaluate the importance placed on this relationship, and its ramifications for the entire family. These characters' reluctance and abashment of the marital state shows its importance, as eventually, they all take a turn down the aisle. Across both of these genres, regardless of the subject matter, it is clear that the formation of the family is explored through the sustained emphasis on the bonds indicative of the marital relationship.

In this chapter, I have argued that marriage is the most significant bond that two people can make to one another both in the early modern period and in Shakespeare's plays. Even when marriage is mocked in the comedies or eventually destroyed in the tragedies, it always proves to be important to the characters in his plays. While some critics have interpreted the dissolution or disruption of marriage to be indicative of a larger unease between males and females in the play, I have shown that marriage is highlighted by Shakespeare as a unique and treasured bond between two people. This is often evidenced by the great lengths characters will go to in order to protect marriage, or the way it is used to create a bond between two people who are otherwise unlinked. The fact that Shakespeare continuously turns to marriage when his source materials gloss over it demonstrates a conscious choice to highlight the complexities of this relationship in his plays. Marriage was the first step in forming a family in early modern England.

[231]Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 185.

Domestic manuals and sermons taught that one of the purposes of marriage was to regulate sexual activity and procreate. The fact that children played such a prominent role in defining the marital relationship demonstrates their importance in creating and solidifying the nuclear family unit. The next chapter will explore in more detail how early modern people considered reproduction and child-rearing, and how this early modern understanding compares to Shakespeare's plays.

Chapter 2: Children

> *'My dear wife's estimate, her womb's increase, and treasure of my loins' (Coriolanus 3.3.114-5)*

Early modern people frequently wrote about the conditions of conception as an important indicator about the future child's life. As such, the moment of conception was something that would have been important to early modern couples once married. Continuing on from the previous chapter about the relationship between husband and wife, this chapter will examine how the anxiety surrounding reproduction altered this relationship, and in turn, how parents related to their children both in pregnancy and after birth. It is evident from a variety of medical and domestic manuals that the proper rearing and management of children was an essential component of familial life. Given the early modern perspective on pregnancy and children, I will argue that Shakespeare takes pains to highlight various children in his canon, allowing them more substantial roles than are given in his source materials. I have chosen to discuss *The Winter's Tale* because of the sustained focus on the conditions of pregnancy, in particular, and the ramifications that Hermione's thoughts and actions would have had for her child given the medical understanding of reproduction at the time. *Richard III* provides distinct and autonomous roles for children, allowing for a deeper understanding of the way the family functions in the plays. While *The Winter's Tale* and *Richard III* both depict the life of monarchs, they take pains to focus on the way that the family functions and interacts with one another. These plays represent disparate moments in Shakespeare's career and different genres, and as such demonstrate that Shakespeare is preoccupied with familial life and relationships throughout the entirety of his canon.

Children were both desired and treasured in early modern England, and this idea can be seen in a number of Shakespeare's plays. Legitimacy is a fundamental concern in

The Winter's Tale as it determines a mother's chastity, a family's unity and a child's nobility. Despite being labelled a bastard moments after birth, Perdita is eventually restored to her rightful position as Princess of Sicilia, reuniting with her biological parents as the play draws to a close. Regardless of her humble upbringing, Perdita conducts herself in an aristocratic manner, raising the question as to whether personal and physical characteristics are innate or cultivated. This matter hinges on the debate between art and nature that is articulated by Polixines and Perdita during their discussion about the formation of flowers, and is vital to our reading of the play. This emphasis placed on breeding permeates Leontes' relationship with both of his children, as he compares his physical traits to his son Mamillius in order to corroborate his paternity. *The Winter's Tale* examines issues that are important to Shakespeare's society: the reproduction of children, their personal attributes and any factors that impact their development.[232]

Perdita is only briefly an infant on stage before she makes an appearance as a young woman, yet her role as a newborn powerfully demonstrates the importance of legitimacy in early modern England. Derek Traversi has noted that by calling his daughter a bastard, Leontes 'commit[s] the supreme offence against his paternity and the unity of the family.'[233] The fact that Leontes' rejection of his daughter is one of the most horrific and influential moments in the play demonstrates that the characters expect the family to be invaluable to the characters. During this time, legitimacy was a serious matter because 'under canon law the parents had sinned by conceiving a child outside a marriage and should be punished. Part of the punishment fell on the child, because the status of bastard conferred certain civil disabilities,' such as the rights of

[232]Harold S. Wilson, 'Nature and Art in *The Winter's Tale*' *Shakespeare Associate Bulletin* 18 (1943), 114-20. See also Frank Kermode, ed. *The Tempest* (London and New York: Methuen, 1954), xxxv-xxxvi; and Stephen Orgel, ed. *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 46.
[233]Derek Traversi, '*The Winter's Tale*' in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1979), 129.

inheritance and ordination for priesthood.[234] *Bastard* was one of the most offensive slurs that someone could utter at this time, because it questioned the very nature and legal status of a person, and Shakespeare's audience would have understood this to be a scathing denigration to Perdita's character. Bastards were known as '*filius nullius*, the child of no one,' because no one was legally accountable for them since their presence was a disgrace to their family.[235] During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, around three percent of recorded births were listed as illegitimate in the county registers.[236] However, Peter Laslett has argued that the 'numbers of baptised bastards may well have to be multiplied by fifty, seventy, or even a hundred times and more in order to guess the number of sexual lapses which lay behind them,' particularly in cases of adulterine bastards.[237] Although there were inevitably more illegitimate births than were recorded, labelling a newborn as such would have resonated with the audience, who would understand Leontes' accusation as extremely aggressive. It is clear that Paulina, Hermione and the other characters at court treat his actions as hostile. This scene illustrates the importance of family title and social station at this time, because once these were revoked or even suspected to be false, the identity of the child was irrevocably tarnished.

While this slander seems unwarranted to a modern day audience, court cases indicate that 'deponents testified to acts of incontinency committed in work spaces such as kitchens, garrets, and cellars.'[238] Sexual relations often transpired in various locations in the household due to the lack of privacy and structural integrity of individual rooms, even for higher classes. Rooms were often loosely defined by the placement of a draped

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[234]B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, 23.
[235]Ibid.
[236]Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 159. See pp. 158-161 for discussion of these figures. See also Peter Laslett and Karla Oosterveen, 'Long-Term Trends in Bastardy in England: A Study of the Illegitimacy Figures in the Parish Registers and in the Reports of the Registrar General, 1561-1960' *Population Studies* 27:2 (1973), 255-286.
[237]Ibid., 163.
[238]Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 173.

cloth (to serve as curtains), wall hangings or even furniture, and little else.[239] Given the layout of early modern houses, Hermione could plausibly have had the opportunity for an extramarital relationship while Polixines was a guest in their home, which makes Leontes' allegation more credible. The fact that the insult could be true makes the dramatisation of it that much more striking. Since the audience is well aware of Perdita's legitimacy due to the oracle, Shakespeare experiments with this slur, as Perdita's noble title is eventually restored. Her banishment from her home in Sicilia allows Perdita to start afresh in Bohemia, without the stigma of *bastard* attached to her throughout childhood.

The dramatising of this scene brutally demonstrates how integral family structure was at this time, because once the integrity of it is destroyed, there are serious consequences for all involved. By carrying Perdita on stage, Paulina 'makes shockingly visible both the utter dependence of human infants on adult care and their lack of recourse when that care is withheld.'[240] The defenceless form of Perdita demonstrates that she is completely reliant on others to protect her, even though her father will not. Leontes cannot even hold his newborn child because he believes that she is a product of Hermione's manipulation and abuse.

While Perdita is not actually a bastard, an illegitimate child appears in *Titus Andronicus*, and is similarly threatened only moments after his birth. The nurse insists on murdering Aaron and Tamora's love child, slandering it as 'our Empress' shame' (4.2.60); 'a devil' (4.2.64); and 'a joyless, dismal, black and sorrowful issue!' (4.2.66). Aaron, in turn, saves his son and declares, 'Nay, he is your brother by the surer side, although my seal be stamped in his face' to Tamora's children, Chiron and Demetrius

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[239]Ibid., 169.
[240]Kate Chedgzoy, 'Introduction: "What, are they children?"' in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20.

(4.2.126-7). While these characters' reactions are indicative of their racism, they also make plain how bastards were considered an embarrassment throughout society, since infanticide is considered a more viable option than permitting the baby to live. Aaron's line also addresses the belief that the father's physical traits are transmitted to the child, as Aaron emphatically states that the infant's face is a copy of his own. The amount of traits that a child inherited from his/her parents is questioned in *The Winter's Tale* as well, in connection to both Perdita and Mamillius. Given that the main crux of the plot centres around issues of legitimacy and reproduction, it is important to understand the early modern notion of these issues that Shakespeare would have been aware of when writing the play.

Early modern society derived their ideas about birth from Aristotle and Galen, leading to 'the widespread and persistent medical theory that the constitutional characteristics of the child were determined by the physical condition of the parents at the moment of conception,' evidenced by medical manuals and personal effects.[241] Consequently, even within a marriage, copulation was only considered acceptable at certain times, with couples encouraged to abstain during the summer months, menstruation, particular stages of pregnancy, breastfeeding and when both the man and woman were not well rested or in full sexual vigour.[242] Although a woman's sexual desire was constructed as a threat to the stable nuclear family, it was viewed positively with regards to the conception of children. Well into the seventeenth century, it was the prevailing opinion of medical advice books and practicing physicians that female sexual pleasure was necessary for fertilization.[243] Numerous published medical practices at the

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[241]L. Stone, 312.
[242]Richard Sherry, *A treatise of schemes [and] tropes very profytable for the better understanding of good authors, gathered out of the best grammarians [and] oratours* (London: John Day, 1558), 73. See also *Aristotle's' Masterpiece*, 25; L. Stone, 312-3; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 46; and Houlbrooke, 103.
[243]Mendelson and Crawford, 47.

time promoted women to take 'a great delight and pleasure in the venerious act' in order to facilitate a healthy pregnancy.[244] It was also believed that the circumstances of a couple's intercourse affected the child's temperament and physical appearance. In fact, one of the most popular sources, *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, states:

> for many are less venerious and not so hot, and consequently not so desirous of copulation, but rather decline it, unless the obstreperousness of their wives cause them to compliance therein, and then they proceed faintly and drowsily, whence it happens that the children fall short of the parents nature, wit and manners, and hence it is that wise men frequently beget stupid slothful children of feeble minds, because they are not much given to these delights.[245]

This manual illustrates how children can often not resemble their parents in demeanour or appearance, and expounds on the causes of such cases. The fact that this is even discussed in this medical work signifies the anxiety that was surrounding this issue at this time. Clearly, early modern people were concerned with how their children looked and behaved, and what influence they had over it. Similar arguments appear in many medical journals and books on midwifery, childbirth and heredity, which all trace a child's disposition back to the circumstances surrounding the parents' intimacy.[246] This belief certainly emerges in *King Lear*, where Edmond's characteristics are examined by his father because of his illegitimate birth. Gloucester recalls that 'there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledg'd' (1.1.23-4). By referring to Edmond's conception, Gloucester introduces this popular theory that character traits are inherited from the moment of copulation. His cavalier comment shows that while Edmond is illegitimate and identified as such throughout the play, his conception was enjoyable for Gloucester.

Throughout *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes attempts to substantiate his attachment to Mamillius through his own physicality. During the early modern period, fathers in

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[244]Jacob Rueff, 184. See also *Aristotle's' Masterpiece*, 27; William Harvey, 543.
[245]*Aristotle's' Masterpiece*, 27.
[246]See James Guillimeau; Eucharius Roeslin; and William Harvey.

particular yearned for a physical bond with their children, as their 'identification with their children was important' in order to reinforce patriarchy.[247] Paulina employs this tactic while trying to convince Leontes of Perdita's legitimacy, arguing Hermione's faithfulness because the baby is a 'copy of the father—eye, nose, lip, the trick of's frown, his forehead' are all identical to Leontes' physical features (2.3.100-1). Even though her manoeuvre is unsuccessful, Leontes certainly practices a comparable approach in solidifying his bond with Mamillius, early on in the play. His exchange with his son begins when he directly asks him:

> Leontes: Art thou my boy?
> Mamillius: Ay, my good lord.
> Leontes: I'fecks!
> Why, that's my bawcock. What? Hast smutch'd thy nose?
> They say it is a copy out of mine (1.2.120-2).

Janet Adelman has pointed out that there is a 'drive toward absolute identity in Leontes' early assertions of the likeness between father and son.'[248] I believe that this demonstrates the comfort that he receives from corroborating his paternity, and subsequently, his wife's fidelity. By forcing Mamillius to inhabit his exact physical traits, Leontes desperately clings to the idea of his innocent wife and child, but somehow, cannot. Leontes is overinvested in making his son resemble him in look and character to emphasise his own role in his son's existence. Shakespeare returns to this device later in the scene by having Mamillius tell his father, 'I am like you, they say' (1.2.208). Mamillius' understanding that he is supposed to transmit a sense of his father's appearance, even at a young age, shows how important this notion was to people in early modern England, who were not afforded the paternity technology that we are today. However, in desperately forcing Mamillius to be an exact duplicate of

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[247]Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 50.
[248]Janet Adelman, 'Masculine Authority: Feeding, Dependency and Aggression in *Coriolanus*' in *Shakespeare: an Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945-2000*,ed. Russ Macdonald (Padstow: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 152.

himself, Leontes cannot forget that his son is also parented by Hermione. The 'physical resemblance between father and child does not necessarily elucidate a pregnant woman's sexual behaviour,' and this concern proves all too true for Leontes.[249] Eventually, he cannot separate Mamillius from his mother, declaring, 'Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you have too much blood in him' to Hermione (2.1.57-8). Despite his physical connection to his father, Mamillius also contains attributes of his mother, making him 'a physical outward and visible sign of a consummated and stable union for his mother but a politically unstable phantasmagoria for his father,' resulting in tragedy for the entire family.[250] Mamillius' resemblance to his mother angers Leontes, and forces him to contemplate the roles in reproduction. Shakespeare analyses the process of conception as a way of exploring the roles of parents in creating a family, and how this affects the marital relationship as well.

The same ideology even emerges in Leontes' greeting of Florizel, whom he tells 'Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince, for she did print your royal father off, conceiving you' (5.1.134-6). Throughout the play, Leontes attempts to corroborate his attachment to Mamillius by asserting his own physical traits. The king even refers to his son as 'my collop!' a word deriving from *flesh* that was used in sixteenth and seventeenth century England to denote offspring quite literally as part of one's flesh and blood (1.2.137).[251] During the early modern period, fathers in particular yearned for a physical bond with their children, as their 'identification with their children was important' in order to reinforce patriarchy.[252] Furthermore, in a culture predicated on

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[249]Michelle Ephraim, 'Hermione's Suspicious Body: Adultery and Superfetation in *The Winter's Tale*' in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 46.
[250]A. J. Piesse, 67. See also Carol Thomas Neely, '*The Winter's Tale*: The Triumph of Speech,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 15:2 (1975): 327.
[251]Definition in Oxford English Dictionary. See Rebecca Yearling's analysis of this word as it pertains to a piece of meat in 'Rivalry and Romance in Late Shakespeare' *Essays in Criticism* 61:3 (2011), 235. (232-248)
[252]Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, 50.

patriarchal supremacy, female adultery was far more potent and embarrassing than it is today. If a child's appearance did not compare to the father, the mother's loyalty and the household's reputation were both at stake.

The dissemination of medical knowledge was widespread during this period through popular medical treatises and manuals, which described the function of reproductive organs, outlined conception through detailed diagrams and provided advice to midwives and mothers on how to treat various ailments common to pregnancy. These manuals taught that the man and woman each released a seed during intercourse which would result in a child. It was commonly thought that 'after that the Womb, which is the Genital Member of the Female Sex hath received the Seed of the Man, she commixes also her own Seed, so that there is now but one mixture made of the Seed of both Sexes.'[253] Physicians were concerned about the condition of the moment of conception, as this had ramifications for the resulting child. For the woman, 'this seed doth issue from this foresaid place down along to the woman's privy passage, moistening all that part as it were with a dew' made from the blood of her arteries and veins.[254] In fact, *Aristotle's Masterpiece* even went so far as to state that the female seed 'entices their minds and imaginations to venery,' encouraging her to engage in sexual relations.[255] Thus, women were considered to be 'safest' when married, because it was only under the husband's supervision that the female's seed would be released at proper intervals, warding off the potential consequences of excess seed: lustiness, or more seriously, greensickness, which could result in madness, depression or even death. However, the threat of the woman's seed could not be evaded even in marriage, as her temperament was crucial to producing a healthy and honourable heir. Medical manuals insisted:

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[253]John Pechey, *The compleat midwife's practice* (London: H. Rhodes, 1698), 96.
[254]Thomas Raynald, 40.
[255]*Aristotle's Masterpiece*, 6.

> So whilest the Man and Woman Embrace, if the woman think of the man's countenance, and look upon him, or thinks of anyone else, that likeness will the child represent. For such is the power of Imagination, that when the woman doth intentively behold anything, she will produce something like that she beheld, so it falls out, that children have the forms of divers things upon them, as Warts, Spots, Moles, Dashes, which cannot easily be wiped off, or taken away.[256]

It is clear from this passage that early modern people were concerned about the effect that the woman could have on her child, even while in the womb. This medical belief was widely circulated in the early modern period, and most likely known by Shakespeare and his audiences. I believe that Shakespeare was specifically investigating this issue in *The Winter's Tale* and how it impacts not only the child, but the marital relationship as well. The woman's mental state had such an effect on the temperament and appearance of her newborn, that various manuals instructed women how to act, eat and interact with people while pregnant to ensure the safe delivery of her child. Early modern physicians taught that 'in the act of generation or else afterwards' was when the child took form, both physically and emotionally.[257] For just 'as the children represent their fathers likeness or mothers in the form of their bodies, even so their inclination of goodness and virtue shall represent the fathers and mothers disposition, which they had when the children were begotten.'[258] These tracts demonstrate that the act of conception was considered integral to the development of the child at this time, and that women were often regarded as responsible for the children that they produced.

Specifically, blame was habitually placed on the mother, since early modern medicine taught that 'two external forces are said to act on the uterus: the moon and the imagination,' vowing that the uterus could cause psychological and physical deformities in a foetus if the mother's thoughts were impure during conception and throughout her

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[256]Levinus Lemnius, 11. *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, 20.
[257]*A Glass for Householders* (London: Richard Graftoni, 1542), page before d.
[258]Ibid., page before d.

pregnancy.[259] Aristotle set the example in this by arguing 'hence it is that the child more frequently resembles the mother than the father because the mother confers the most towards its generation' both *in vitro* and post-natal through breastfeeding.[260] Yet the woman's substantial role in conception was problematic since it empowered the female body with the means necessary to reproduce a family, and therefore, all of humanity. Since the entire hierarchical system in society at this time was predicted on male supremacy, instilling the female body with the power to create, nourish and sustain human life, the basic unit of the family, challenged notions of patriarchy.

A debate surfaced during the early modern period as to who played a more active role in conception: the mother or the father. Nowhere is this more evident than in popular medical treatises published and widely distributed during the period, in which the authors discuss the controversy surrounding the mother's active role in conception. In his *Directory for Midwives*, physician Nicolas Culpeper explicitly states 'conception is an action of the womb, after fruitful seed both male and female is received, mixed and nourished.'[261] However, this seemingly simple declaration was a matter of contention during this time, as demonstrated by Thomas Raynald's delicate treatment of the matter in his medical tract. He argues that 'although that the man be the principal mover, and the cause of generation: yet (no displeasure to men) the woman doth confer and contribute much more, what to the increasement of the child in her womb, and what to the nourishment thereof after birth, than doth the man.'[262] Moreover, William Harvey overtly addresses the controversy surrounding the issue, announcing, 'I know full well

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[259]Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 41. Lemnius, 11.
[260]*Aristotle's' Masterpiece,* 29.
[261]Nicolas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Directory for Midwives,* 141. See also Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2004), 35.
[262]Thomas Raynald, 17.

that some scoffing persons will laugh at these conjectures.'[263] His comment illustrates that the woman's role in conception was widely debated at this time, and he attempts to rectify this by defending women from a medical standpoint. Despite this, he asserts that the uterus 'doth exercise the plastic generative power, and procreateth its own like,' and discusses his rationale behind this conclusion for the ensuing six pages.[264] His tentative treatment of the matter and anticipation of those who disparage his findings demonstrates that a woman's role in conception was a contentious topic at this time. If a woman was responsible for propagating, then it was difficult to define her as innately subordinate to her male counterpart; a belief on which early modern society was predicated. Arguments surfaced from theologians who disputed the woman's role in generation based on Biblical passages advocating female subordination. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, the uterus began to 'evoke admiration and eulogy for its remarkable role in procreation.'[265] As a result, many believed that the woman became invaluable in her role in the family, not solely in its management, but in its physicality as well. Since women played a larger role in the reproductive process in these early stages of pregnancy, it became paramount for the father to feel a postpartum physical attachment to his child in order to solidify his role in its development. The woman's prominent role in conception permeates this play in Leontes' drive to find himself replicated in his son and daughter, and his blame on his wife when he cannot.

Therefore, Leontes' search for himself in his children has materialized out of a society that used that bond as the basis for paternity. Nevertheless, it is not merely that Leontes wishes to see his traits in his son, but actually necessitates a duplicate of himself. He comments to Polixines that 'looking on the lines of my boy's face, me

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[263]William Harvey, *Anatomical Exercitations* (London: James Young, for Octavian Pulleyn, 1653), 546. See also Thomas Chamberlayne, 75.
[264]William Harvey, 540.
[265]Ian Maclean, 53.

thoughts I did recoil twenty-three years and saw myself unbreech'd' (1.2.153-5). His need for absolute identity in his son negates Hermione's role in reproduction in the most stringent form of the contemporary debate about who has the active role in conception. Eventually, Leontes cannot separate Mamillius from his mother, declaring, 'I am glad you did not nurse him. Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you have too much blood in him' to Hermione (2.1.56-8). Since early modern medicine held that the benefits of breastfeeding were delivered to the child through the blood, it was taught that this act could also transmit various physical and personality traits to the newborn, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter.[266] Leontes' callous remark demonstrates his desire for less of Hermione to be included in Mamilius, a desire which is in part assuaged by the fact that she did not breastfeed him; as it was common practice for upper class women in England at the time to send their babies to wet nurses. Despite his physical connection to his father, Mamillius also bears attributes of his mother, making him 'a physical outward and visible sign of a consummated and stable union for his mother but a politically unstable phantasmagoria for his father,' resulting in tragedy for the entire family.[267] At the play's conclusion, Mamilius is absent since he has actually died and is not afforded a grand resurrection like that of his mother. His absence from this scene shows the limits of the reconciliation in this play, but it also hints at the disparity of gendered identities as well, as Perdita is present. Since Perdita is female, she cannot embody the same level of physical comparison to Leontes as her brother supposedly can. It is telling that the child in the final scene is female, and thus does not heed the same level of scrutiny for physical similarities because of her gender. Perdita can never resemble her father in the same way her brother can, and thus, her brother is absent from the final scene, so that he cannot be held to Leontes' impossible

[266]Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 136-7.
[267]A. J. Piesse, 67. See also Carol Thomas Neely, '*The Winter's Tale*: The Triumph of Speech,' 327.

standard of similitude. Shakespeare only includes Leontes' daughter in this scene as a reminder of the consequences of the impossible standards that he set for his wife and children with respect to their reproduction.

Perdita is only briefly on stage as an infant before she makes an appearance as a young woman, yet her role as a newborn powerfully demonstrates the importance of legitimacy in early modern England. Leontes irately states, 'No! I'll not rear another's issue' at the sight of his baby daughter (2.3.193-4). His condemnation uses the word *issue*, often the legal term for offspring or heirs at this time.[268] Numerous court cases from the period heard evidence of the adulterous female, whose husbands attempted (and often succeeded) a *mensa et thoro*, or separation from bed and from board.[269] While in theory, witnesses were necessary in cases of adultery to provide substantial evidence that sexual acts had actually occurred; in practice, certain activities and situations were often enough to corroborate an accusation of adultery.[270] Since wives' behaviour was regulated at this time, the suspicion of adultery could be sufficient evidence for the court, if the woman was found in particular circumstances believed to be sexually compromising. Furthermore, by the end of the seventeenth century, adultery was grounds for divorce and there was even an attempt to turn female adultery into a statutory offence.[271] These legal consequences for female adultery demonstrate its serious implications at this time, particularly as the household structure was predicated on male supremacy. Furthermore, the fact that the Archdeacons' Court that heard these matters was nicknamed the 'Bawdy Court' suggests a prevalence of cases relating to adultery and sexual impropriety at the time. Shakespeare's audiences were no doubt well

[268]Definition in Oxford English Dictionary. See T. J. Daus, *Commentaries*, trans. J. Sleidane (London, 1560) f. cj^{v}; and WaterRaleigh, *The History of the World*I. I. vii. (London: 1614), §7 109.
[269]Mendelson and Crawford, 42-3.
[270]Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 190.
[271]Mendelson and Crawford, 42-3.

aware of the consequences of adultery, as have already been touched on in the previous chapter.

Yet this is no ordinary case of adultery, as Leontes is king, heightening the severity of Hermione's charge. Under English law at the time, adultery with the Queen was considered high treason, which was defined as 'plotting or imagining the death of the king, his wife or his oldest; violating his wife' and was exemplified by King Henry VIII's execution of Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard on such grounds.[272] In fact, the indictment at Hermione's trial states: 'Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, King of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason, in committing adultery with Polixines, King of Bohemia' (3.2.12-15). The fear that heirs to the throne would be illegitimate was one that people were certainly aware of at this time, given the history of Henry VIII's treatment of his wives. The dramatisation of this on stage illustrates the anxiety that permeated society about polluting the heirs to the throne, which queens could be charged with in the case of adultery.

Shakespeare's audiences would undoubtedly have been aware that the consequences were high during the play because of the sovereignty that Leontes has. Leontes berates Paulina for bringing the baby to him: 'Thou traitor, hast set on thy wife to this. My child? Away with't! Even thou, that hast a heart so tender o'er it, take it hence, and see it instantly consum'd with fire' (2.3.131-4). The dramatisation of father-child relationships in this way underscores the insecurity of fathers in their connection with their own children, as this was their only method of corroborating their paternity. This play highlights the scrutiny that women were forced to undergo regarding their own sexuality, even once married, as children were expected to confirm to a chaste ideal in their appearance and temperament. If a child did not replicate his/her father's features,

[272]B. J. and Mary Sokol, 369.

the mother was always under suspicion whether or not the husband had just cause, demonstrating the prevalence of distrust surrounding female sexuality at this time. However, these scenes of family dispute emphasise the significance of familial bonds through Shakespeare's subversive treatment of the characters here. Despite the pervasiveness and legality of publically doubting a wife's faithfulness and chastity in the period, Shakespeare scrutinises Leontes' behaviour in this scene by showing that even Paulina, a mere subject, knows his actions are unjustified. While Leontes' rejection of Hermione often seems cruel to a modern audience, this behaviour was accepted by the laws and medical discourse, which permitted the suspicion of a wife's behaviour as proof of her adultery. By introducing this debate with Leontes as the perpetrator in this scene, Shakespeare allows the audience to comprehend his unmerited behaviour in questioning his wife, and in doing so, emphasises the expected bond between family members. Leontes is characterised as ignorant and brutal in this scene which suggests that his behaviour should be more tender and trusting of his family. Ultimately, Shakespeare reverses the early modern notion of paternity by writing a tale about a faithful wife and distrusting husband. Thus, the play is deliberately provocative by showing the father as deluded in this way. Unlike his contemporaries, Shakespeare dramatises the jealous husband in cases where the wife is faithful. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello* and of course in this play, Shakespeare uses the threat of cuckoldry to consume and corrupt the husband, despite the chastity of all the wives in these plays. Since female adultery was capable of destroying the nuclear family unit, there was a great deal of anxiety surrounding it. However, Shakespeare only ever dramatises the threat of this, without making his female character culpable.

Since Leontes is overinvested in his notion of paternity as an absolute replica of himself, he cannot embrace Mamilius as his son. Shakespeare introduces this debate

which would have been shrouded in anxiety during the time the play was originally performed; yet allows the king to be misled in his overzealous dedication to this ideal. Yet, Leontes' logic is suspect because it is not a perfect copy of himself that he is after, as this would reflect his own jealousy and rage. In fact, when he is confronted with his insecurities by the oracle, he is only propelled deeper into anger. If Leontes saw these traits mirrored in his son, he would not be able to cope. While Leontes does not wish for his son to be passive and act the way he does, Leontes cannot accept his own flaws mirrored in his son either. Ultimately, Leontes must relinquish the ideal copy of himself, as such a copy cannot exist. Shakespeare problematises the notion of paternity to reveal its uncertainty and problematic nature. Legitimacy saturates this play, not only when children are conceived or born, but when they mature as well. Shakespeare is obviously interested in dramatising the implications of legitimacy for children.

Perdita's legitimacy continues to be questioned, albeit in a different manner, once she begins spending time with Floritzel. When Polixines spies on Perdita interacting with his son, he comments: 'This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the green-sord. Nothing she does, or seems, but smacks of something greater than herself, too noble for this place' (4.4.156-9). Thus begins the discussion of Perdita's innate noble status despite her only known social station as a shepherdess. Floritzel and Camillo both comment on her dignified behaviour, and even the gentlemen informing the audience of her reunion with her father state that 'the majesty of the creature in resemblance of the mother; the affection of nobleness which nature shows above her breeding; and many other evidences proclaim her, with all certainty, to be the King's daughter' (5.2.35-9). Everyone agrees that Perdita, despite being raised in a rural town by a lowly shepherd, is in fact a worthy and decorous princess. Her gentility affirms her status as legitimately born, but it also raises the question about the nature and nurture of

children. Even though Perdita is only conscious of living with the shepherd as her father and has no knowledge of her status as gentry, all around her concede that she acts in a way befitting of royalty. Marianne Novy has argued that the 'pastoral world seems, emotionally, a better environment for childrearing than the cold and suspicious world of the court,' but I believe that Perdita's surrogate family is overshadowed in the final scenes by her reunion with her biological parents.[273] While her shepherd lifestyle is seemingly enjoyable to her when she is shown in it, nothing is made of her correlation to this world once her biological parents return to the scene. The prominence of Perdita's natural connection with Leontes and Hermione, along with the emphasis on her aristocratic sensibility, suggests that regardless of her upbringing, Perdita has inherited her demeanour from her parents. Shakespeare's inclusion of this alternate world with other parents for Perdita suggests that biological parents are more significant to people at this time, especially given the focus on traits carried in blood over the course of the play. I believe that Shakespeare briefly turns to this discussion as a way of commenting on the affection innately felt between parents and children.

The fact that Polixines cannot fathom his son, a prince, befriending and potentially marrying a shepherdess, illustrates the stringency of the class distinctions in Shakespeare's society. Perdita acts as hostess to the gathering of shepherds by welcoming everyone and distributing flowers to her guests, as was typical for a May Day carnival. At this festival, known to celebrate the young, children would typically pass out flowers and wreaths to those around them, which was 'associate[d] with the idea of rebirth implicit in vegetation.'[274] Shakespeare utilises these notions of birth and childhood to establish Perdita's place in the play once sixteen years have passed, so that the audience continues to associate her with the traditions and expectations of

[273]Marianne Novy, 'Multiple Parenting in Shakespeare's Romances,' in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride(Pittsburgh: Duquesene University Press, 2002), 192.
[274]Ariés, 75.

childhood. Flowers were also correlated to the seasons of a man's life, of which undoubtedly Shakespeare's audience would have been aware.[275]

While handing out these flowers, the topic of art and nature saturates her conversation with Polixines about horticulture. Perdita claims that 'the fairest flowers o'th' season are our carnations and streaked gillyvors, which some call nature's bastards; of that kind our rustic garden's barren, and I care not to get slips of them' (4.4.81-5). Carnations and gillyflowers were types of hybrid cloves 'associated with eroticism as well as artifice.'[276] Perdita's resistance to them because of their synthetic nature links her to her father, as his feelings towards bastards have already been shown at her birth. While the word *bastard* could evoke the idea of a hybrid or counterfeit at this time, it is clear through her use of the same term as her father, that Perdita's problem with these flowers is their unnaturalness and the motivation behind their cultivation.[277] Of the thirty different plants and flowers mentioned in the play, Perdita hinges the conversation on these cloves because their artificiality troubles her.[278] Ornamental plant breeders judge flowers by their aesthetic characteristics, allowing only the visually pleasing flowers to survive.[279] The rationale behind creating these plants perplexes Perdita, who challenges the notion by relating it to herself. She dislikes the idea that once she is positively evaluated by a suitor, 'only therefore [would he] desire to breed by me' (4.4.102-3). The term *bastard flower* correctly characterises these cloves for Perdita, because it signifies 'an index to our own corruption as it is the creation of our illicit pleasure,' similar to the creation of illegitimate children.[280]In

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[275]William Scott, 'Seasons and Flowers in *The Winter's Tale*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 14:4 (1963), 417. See also Ariés, 75.
[276]William Scott, 413. Gregory Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (London: Helicon, 1965), 63.
[277]Stephen Orgel, ed. *The Winter's Tale*, 172.
[278]William S. Warren, 'The Biology in Shakespeare' *Bios* 15:1 (1944), 22.
[279]Gregory Gessert, 'Bastard Flowers' *Leonardo* 29:4 (1996), 291. Daniela Soleri Cleveland and Steven E. Smith, 'A Biological Framework for Understanding Farmers' Plant Breeding' *Economic Botany* 54:3 (2000), 54.
[280]Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, 46.

Montaigne's 'Of the cannibals' (1580), which Shakespeare certainly consulted in his writing of *The Tempest*,[281] a similar argument is introduced:

> they are even savage, as we call those fruits wild which nature of herself and of her ordinary progress has produced, whereas indeed they are those which ourselves have altered by our artificial devices and diverted from their common order we should rather term savage. In those are the true and most profitable virtues, and natural properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardised, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste.[282]

This passage indicates that the debate between natural and artificial flowers was of concern to early modern people, and certainly something that Shakespeare came across when writing his plays. The fact that two of his plays during this period show a fascination with this topic is important to the study of Shakespeare's plays, but that he relates this topic of agriculture to the family is significant in terms of his understanding of domestic relationships. Shakespeare explicitly dramatises this debate surrounding horticulture in terms of parent and child relationships, demonstrating his absorption with the domestic. Perdita's endorsement of nature over art demonstrates a popular debate in early modern England, one that many disagreed with, as exemplified by Polixines. The fact that Perdita immediately relates the debate to herself and her own breeding prospects allows the audience to understand the way in which this debate permeated societal discourse, not only in relating to flora, but humans as well.

As a rebuttal, Polixines justifies the creation of these flowers, informing Perdita: 'we marry a gentler scion to the wildest stock, and make conceive a bark of baser kind by bud of nobler race' (4.4.92-5). His view of art was also conceded throughout society, made explicit in *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), which held that 'in some cases we say arte is an aid and coadjutor to nature, and a furtherer of her actions to

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[281]Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman, eds. *William Shakespeare: The Tempest: Sources and Contexts* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004), 107.
[282]Michael de Montaigne, 'Of the cannibals' trans. John Florio (London: V. Sims for E. Blout, 1603), 102.

a good effect, or peradventure a mean to supply her wants, by reinforcing the causes wherein she is impotent and defective.'[283] The debate between Polixines and Perdita for competing values of art and nature was popular during this time, but the result of their dispute is inconclusive, as it seems that society was divided on the matter.[284] While his validation for the flowers is ironic because it stands in stark contrast to his contention with his son's engagement to Perdita solely because of her social status; the terminology that he uses candidly connects the practice of plant breeding with the birth of a legitimate child. He claims that the flowers *marry*, and a *nobler race* is born, similar to a description of two noble parents conceiving a child. This methodology was popular in early modern England, as plant cross-breeding was often employed as an educational device for explaining human reproduction. Nathaniel Highmore, a doctor of Physic at Trinity College, Oxford, used plants in his book, *The History of Generation* to describe the process of procreation in humans. He informs the reader that his work explains 'how a Plant or Animal comes by that figure it hath.'[285] Due to the association between plant breeding and human reproduction during this time, the discussion between Polixines and Perdita regarding flowers would have indicated to the audience the more relevant issue of human characteristics attained through breeding. By including this element in their discussion, Shakespeare allows the audience to consider human traits through the importance of art and nature's influences on plants.

In the final scenes of the play, Perdita reunites with her parents, bringing a joyous conclusion to an otherwise oblique play. Upon realising that Perdita is his daughter, Leontes' anguish resurfaces at his responsibility for the events culminating in their separation. The gentlemen tell the audience, 'Our king, being ready to leap out of

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[283]Thomas Campion, *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field for Andrew Wise, 1602), 253.
[284]Frank Kermode, ed. *The Tempest*, xxxv-xxxvi. See also Stephen Orgel, ed. *The Winter's Tale*, 46-7.
[285]Nathaniel Highmore, *The History of Generation* (London: R. N. For John Martin, 1651), 18.

himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries, "O, thy mother, thy mother!"' (5.2.49-52). While excited over his daughter's return, Leontes' reaction to her presence is a complicated one that mirrors the play's own tragicomic genre. His expression of happiness at the sight of her, combined with his despair over the absence of the remainder of her family, conflate in his response to her return. Elizabethans believed that 'grief was both a natural and a cultural phenomenon' that people performed out of obligation, respect and reverence for the dead.[286] Thus, Leontes' emphatic expression of grief honours Hermione to their daughter. The fact that Leontes is able to reunite with his daughter in cheerful circumstances after years apart, tragically hinges on the destruction of his family that resulted in Hermione and Mamillius' deaths. Perdita's appearance in Sicilia serves as a replacement for her brother, accentuated by the accelerated timeline, which makes these events only a few scenes apart. By acting as a substitution for Mamillius, Perdita restores hope to her parents and the audience. Theatrically, the actor playing the role of Mamillius typically doubles as Perdita, because their scenes do not intersect at all.[287] This doubling reinforces Perdita's association with her brother in the audience's minds, and attempts to erase the grief caused by the loss of Mamillius, as the embodiment of him continues to be present on stage.[288]

The manner in which Mamillius dies contributes to the overall tragedy of the play, since his death is not due to natural causes, but instead, 'with conceit and fear of the Queen's speed, [he] is gone' (3.2.144-5). Blaming his death on none other than Leontes' cruel and unjust actions towards his wife, Shakespeare elevates the emotional intensity of the death of a child into something more profound and disturbing.

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[286]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 393.
[287]Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino, eds. *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Appendix B.
[288]Kenneth Muir, 'Directing the Romances' *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976), 73.

Mamillius is assigned a unique position in the dramaturgy, in that his death reveals more about his maturity than any of his actions on stage allow him. The passion and vigour of his reaction to his parents' quarrel entitles him to a much more insightful and acute grasp of his situation than is typically assigned to children. Mamillius' death reverberates throughout all of his scenes, as Shakespeare focuses on characterising Mamillius where his source material neglected the role, and places the young prince at the centre of the familial conflict.

At the news of his son's death, Leontes instructs Paulina, 'Prithee bring me to the dead bodies of my queen and son. One grave shall be for both; upon them shall the causes of their death appear (unto our shame perpetual)' (3.2.234-8). The bond between mother and son is emphasised in their shared burial. 'Elizabethan gentle testators often requested burial alongside a departed spouse or in close proximity to other members of their family, so that they might enjoy the resurrection in familiar company.'[289] In a small yet distinct way, Leontes honours Hermione's memory by ordering this shared grave, as this would have publically proclaimed the bond that she had with her son in life, even more strongly to Shakespeare's audience than it does today. Burials were steeped in ritualistic methods and beliefs that signified various ideas to society. For example, a headstone with an inscription that Leontes orders for his wife shows his guilt over her death, but it also announces their status as wealthy and elite, since permanent headstones were extremely expensive and rare even for gentry in early modern England.[290] A grave was thought to 'reminded the onlooker how honourable the couple's marriage had been, how illustrious their connections' as a family, and presented parents and children together to underscore this to any passerby.[291] During this period, personal qualities and domestic virtues began to be listed on people's

[289]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 461.
[290]Ibid., 470.
[291]Houlbrooke, 205.

gravestones for the first time in order to individualise the deceased.[292] It was thought that 'the gentlemen who requested such memorials projected themselves as husbands and fathers, as heads of households, rather than as mere individuals,' and Leontes takes this burden on himself with the burial of his wife and son.[293] For aristocracy in particular, a 'cluster of family tombs was a striking reminder of power, continuity, and cohesion' to the world, which Leontes attempts to achieve at the news of his wife and child's absence, especially because he was unable to do this during their lives.[294]

Mamillius' death is also reported as contingent on his mother's imprisonment, and the 'consequence of that shattering and attendant loss of maternal presence' in his life.[295] Mamillius' closeness to his mother remains significant during his time with her on stage, which surprisingly even Leontes notices, despite his irrational judgement of his wife. When he presses a servant about Mamillius' health, Leontes expresses his observations regarding Mamillius' feelings towards his mother. He claims:

> To see his nobleness,
> Conceiving the dishonour of his mother!
> He straight declinn'd, droop'd, took it deeply,
> Fasten'd and fix'd the shame on't in himself,
> Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep
> And downright languish'd. Leave me solely; go,
> See how he fares (2.3.10-18).

Although his assertion about Hermione's deceitfulness is known to be inaccurate, Leontes' scrutiny about the way in which Mamillius perceives his parents seems to be an authentic representation of his character. Mamillius feels more than anyone else in the play, given that his mother's imprisonment results in his death. Hermione's thoughts towards her son are definitely reciprocated, and when she receives the news of Mamillius' death, it overcomes her and Paulina claims, 'This news is mortal to the

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[292]Ibid., 205.
[293]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 471.
[294]Ibid., 462.
[295]Adelman, 'Masculine Authority,' 161.

Queen' (3.2.148). Contemporary doctrine showed that 'maternal love was held to be naturally stronger' that paternal, because the mother spent much more time with the child, especially at a young age. Hermione's response to the news of her son's death is so catastrophic for her that Leontes does not question her successive death.[296] Even though the truth that she did not die eventually presides, it is clear that Mamillius' death is tremendously difficult for Hermione to deal with, emphasising her love and attachment to her child. By dramatising Hermione's connection to her child, Shakespeare expresses the affection that parents felt towards their children at this time. This scene is imperative in establishing the family as vital to specific characters, and not merely a plot device to further the play.

As tragic as Mamillius' death is when it occurs, it is foreshadowed from the opening scene of the play, when Archidamus says, 'If the King had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one' (1.1.45-6). His discussion with Camillo frames the entire play and prepares the audience for the events that are to come. Since Leontes already has a child and another on the way, the possibility of an heirless throne is irrelevant. Stuart M. Kurland has argued that Mamillius becomes 'the hope of the entire kingdom,' because he is not only important to his parents, but to all in Sicilia because of his role as future king.[297] Yet, it is not this relationship to the people that Shakespeare focuses on, as he repeatedly stages the family's response to Mamillius' death, over that of the people's. This scene reminds the audience the Mamillius is not just an ordinary child, but the child of the King, and therefore, signifies a royal lineage bigger than himself. The two lords understand this and attempt to inform the audience of this valued position through their discussion, as Archidamus claims, 'You have an unspeakable comfort in your young prince Mamillius' (1.1.34-5). The proprietorial nature of this

[296]Houlbrooke, 135.
[297]Stuart M. Kurland, '"We Need No More of Your Advice": Political Realism in *The Winter's Tale*' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31:2 (1991), 365.

statement, *your* young prince, highlights how consequential Mamillius is to the people of Sicilia, as they invest a degree of personal pride in him. Due to the fact that a Bohemian lord makes this statement, the pride and sense of ownership in the prince is presented as customary to the society portrayed on stage, further amplifying the significance of Mamillius' role in the play. He is described as 'a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh' (1.1.38-9). This comment about Mamillius' role in society 'in a negative way underscores the need he could have filled' once he dies.[298] While the political importance of Mamillius as the heir to the throne is mentioned briefly at the beginning of the play, 'the consequent political disorder does not overshadow the family relations,' foregrounding his role in his family over his potential political future.[299] Instead of emphasising Mamillius' significance to the nation throughout the play, Shakespeare confines this discussion to this scene, elaborating on his personal connections elsewhere. Yet again, Shakespeare emphasises the family in a political situation by removing the narrative of an heirless kingdom and focusing on the ramifications for the individual family.

In the final scene of the play, as Hermione is reunited with her husband and child, Mamillius seems absent and forgotten, creating a more blissful reunion for the rest of the family. Hermione asks Perdita: 'Tell me, mine own, where thou hast been preserv'd? Where liv'd? (5.3.123-4). These questions as to her daughter's whereabouts remind the audience of the traumatic events leading to this reunion, and ultimately, of Mamillius' death, because it occurred the last time Perdita was with her mother. Yet, the audience is almost not permitted to indulge in this melancholy, as Paulina interrupts and says, 'There's time enough for that; Least they desire (upon this push) to trouble your joys with like relation' (5.3.128-130). Her plea for Hermione to leave their happiness

[298]Peter B. Erickson, 'Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*' *PMLA* 97:5 (1982), 821.
[299]Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 184.

unencumbered by the troublesome account of Perdita's upbringing mediates the feelings of the audience as well. In many of his plays, Marjorie Garber argues, Shakespeare introduces a 'fundamental pattern of "death" and "rebirth"' in which characters only appear dead or are believed to be by other characters, exemplified by Hermione's 'death' in this play.[300] However, Mamillius is not written a miraculous awakening similar to that of his mother, and consequently, he remains the one tragic element to an otherwise content conclusion for his family. It seems that Shakespeare includes this line of questioning and the mention of him again only a few scenes before, to remind the audience of his absence, while not undermining the substance of the play. Mamillius becomes a symbol of loss, which is present in the play, and certainly in early modern English society, regardless of its other positive outcomes.

The final time that Mamillius is directly mentioned is at Floritzel's entrance in Sicilia, when Paulina reminisces: 'Had our prince, jewel of children, seen this hour, he had pair'd well with this lord; there was not a full month between their births' (5.1.115-8). The memory of Mamillius is triggered when his doppelganger in the play, Floritzel comes on stage. The fondness in Paulina's remembrance, and her reference to him as a *jewel* forces the audience to remember his importance and tender relationship with his own mother. Despite being otherwise forgotten in the conclusion of the play, Mamillius' memory is once again ignited at Perdita's mention of him. Leontes' response to Paulina contextualises his death for the audience to better appreciate how painful and raw his child's death still is to him, even after sixteen years. He replies, 'Prithee no more; cease. Thou know'st he dies to me again when talk'd of' (5.1.119-120). The fact that he cannot even discuss his son's death, sixteen years after its occurrence, demonstrates the pain, guilt and devastation that Leontes feels over his

[300]Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 229.

son's passing. This one comment to Paulina makes clear to the audience how much he cared for his son, and the grief he has felt over his death.

Throughout *The Winter's Tale*, children are valued and adored by their parents, yet their legitimacy remains a crucial question in determining their acceptance, both as an infant and a prospective marriage partner. I have argued that the breeding of children is placed at the forefront of the play in order to examine the distinction between art and nature, a popular Renaissance controversy.[301] Shakespeare emphasises the inherent attributes of his child characters in this play, solidifying both Mamillius and Perdita's royalty and physical connection to their biological parents, despite their contradictory upbringings. The emphasis on children takes a different turn in *Richard III*, as Shakespeare no longer focuses on their legitimacy and conception, but their growth and maturation.

[301]Stephen Orgel, ed. *The Winter's Tale,* 172.

Richard III

In Shakespeare's final play in the first tetralogy, *Richard III*, the familial element of the plot is exacerbated by his inclusion of personal reactions and emotions from those most affected by the destruction of the infamous households of Lancaster and York. Amid this civil tumult are a number of children who are often unaware of the political ramifications of their family's decisions. The most popular and influential children in the play are of course the young princes, Edward and York, whose legitimate claim to the throne immediately supersedes Richard's own. The audience easily presumes the princes' 'innocence and incorruptibility' because of their young ages, enhancing Richard's villainy in his destruction of them.[302] Despite wielding sympathy from the audience due to their vulnerability, Edward and York illustrate their imposing threat to Richard through their wit, assertiveness and intelligence during their brief appearances on stage. The other children present in the play, Clarence's two orphaned children and a page who is summoned by Richard to employ a murderer, contribute to the audience's interpretation of childhood as well. Their exchanges with other characters show that children are not merely inconsequential to our understanding of the play, but prove to be observant, intuitive characters, worthy of proper examination that they have often been neglected in recent criticism. The children's absence from the various source materials attributed to the composition of the play and the fact that the majority of their scenes provide little to no narrative information, suggests that Shakespeare invests in their characterisation, providing them with autonomy and authority of their own. I will show that Shakespeare focuses on childhood in this play, even in his characterisation of Richard as a demented, malicious child who lacks the maturity to withstand scrutiny from his mother. This inversion of childhood presented in

[302]R. S. White, *Innocent Victims: Poetic Injustice in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: The Athlone Press, 1982), 46.

Richard's character provides the audience with a unique symmetry of children throughout the play. While Richard reverts to a manipulative, petty enactment of a child, the remainder of the children on stage are prematurely sagacious.

More than forty percent of London's population in the early modern period was comprised of children still living at home with their parents, although modern day audiences would hardly realise this from the lack of child parts available in Shakespeare's canon.[303] The comparatively miniscule amount of roles for youngsters could be attributed to several factors, many of which are theatrical concerns: a lack of child actors available to tour with a travelling company; the risk of incredibly varied performances due to a lack of professionalism, exposure and experience; and even the opportunity to join a child acting company, such as the Children of St. Paul's or Chapel Royal that were highly favoured by Queen Elizabeth.[304] Despite all of these concerns, Shakespeare does indeed create children's parts, particularly in *Richard III*, where many of their scenes are peripheral to the narrative of the play.

The majority of the children's lines supply the audience with their personal sentiment and response to devastating news, or their impression of the ongoing events surrounding them. Their lack of contribution to the development and momentum of the play, along with the material conditions of the theatre are symptomatic of Shakespeare's desire to include these roles for children, however small. Theatre anecdotes demonstrate that children visited public playhouses with their parents, although the frequency of their presence is unknown.[305] Andrew Gurr suggests that compared to the other pastimes available at the time—gambling, whoring and drinking—the theatre was the

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[303]Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 119. See also Keith Wrightson, 105-6.
[304]Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, 30. Ann Blake, 'Shakespeare's Roles for Children: A Stage History,' *Theatre Notebook* 48:3 (1994), 126. Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 21.
[305]Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 79. Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage,* 265.

form of entertainment that created the most wholesome environment so understandably, families visited together.[306] Given children's presence in the audience, these roles become more poignant to families watching the performance together. Shakespeare was certainly aware of his audiences in theatres when writing his plays, and the amount of children in this play suggest that he purposely emphasises this stage of life in this play. By incorporating these parts into his play, Shakespeare deliberately personalises and domesticates the ramifications of this tragic point in the history of the English monarchy.

The first children introduced in the play are Clarence's young boy and girl, who are only on stage for one scene with their grandmother, as they discover the death of their father. The fact that they are merely known in the play as *girl* and *boy*, without individual names, hints at their irrelevance and predicts their frequent omission from performances and criticism as well. However, in their scant time on stage, they prove to be mature in dealing with their father's death, contrary to adult actors in the play. Furthermore, the lack of specification when dealing with these children can instead be read as a universalising of their characters, allowing the audience to associate any common child with this boy and girl, despite their royal lineage. Paul Griffiths' analysis of age in court records shows that ninety percent of the usages for the term *boy* at this time referred to a child between the ages of ten to eighteen; and *girl* between ten and twenty-four, but some as young as six.[307] Yet, historically, Clarence's children were named Edward and Margaret Plantagenet, which is often listed in the *dramatis personae*, along with a note that the characters in the play are 'a young son/daughter of Clarence.' The inclusion of the word *young* in this epithet makes clear that while *boy* or *girl* could refer to an older child, Clarence's children are still youthful. Heather Dubrow

[306]Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 268.
[307]Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 24-5.

has noted how their scene 'anticipates the fate of their cousins, who have also lost a father,' and examines how children behave once they are orphaned.[308] The scene does much more than this, though, as it provides the audience with a greater awareness of mourning and familial ties in the play, because of the concerns expressed about their father's death.

The events of the play span a broad historical period, from 1477 to 1483, but Shakespeare accelerates the timeline in order to enhance the dramatic impact of the play.[309] For example, Clarence's death actually occurred far earlier than Richard's accession to the throne than it does in the play.[310] By postponing Clarence's death, Shakespeare enhances the brutality of Richard's tyranny, especially when viewed through the eyes of his young children and the impact that it has on their fragile lives. Over the course of this scene, Clarence's children show that they are observant, resilient and empathetic. The boy's direct and stubborn questioning of his grandmother regarding his father's death shows him to be sensible and determined. Although their grandmother responds by frankly denying Clarence's death, the boy and his sister persist in questioning her, astutely concluding that her actions are associated with mourning. The children are able to 'make use of their grandmother's words and behaviour in their own arguments,' in order to confirm their father's death and outsmart her in conversation.[311] While grieving was an accepted response to a loved one's death, early modern society considered excessive weeping to be inappropriate because of the strong religious beliefs associated with such funeral rites.[312] The fact that these young children are able to interpret her weeping as part of the rituals related to bereavement

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[308]Heather Dubrow, *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss: Forms of Deprivation, Mourning and Recuperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 182.
[309]Bullough, vol. 3, 240-1.
[310]Ibid., 240.
[311]Wolfgang Clemen, *A Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III*, trans. Jean Bonheim (London: Methuen and Company, 1957), 99.
[312]Houlbrooke, 206. See also Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death,* 393.

shows their observant nature, as they presumably would not have been exposed to many deaths as yet at their young ages. Eventually, the boy retorts, 'then you conclude, my grandma, he is dead,' uncovering his grandmother's deceit and demonstrating his intuition and confidence (2.2.12). His ability to comprehend and interpret his grandmother's actions, despite directly being informed to the contrary, shows the audience that he is incredibly perceptive and observant; attributes not generally associated with childhood.

The boy and girl are also able to express their sorrow in a similar way to the adults around them. The girl advocates the necessity of mourning the deceased when she laments: 'our fatherless distress was left unmoan'd, your widow-dolour likewise unwept!' (2.2.64-5).[313] While they are most certainly young, the boy and girl immediately look for ways to convey their grief, from avenging their father's death, to establishing appropriate methods of mourning, all within a few lines of being informed of its occurrence. The 'dichotomy between weeping and manliness, between mourning and vengeance' appears here in Clarence's children, who are able to exhibit both sorrow and proper decorum simultaneously.[314] Children in the sixteenth century were taught 'to be afraid of death' due to high mortality rates, yet neither of Clarence's children seems even slightly fearful or anxious at the news of their father's death.[315] No sooner have they extracted the truth of their situation from their grandmother, than does the boy courageously asserts, 'God will revenge it, whom I will importune with earnest prayers all to that effect' (2.2.14-5). This comment shows the audience that while just a child, the boy expresses an obligation to his father. His sister wholeheartedly agrees with him, showing that the two of them are 'drilled into participation in adult vendettas' that have

[313]Wolfgang Clemen, 100.
[314]Ian Frederick Moulton, '"A Monster Great Deformed": The Unruly Masculinity of Richard III' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47:3 (1996): 261.
[315]L. Stone, 124.

existed since before they were even born, and that have become a part of their methodology of recuperation.[316] The fact that their reaction to this news is to bring about justice for their father and his memory demonstrates that they have adopted the mindset of retribution that is prevalent in their family, regardless of their youth. It is clear that Shakespeare extends this scene from his source materials in order to highlight children's notions of their parents.

The boy's reactions echo Clarence's in a way that emphasises his maturity and similarity to his father. At the suggestion that Richard orchestrated his father's death, the boy states that Richard 'pitied me, and kindly kiss'd my cheek' (2.2.24). The boy's conclusion that Richard's visible compassion and affection for the boy are indicative of his incapacity to murder his own brother is equivalent to his father's rationale concerning Richard. When confronted by his murderers, Clarence asserts that Richard is innocent because he 'bewept my fortune, and hugg'd me in his arms' (1.4.244-5). The resemblance in their responses when plagued by the possibility of a family member's deceit solidifies Clarence's boy's position as mature and shrewd in the audience's minds. He and his sister are able to comprehend their situation using the same techniques as the adults around them, and even mimic the actions that they witness. Their approach to their father's death shows the audience how prudent they are, despite reminding them of their young ages.

Almost a century later, philosopher John Locke wrote that children 'are Travellers newly arrived in a strange Country, of which they know nothing: We should therefore make conscience not to mislead them.'[317] His analogy demonstrates the prevalence and persistence of the early modern view of children as ignorant; one that does not seem sufficient for Clarence's children despite condescension from those

[316]R. S. White, 102.
[317]John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: Black Swan, 1693), 137.

around them. Shakespeare seems particularly interested in their contribution to the play, as their presence is an addition that he made to his source materials; none of which contain either of these children.[318]

Perhaps what is most noticeable about their dialogue with their grandmother is the amount of questions they raise, and the direct nature of them. Many historians believe that precocity 'was the quality most acceptable to the Elizabethan parent,' as it was then considered demonstrative of a child's intellect.[319] In acknowledging these pre-existing notions of intelligence amongst children, we must consider that an early modern audience would have perceived Clarence's children as intuitive and rational people, and not cast them aside as ignorant. However, their boldness would not have been viewed with such fondness, since Elizabethans taught children

> to obey with ready and willing minds all their lawful and reasonable commandments: to fear them, and to be loath to displease them: to be faithful and trusty to them and theirs: in deeds and promises, to be diligent and serviceable: to speak cheerfully: to answer discreetly: not over boldly to dally with their master's wife, daughters, or maidens.[320]

It was common in the Elizabethan period to expect children to be demure and well mannered towards their parents, as evidenced by this passage. This contemporary opinion is seen in the play when the daring nature of children is admonished, as seen through Elizabeth's frustration at York's inquisitiveness.[321] Shakespeare utilises his society's ideas regarding children in order to show the intelligence, self-sufficiency and uniqueness of his child characters in the play.

Given their rational approach to their father's death, it seems unsubstantiated for their grandmother to label them 'incapable and shallow innocents' (2.2.18). Although she claims this in response to the children's insistence on trusting Richard, this

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[318]See Bullough, ed.
[319]Arlin J. Hiken, 'Shakespeare's Use of Children' *Educational Theatre Journal* 15:3 (1963), 244.
[320]Cleaver.
[321]See 2.4.

admission alone can hardly be a sign of incompetence or naivety, as Clarence himself utters the same conviction only a few scenes earlier. In fact, when the murderers inform Clarence that Richard has employed them, he insists that 'it cannot be' (1.4.244). If the Duchess' claim against the boy and girl is that they are unable to see Richard's malice, then this slander can certainly be applied not only to the children and Clarence himself, but also to the majority of the characters in the play, many of whom do not recognise the façade of Richard's kindness. Her statement is disproven through the children's capable and sensible demeanour throughout this scene. Instead, this phrase is nothing more than a reminder to the audience of their youth and the traits that this entails. Shakespeare specifically includes these children and characterises them as witty and intelligent, emphasising their role in the family battle that encompasses the play. This demonstrates his focus on children and their intelligence and personalities, and explores their role in the family.

Early modern society thought that children 'have not Understandings capable of' certain aspects of life, because certain ideas were too advanced for their brains' comprehension.[322] While children were expected to master languages and classical texts at an early age, educators stressed that extending the material of their studies too quickly was unadvisable. They instead emphasised that 'children are to be used as children: and they who are grown in years, and of riper understanding, according to be dealt withal: yet still must parents have a care of their well doing.'[323] This statement introduces children as innocent and uninvolved in the events that surround them, allowing the audience to consider them in such a way as well. Elsewhere in the play, Richard claims that the children are 'foolish' (4.2.55) and even Clarence characterises them in a similar fashion, saying to the keeper: 'Spare my guiltless wife and my poor

[322]Locke, 197.
[323]Gouge, 547.

children!' which is suggestive of their incapability (1.4.72). The constant reminder of their youth, articulated by various characters, shows how Clarence's children surpass the anticipated notions of their characteristics due to their age, through their logical and discerning natures.

Another unnamed child present in the play only appears briefly on stage once Richard is king. The page assists the king in locating and hiring Tyrrel to murder the princes, a task that elevates his otherwise inconsequential role to invaluable. This scene depicts an 'evident sign of disorder in Richard's interior world' because he seeks political advice from a lowly and young page.[324] When Richard summons the page, he merely shouts, 'Boy!' and repeats this nomenclature over the course of only a dozen lines with him (4.2.32). The use of this word in particular casts the page in the same age range as both the princes and Clarence's children, since this term is used when referring to them as well.[325] By applying the same word to all of the children in the play, Richard erases distinctions between them, allowing them to become interchangeable. Although this may seem immaterial at first glance, this specific detail of the page's identity was Shakespeare's alteration from the previous accounts of the page involved. In one of Shakespeare's source materials, the anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard III* from 1594, Richard calls the page 'sirrah' and 'man,' indicating that the page is in fact, not a boy, but a grown man. The fact that Shakespeare changes this character's age so that he, too, is a child hints at a specific interest in dramatising the acts of children in this play. Moreover, 'it is clear that even the largest Elizabethan company would have had to double extensively to perform' *Richard III* because of its large number of parts.[326] Although the doubling of children in the play is debated, the use of the same actor to

[324]Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 153.
[325]For Clarence's son called *boy*, see 2.2.2, 32; 4.2.55. For the princes as *boy*, see 2.4.35, 66; 4.2.29; 4.4.231.
[326]Antony Hammond, ed. *King Richard III* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 62.

play the page and one of the princes or Clarence's children would further obscure the boundary between children in the audience's minds.[327]

The fact that the page is hired to advise the king on the details of the princes' deaths is ironic, as it places a child and commoner in a position of knowledge superior to that of the adult king. But, since both the princes and the page are referred to using the same name, it also obscures the boundary between them, vicariously enacting the princes' vulnerability on stage through the presence of the page. While the princes are in the Tower when Richard orders their murders, the page's entrance on stage continues to make children visible, even while the princes are absent. This serves as a constant reminder to the audience that the murder Richard is endorsing is that of a child, not unlike the one standing before him in this scene.

This exchange also characterises Richard as requiring assistance from those of a lower social status than him, comparable to the ignorance of a child. Throughout the play, Richard is often understood to exhibit child-like qualities, both by his own admission, and that of those around him. He and Margaret act 'as disgruntled infants, clever, energetic and quick to react, but far too irresponsible to rule a country,' as shown through their constant bickering with one another.[328] He is unable to rule once he finally ascends the throne, since he is incapable of presiding over people, only truly knowing how to manipulate them. The characters around him conceptualise him as a child, particularly seen in his mother's relationship with him. His mother's presence in the play casts him as a subordinate to her maternal authority, since she openly treats him with disrespect, despite his regal authority once crowned King. In a play where the children are shown as orphaned or removed from their maternal care, the presence of

[327]See A. C. Sprague, *The Doubling of Parts in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1966); and David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
[328]Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 125.

Richard's mother likens him to a child who is still dependent on his parents. The Duchess repeatedly asserts her dominance, telling him that she 'might have intercepted thee, by strangling thee in her accursed womb, from all the slaughters, wretch, that thou hast done!' (4.4.137-9). By reverting to the physical superiority that she had over him while he was still in the womb, the Duchess maintains her authority over Richard as his mother and therefore, superior, even once he is king. Morriss Henry Partee argues that the 'stress on the cursed conception, birth, and infancy paradoxically goes a long way to absolve Richard of his evil as an adult,' but in his relationship with his mother, I believe it actually works to aid the audience in understanding Richard in this childhood state.[329] The Duchess is one of the only characters who is able to discern Richard's malevolence early on in the play, publicly labelling him for who he is, without withholding for fear of recrimination. Her presence allows the audience to view Richard from her stance as a mother to a deceitful, unruly child.

His mother's idea of him affects the way that Richard responds to those around him and conveys himself. He claims early in the play that he is 'too child-foolish for this world,' associating himself with the characteristics and naivety of youth (1.3.141). He seems to lack the perseverance to complete his plans by himself, continuously employing supernumeraries or ensemble characters to carry out the unseemly details of his rise to power. Buckingham, one of the people Richard heavily relies on, he even tells, 'I, as a child, will go by thy direction' (2.2.153). The way that Richard portrays himself as a malign inversion of a child longing for guidance, characterises him as inhabiting the attributes often associated with youth. In wishing to be interpreted as such, Richard changes the association with *childhood* from evoking a stage of life to a rhetorical device. By 'cloaking himself in the language of infancy and childhood,'

[329]Morriss Henry Partee, *Childhood in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 45.

Richard endeavours to become comparable to one of the children in the play, attempting to assume their innocence as well.[330]

Two competing views of children prevailed in writings throughout the medieval and early modern periods in England. While children were considered congenitally depraved, full of vicious impulses and a deceitful nature, they were also thought to be innocent and incapable of mortal sin.[331] Richard simultaneously displays the characteristics of the unruly and innocent child throughout the play. By the seventeenth century, though, it seems that the idea of innocence as innate to children was believed by the majority of society. Some critics extend this characterisation of Richard as a child further, proposing that he is punished for continuing to interact with others as a child and not properly mature into adulthood. The fact that his 'reputation had suffered because he had lost his kingdom; [and] had he lived and had children, his conduct would have been judged wholly honourable.'[332] Richard's lack of children, particularly once king, also ensures that he is associated with immaturity because he remains stagnant in the traditional life cycle expected at this time. His own understanding of himself as well as that of those around him, allows the audience to interpret him as an underdeveloped child, seen through his selfish, irresponsible and incompetent manner of conducting himself.

There seems to be a particular type of malice evident in Richard's relationship with his niece and nephews. After cruelly declaring his happiness at the news of the princes' deaths, Richard proudly informs Tyrell: 'The son of Clarence I have pent up close, his daughter meanly have a match'd in marriage, the sons of Edward sleep in Abram's bosom' (4.3.36-8). His perniciousness in dealing with both Clarence and Edward's children differs from his habitual nastiness, as it seems pointedly directed at

[330]Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 140.
[331]Houlbrooke, 141-2.
[332]W. Gordon Zeeveld, 'A Tudor Defence of Richard III' *PMLA* 55:4 (1940): 948.

the individuals and not merely used to serve his personal agenda. Even though he is often mischievous in efforts to obtain power over others, Richard becomes vindictive when considering his niece's happiness. His relationship with these children demonstrates Richard's envy of their positions, lives and perhaps, their youth.

Richard's demand for the princes' brutal murders 'represents the climactic confirmation of his tyranny,' because the princes are no longer considered worthy of the throne due to Richard's slander of them as illegitimate.[333] Their presence is the principal threat to Richard's success, assigning them an immense amount of power despite their ages. Although Edward and York were historically thirteen and eleven years old respectively, Shakespeare 'reduces the ages of some victims to heighten the dramatic impact' of their deaths.[334] Over the course of the play, both princes demonstrate knowledge that surpasses their years, while still maintaining attitudes and interests common to children. Shakespeare focuses on specific attributes associated with childhood in characterising York and Edward. For example, York demonstrates his infantile nature through his keen interest in whether or not his brother has outgrown him since they last saw one another.[335] He also immediately resorts to unreservedly teasing his uncle and engaging in child's play when he arrives to greet his brother in London. Edward reveals his youthful perspective through his desire for his mother and brother to be present upon his arrival, something that is certainly characteristic of a child dependent on his mother. In early modern England, boys were removed from the company of women at the age of seven, and although Edward is historically much older than this, his yearning to regress to his mother's supervision makes him appear much

[333]Catherine Belsey, 'Little Princes: Shakespeare's Royal Children,' in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, 35.
[334]Bullough ed., 254; Morriss Henry Partee, *Childhood in Shakespeare's Plays*, 50.See also Bullough ed., 226.
[335]See 2.4.8 and 3.1.101-4.

younger to Shakespeare's audience.[336] Additionally, Edward and York articulate their apprehension about sleeping in the Tower after their uncle's murder there; a fear that characterises them as cowardly.[337] In addition to this, both of the brothers are repeatedly alluded to as infants or babes, reminding the audience of their youth.[338] However, 'even the children themselves are not fully invested with the lamb-like qualities that would stir our pathos,' as they frequently act in very calculated and mature ways. Shakespeare provides complex characters in the princes as these momentary glimpses of childhood concerns are fleeting and the princes compose themselves with dignity and maturity the majority of the time.[339] It is significant that Shakespeare not only expounds on these children's parts, but does it in such a way that accentuates their youth and reliance on familial relationships.

Even within the play, the question of their autonomy is raised during the debate between Buckingham and the Cardinal about the authenticity and inviolability of a child claiming sanctuary. While the Cardinal originally refuses Buckingham's request to intercept York from his mother's care, he eventually succumbs to what he believes to be a compelling argument for York's ignorance regarding the matter. Buckingham appeals to him by saying:

> This prince hath neither claim'd it nor deserv'd it,
> And therefore, in mine opinion cannot have it.
> Then taking him from thence that is not there,
> You break no privilege nor charter there.
> Oft have I heard of sanctuary men,
> But sanctuary children never till now (3.1.50-6).

While the audience is aware that York's mother claims sanctuary on his behalf in order to protect him, Buckingham's removal of York deliberately rescinds his mother's

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[336]Mendelson and Crawford, 83. See also Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Govenour* (Thomas Bertheleti: London, 1531).
[337]See 3.1.68, 139-45.
[338]See 4.1.98-103, 4.3.9, 4.4.9, 4.4.363 for the princes referred to as *babes* or *infants*.
[339]R. S. White, 48.

authority over him and his religious rights.[340] Although Buckingham asserts that children are incapable of making this decision of their own volition, by detaching York from his mother's supervision, he demonstrates the direct opposite: that York is competent enough to act on his own behalf, without the consent of his mother. Heather Dubrow suggests that York's separation from his mother 'demonstrates the limitations on the maternal body in its role as sanctuary for a child,' because he is expelled from the safety of her guardianship, and consequently dies.[341] However, I believe that the fact that Buckingham is successful in taking York away from the church provides legitimacy to his argument, regardless of his motivation behind making it, because a priest, who is supposedly impartial and pious, agrees with his logic. This suggests to the audience that York is in fact too young to be conscious of his decisions and the ramifications of them. In an extremely disturbing way, this physically forces York away from the safety offered by his mother and the church, and in to the world by himself, while simultaneously characterising him as someone who is unable to grasp the world on his own.

Historically, York's release was described as follows: 'On 16 June the queen, persuaded by the arguments of cardinal-archbishop Bourchier of Canterbury that little York should attend his brother's coronation, or perhaps more persuaded by the presence of soldiers around the abbey, at last surrendered York.'[342] Shakespeare's play modifies the historical account in a few crucial ways; namely, by excluding the mother in the debate; and by centring the scene on the argument of the validity a child's claim to decide his moral fate for himself. In presenting this speech from Buckingham,

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[340]See 2.4.66.
[341]Dubrow, 184.
[342]Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 173.

Shakespeare places the responsibilities and vulnerabilities of childhood at the forefront of the audience's minds.

It is difficult to accurately determine whether York could be legally separated from his mother because the age at which a person gained independence from custodial authority in early modern England is disputed. Firstly, children were taught to observe 'an extremely curious custom [that] forbade them in the name of good manners from openly revealing [their age] and obliged them to answer questions about it with a certain reserve.'[343] Thus, children were often categorised solely by their place in the popular allegory of the seven ages of man. Even the names and distinctive ages of these categories varied somewhat throughout society, but it seems that a person's stage of life became a significant element in the physical description and credibility of him/her during this time.[344] By understanding the legal accountability of children at this time, we can fully understand the impact of Shakespeare's decision to dramatise York's removal from his mother in sanctuary.

Legally, children were given authority at varying times based on their circumstances. Children were permitted to sign apprenticeship contracts that were legally binding and often testified in court, even while still young. Because 'infants below a certain age were, like insane persons, absolutely incapable because they "wanted discretion,"' children were allowed to provide testimony in court cases once they reached the age of fourteen.[345] This was because the age 'between the dependence of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood' began at fourteen, usually termed

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[343]Ariés, 16.
[344]Alexandra Sheppard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 54-5.
[345]W. S. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, IX (Boston: Brown, 1926), 188. See also Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 161.

youth.[346] This age is when children were held accountable and could be separated from their parents. Despite this, 'during the early seventeenth century, young children in both England and America often testified, apparently without even the doubts of their veracity' on the witness stand.[347] In fact, court records indicate that in 1606, an eight year old girl testified in a murder case in England without recorded objection from anyone regarding her young age. It seems that regardless of the barometer of maturity in the legal system being fourteen, this rule was often broken and does not seem to be a steadfast indication of early modern opinions towards age.

Even with regards to the law, the rights and ages of children varied. For example, a child was legally unable to hold an estate until s/he came of age, and would be assigned a guardian to manage the estate affairs in his/her place for the duration of childhood. In matters of inheritance, 'infancy lasted until twenty-one for male heirs and sixteen for female heirs, much older than the age of marriageable consent.'[348] As in many legal matters, the age for female heirs was much younger than males, because women were expected to marry and subsequently be deferential to their husbands, removing the potential for any negative consequences from their own decisions regarding the estate due to her age. Custodial rights of parents or wards ended once the minor reached twenty-one, when a child became fully responsible for him/herself.[349] However, it seems that 'although the age of twenty-one in some cases defined "minority", it did so only loosely as an outside delimiter, and only within the common law,' because people were legally permitted to marry much earlier than this.[350]

Marriage could be contractually agreed upon by two young children. Laws stated that 'consent to a marriage could be given by any person over the age of seven,

[346]Mendelson and Crawford, 79.
[347]Holly Brewer, 155.
[348]B. J. and Mary Sokol, 403.
[349]Holly Brewer, 233.
[350]Ibid., 238.

while marriage could be consummated by boys at fourteen and girls at twelve years of age.'[351] However, even in such cases where marriage was contracted before adolescence, it was often deferred to allow the couple to produce the sufficient means to establish their own household.[352] Many young people participated in apprenticeships during this time in order to gain experience, knowledge and funds necessary for marriage. There was 'a statutory stamp, for example, upon the minimum age of departing apprenticeship' which was twenty-four years for men and twenty-one years for women, or in some cases earlier if they married.[353]

Given all of this disparate information regarding the legal authority of children and youths in the early modern period, with respect to contracts, marriage and courts, it is challenging to conclude the exact age at which a child was considered to commence adulthood. Early modern English society disagreed about the parameters of youth and adulthood, and obscured the two categories, so that 'youth and old age were often represented as paradigmatic of the human condition in relation to questions of sin, virtue and morality,' instead of a distinct age.[354] It is also important to consider that 'there were many different ways of growing up in early modern society, and they were affected by social class, gender, the state of labour markets, customary access to the land, and, above all, the responses of the young.'[355] Given the notion of age and authority prevalent at the time, it is important for our modern perspective of children not to override our impression of the children in this play, and individual levels of maturity and development. While Buckingham and the Cardinal's discussion introduces questions regarding York's authority as a child, it seems that this was a disputed and debated topic in early modern England, with no explicit and defined answer. By

[351]Keith Wrightson, 67.
[352]Ibid., 69.
[353]Griffiths, 5.
[354]Alexandra Sheppard, 21.
[355]Griffiths, 6.

including this dialogue, Shakespeare utilises the age of York's character to highlight an issue already recognised as relevant to early modern society.

The exchange between Buckingham and the Cardinal also indirectly questions the ability for a child to rule as monarch, since Edward is not much older than his brother and has just been crowned king. If York is not considered responsible enough to make a decision regarding his own welfare, then he can hardly be thought proficient at ruling an entire nation; presumably the same would be true of his brother who is a similar age. The fear of a child monarch was present in early modern England as it is in the play. The third citizen succinctly iterates this anxiety when he declares, 'woe to that land that's govern'd by a child!' (2.3.11). His comment shows the awareness of the dangers that resulted from a child's accession to the throne, which were customary in England at this time.[356] By asserting that a child is inept at claiming sanctuary—a religious and personal decision—Shakespeare questions whether or not children are truly capable of making any decision for themselves, or whether they are entirely reliant on their guardians until they reach adulthood.

Eventually, the maturity of the princes is irrelevant in the scope of the play as they are killed. The princes' murder in the Tower takes place off stage, which many have suggested was done in order to avoid duplicating Clarence's murder scene, as it involves similar circumstances and location.[357] Although this may have been a factor, it is also plausible that the staging of the princes' murders would have been too tragic and graphic for an audience to witness while watching a play. Childhood was described as:

> the age of innocence, to which we must all return in order to enjoy the happiness to come which is our hope on earth; the age when one can forgive anything, the age when hatred is unknown, when nothing can cause distress; the golden age of human life, the age which defies Hell, the age when life is easy and death holds no terrors, the age to which

[356]See Ian Frederick Moulton, '"A Monster Great Deformed," 256.
[357]Ann Blake, 'Children and Suffering in Shakespeare's Plays' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993), 297. See also Bullough ed., 239.

> the heavens are open. Let tender and gentle respect be shown to these young plants of the Church. Heaven is full of anger for whosoever scandalises them.[358]

This passage demonstrates how childhood was considered to be filled with virtuousness during the early modern period. Understanding this intensifies Richard's viciousness towards the princes, because it demonstrates how unnecessary and lascivious his actions are towards his nephews. Despite many of Shakespeare's characters who are children meeting a tragic end, not only in this play, but across his entire canon, the majority of their deaths are not depicted on stage, but merely reported.[359] Children are considered a serious threat in many of Shakespeare's plays, and are confronted with danger often immediately upon birth. The children who are threatened but survive: Fleance in *Macbeth*, Aaron and Tamora's bastard child in *Titus Andronicus*, Edward V in *3 Henry VI* and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* all encounter peril at the hands of family members or people with close ties to their parents. Besides the princes, the other children who tragically die during his plays, Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*, Arthur in *King John* and Macduff's children in *Macbeth* are all killed off stage. With the exception of Rutland in *3 Henry VI*, all of Shakespeare's children's deaths occur off stage. It seems that although Shakespeare frequently uses the violent endangering or killing of children as a plot device, it is too vicious and brutal to illustrate in front of an audience. Shakespeare distinguishes himself from Marston, Middleton and Webster by portraying these deaths of children off stage instead of brutally in front of the audience, suggesting the theme of the innocence of children that is explored in his plays.[360]

Early modern society traditionally viewed children as the hope for a more prosperous England to come and yet a symbolic link to an idealised past of their own

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[358]F. Guerard, quoted by Ariés, 108. See also Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage*, A Svvete and Devout Sermon of Holy Saint Cyprian of Mortality of man* (London: Tho. Bertheleti, 1534), 20;andJohn Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 34.
[359]I am referring only to children who are not given any serving roles.
[360]See *Antonio's Revenge*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*.

childhoods.[361] Edward and York would have been even more inundated with this conflicting view of children given that they were English princes and the future rulers, heightening their link to the promised future. Tombs were a method of displaying the importance of the family to the world, because they 'conjoined title, name, date and lineage as a kind of visual art which legitimised the form of the body politic' for all to witness.[362] Tyrell reports the princes' deaths to the audience, describing them as:

> girdling one another
> Within their alabaster innocent arms.
> Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
> Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.
> A book of prayers on their pillow lay (4.3.10-14).

The imagery evoked by his speech demonstrates the importance of their role in the ongoing war between families. The colours that are mentioned—alabaster and red—recall the white and red roses of the houses of York and Lancaster, respectively; a symbol of the war in which the princes found themselves pawns. Shakespeare writes his children characters amid a world of 'extreme suffering' to show how conflict affects all members of society, even children, and this idea is certainly present in the events culminating in the princes' deaths.[363] Their arms wrapped around one another as a source of comfort and even protection invokes the failed security of their mother's arms, and the safety they failed to provide from Richard's plotting. Earlier in the play, Buckingham specifically instructs Hastings that if York's mother refuses him, 'from her jealous arms pluck him perforce' (3.1.36). Arms have been portrayed throughout the play as symbolic of protection, even though they were ultimately unsuccessful. They appear in this scene a final time, showing that even in death, the princes attempt to shield one another from the outside world, which no one was able to accomplish during

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[361]Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, *Childhood and Cultural Despair* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 34.
[362]Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.
[363]Ann Blake, 'Children and Suffering in Shakespeare's Plays,' 301.

their lives. Lastly, the prayer book that is placed by their pillow serves as a reminder to the audience of the promised shelter of sanctuary that collapsed under Richard's regime. All of these images mentioned at their deaths remind the audience of the constant resources—their mother, their families and even the church—that have denied them while alive.

The use of the word *alabaster* when describing the young princes associates them with tomb monuments particularly those built in England at this time. As with many items in early modern England, funeral monuments displayed the class and rank of the deceased through the choice of materials and the detail of engraving on the tombstone itself. Even the location of the tombstone inside or outside the church and its proximity to the altar, determined the level of cost, and therefore, relative importance of the person buried.[364] Alabaster 'traditionally supplied most of the high quality native effigies,' given its expense, and its commercial value outside of the production of tombstones and church monuments.[365] In medieval England, it was a popular practice to make death monuments from alabaster, and numerous alabaster statues and artefacts present in churches originated from this time.[366] Furthermore, alabaster 'constitute[d] a large part of our surviving heritage of late medieval English art,' because its identity was correlated with English nationalism, heightening the significance of its use for the young English royals.[367] The way that the princes' deaths are placed in direct reference to their future tombs would have been significant to Shakespeare's audience. Furthermore, 'funeral effigies of children had occasionally been placed on the tombs of their parents in the sixteenth century, but by the seventeenth, children were being given

[364]Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral*, 164. See also Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 460.
[365]Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, c. 1500- c. 1800* (London: Reakton Books, 1991), 125. Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1984), 30.
[366]Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 114.
[367]Francis Cheetham, 11.

their own tombs, effigies, and epitaphs,' and becoming more individualised.[368] Although the events of the play take place before this shift in conceptualising children, Shakespeare's audience would be aware of the changes in funeral monuments for children.

Before their inevitable deaths, the princes are afforded a drastic expansion of their roles available in Shakespeare's source material. In Edward Hall's *The Union of The Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*, (1548), Edward is referred to as a 'young king,' but the only words that he utters throughout the entirety of the piece are: 'Alas I would mine uncle would let me have my life although I lose my kingdom.'[369] Similarly, in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and Holinshed's *Chronicles*, his role is diminished as he is merely mentioned, yet is given no lines whatsoever. The fact that Shakespeare greatly expanded this part shows its importance in and to the play: from a barrier in Richard's access to the throne, to a separate and individualised character with his own agency. The princes' existence seems to hint at the contrast between regal authority and child susceptibility, as they are able to show their wit and assertiveness, while still maintaining concerns that are indicative of childhood.

Despite various traits attributed to the princes in order to categorise them as dependent, needy and senseless children, they demonstrate intelligence and agency throughout their time on stage. In fact, they are the 'most effective verbal opponents' to Richard, because they seem to be conscious of his true cruel intent and have no difficulty expressing this.[370] When Edward arrives in London for his coronation, he tells Richard, 'I want more uncles here to welcome me' (3.1.6). In desiring his other uncles there to greet him instead of Richard, he shows that he is aware of Richard's deceitfulness.By expressing this to Richard in such a way, Edward shows both Richard

[368]Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, *Childhood and Cultural Despair*, 39.
[369]Bullough ed., 255-6 and 278.
[370]Belsey, 'Little Princes,' 46. See also A. J. Piesse, 73.

and the audience his calculated demeanour, which is an extremely mature and reserved action for a child to accomplish.

Early modern children were generally considered to be unaware of their circumstances, since they heavily relied on their parents (and often servants, for children of the gentry) to provide for them. Because society thought that 'they cannot deeply discern nor profoundly conceive things,' children were to be treated with condescension and patience.[371] However, not long afterwards, John Locke maintained that children were perceptive in matters of deceit and manipulation. He claimed:

> They easily perceive when they are slighted, or deceived, and quickly learn the trick of Neglect, Dissimulation, and Falsehood, which they observe others to make use of. We are not to entrench upon Truth in any Conversation, but least of all with Children; since if we play false with them, we not only deceive their Expectation, and hinder their Knowledge, but corrupt their Innocence, and teach them the worst of Vices.[372]

Given this passage, it is clear that while many considered children to be incapable of comprehending social situations, some thought that they could easily observe the viciousness of someone. While he was writing a few years after Shakespeare, Locke was well respected and frequently published, thus this idea regarding children's natural intuition was most likely ingrained in popular opinion. Therefore, Shakespeare's characterisation of Edward introduces his perceptiveness with respect to common notions of childhood behaviour. Edward's ability to perceive his uncle's true malice exemplifies the Elizabethans' notion that children were intuitive, despite their lack of knowledge in other areas.

Edward continues in this manner, remaining calm yet subtly asserting his own opinion and authority when he vows, 'God keep me from false friends!—but they were none,' regarding Richard's accusation against his other uncles (3.1.16-17). He

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[371]Cleaver, 306.
[372]John Locke, 137.

demonstrates that he cannot easily be manipulated into believing allegations about the family members whom he trusts. Edward also makes it clear to Richard that he has no reason to fear others, stating 'I fear no uncles dead,' implying Richard's villainy (3.1.156). By stating this to Richard, Edward positions himself in a place of superiority despite the fact that he is a child, because he shows that he is unafraid of others and aware of his uncle's double persona. His comments also make it obvious that while Clarence's children (and indeed even Clarence himself) cannot believe Richard's malignity, it is transparent to Edward, despite his young age. Richard realises the threat that Edward poses to him, both in his claim to the throne, and in unveiling his deceitfulness, and tells the audience of his intentions for Edward in an aside, 'So wise so young, they say do never live long' (3.1.79). Not only does this foreshadow Richard's plans for Edward, but it also shows that Richard is intimidated by the wit and intuition that Edward possesses. Shakespeare's creation of this suspicious and probing attitude in Edward, when other adults around him lack it, shows his own interest and investment in his children characters. Over the course of the scene, Edward also chides his brother for begging, articulates an interest in tradition and the preservation of buildings and expresses goals for his reign as king, all of which demonstrate his innate maturity and nobility.[373]

Edward's interest in the Tower and its history emphasises the 'conspicuous enthusiasm for the benefits of education' that arose in the sixteenth century.[374] Parents became interested as never before in the importance and advantages of providing an education for their children. The Tower acts as the location for the princes' deaths, but even previous to this, it becomes an emblem of turmoil due to Clarence's murder there. Edward's trepidation concerning the Tower, due to his uncle's death, makes his

[373]Cleaver, 306.
[374]Keith Wrightson, 184.

fascination with the planning and building it intriguing, while foreshadowing of his own demise. When Edward questions Richard and Buckingham about the construction of it, he learns that since it was originally built, 'succeeding ages have re-edified' numerous times (3.1.71). Since the remodelling of the Tower remained incomplete not only in the era of the play, but also when it was originally performed to Elizabethans, the Tower 'becomes a symbol for the children's unfinished lives.'[375] Ironically, the Tower was built as a fortress against foreign enemies, yet it becomes the location for a battle between family members, especially during this civil war.

York is even more cunning than his older brother, unashamedly teasing Richard throughout their time on stage together, and previously in his mother's company. His 'wit is bolder and more nimble' than Edward's, since he is more assured of his position, and perhaps more naive about the serious nature of his situation.[376] His humour and witty repartee aggravates those around him, as he seems to have a tendency to twist others' words to use against them. Buckingham notes 'with what a sharp-provided wit he reasons!' (3.1.132); Elizabeth calls him 'A parlous boy!' (2.4.35); and Richard repeats this, calling him 'a perilous boy, bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable' (3.1.154-5). Clearly, York is perceived by those around him as quick-witted, crafty with words and extremely astute.

While York's playfulness might seem demonstrative of his immaturity to a modern audience, this in fact would have signalled his class and education to early modern theatregoers. Children were encouraged to develop an interest in words in the early modern period, and were taught before they reached seven, that: 'there is no better elective to noble wits than to induce them in to a contention with their inferior companions: they sometimes purposely suffering the more noble children to vanquish,

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[375]Maurice Hunt, 'Ordering Disorder in *Richard III*' *South Central Review* 6:4 (1989), 17.
[376]Wolfgang Clemen, 126.

and, as it were, giving to them place and sovereignty, though indeed the inferior children have more learning.'[377] Contemporary audiences would have noticed York's wordplay as part of a game and a learning experience for him to improve on his language skills, as this exchange directly mimics the advice given to parents about how to teach their children. Three distinct categories of games were recognised at this time: games of exercise, games of chance and parlour games, all to be played under specific circumstances.[378]

Parlour games referred only to 'games of wit and conversation' because 'they can appeal only to persons of quality, bred on civility and gallantry, quick at repartee and speeches, and full of knowledge and judgement, and cannot be played by others.'[379] Due to the fact that specific classes were associated with various types of games, York's witty discussion with his uncle would have been an indication to the audience that he was a well-educated, noble child. The fact that Shakespeare includes this exchange shows that he is invested in how York is interpreted on stage by his audience. However, it is York that is more successful with words than his older opponent, reversing the inherent authority of Richard simply because of his age. By writing a gutsier younger prince, Shakespeare allows the audience to understand these two children as distinctive, proficient characters in the play.

Throughout *Richard III*, children are present in order for the audience to interpret the personal ramifications of the events unfolding on stage before them. Although all of the children in this play: Clarence's boy and girl, the page, Edward and York are given comparatively small roles, they are greatly expanded upon or even entirely created by Shakespeare. Since the scripting of their scenes is often unnecessary to the narrative of the play, the children's presence and opinions seem suggestive of

[377]Thomas Elyot, fol. 18.
[378]Ariés, 89-91.
[379]Ibid., 88.

Shakespeare's intentional inclusion of their characters. All of the children serve as a reminder of the consequences to the innocent during war; a fact that is ultimately realised by society in the play through the deaths of the princes. Their significance exceeds this, however, as the children in this play exhibit a maturity and intuition beyond their years that many around them are not afforded. Richard's reversal of the innocent child provides the audience with a conflated view of childhood that is both guiltless and unruly. The early modern period produced 'a greater interest in children' than ever before, and Shakespeare demonstrates this through his investment in their characters throughout the play.[380]

By writing scenes for these children characters, Shakespeare once again deliberately personalises the political tragedy, allowing every commoner to relate to a tale of kings. *The Winter's Tale* shows a similar prominence of children, this time with the conception and formation of them, whereas *Richard III* investigates their role in the family once they have grown somewhat. This chapter has investigated the role that children play throughout Shakespeare's canon, not only after they are born, but in conception as well. The persistent spotlight on children in both *The Winter's Tale* and *Richard III*, even when they are in danger, demonstrates their importance to the succession and legacy of a family. I have shown that Shakespeare incorporates these scenes of family life in his plays, even when the expectation or source material does the contrary, as a way of keeping his audience connected to the material dramatised before them on stage. While these plays cast monarchs, they investigate domestic life by exploring the relationships between parent and child, regardless of rank or wealth. Shakespeare also explores how husbands and wives mediate their own relationship once children are involved. In the next chapter, I will investigate the next phase of family life,

[380]L. Stone, 124.

adolescence, and how it influences interactions with family members and future spouses. When children reached maturation, their relationship with their parents became far more complex and intricate, which I will discuss.

Chapter 3: Adolescence

'Youth is hot and bold, age is weak and cold' (The Passionate Pilgrim 7.7)

The previous chapter explored the bond between parents and children, and this chapter continues in that vein by investigating how that relationship mutated and evolved as the child grew and reached maturity. This chapter concentrates on how adolescent figures interacted with their parents and formed their own sense of identity through their housing circumstances. It raises a series of questions about the experience of adolescence: how was adolescence considered and interpreted in early modern England? How does this compare to Shakespeare's dramatisation of this stage of life? The tension between adolescents and their parents is something that certainly affected the family dynamic, and Shakespeare explores this in *Romeo and Juliet*, which is known for its depiction of young lovers who have become emblematic of youth itself.

Adolescence was a transitional period between childhood and adulthood in early modern England as it is today. *Romeo and Juliet* has long been recognised as a 'tragedy of youth,' with two young lovers distrusting the oppressive authority figures in their society, shown in the form of their parents.[381] The play was popular on the Elizabethan stage and continues to be a favourite among modern audiences, most likely because of its poignant portrayal of eternal true love conquering familiar obstacles.[382] Jill Levenson has argued that the play's everlasting popularity and resonance 'allow the protagonists

[381]Harley Granville Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, vol. 5 (London: B.T. Batsford, 1970), 36. See also Franklin M. Dickey, 'To love extremely, procure they ther death or danger' in *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays*, ed. John F. Andrews (New York and London: Garland Publishers, 1993), 269; Coppélia Kahn, 'Coming of Age in Verona' *Modern Language Studies* 8:1 (1977-1978), 5; and Jerry Weinberger, 'Pious Princes and Red-Hot Lovers: The Politics of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*' *The Journal of Politics* 65:2 (2003), 352. For how distrusting authority figures as characteristic of Shakespeare's young people, see Derek Cohen, *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 2-3.
[382]Bullough, ed., vol. 1, 275.

almost no individuality.'[383] Over time, the young lovers have become symbols of youth and its emotions, desires and ideas. The Nurse's specificity of Juliet's age; Romeo's immediate transference of love from Rosaline to Juliet upon meeting her; the continuous brawls in the streets; and the secrecy and disobedience with which Romeo and Juliet conduct their relationship, all emphasise immaturity or naivety which was often associated with youth during the period. In addition to this, Romeo and Juliet remain stagnant in adolescence, never permitted to make the rite of passage into adulthood in the way that their families and friends interpret them. Shakespeare presents an impossible situation for the young lovers, who are unable to proclaim their marriage publically, but cannot conceal it any longer, as Juliet's impending marriage to Paris and Romeo's banishment from Verona override their personal emotions. In their attempts to mimic the conventional, patriarchal form of love around them, Romeo and Juliet ultimately suffer from their adolescence, and its inherent dependence on their families, as they cannot progress into the self-sufficient phase of adulthood. Shakespeare focuses on adolescence in this play and demonstrates how this phase changes the family dynamic.

Throughout the play, youth is associated with fickleness, lack of knowledge and rashness. Romeo is repeatedly described as *young* by those around him, with Friar Lawrence simply labelling him a 'young waverer' (2.4.89).[384] Before Juliet even appears on stage, the audience is given her father's perspective of her: that she 'is yet a stranger in the world' (1.2.8). This introduces her character to the audience as naive and inexperienced, particularly because adults—her parents and the Nurse—assign her personality traits before she is even given the opportunity to define herself. Her father's

[383]Jill Levenson, 'Introduction' in *Romeo and Juliet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17. See also Barbara Hodgdon, 'Absent Bodies, Present Voices: Performance Work and the Close of Romeo and Juliet's Golden Story' *Theatre Journal* 41:3 (1989), 343.
[384]See 1.5.66, 2.3.33 and 2.4.89.

notion of her, coupled with the Nurse's lengthy monologue reminiscing about Juliet's infancy as 'the prettiest babe e'er I nursed,' characterises her as young before she is even assigned many lines (1.3.65). Later in the play, Capulet admonishes Juliet for behaving as 'young baggage, disobedient wretch' (3.5.160) and considers her to be a 'wayward girl' (4.2.47). His view promotes the normative patriarchal hierarchy within the household of a father presiding over his daughter, but it also contrasts him with his daughter, casting him as old and hence obsolescent. Capulet is meant to be understood as archaic in his preparations for Juliet's marriage, which is a recurring thematic device in the play. Lady Capulet chides her husband for acting too young when he tries to fight in the streets and again when he is hot-tempered with Juliet, establishing their characters as old and too sensible to behave in an adolescent manner. The Nurse dates herself as well when discussing Juliet's age and later when she complains about her bones and back aching.[385] The behaviour of these characters separates them into two general categories: young and old. The antithesis of youth and age is one of the many oppositions in the play in terms of theme, language and characterisation; a motif which is absent from Shakespeare's source materials.[386] The contrasts between light and dark, gall and sweet, prose and verse, public and private and Capulet and Montague all contribute to the audience's understanding of the vast differences between the old and the young characters as it is just one of the many antitheses that has been introduced over the course of the play.[387] This allows Romeo and Juliet to be equated with the adolescent phase, because they are specifically distinguished from the knowledge and temperament of the older characters in the play.

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[385]See 2.5.

[386]Bullough, 277. For a discussion on sources of this play, see Arthur J. Roberts, 'The Sources of *Romeo and Juliet*' *Modern Language Notes* 17:2 (1902), 41-44.

[387]See 1.1.133, 135-6, 176; 1.4.13-14, 19; 2.1.64-5 and 148-9; 1.1.190, 1.4.205 and 2.4.22-3; Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 194.

Topically, the primary concern of the play is adolescence itself. Juliet is constantly depicted in the company of her parents or the Nurse, all of whom are figures of authority, to accentuate her reliant and juvenile status. During her first scene on stage, a lengthy discussion regarding Juliet's age ensues, which provides more specificity as to her age than any other Shakespearean character, emphasising her youth as a thirteen year old girl.[388] Shakespeare reduced the age of his heroine from his source materials, as Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (1562) has Juliet at sixteen and Painter's Juliet in *Rhomeo and Julietta* (1567) is aged eighteen.[389] In addition to this, both of the young lovers' names are also associated with youth in meaning. Juliet's name originates from a Latinate word meaning *youthful* and Romeo is defined in a 1598 dictionary as an Italian word meaning 'a roamer, a wanderer, a palmer.'[390] Furthermore, the continual references to time in the play and the 'unusual frequency and specificity would indicate that they are especially important' to our understanding of the world dramatised in the play.[391] While older characters refer to the duration of time in months and years, Romeo and Juliet mark themselves as young through their references to time in smaller increments, such as hours and days. The fact that the protagonists are unable to conceive time in larger amounts suggests their youth and inexperience, as they are more eager and impatient than the older figures in the play.

The fluid and excessive sexuality present in the language is linked to the youth of the characters as well. The various characters' persistence in discussing and visualising sexual relations is obsessive and often times ambivalent about their intended target. The ambiguity of the characters' sexual preference has led many critics to point out the latent homosexuality between the young men in the play. However, the sexuality

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[388]Harley Granville-Barker, 49-50.
[389]Bullough, 279.
[390]John Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes* (London: Arnold Hatfield for Edward Blount, 1598), 333.
[391]Thomas Tanselle, 'Time in *Romeo and Juliet*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15:4 (1964), 350.

presented is not merely between all of the male characters, but also between Romeo and Juliet. The play 'charts a movement from a possibly idealistic sense of sexuality as interconnected with personal selfhood, to an isolated private individual whose gender is subject to social convention.'[392] The young lovers adhere to their society's protocol for dealing with love, relating their experience to the rest of the characters' compulsive and excessive love elsewhere in the play. Furthermore, because they have no enclosed space of their own in which to display their love, Romeo and Juliet appear overzealous in conducting their sexual activity in her father's house.[393] Their relationship emerges as demonstrative of their immaturity and youth due to its gratuitous and misallocated sexuality.

It is not just the heightened sexual desire but also the timeline that is correlated to youth. Shakespeare accelerates the timeline from his source materials so that the full length of the play occurs over one week in the month of July, 'a fortnight and odd days' until Lammas-tide (1.3.17).[394] A common sixteenth-century explanatory tool about the ages of man was to relate each age to a season that it resembled. Youth was associated with summer because it was the period of life when people had the most sexual heat and were young and vigorous.[395] By changing the timeline of his play to ensure that the entire play occurs during summer, Shakespeare emphasises the adolescent nature of the play, because of the association with youth during the early modern period. The seasoned imagery evoked by the language throughout the play is correlated to summer as well. Juliet tells Romeo, 'this bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, may prove a

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[392]Lynette Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels, *Negotiating Shakespeare's Language in* '*Romeo and Juliet*' (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 85.
[393]Julia Kristeva argues that the lovers thrive on this illegality in her 'Romeo and Juliet: Love-Hatred Couple' in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 68-9.
[394]J. J. Munro, ed. *Brooke's Romeus and Juliet* (London: Humphrey Milfred, 1907), lviii. See G. Blakemore, Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd edn (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1109, n15.
[395]Henry Cuffe, *The Difference of the Ages of Man's Life* (London: Arnold Hatfield for Martin Clearke, 1607), 115-6.

beauteous flower when we meet' (1.2.164-5). On stage, a sense of expediency is present as well through the hastened nature of Romeo and Juliet's courtship and subsequent marriage. The early modern ritual of courtship was often a protracted process that extended over a period of many months due to the financial arrangements made by both families.[396] However, in the play, Romeo and Juliet agree to marry only hours after they have met and prepare for their wedding to take place immediately.[397] These actions not only associate the young lovers with adolescence in the audience's minds, but also highlight how marriage solidified the formation of a family, as has been discussed earlier.

During their meeting and wooing, Romeo and Juliet both use language that is symptomatic of patriarchal society, emphasising their awareness of the conventions of expressing love and their desire to adhere to them.[398] Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* describes courting as a series of steps, ranging from several months to a year, beginning with a man selecting an unmarried woman whom he admires, declaring his love to her, agreeing upon marriage with her and her father, and finally making the arrangements required for a wedding to take place.[399] As has already been discussed, Romeo and Juliet hasten this process to span over a few days instead of months, which is emblematic of their accelerated journey through life. However, behaviour that they employ in preparing for marriage is significant in that it mimics the expected courtship behaviour in many aspects. When the two first meet at Capulet's party, they complete a sonnet together, which indicates the heightened etiquette of their love. Nevertheless, the sonnet concludes with an extra quatrain, obstructing its formalisation and traditional

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[396]Houlbrooke, 73; and Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 243.
[397]See Elmer Edgar Stoll, 'Shakespeare's Young Lovers' in *Romeo and Juliet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Douglas Cole (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), 43 for a discussion of this scene.
[398]Marianne Novy, 'Violence, Love and Gender in *Romeo and Juliet*' in *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays*, ed. John F. Andrews (New York and London: Garland Publishers, 1993), 363.
[399]See Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: William Seres, 1528); and Johanna Rickman, *Love, Lust and License in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 44.

function. Lynete Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels have argued that the language includes 'many formal sonnets and parts of sonnets that are suggestive of the breakdown in language, behaviour and communication.'[400] It is not their linguistic alterations that I am interested in, rather, the way that they use it to signify their intent and mimicry of court rituals. Their shared sonnet ends in a kiss, which was not usually a component of courting rituals until marriage had been properly agreed upon by both families.[401] Elizabeth's retinue were fascinated with courtly love and practices, so much so that the term *to court* acquired the definition 'to woo' during the sixteenth century, linking the practice to her court and their frequent love games.[402] By including this prescribed expression of love in the play during a time when people were concerned with courtship practices, Shakespeare hints at the elevated class and maturity of his young lovers, as these customs were reserved for the elite. However, Romeo and Juliet's failure in their attempt to declare only a sonnet proves them to be immature and inexperienced, despite desperately trying to establish their development and decorum. Later, Romeo attempts to follow these conventions again by swearing his love to her by the moon, which Juliet criticises.[403] Their love is expressed to one another in Petrarchan clichés, which is suggestive of the fact that they are only aware of the traditions and expectations associated with courtship, but have yet to experience it for themselves. The young lovers are exploring the language of love and borrow practices from traditional etiquette by mimicking the traditional wooing narrative. Shakespeare dramatises the way that the courtship narrative cannot exist in isolation, without any mediation from either family party. In doing so, he highlights the adolescent's reliance on parental figures,

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[400]Lynete Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels, 127. See also Ralph Berry, '*Romeo and Juliet*: The Sonnet World of Verona' in *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays*, ed. John F. Andrews.
[401]Johanna Rickman, *Love, Lust and License in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 44-5.
[402]Ibid., 43-44; Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 2.
[403]See 2.1.151.

particularly in attempting to create their own families and demarcate themselves from their parents.

In efforts to abandon their families' feud, Romeo tells Juliet, 'Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd' (2.2.50). By instigating a name change, the lovers embark on a significant tradition associated with the coming of age: creating their own individualised sense of self and family, separate from the Montagues or Capulets.[404] Their desire to rid themselves of their names—their most obvious outward connection to their families—demonstrates the 'increased emphasis on the nucleated unit rather than the extended clan' that was prevalent during this period.[405] Instead of being attached to their families, Romeo and Juliet attempt to divest themselves of any correlation to them and instigate a new nuclear family. Critics have noticed that Juliet shows signs of growth as well as she becomes 'more mature and self-directed' over the course of the play, specifically during her refusal of the Nurse and completing the remainder of her plan by herself.[406] Despite these attempts made by the lovers to eradicate themselves from their families, they are unable to, because they are not properly detached from them due to the clandestine nature of their marriage. This inevitably futile effort to create their own family is crucial to our understanding of the lovers, because it highlights their dependence on the traditional familial hierarchy. Their juvenile imitation of love demonstrates their lack of maturity and knowledge to the audience, ironically while they are attempting to assert it to their society.

The rapidity with which Romeo and Juliet's marriage occurs is subversively commented on by the other courtship narrative in the play between Paris and Juliet.

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[404]Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, 67-8. See also Novy, 'Violence, Love and Gender,' 366-7; Catherine Belsey, 'The Name of the Rose in *Romeo and Juliet*' in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001); and James L. Calderwood, '*Romeo and Juliet*: A Formal Dwelling' in *Romeo and Juliet: Critical Essays*, ed. John F. Andrews, 87.
[405]Dympna C. Callaghan, 'The Ideology of Romantic Love: The case of *Romeo and Juliet*' in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White, 91. See also James L. Calderwood, 87.
[406]Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*, 84.

Despite the fact that Capulet has already implored Paris to wait before marrying his daughter, he quickly agrees to her wedding after Tybalt's death. He informs Paris, 'Monday, ha, ha! Well, Wednesday is too soon; A Thursday let it be—a Thursday, tell her, she shall be married to this noble earl' (3.4.19-21). The breaks in his language and subject matter present a sense of urgency to the audience regarding this union. Juliet reiterates this impetuosity in her reaction to the news from her mother, claiming, 'He shall not make me there a joyful bride! I wonder at this haste, that I must wed' (3.5.117-8). The fact that this marriage, which has followed the traditional courtship process, is widely considered to occur suddenly, emphasises the quickening of Romeo and Juliet's plans.

In the final scenes before the tragedy occurs, Shakespeare returns to the domestic where his sources remain steadfast on the tragedy at large. The practical arrangements for Juliet's impending nuptials to Paris are shown in household terms, with the Capulets organising the food and festivities for the celebration. The realistic preparations such as invitations, cooks, venue and so forth are all taken into account by Capulet, who informs his family and servants that he will 'play the housewife for this once' (4.2.43). This scene provides an interlude to the ongoing tragedy, instead focusing on the household in the lead up to a wedding. It allows the audience to experience the normative process of this rite of passage with a stable family structure in place. The hurriedness of this scene, due to the extent of organisation required for a marriage celebration, contrasts with Juliet's previous marriage ceremony to Romeo, which was secluded and secretive. By hearing these comments and viewing the haste of the preparations involved in hosting a wedding in only a few days, the audience is able to perceive how quickly Juliet's marriage to Romeo transpired. Discussing the meaning of

Romeo and Juliet's behaviour is dependent on an understanding of early modern notions of the transition between childhood and adulthood.

Early modern ideas regarding adolescence have long been debated by social historians, who often argue that 'linguistic and numerical inconsistency implies that early modern people had no sense of a stage of life in the long interval between childhood and adulthood, or that if they did, they did not define it in strictly numerical fashion.'[407] Based on the fact that adolescence is often absent from judicial records, household manuals and books detailing the ages of man, some historians such as Peter Griffiths and Philippe Ariés suggest that during this time, youth was not conceived as a unique stage of life, separate from childhood and adulthood.[408] Despite the fact that youth was frequently consolidated with childhood in the popular allegory of the seven ages of man, I believe that the evidence suggests that society did have a general understanding of youth during the time; regardless of whether it was always categorised as a unique period of life. Many early modern writers such as Henry Cuffe and William Gouge identified *youth* among the ages of man. Cuffe conceited that 'many distinguish the whole course of a man's life into four parts: childhood, youth, man-age, old-age.'[409] It is my contention that adolescence was identified as distinct from childhood and adulthood, as substantiated by the discussion surrounding this age in many contemporary writings. The age of youth typically ranged from fourteen or fifteen to twenty-five, and was always described as a preparatory period for adulthood.[410]

Regardless of whether or not youth was listed as a distinct age of man, notions of behaviour and treatment of adolescents surfaced as predominate concerns of society,

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[407]Griffiths, 23. See also Ariés, 24.
[408]Griffiths, 22 and 73.
[409]Gouge, 525-6.
[410]Cuffe, 118; and Gouge, 525-6. See also Houlbrooke, 166; Griffiths, 22; and Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 216.

because age was a significant marker of societal status at this time.[411] Contemporary moralists followed Galen in characterising adolescence as a phase filled with disobedience, recklessness, riotous behaviour and excessive lust, considering it to be a time of social transformation and growth that determined the young man or woman's maturity as an adult.[412] Society sought to 'prolong [the] period of legal and social infancy' in adolescents through formal education and apprenticeships, in order to better prepare them for adulthood by ridding them of their irresponsible nature.[413] However, early modern notions of youth were not all derogatory. In fact, many referred to it as a ripe, hopeful age; full of eloquence, invention and strength, similar to Aristotle's beliefs about the age.[414] Therefore, a dual understanding of adolescence appears throughout the period that maintained that 'between fourteen and twenty-eight the child is most sensible, full of strength, courage, and activeness, easily drawn to liberty, pleasure and licentiousness.'[415] This combined notion of youth allowed people both freedom and judgement from society, based on their individual actions. Thus, the period of youth was often extended into the mid to late twenties of a person's life for him/her to acquire financial stability and the responsibility required to run a household.

In order to transition into adulthood, adolescents were required to physically separate from their parents, because living situations were indicative of their subordination and dependency. 'Marriage was a point of departure from youth for both men and women,' allowing them to establish their own household and family.[416] Since society predicated notions of adulthood on the physical space that people inhabited, it was not until a person established his/her own household, without parents or guardians,

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[411]Keith Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62 (1976), 205. See also Griffiths, 73; and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 15-17.
[412]Ben-Amos, 17. See also Griffiths, 38 and 60.
[413]Laslett, *Family Life*, 214. See also Houlbrooke, 167.
[414]Laslett, *Family Life*, 207, 218. See also Ben-Amos, 20-1; and Griffiths, 45-6.
[415]*The Office of Christian Parents* (Cantrell Legge for University of Cambridge, 1616), 135.
[416]Griffiths, 28. See also Laslett, *Family Life*, 177; Ben-Amos, 32; and Ariés, 24.

that s/he was considered an adult. Contemporary moralists advised to 'go thy ways into thine own house, unto thy family and show them how much the Lord hath done for thee, and what compassion he had over them' once married.[417] Romeo and Juliet are never able to complete their transition into adulthood, despite the fact that they get married, because they are unable to set up their own household away from the control of their families. While they marry one another and attempt to become autonomous adults by negating their responsibilities to their families, it becomes impossible for them to create their own identities outside of the feud, as they have yet to fully detach themselves physically or mentally from their families.[418] Heather Dubrow has theorised that the loss of domestic dwellings, as a result of fire or lack of landownership, was often associated with the loss of control and masculinity in early modern England.[419] Given this argument, I believe that Romeo's inability to procure his own household can be understood as his failure at asserting his adulthood and masculinity to his society. Since a house was a precursor to establishing masculinity, it follows then that the absence of a house signifies the loss of male identity. Domestic manuals often concentrated on the hierarchy expected in the household, with the husband and father figure at the top of the domestic structure. So intertwined is the notion of male dominance and household order in this discourse that Romeo's lack of domestic governance would have been associated with his masculinity in his audience's minds.

The valuation of household structure was so ingrained in early modern thinking that manuals taught that once a couple married, they should 'keep house together and so deduct as it were new colonies,' away from their parents.[420] The use of the word *colonies* demonstrates the conceptualisation of the household structure as it relates to

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[417]Hegendorph, 5.
[418]Kahn, 'Coming of Age in Verona,' 6.
[419]Dubrow, 94.
[420]Petrus Aerodius, *A Discourse for Parents Honour and Authority* (London: Edward Griffin for William and Thomas Harper, 1614), 67.

parents and their married children. This notion that married children were to establish an individualised, separate house of their own was prevalent throughout society. Early modern culture taught that:

> unto ye husband, in ordering of his house, and in governing of his family and household by this cities are edified. And she cometh, even as god sayth, into her husband's house, as an helper like unto himself, and as a sure companion continuing onto the end of her life, a part-taker of mirth and heaviness, ye mother of their common children, the which keepeth his goods as her own, thinking none other goods to be hers but those.[421]

Numerous manuals derived this idea from Biblical teachings: that a man must leave his own parents and cleave to his wife once married, enhancing its importance to moralists.[422] Since the structure of the family was frequently employed as a model for the commonwealth, people were generally concerned with the hierarchy in families. In fact, William Gouge even commented that if parents 'live with their children, they will so pry into everything that their children's husband or wife doth, and show such suspicion and jealousy in everything, as they cannot but cause much discord: and hence it oft commeth to pass, that either parent or child, or husband or wife must be parted: they cannot all in peace live together.'[423] The detrimental effects of children continuing to live with their parents after marriage is demonstrative of the importance placed on couples at this time to separate from their parents' household in order to create their own. The importance of establishing this household structure recalls a previous chapter in this thesis, discussing marriage and its significance in the formation of the family.

It is no coincidence, then, that the play is deeply concerned with household configuration, and it is evoked throughout to indicate both living circumstances and the relationships between characters. In the prologue, the audience is informed that the feud

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[421]Juan Luis Vives, *The office and duetie of an husband*, trans. Thomas Paynell (London: John Cawood, 1555). See also Hermann von Wied, *A brefe and a playne declaratyon of the dewty of married folkes gathered out of the holy scriptures*, trans. Hans Dekyn (London: 1513), 17; and Edmund Tilney.
[422]Cornelius Agrippa. *The Commendation of Matrimony*, trans. David Clapam (1534). See also Roland Du Jardine, *A discourse of the married and single life* (London: Jonas Man, 1621), 14; and Gouge, 581.
[423]Gouge, 583.

is between 'two households, both alike in dignity,' significantly referring to *households* which included all members of the house, instead of using the term *families* that only referred to people actually related to one another (pro.1). Capulet informs Paris that he shall 'inherit at my house' (1.2.30); Mercutio infamously curses 'a plague a' both your houses!' at his death (3.1.106); and Capulet's main incentive for maintaining Juliet's obedience is the safety that his house provides, shown by his declaration: 'Graze where you will, you shall not house with me' in their heated argument regarding her imminent marriage (3.5.88).[424] The house is also viewed as a place of comfort when Friar Lawrence instructs Juliet, 'go home, be merry' in attempts to console her over Romeo's banishment (4.1.89). Perhaps most poignant is Romeo's reference to his home when wooing Juliet in their first scene alone together. He informs her: 'And I'll still stay to have thee still forget, forgetting any other home but this,' conceptualising of her as his consolation and only residence (2.1.220-1). The fact that the house frequently appears as a place of security, comfort and affection accentuates its value in and to the play. Before a couple could get married, a formal courtship process was usually required during this time, which Romeo and Juliet fail to realise or act upon.

The house was considered fundamental to the courtship process, as it served both as the location for and commodity in negotiations between the girl's father and future husband. The courting process is described during the period as:

> usually the young man's father, or he himself, writes to the father of the maid, to know if he shall be welcome to the house, if he shall have his furtherance if he come in such a way, or how he liketh the notion [...] they visit usually every three weeks or a month, and are usually half a year, or very near, from the first going to the conclusion. So soon as the young folks are agreed and contracted, then the father of the maid carrieth her over to the young man's house to see how they like of all, and there doth

[424]Also stated in 3.5.90 and 99-100.

> the young man's father meet them to treat of a dower, and likewise of a jointure or feoffment for the woman.[425]

The house was important in securing marital negotiations for both the suitor and the bride's father, as this passage makes evident. The fact that the house appears in these proceedings emphasises its centrality to the courtship traditions between men. Another early modern gentleman uses his property to court his love, writing to her: 'a house I have and furniture, and all to pleasure thee, my dear, and I have lands for thee to view' in a love letter.[426] Therefore, the focus on property in the play when discussing marriage would have been significant to Shakespeare's audience. When Capulet and Paris meet to discuss Juliet, it seems to a modern audience that 'the crude sexual and economic exchange of enforced marriage is displaced by the concept of freely circulating love' that Romeo and Juliet share.[427] However, economic concerns were a key component of marriage preparations during the early modern period, and were embedded in accounts of courtship. In fact, Romeo and Juliet even express their love for one another in terms of property or commodity. Romeo claims that 'as that vast shore wash'd with the farthest seas, I should adventure for such merchandise,' referring to his future bride as an article of trade (2.2.83-4). Similarly, Juliet employs the language of monetary value in marriage by saying: 'They have but beggars that can count their worth, but my true love is grown to such excess I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth' (2.5.32-4). The young lovers are inundated with their society's notions of economic concerns in marriage, despite their untraditional courtship, because they only understand love and marriage through their society's language of currency.

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[425]Donald Woodward, ed. *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 122-3.Also cited by Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 253 and Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 102-3.
[426]George Parfitt and Ralph Houlbrooke, eds., *The Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft, Derbyshire Yeoman* (Reading: The Whiteknights Press, 1986), 59.
[427]Callaghan, 99.

The house is emblematic of personal independence from familial ties in the play, not merely in the ongoing feud, but also in Romeo and Juliet's desperate attempt to separate themselves from their families because of their love for one another. Friar Lawrence agrees to unite Romeo and Juliet because of this very reason, that 'this alliance may so happy prove to turn your households' rancour to pure love' (2.3.91-2). Even while preparing to perform their marriage—the very act that removes adolescents from parental authority—Friar Lawrence still considers Romeo and Juliet to be a part of their respective households. The Nurse thinks of her young mistress in the same way, as she later encourages her to obey her father in marrying Paris, instead of submitting to her husband.[428] The way that the young lovers are perceived as dependent on their parents, even by those who are aware of their marriage, demonstrates the vitality of managing one's own household once married to create independence. Early modern moralists said 'that amongst all other companies belonging unto a private house, that of the Husband and of the wife was the principal and chiefest,' because this was integral to society's perception of a couple.[429] The correlation between the house and marriage suggests that because Romeo and Juliet remain in their parents' houses, they are not considered adults by their society. Although they each display glimpses of autonomy, the final transition into adulthood is never fully realised, and they remain transfixed in adolescence.

Romeo and Juliet's struggle to separate from their families would have been problematic in terms of the dramatisation of this play. Based on Elizabethan staging practices, Andrew Gurr surmises that the actors would most likely have used 'two flanking doors to identify each other by where they entered and exited,' with the Montagues and Capulets each attributed to a side of the stage in order for the audience

[428]See 3.5.213-225.
[429]Erocle Tasso, *Of marriage and wiving* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599), page beginning 'gloomie clouds' in chapter entitled 'A defense or answer.'

to easily differentiate between them.[430] By allocating the entrances to the two families, the play leaves little room for characters to detach themselves from this identity while on stage and create a new existence within the same playhouse. It is as though, even in the original production, Romeo and Juliet must maintain their roles as Montague and Capulet respectively, because of the space that they were forced to occupy on stage. Even in staging the performance, specific locations and doors would have signified identity to an early modern audience, and therefore, there is literally no room for identity outside of this binary within the play. Shakespeare not only correlates the characters' identity with the household, but the settings as well.

The play consistently presents the drama in domestic terms, providing the audience with a steadfast and familiar space in the midst of the tragedy. Distinctive locations in the house—the hall, orchard, chamber and closet—become the locale for certain events, drawing on the audience's knowledge of the public and private atmosphere of such settings. At his party, Capulet informs the audience of his location, instructing his guests, 'A hall, a hall! Give room! (1.5.26).[431] In early modern houses, the hall was a 'vast space to accommodate feudal retainers in eating and sleeping,' but could be cleared to facilitate entertainment for guests as well.[432] With few props and little set design on the Elizabethan stage, Shakespeare assists the audience in visualising the scene by providing descriptions of the supposed setting, and notates the level of intimacy that was ascribed to such rooms. Traditionally, the hall provided a space for the head of household 'to enact the symbolic function of establishing his dignity' to his guests, because it was adorned with paintings and furniture.[433] People 'listened to

[430]Gurr and Ichikawa, 123.
[431]See the Arden and Oxford editions for location listed as a hall.
[432]Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 79.
[433]Ibid., 82.

music, danced their stately measures or paced up and down for exercise' in the hall.[434] Not only does this location portray Capulet as a figure of wealth and prominence, it also works to show the physicality of the household and his possessions. While the household was generally seen as symbolic of adulthood and stability throughout society, on an economic level, it also makes visible the tangible items that Capulet owns, in contrast to Romeo and Juliet who have no possessions. Even though they wed, Romeo and Juliet are clearly unable to furnish a household, which the specificity provided about the rooms in her father's household ostensibly points out to the audience. The fact that they initially meet here, in the hall of her parents' house, also places Juliet in a state of dependency on her father, not only for her basic needs of accommodation and food; but also her emotional needs, as she meets her future lover, albeit accidently, at her father's house. The dramatisation of these events forces Juliet to remain utterly reliant on her father while attempting to separate herself from his authority and control in the forthcoming scenes.

The intimacy and growth of the young lovers' relationship is introduced in terms of their positions in the household. Romeo and Juliet 'attempt to forge an erotic alliance beyond the physical and ideological constraints of the feuding houses of Capulet and Montague,' but are unable to do so.[435] While they meet in the public hall, all of their scenes alone together are outside the confines of the Capulet household in their orchard.[436] This transient space between the Capulets' house and the city of Verona provides the backdrop for Romeo and Juliet's initial declarations of love to one another and their marital preparations.[437] In early modern England, where privacy was scarce, gardens provided an opportunity for seclusion, and were so frequently used for secret

[434]M. St. Clare Byrne, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country* (London: Methuen, 1957), 44.
[435]Valerie Traub, 2.
[436]Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, 165.
[437]See 2.2 and 2.5; See 3.5.

conversations that they became synonymous with privacy itself.[438] Physically, the orchard occupies a unique space in the realm of the household, as it is situated inside the walls of the property, yet outside the walls of the interior house; much in the same way that Romeo and Juliet are in a transitional age between the dependency of childhood and autonomy of adulthood. This mirror effect allows the audience to understand the young lovers in such a way. Although their famous scene together is typically referred to as 'the balcony scene,' this label has been a result of the frequent use of a balcony in its staging, while the text indicates that they are in the Capulets' orchard.[439] Shakespeare includes indicators of their whereabouts through Juliet's surprise that Romeo managed to get inside the exterior walls, because 'the orchard walls are very high and hard to climb' (2.2.63). Spatial analysis of their meeting directly shows the level of privacy that the two are afforded, as they now converse in a more open and uninhibited manner. This backdrop also stands as a symbol of the vestibular nature of Romeo and Juliet, as they must hide on her father's land, without crossing the threshold of the house itself. They are unable to procure their own household and fully enter into adulthood, resulting in tragedy for both of their families. In a parallel scene in one of Shakespeare's source materials, *Giulia e Romeo* by Luigi da Porto (1530), 'Romeo haunts her chamber-window, climbing her balcony to woo her ardently.'[440] The fact that Shakespeare modifies their locale to the orchard, especially when considering its inherent intimacy, demonstrates its importance as the setting for the lovers' rendezvous.

The orchard itself would incite a sense of eroticism to an early modern audience, as gardens were widely recognised as a source of pleasure. Many horticulture manuals were written during this period that portray the garden as necessary for subsistence

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[438]Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 235-6.
[439]See location for 2.1 and 2.2. See also Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*: *Violation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31.
[440]Bullough, 270.

because of the crops it produced, but also as a source of enjoyment because of the spectacle of its floral design.[441] This, in turn, produced a large amount of anxiety about pleasure from gardens, which moralists stressed must be linked to the beauty of the flowers or the profit of yielding good crops, and not sinful, wanton pleasure.[442] In addition to this, a figurine of Venus was often present in the garden as one of the guards of the space, which associated it with love.[443] The surrounding walls of a garden afforded it a certain amount of solitude, which separated the cultivated land from the wild brush surrounding the walls. Given this enclosure, the garden became an imitation of paradise, because it was distinguished from the outside world and filled with beauty and pleasure. Therefore, the notion of the garden converged the idea of confinement and enclosure with delights and paradise during this time.[444] The fact that Romeo and Juliet's trysts take place in the orchard would have conveyed a sense of eroticism, seclusion and pleasure to Shakespeare's audience, due to their notion of gardens at the time.

The garden was even employed by Thomas Bentley, the author of *The Sixth Lamp of Virginity*, in advising maids on how to remain chaste. He gives the example of two men, who:

> as soon as her maidens had shut the garden or orchard door, and were gone for oil and soap for their mistress, as she had commanded them: These two wicked Elders or lecherous judges, who had lain there privily hid unknown to Susanna and her maidens, like two neighing horses came upon her now being all alone, and said: Behold, the garden doors are now shut that no man can see us, and wee burn in love with thee: therefore consent unto us and lye with us, if thou wilt not, we will bear witness against thee, that a

[441]Jennifer Munroe, 'Introduction,' in *The Early Modern Englishwoman* 3:1 Making Gardens of Their Own: Advice for Women, 1500-1750, ed. Betty S. Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), x-xx.
[442]Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 94.
[443]Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance* (New Brunswick: The Harvester Press, 1978), 89.
[444]Ibid., 48-9.

> young man was in the Orchard with thee, and yet therefore thou sentest away thy maidens from thee, because thou wouldest.[445]

This passage suggests that the very act of a maid appearing alone in an orchard with a man was suspicious to society, and would have resulted in the presumption of sexual activity occurring between the two parties. While the men are portrayed as manipulative in abusing their power, the tale demonstrates common attitudes towards gardens. Furthermore, because the tale appears in a book dedicated to upholding chastity, it stands to reason that decorous maids were not found alone in the orchard with a suitor, as this would destroy their credibility and reputation. Given this understanding of orchards, Shakespeare's setting for the two lovers would have made a strong statement to his audience about their intentions towards one another. The liminal space recreated in this scene shows the transitional stage of life of the young lovers, who interact outside of Capulet's house yet still within its boundaries.

The house takes on such significance in this play that Mercutio becomes a unique character because he is not assigned a place in either of the prominent households, whereas the other characters are ascribed their affiliation through birth or marriage. The fact that Mercutio is attached to neither family, nor remains unaffected by the events of the play until they result in his death, is evident from his neutral attitude towards the feud. While others frantically announce the arrival of their enemies, Mercutio asserts, 'by my heel, I care not' (3.1.38). His lack of concern for the trivialities of the Montague and Capulet dispute allows his character a function that is different from that of the remainder of the characters in the play. His character provides the audience with commentary about other characters, voices a cynical view of love and demonstrates the transformation that Romeo undergoes once meeting Juliet, as he is no longer preoccupied with his friends' concerns in their scenes together. However,

[445]Thomas Bentley, 244.

Mercutio is afforded a far greater amount of agency than his friends, because he is permitted to choose the household that he will support and defend. Mercutio's character is derived from a sole reference in Brooke's poem: 'one called Mercutio, a courtier that etch where was highly had in price for he was courteous of his speech and pleasant of device.'[446] From this, Shakespeare extensively expanded the role into an individualised and distinctive character in the play, which has often been considered more popular and well-rounded than Romeo by critics and actors alike.[447] The development of Mercutio's role suggests that Shakespeare was interested in the characterisation and purpose of this character, elevating his function in the play.

Despite his initial neutrality, Mercutio must ultimately choose which household he will assist, which situates his character in a distinctive position in the play. His character demonstrates the magnitude of the feud, because his death shows the audience that it encapsulates the entire city of Verona, regardless of one's family name or background. More significantly, it provides the audience with an example of the impossibility of being caught between the two households. Much like Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio is unable to remain segregated because the feud even permeates his life. His character allows the audience to better comprehend the severity and intensity of the situation in the way it defines the identity of the characters. Shakespeare writes the play so that all of the characters, aside from the figures of authority or religion, are compelled to select one of the household, leaving no room for them to create their own household or identity outside of this binary system. Mercutio inevitably involves himself in the battle because it is impossible in Verona to survive otherwise. In doing this, Shakespeare emphasises the importance of the family and the identity and protection it ensures in this play.

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[446]J. J. Munro, ed., II. 254-6. See also Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 25. Bullough, 280-1.
[447]Gurrand Ichikawa, 46. Joseph A. Porter, *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Drama* (Chapel hill, 1998), 100-110.

Once he is wounded by Tybalt, Mercutio instructs his friend, 'help me into some house, Benvolio, or I shall faint (3.1.105-6). He understandably does not wish to die out on the streets, and trusts that his friend will ensure that he is cared for in his final moments. However, his language focuses not on his own dignity or cause, but on his location, specifically a house, to console him as he dies. Tragically, what he does not realise is that he no longer has the ability to be admitted to *some* house, because he has allied himself with the Montagues, hence announcing himself as an enemy of the Capulets. His mindset, even after instigating his own involvement in the feud, remains that of an outsider, one without a declared household and family. The dramatisation of this scene constructs the household as synonymous with family and alliances, reiterating the innate reassurance and security that the house provides.

Mercutio's attempt at defending his friend's honour against Tybalt is ironically fatal to Romeo, because it propels him to declare his own identity as a Montague by murdering Tybalt. Similarly, Juliet asserts her choice of household through her interactions with her parents and the Nurse. Despite her scolding of the Nurse for degrading her husband, Juliet informs her, 'I am gone, having displeas'd my father, to Lawrence' cell, to make confession and to be absolv'd' (3.5.231-3).[448] While the audience is aware that she is using this as a decoy in order to excuse her absence from her house to converse with Friar Lawrence in private, the method that she employs of obedience to her father is telling in terms of her character's choice of household. Unable to establish her own household with her husband, she deceives her parents and the Nurse into believing that she will comply with her father's plans for her marriage. This particular deception suggests that although she is cunningly plotting to disobey her parents, Juliet is unable to separate herself from their supervision, and must continue to

[448]See 3.2.97.

appear as if she is abiding by her father's rules. She is not assertive enough to openly disobey her father, as this would result in her homelessness and thus, the loss of her identity; and therefore, she concocts a plan that allows her to remain in her father's house. This scene centralises the household in determining the characters' very identity. It is clear from the intensity of these three decisions made by Mercutio, Romeo and Juliet, that one cannot survive in Verona without a household to claim. All three of these characters desperately attempt to create their own universe and self image outside of this, but are forced to choose a household to represent. The fact that Mercutio is allied with the lovers in this pursuit of individualisation is also significant, because previous to this, he acts as a foil to Romeo's character, mocking his self-indulgence and idealised notion of love. These two seemingly opposite characters vying for the same end makes this pursuit even more powerful, since they are disparate in other aspects.

In a play where one's house is integral to one's identity, Romeo's banishment becomes the ultimate form of the loss of one's individuality. By exiling him, Prince Escalus erases Romeo's entire personhood in Verona, because the house occupies such a strong sense of self throughout the play. Romeo takes the news of his banishment solemnly, berating the friar: 'Ha, banishment? Be merciful, say "death"; for exile hath more terror in his look' (3.3.12-3). The severity of Romeo's reaction to his punishment, while seemingly better than the threatened consequence of death, demonstrates the importance of the house in this play. Romeo cannot fathom a life outside of Verona, because he has been incapable of separating himself from his parents' household, and relies on them for his subsistence and individuality. His passionate reaction displays how strongly the loss of a dwelling is associated with the loss of one's sense of self in the play, because Romeo would rather die than be exiled.

The household occupies a significant space elsewhere in Shakespeare's canon, namely in *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia proclaims her devotion to Bassanio by informing him that she and her house

> Commits itself to yours to be directed,
> As from her lord, her governor, her king.
> Myself and what is mine to you and yours
> Is now converted. But now I was the lord
> Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
> Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
> This house, these servants and this same myself
> Are yours—my lord's! (3.2.164-71).

The terminology that she uses to express her relationship to him: *mansion*, *servants*, *this house*, all refer to the household and its contents, which she surrenders to him as part of the normative experience for marriages in early modern England. Portia submits herself to her new husband, Bassanio, by symbolically transferring her title as head of household to him, so that he may now rule over her house, her servants and herself. The fact that Shakespeare signifies their union in this way is indicative of the household's position in early modern English society as indicative of the familial relations within. Throughout this play, 'wealth transcends or threatens boundaries,' as it is clearly constructed as the language of power and dominance for both Portia and Shylock.[449] In stark contrast to Romeo and Juliet, Portia revokes her previous role in the house, in order to signify her changed mentality and create a new life and household with her husband.

Aside from Portia's positive image of the household in this play, it also appears as a place of confinement and discontent in Shylock's home. Jessica proclaims: 'Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil, didst rob it of some taste of tediousness' (2.3.1-3). The fact that she views her family life as detrimental to her happiness with Lorenzo forces her to associate the very building with this negativity. Since her father's house

[449]Marilyn L. Williamson, *The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1986), 30.

quite literally imprisons her from her lover and their time together, she must flee the building itself. In fact, when she and Lorenzo elope, Lorenzo describes their plan as: 'She hath directed how I shall take her from her father's house, what gold and jewels she is furnish'd with' (2.4.29-31). His phrasing leads the audience to understand her escape and their relationship in terms of the space that it occupies. Instead of discussing their love or future plans, the two of them view their actions as fleeing from her father's house, because it encapsulates everything that she dislikes about her life.

Shylock instigates this rationale regarding the house when he accuses Portia and Antonio of taking his livelihood when trying to enforce the terms of his bond. He claims: 'You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house; you take my life when you do take the means whereby I live' (4.1.375-7). His allusion to the Bible refers to both his money and his daughter that he believes were stolen from him, through the use of the *house*.[450] The fact that *house* is synonymous with family, property and lodging in Shylock's mind, conflates the word's meaning, so that the audience is able to comprehend the full weight of the situation for Shylock in his daughter's departure from his home. It is not merely that he has lost his jewels or money, but that his family, the very being that justifies his head of household title, has been stripped away, and this is too painful for him to bear. More than a residence, the house acts as a method of demonstrating the closeness of a relationship and authority that it contains, between both father and daughter, and husband and wife.

Perhaps the most obvious way that the distinction of households appears in *Romeo and Juliet* is through violence, as the brawls are the main outlet for characters to express their affiliation to a specific household. The young men's preoccupation with sword fights in the streets of Verona also points to another central theme in the play: the

[450]See Ecclesiastics 34:23, KJV: 'He that taketh away his neighbour's living, slayeth him.'

correlation between love and violence. These two ideas are intrinsically linked throughout, seen in the copious amount of double entendres while sword fighting, the descriptions of love provided by Mercutio and even in Romeo's wooing of Juliet. For the duration of the play, violence is used as a key component of love, necessary when describing sexual conquests and associated with courtship and marriage.[451] Violence is attributed to the frivolousness of youth when Lady Capulet scolds her husband for wanting to scuffle in the opening scene of the play.[452] Because 'feuding has become the normal social pursuit for young men in Verona,' it is then associated with love. In violently stabbing one another and instigating fights whenever they meet, the young men can be understood to be attempting to assert their masculinity through violence (in lieu of love) because of their juvenile understanding of both.[453] Romeo and Juliet attempt to distinguish themselves from this world by creating their own atmosphere, but cannot escape their familial obligations, and are eventually immersed in it as well.[454] The fact that the lovers meet in her father's orchard at night and marry in darkness in order to hide their love hints at the idea that love is blind, similar to descriptions of Cupid, which certainly appear in the play as well.[455] Benvolio warns Romeo: 'We'll have no Cupid, hoodwinked with a scarf bearing a tartar's painted bow of lath, scaring the ladies like a crow keeper,' just as Mercutio associates Romeo with the god of love (1.4.4-6).[456] By relating Romeo to Cupid, his friends bring many contemporary conceptions of the deity to bear on his character. Unlike the modernised tame version of Cupid, Elizabethans described the figure as a furious, harsh and remorseless god, who

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[451]Novy, 'Violence, Love and Gender,' 360. Also see Jill Levenson, '"Allastoccado caries it away": Codes of Violence in *Romeo and Juliet*' in *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Texts, Contexts and Interpretation*, ed. Jay L. Halio (London: Associated University Press, 1995), 86.
[452]See 1.1.71-4.
[453]Kahn, 'Coming of Age in Verona,' 9.
[454]Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 30. For differences in language between the two 'worlds,' see Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, 37.
[455]Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, 166-7.
[456]See 1.4.17-18.

viciously pierced the hearts of his victims with cruel matches.[457] For example, in the tale of Cupid's match with Psyche in Lucius Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, Venus

> called her winged son Cupid, rash enough and hardy, who by his evil manners contemning all public justice and law, armed with fire and arrows, running up and down in the nights from house to house, and corrupting the lawful marriages of every person, doth nothing but that which is evil, who although that he were of his own proper nature sufficiently prone to mischief.[458]

The waywardness with which Cupid is described shows how he was portrayed in early modern writing, unlike the lovelorn Cupid that is often evoked today. Shakespeare's use of Cupid throughout the play, especially in connection with Romeo, would have recalled these contemporary notions of the figure for his audience, thus creating a parallel between love and violence.

Cupid's cruel matches were particularly problematic at this time in terms of the economic stability of potential marriage partners. When making a match during courtship, the families of both the bride and groom were involved in order to secure a suitable mate for their children. Society held that it was important for the couple to be of a similar age, status and wealth if they were to marry.[459] Manuals advised that one should 'choose such as are of equal years, birth, fortunes, and degree, of good parentage, and kindred, of such a countenance, complexion and constitution, as best agrees to our love and disposition.'[460] While Lawrence Stone has argued that the early modern marriage system was mainly mercenary, it seems that material gain in marriage

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[457]John Lydgate, *The ancient history and only true and sincere chronicle of the wars between the Grecians and the Trojans* (1555), 17. See also Bruce R. Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 135; George Whetstone, *An heptameron of civil discourses Containing the Christmas exercise of sundry well courted gentlemen and gentlewomen* (London: Richard Jones, 1582), 33; and *The Poems of Catullus*, trans. Peter Whigham (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 144-5.

[458]Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Asse*, trans. William Adlington (London: John Lane the Bodley Head Limited, 1923), 103.

[459]Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 25; Keith Wrightson, 80; and Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making A Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 39.

[460]Robert Crofts, *The Lover, or Nuptiall Love* (London, 1638), B2. *A Discourse of Married and Single Life* (London, 1621), 21, 29; Matthew Griffith, *Bethel, or A Forme of Families* (London, 1633), 253-4. Ann Jennalie Cook, 40.

was generally frowned upon by moralists and society alike.[461] In fact, Cleaver advises that people 'too greedy of honour, worships, or wealth, intending to have the gold, and catching the hot coals do burn themselves without recovery.'[462] Household discourses makes it clear that while parents were responsible for making the most advantageous matches for their children possible, they did not treat marital negotiations as a purely avaricious matter. Numerous books on the matter confirm that economic concerns, such as property and dowries, were important to society during espousals, which parents of course considered when making a match.

One such commodity when negotiating was the household, not only because it was a necessity for the couple to marry, but it was emblematic of a family's wealth and social status. Because 'marriage was one of the chief means of securing that livelihood upon whose possession individual and family security and independence chiefly rested,' an inauspicious match could be detrimental to the entire family's reputation.[463] A child's marriage often led to the consolidation or extension of a family's land as part of the dowry or inheritance for the bride and groom.[464] Given this early modern conception of a marriage as partly a fiscal matter, Cupid's malicious matches are even more dangerous to the characters in the play, as falling in love with the wrong person could result in the loss of property and social status. Ironically, Romeo and Juliet are equal in terms of wealth, age and status, but cannot prosper because of their involvement in their families' feud.

The association of violence and love culminates in the highly eroticised deaths of the title characters. In fact, this scene 'establishes the equation of love and death as

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[461]L. Stone, 129.Houlbrooke, 74; and Keith Wrightson, 71.
[462]See Cleaver, 143; Henry Bullinger, 51; Thomas Cobbet, *A Fruitful and Usefull Discourse touching the honour due from children to parents, and the duty of parents towards their children* (London: S. G. For John Rothwell, 1656), 20-1; Thomas Gataker, 16; Gouge, 190; and Daniel Rogers, 45.
[463]Houlbrooke, 74.
[464]Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 100; and Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death,* 254.

part of their youngness,' because all three appear on stage.[465] The inevitability of the lovers' deaths is evident, even from prologue, but in dramatising their double suicide, their deaths become associated with love.[466] Fearing that she will be found and impeded, Juliet cries, 'yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. *She takes Romeo's dagger.* O, happy dagger, this is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die. *She stabs herself and falls* (5.3.169-70). Her suicide is staged as a perverse copulation with Romeo, since she uses his dagger to stab herself.[467] The 'erotic imagery associated with death alludes to the real performance of sexual desire,' emphasised by the fact that the consummation of their marriage was held offstage.[468] By scripting this act for the audience to witness, Shakespeare allows them to connect sexual desire and activity with violence and death in the final scene, as has been hinted at for the duration of the play. As Juliet enacts this violent and erotic act, the audience is able to understand her place as a young wife, unable to fulfil her sexual desire because of the death of her husband.

Romeo and Juliet focuses on the issues of young love, violence and the search for identity during the transitional phase of adolescence. Shakespeare deliberately dramatises the household space as important to the plot and relationships in the play. By specifying individual rooms, describing the barriers of the orchard and referring to the physicality of the household, Shakespeare allows the audience to understand the precise locale of each scene by associating it with the boundaries of intimacy. The fact that Romeo and Juliet's love is overwhelmingly scripted in the realm of the household and its varying rooms demonstrates its significance in the play as a whole. Shakespeare illuminates his society's construction of adolescence through the physical structure of

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[465]Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen and Co, 1968), 102.
[466]Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 30. See also Lloyd Davis, '"Death-marked love": Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*,' in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 31-2.
[467]François Laroque, 'Tradition and Subversion in *Romeo and Juliet*,' in *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Texts, Contexts and Interpretation*, ed. Jay L. Halio (London: Associated University Press, 1995), 21.
[468]Phillipa Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 24.

the household. Given the fact that the household was symptomatic of the progression into adulthood in early modern England, and is elevated over the course of the play; it is extremely significant that Romeo and Juliet are not given their own household, and remain transfixed in adolescence for all eternity. The household becomes both the setting of the play and an emblem for various relationships in the play, no more clearly than in the young lovers' inability to progress fully into adulthood by their period's standards. The narrative of this play highlights the importance of the progression from various stages of life in order to establish one's own family. While Romeo and Juliet die, their families realise the triviality of their feud and eventually pledge to resolve it. Throughout this play as elsewhere in the canon, Shakespeare explores the physical and psychological significance of the household to the composition of the family.

This chapter has shown that the household plays a significant role in creating the identity and formation of a family, regardless of the relationships within. It demonstrates that the way that the household were created had serious implications for the family life and relationships within, with respect to marital negotiations and household space. I have argued that household space was instrumental in segregating children from parents in order to form new families, principally because it was difficult to differentiate between distinct families when members shared the same bloodline. Thus far this thesis has explored the ways in which husbands and wives and parents and children interact, but has yet to consider other relationships in the household, such as those of siblings. The next chapter will discover if brothers and sisters bonded in early modern families, and how this relates to Shakespeare's dramatisation of them. Shakespeare is frequently interested in the influence that twins have over one another and the way they care for one another, even well into adulthood when they are no longer living in the same household. The next chapter will ask questions about why this is the

case and how other siblings are depicted as well. In doing so, I will continue to explore the ties between people who share a bloodline, while interrogating another aspect of the family.

Chapter 4: Early Modern Siblings

'Are dearer than the natural bond of sisters' (As You Like It 1.2.241-2)

The above quote illustrates the expectation prevalent in Shakespeare's plays for siblings not only to affable towards one another, but to share an irrevocable attachment to one another as well. This chapter will explore the inherent bonds of siblings in the early modern period, how they interacted and were taught to treat one another. While numerous siblings surface in Shakespeare's plays, I have chosen to focus on this family dynamic in *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, because these plays interrogate the innate bonds and conflicts of various types of sibling relationships. I will argue that Shakespeare frequently dramatises close ties between siblings and when these relationships are discordant, it is often due to a rivalry instigated by the parents or primogeniture. Shakespeare also explored the influence of siblings on identity through the twins' relationships with one another in *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors*. These plays show a variety of relationships between siblings at various levels of closeness throughout the canon, across genre and career span, demonstrating Shakespeare's fascination with them. Although siblings are often glossed over by critics, I will analyse how these relationships function as a way of understanding relationships formed with blood relatives in the household in the early modern period, and how they compare to similar relationships in Shakespeare's plays. I will begin by examining their significance in contemporary diaries, manuals and personal effects to gain an early modern perspective on the significance and interaction of siblings.

Sibling relationships during the early modern period are seldom studied and there are few comments on them in Shakespeare's plays.[469] Nonetheless, sibling interaction is crucial to understanding the early modern family, as brothers and sisters comprised a large component of the nuclear family unit. Social historians have noted that during the early modern period, 'brothers and sisters were a significant part of the social context around which individuals developed their identities and could, as we have seen, be present for a greater part of the individual's lifetime.'[470] Records indicate that while children were young and living in the same household, they interacted with their siblings, sharing activities such as throwing snowballs, fishing, playing games and even performing.[471] After childhood, though, siblings dispersed into their own nuclear families, forming a kinship network with one another and other extended family members, such as cousins, aunts, uncles and family friends. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh have stated that the 'primary paradigms of sibling bonds [are] reciprocity, affection, competition, and alliance-building.'[472] I believe that these remained intact even after marriage, as many siblings were friends throughout adulthood. Household manuals offered abundant advice for parents and children, husbands and wives and masters and servants, underpinning our understanding of early modern social expectations. There was an acknowledged conduct amongst brothers and sisters despite the fact that there was no formal behavioural code outlined in these domestic manuals for sibling relations. They were expected to care for and love one another in a Christian

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[469]This has also been noted by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, 'Introduction: Thicker than Water: Evaluating Sibling Relations in the Early Modern Period' in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1. Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 209. In relation to Shakespeare's plays, see Naomi J. Miller, 'Sibling Bonds and Bondage in (and beyond) Shakespeare's The Tempest' in *Sibling Relations*, 150.

[470]Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 223. Leonore Davidoff, 'Where the stranger begins: the question of siblings in historical analysis' in *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Crisis* (New York: Polity Press, 1995). See also Wrightson 47-8, Houlbrooke, 19, 40.

[471]Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 237.

[472]Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, 2.

way, and it was often asked in manuals: 'Who is more friendly then one brother to another?'[473] Siblings also offered each other practical advice on parenting problems, emotional support through marital problems, financial and legal aid, help with marriage negotiations, accommodation and even provided education, training and housing for their siblings' children.[474] In addition, numerous letters written between pairs of siblings suggest that they were expected to maintain contact with one another into adulthood after they had married and started their own families.[475] In fact, Patricia Crawford argues that often siblings became surrogate parents to their younger siblings after parents' deaths, frequently at middle age in this period.[476] Based on this evidence, it is clear that siblings were close with one another and relied on one another during the early modern period. Regardless of circumstances, brothers and sisters were evidently expected to provide for one another by early modern standards.

While relations among siblings were no doubt varied, household manuals indicate the prevalent discourse surrounding the bonds between siblings. William Gouge explains the purpose of other kinsfolk in his work, asserting 'because parents and children are not always together, or not able to help one another, or unnatural, God hath yet further extended this natural affection to brethren, cousins, and other kindred.'[477] Gouge explicitly states the innate bond that siblings share based on consanguinity. His comments point to the prevailing notion that siblings were part of the nuclear family in childhood and consequently an important relationship to uphold during one's lifetime. Moreover, the statement assumes a natural affection between siblings and other family members. Despite the modern discourse surrounding the issue of emotional attachment at this time, Gouge shows that people were expected to act tenderly towards their

[473]Juan Luis Vives, *The office and duty of an husband*, 193.
[474]Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 218-23.
[475]Ibid., 218.
[476]Ibid., 210-1.
[477]Gouge, 81.

families. During the early modern period, Ralph Houlbrooke has noted that 'inheritance of the paternal surname encouraged individuals to perceive themselves as members of their fathers' lines.'[478] While the mother's side of the family could be valued in the same way, paternal genealogy was significant in terms of the conceptualisation of the family unit. In providing the surname for a family, the father offered a form of identity to each member of the family unit. Women's adoption of their husbands' surnames upon matrimony indicates that families were perceived along these lines as well. However, historians have since disagreed whether the family should be studied in its nuclear or extended form in this period.[479] For the purpose of this thesis, I am focusing on the relationships that are defined by blood relations, with the exception of husbands and wives, which are integral to the formation of the family. While siblings were initially part of each other's nuclear families, they soon became part of their extended family once children progressed into adulthood. This adjustment may not have been as complicated as historians suggested, as many siblings retained close relationships with one another throughout their lives, regardless of the evolution of family formation. Rather than evidencing an issue between early modern family members, this transformation most likely only proves problematic to our modern classification systems of the early modern family, and Gouge's notions of siblings may more closely represent sibling bonds.

Parents were warned about the ramifications of sibling rivalry and antagonism during this time. Robert Cleaver stated that

> parents therefore ought to be careful to maintain their children in peace, concord and amity: for if discord and contention be dangerous and pernicious among all men, how much more between brethren and sisters? Likewise if it be hard quenching of stomach and debate between those that are not enjoined in kindred, it is far more difficult to reunite brethren,

[478]Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700*, 43.
[479]See Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 209-238 for outline of debate between nuclear and extended families.

> because enmity amongst them is mighty and strong, like iron-bars, to keep them asunder. Neither is there anything more slippery or of greater efficacy to subvert a family, then dissention among brethren.[480]

Cleaver shows that siblings were supposed to be amicable with one another, and that it was the parents' responsibility for instilling this relationship in their children. His domestic manual instils this relationship with a great deal of power, because if gone awry, it could destroy the family entirely, demonstrating the significance of this bond in early modern England. A similar note was made by William Gouge, who warned in his manual that favouring one child over another 'cause[s] envy, malice, and much contention to arise among children. When Joseph's brethren saw that their father loved him more then all them, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.'[481] The fact that household manuals warned parents about sibling contention reveals the impact of the relationship on the early modern family dynamic. Furthermore, by focusing on the dangers that could befall a broken family, Gouge and Cleaver emphasised the importance of the family acting united and harmonious. It is important to remember that this concordant relationship between siblings it constructed as the norm, and therefore the model with which Shakespeare and his audiences would have been familiar.

Given the prolific amount written on blood in the early modern period covered elsewhere in this thesis, it is no surprise that blood played a role in sibling relationships as well, as medical manuals taught that there is 'no one nearer in blood than a brother.'[482] Many writers discussed the bonds of consanguinity, arguing that people naturally felt a connection to their relatives because they shared the same blood, which

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[480]Cleaver, 159.
[481]Gouge, 578.
[482]John Leslie, *A defence of the honour of the right high, mighty and noble Princess Mary, Queen of Scotland and dowager of France* (London: Eusebius Dicaeophile, 1569), 38.

has largely been the topic of this thesis.[483] Contemporaries believed 'surely it is so, we cannot deny: and therefore this bond of blood, stock, house, linage, and kindred in root, though I say the degrees be far, should continue to regard one of another, and love more than is.'[484] The fact that early modern people recognised the commonality in blood between siblings, and hence utilised this to create a filial connection between them, evokes the expected bond between brothers and sisters at this time. Conceptualised in this manner, sibling relationships were significant because they constructed a sense of heredity as well as identity due to the corporeal associations between brothers and sisters. Juan Lewis Vives took to describing the bond between siblings, noting that

> consanguinity and affinity crept in a little further and being many in number, would not depart from the family, because they of youth were brought up together (for there is no sweeter thing, then of children to have been conversant and acquainted) and because they were such persons, whom they loved as themselves, they could not be departed, except they should have been separated and drawn from themselves. And although certain of them were removed and gone, as it were to dwell in another place, yet that notwithstanding they oftentimes returned unto their original house, and were most familiarly conversant together.[485]

Aside from being defined in terms of the household, the family was also considered to connect people through similar blood, as discussed in the introduction. This thesis has focused on how the relationships within the household affected one another, and now contemplates the ways in which familial relationships extended beyond the household, based on genetic affiliations. The fact that siblings did not solely share a common home, but were connected to one another in blood demonstrates the emphasis placed on this relationship during this period.

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[483]Jean de Serres, *The three parts of commentaries containing the whole and perfect discourse of civil wars of France*, trans. Thomas Timme (London: Frances Coldocke, 1574), 151 and 189; and Jean Bodin, *The six books of a common weal*, trans. Richard Knolles (London: G. Bishop, 1606), 12 and 363.
[484]*Gervase Babington, Certain plain, brief and comfortable notes upon ever chapter of Genesis gathered and laid down for the good to them* (London: Thomas Charde, 1592),40.
[485]Juan Luis Vives, *The office and duty of a husband*, 16.

Historians have suggested that most brothers and sisters enjoyed 'warm, intimate relationships' during the early modern period.[486] Ralph Houlbrooke has argued that while relations between brothers could be strong, they were not predicated on a sense of family loyalty or shared property, but instead were based solely on personal preferences.[487] Lawrence Stone surmised that though relations between brothers were often strained due to the favouritism of primogeniture, brothers and sisters frequently held close ties with one another.[488] While a young boy could be educated by a private tutor at home, his sister was trained by their mother on how to behave as a wife and mother and therefore, brothers and sisters were presented with the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with one another during their childhood and adolescence. This connection can certainly be seen in Sir Philip Sidney's relationship with his sister, Mary. Not only does he dedicate *Arcadia* to her, but in his transcription he states, 'you will continue to love the writer, who doth exceedingly love you, and most, most heartily praise you may long live, to be a principal ornament to the family of the Sidneis.'[489] Another example of close siblings can be seen in Anne Cottrell Dormer's letters to her sister, Elizabeth Cottrell Trumbull, written between 1695 and 1691. Each of the sisters continuously express fervent love for one another and 'the two siblings' frequent pledges of care and concern for each other's well-being form the predominant motif of the letters.'[490] Their letters delineate how they assisted one another with practical and emotional advice when experiencing turmoil in marriage or everyday life. Lady Jane Cavendish also expresses great love and admiration for her sister, Lady Elizabeth Brackley. She was present at her sister's deathbed and composed a poem about the her

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[486]Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family and Business in the English Speaking World, 1580-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 210-15.
[487]Ralph Houlbrooke, 43.
[488]L. Stone, 87.
[489]Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia* (London: for William Ponsonbie, 1593), between pages 3 and 4.
[490]Sara Mendelson and Mary O'Connor, '"Thy Passionately Loving Sister and Faithful Friend:" Anne Dormer's Letter to her Sister Lady Trumbull' in *Sibling Relations*, 207.

loss entitled 'On the death of my deare Sister the Countess of Bridgewater dying in childbed, delivered of a dead infant a son, the 14th day of June 1663.' In it, she expresses her opinion of her sister, declaring 'for none can give example like her life, to friendship, kindred, family, or wife. A greater Saint the earth did never beare, She lived to love, and her last thought was to care.'[491] All of these sibling relationships show a deep respect and admiration for one another, that were easily expressed to one another. Shakespeare explores similar relationships in his plays, between both brothers and sisters.

In *Hamlet*, a close bond can be seen in Ophelia's relationship with Laertes, who is aware of her dealings with Hamlet even before her father is; cares for her chastity and reputation; and mourns her death. Polonius' children clearly share an attachment to one another, seen immediately when Laertes departs from Denmark, instructing Ophelia, 'Do not sleep but let me hear from you' (1.3.3-4). Her innocent reply, 'do you doubt that?' demonstrates that she values their relationship and assumes it to be instinctive given their connection (1.3.4). Her rapid response to his request completes her brother's line, showing the audience their familiarity in language. She also heeds his warning about Hamlet's intentions and informs her brother, 'I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep as watchman to my heart' (1.3.45-6). Her language shows that she cares about her brother's opinions and values his instructions to her. This interchange between siblings occurs early on in the play and introduces Ophelia and Laertes to the audience as deeply attached to one another.

Laertes' reaction to his sister's death further solidifies their bond, as he cries at the news despite finding his own response shameful and womanly. When Gertrude reports Ophelia's death, he replies, 'Let shame say what it will. When these are gone, the

[491]Lady Jane Cavendish, 'On the death of my deare Sister' in *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*, ed. Gremaine Greer, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff and Melinda Sansone (London: Virago Press, 1988), 118.

woman will be out' (4.7.188-9). Later, at her funeral, Laertes cannot bear his sadness, asserting, 'Oh treble woe fall ten times treble on that cursed head whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense deprived thee of. Hold off the earth a while till I have caught her once more in mine arms' (5.1.213-17). Even though Hamlet accuses him of using formalised and conventional language in expressing his grief, Laertes is clearly troubled by his sister's death. In fact, Hamlet's indictment of Laertes' behaviour hardly seems valid concerning his own treatment of Ophelia. When Hamlet asserts, 'I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up my sum,' Laertes is silent (5.1.236-8). However, Claudius must subdue Laertes in this moment, encouraging him to 'strengthen your patience in our last night's speech' in order to persuade him from not acting further, but later propels him to duel Hamlet (5.1.261). Their fight at Ophelia's funeral is clearly a precursor to their fatal swordfight, and consequently, their final confrontation is contextualised by this fight. While Hamlet and Laertes' fight serves as the climax of the plot between Hamlet and his uncle, it is clear that in providing this initial fight, Shakespeare is dramatising a feud about Laertes' family as well. Before the duel, Hamlet says: 'I embrace it freely, and will this brother's wager frankly play' (5.2.224-5). Although he is stating that he will combat Laertes, the use of *brother* hints at what Hamlet's relationship to Laertes would have been had he married Ophelia. It is evident to the audience that Laertes and Ophelia share a confidence and affection as brother and sister.

Measure for Measure has always been a problematic play, with critics disagreeing even on how to classify the unusual tragicomedy. The character of Isabella, in particular, has been the object of criticism for her actions in the play because of her unwavering morals. Eileen Mackay even stated that 'it is an unsatisfactory play to watch, even un-Shakespearian, for Isabella seems to bear no resemblance to the warm-

hearted heroines of the other plays.'[492] Isabella is often considered difficult to understand because of her steadfast resolve and her outright refusal to compromise her own ethics and chastity, despite the consequences. But her relationship with her brother is important to our understanding of her character, as well as the play as a whole. While she is critiqued for safeguarding her morals above everything else, Isabella clearly shares a bond with her brother and cares for him deeply. She chooses to leave her comfortable convent to save him and even openly disagrees with public figures in order to do so. Isabella is a unique character to Shakespeare, and 'as Claudio's sister she rides between the maternal and the extension of that into the sisterly.'[493] When the audience initially meets Claudio, he is imprisoned and discussing his situation with the provost. He immediately states, 'This day my sister should the cloister enter and there receive her approbation. Acquaint her with the danger of my state, implore her, in my voice, that she make friends to the strict deputy: bid her assay him' (1.2.158-162). The fact that Claudio trusts his sister to help with his predicament before anyone else, even his betrothed, demonstrates the magnitude of her importance to him.

During Isabella's plea for Claudio's life, Angelo states, 'Be you content, fair maid; It is the law, not I condemn your brother: were he my kinsman, brother, or my son, It should be thus with him: he must die tomorrow' (2.2.81-4). While Angelo's comments are hypocritical considering his own actions throughout the play, his argument is important in terms of what it indicates to the audience about family. Angelo asserts that regardless of someone's relationship or affiliation, the law should be unequivocal, suggesting that the implicit bonds of family should somehow surpass the stringent laws in people's minds. The fact that he must offer her this explanation demonstrates the affection or obligation that people expected towards their families. His

[492]Eileen Mackay, '*Measure for Measure*' *Shakespeare Quarterly 14:*2 (1963), 109.
[493]Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 78.

haughty speech is rendered extraneous over the course of the play, after it becomes evident that Angelo is guilty of the actions he proclaims to detest. However, the implication of this speech resonates throughout the play by raising the question of whether family should somehow be given privileges that others are not afforded. Once Lucio reports Claudio's situation to Isabella, she hastily departs the convent, pledging to assist her brother in whatever way possible. This problem removes Isabella from the convent and into a world in which she does not wish to be involved. Janet Adelman states that by 'bringing her face to face with the conflict between her two kinds of sisterhood, the play binds her at once to family and to her female flesh.'[494] She must choose between her life as a nun and her brother's life; a choice that does not prove easy for her. Yet, Shakespeare provides an alternative for her that does not require alienating her brother or her virtue. It is important to consider not only the ultimatum that she is given, but how she responds to it as well. Not once during her visit with Angelo to discuss her brother's situation does she refer to Claudio by name, instead only using *brother*. This language reinforces her relationship to him in the audience's minds and predicates her actions on a series of expectations about family members at the time. Once she appears before Angelo, she appears to falter more easily than her brother desires. Isabella states, 'Oh just but severe law: I had a brother then. Heaven keep your honour' (2.2.42-3). Having tried to persuade Angelo and failed, Isabella turns to leave and is only stopped by Angelo. The fact that she abides by the law and her own stricter set of morals demonstrates her piety to the audience, but it also complicates her seemingly secure relationship with her brother.

Angelo's suggestion that Isabella exchange her virginity for Claudio's freedom disgusts her. Carol Thomas Neely believes that Isabella surprises Claudio by

[494]Janet Adleman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 95.

'protect[ing] her virginity ferociously, even at the expense of her brother's life.'[495] Yet, her involvement in her brother's dilemma does not end there. It is essential to consider the fact that she enacts an alternative method of ensuring both, with the Duke's help. She explains her quandary to her brother in their meeting, telling him, 'Oh, were it but my life I'd throw it down for your deliverance as frankly as a pin' (3.1.103-5). The fact that she values her chastity over her life demonstrates its consequence to her, yet Claudio does not have the same set of values, nor does he understand hers. He pleads with her, 'Sweet sister, let me live: What sin you do to save a brother's life, Nature dispenses with the deed so far That it becomes a virtue' (3.1.133-6). His justification troubles her because the task he asks her to undertake is considered a grave sin in her mind, and their exchange becomes heated. Claudio 'has perpetuated a sort of incest through *language* alone, violating the semantic chastity that should obtain between brother and sister,' which is problematic to Isabella, given that traditionally, men were expected to uphold and defend their sister's chastity, not degrade it.[496]In order to redeem her brother, 'theatrically she is forced to imitate the fallen woman she would not be in reality; in its own way this is a kind of surrogate action.'[497] While the bed trick is often used in Shakespeare's comedies as a frivolous activity, it carries with it a weightier connotation in this play because of the high regard that Isabella has for her own purity. Her severe statements earlier in the play are indicative of the vitality of her chastity, and serve as a signifier of her profound feelings for her brother since she is willing to ruin it (even in name only) in order to save him. While her actions have been criticised as selfish and prudish, it is important to consider the weight of the task she undertakes in her own mind, which Shakespeare provides for the audience in her

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[495]Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, 93-4.
[496]Richard McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law, 1550-1700,* 2nd edn.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 202.
[497]Alexander Leggatt, 'Substitution in *Measure for Measure*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39:3 (1988), 348.Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, 38.

reaction to this request at its inception. Critics often ignore the solution that is created to deal with this problem by focusing solely on her initial reaction to it. Conversely, I believe that Shakespeare shows Isabella to be so willing to help her brother that she continues to discuss the matter and acts under the Duke's counsel even when it could erode her reputation.

As Marc Shell points out, the problem dramatised in this play is that 'this particular commercial exchange, or tantalisation, of flesh would constitute a conflation of kinship roles that resembles incest' as Claudio must confront Isabella's sexuality while she offers it (albeit to another man) solely for her brother's benefit.[498] If Claudio accepts his sister's help, he will be exchanging her maidenhood for his life, a pleasure that carries with it ramifications of incest since Isabella must offer her body for her brother. The conflated roles of sister and lover that appear in this text allow the audience to consider what happens when brother and sister become too close to one another. Critics have argued that a similar situation takes place in *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which Ferdinand declares over-sexualised desires for his sister.[499] However, some critics argue that 'the appearance of sexual anger and guilt in a brother-sister relationship results in a pattern of thought and behaviour which modern readers promptly diagnose as a case of subconscious incest.'[500] Since cases of incest occur with regularity in literature at this time and were not considered taboo to portray on stage, Lever argues that Webster did not intend to create such sexual tension between siblings in this play, otherwise he would have made the incest more evident in the text. The relationship between siblings in *Measure for Measure* is paramount to our understanding of Isabella's characterisation and motives.

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[498]Marc Shell, *The End of Kinship: Measure for Measure, Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 121.
[499]For an overview of ideas of incest in the play, see Richard McCabe, 251-3.
[500]J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State: A Study of Jacobean Drama* (London and New York: Methuen, 1971), 93.

Shakespeare problematises this relationship between siblings by introducing the possibility—even in language—of desires of incest and the impact this has on the play. Incest was a serious issue in early modern England, considered more grievous than other sexual sins, such as adultery and fornication. Contemporaries defined it as sex with 'any of our kin within the fourth degree of consanguinity or alliance, it is called Incest.'[501] The gravity of incest was discussed in numerous religious and secular works of the period, warning people to refrain from incest for their moral fate.[502] One such work states

> by this commandment to be forbidden all manner unlawful use of fleshly pleasure of which sort are incest, both outward and spiritual, buggery, fleshly meddling with spirits or brute beasts, all uncleanliness or pollution, finally single fornication, which is so the lightest and smallest offence in this kind: that yet otherwise by the reason of the circumstances it is made more great and grievous offence that adultery.[503]

While it is obvious that incest was frowned upon, this passage shows that it was considered a crime against nature during the early modern period, defined as worse than other sexual licentiousness. The fact that incest was understood to be repulsive and the most appalling sexual sin allows us to consider the ramifications of the allusion to it in this play. While relations amongst siblings were important, their proximity to one another was imperative as well. Given these early modern associations with incest, the subtle hints at it in Shakespeare's play was likely to disgust any theatregoers. But I think recent criticism has made too much of this thread of incest lingering in the play, as

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[501]Sir Thomas More, *A brief form of confession instructing all Chrisitan foke how to confess their sins and so to dispose themselves* (Antverpie: Johannern Foulerum, 1576), 28.

[502]Johannis Rastell, *The Statues prohemium* (1527), 170; Andrew Chertsey, *Here floweth a notable treatise and full necessary to a Christian man* (London: ye son by Wynkyn deworde, 1502), 122; Heinrich Bullinger, *A confutation of the Pope's bull which was published more than ten years ago* (London: John Day, 1572), 41; Sir Thomas More, 28. Thomas Becon, *The demands of holy scripture* (London: John Day, 1577), 27; William Fulke, *Two treatises written against the papists the one being an answer of the Chrisitan Protestant to the proud challenge of a popish Catholic* (London: Thomas Vautroille, 1577), 15; Andreas Hyperius, *The true trial and examination of a man's own self* (London: John Windet, 1578), 96; Thomas Bell, *The pope's funeral containing a plain, succinct and pithy reply* (London: T. C. For William Welby, 1605), 55; and William Perkins, *Christian economy*, 118.

[503]Desiderius Erasmus, *A plain and Godly exposition or declaration of the common creed* (London, 1534), 170.

none actually occurs. The relationship between Isabella and Claudio is complex, but it is also one of endearment and support, as Isabella devotes her time and reputation to defend him.

Although the extent of Isabella's loyalty to her brother has been questioned, it is undeniable that the two share a bond simply because they are siblings. It seems that brothers and sisters were often closer to one another than two brothers were because of competition for inheritance rights. Since these were based on primogeniture, sibling rivalry and competition often ensued for the father's affection, and subsequently, wealth and titles.[504] One such example is Sir Henry Slingsby's sons, Henry and Francis. On his death bed, Sir Henry instructed his sons, 'Continue firm in brotherly unity: as you are near in blood, be dear in your affection.'[505] However, the close relationship that Sir Henry had envisioned for his boys evidently did not materialise, as Sir Francis Slingsby angrily wrote to his brother, 'you know that I was descended of the same blood with the rest of my father's children' nonetheless, their father left him 'but a small annuity out of such a fair estate as he left' to his brother.[506] His comments exemplify the attitude of some younger brothers, who were excluded from the estate and title of their father's inheritance due to their elder brother's birth right. Francis expresses his frustration at being robbed of his father's possessions solely because he was born after his brother. Inheritance rights certainly affected the relationship between brothers during this time.

In 1659, William Sprigg anonymously published *A Modest Plea for an Equal Common-Wealth Against Monarchy*, in which he argued for equal benefits and portions of inheritance between siblings. He observed that 'the younger son is apt to think

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[504]Joan Thirsk, 'Younger sons in the seventeenth century' in *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003), 335-57. Linda Pollock disagrees that this was always the case, citing positive brotherly relations in her 'Younger sons in Tudor and Stuart England' *History Today* 39 (1989) 23-9.

[505]Henry Slinsby, *A father's legacy: Sir Henry Slingsbey's instructions to his sonnes, written a little before his death* (*London: J. Grismond,* 1658), 82.

[506]*The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven Bart*, ed. D. Parsons (London: Green and Longman, 1836), 341; See also Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 215.

himself sprung from as Noble stock, from the loins of as good a gentleman as his elder brother, and therefore, cannot but wonder, why fortune and the law should make so great a difference between them' and questions, 'Is there anything more just and more equitable, then that all the children should share in their parents' inheritances?'[507] His work explored the issue of primogeniture calls into question whether it is beneficial for familial relations, which suggests a competitive rivalry between many brothers. In spite of this, the notion of competition was not agreed by everyone, as shown in *The Office of Christian Parents* (1616), which also notes the ramifications of favouritism. The manual stated that when the father favoured the elder son, 'so worketh pride, emulation and hatred among his children, which sometime proveth dangerous to the whole family.'[508] Nevertheless, it also instructed that 'above all things keep your eldest son under discipline, and furnish him with all profitable wisdom and learning.'[509] Even as some questioned primogeniture's adverse effects on familial relations, it was the regular practice at this time. These passages highlight the importance of relationships within the family, as this is the primary concern which surfaced as a result of primogeniture. Regardless of the birth right system in place, people were anxious about how brothers treated one another and how their relationship functioned beyond their involvement in the nuclear family.

The distinctive attachment of Ophelia and Laertes contrasts with the other set of siblings in the play: Old Hamlet and Claudius, whose envious relationship concludes in murder. The two brothers are compared by Hamlet over the course of the play, but the court scene provides the audience with a view of the brothers not mitigated by Hamlet's

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[507]William Sprigg, *A Modest Plea for an Equal Common-Wealth Against Monarchy* (London: Giles Calvert, 1659), 82; 84.
[508]Benjamin Spock, *The Office of Christian Parents: showing how children are to be governed throughout all ages and times of their life* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge for University of Cambridge, 1616), 93.
[509]Ibid., 98.

personal anger. In this scene, Claudius calls Hamlet's grieving 'a fault to heaven, a fault against the dead, a fault to nature' (1.2.101-2). As Elizabeth Watson observes, this 'compulsive repetition of *fault*, which puns on *fall*, hints that Claudius has caused the fall of his own brother from kingship and heaven, the falling off of Gertrude, and his own fall as a murdering Cain.'[510] The inadvertent association with Abel's murder of his brother Cain in the Judeo-Christian tradition, present both here and in Claudius' reference to 'the first course' that ever died, alerts the audience to the contention between brothers that exists behind this façade (1.2.105). The tenuous relations between brothers is something that Robert Cleaver hinted at in his household manual, when he surmised that 'there is many a friend that is more kind than a brother, and more ready to do pleasure than he that is more bound by nature and duty.'[511] While an early modern audience might have sympathised with distancing a brother, Claudius took this to the extreme, murdering his brother for his title, wife and prestige. The theme of fratricide present in the play is tragic, but 'it is nevertheless one that only the family permits, or perhaps incites' by definition.[512] Since Claudius is not only the murderer but also the brother of the murder victim, the play becomes a tragic portrayal of sibling relations.

Similarly, in *As You Like It*, brotherly rivalry and hatred is present from the outset, and in the cases of both sets of brothers, primogeniture is raised as a contributing factor in developing the ensuing drama. As the play opens, Orlando expresses

> Ay, better than him I am before knows me. I know you are my eldest brother; and in the gentle condition of blood, you should so know me. The courtesy of nations allows you my better in that you are the first-born; but the same tradition takes not away my blood, were there twenty brothers betwixt us. I have as much of my father in me as you, albeit I confess your coming before me is nearer to his reverence (1.1.41-48).

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[510]Elizabeth S. Watson, 'Old King, New King, Eclipsed Sons, and Abandoned Altars in *Hamlet*' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35:2 (2004), 483.
[511]Cleaver, 36.
[512]Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1999), 137.

Orlando's speech concisely summarises the fact that his brother is given preferential treatment due to this birth right. Marjorie Garber has pointed out that his 'story follows the logic of the fairy tale, rather than that of the laws of primogeniture, although more than a hint of political concern about estate inheritance infuses this pastoral story.'[513] Given that primogeniture was used to determine inheritance rights during the time the play was written, it is significant that the play opens questioning this tradition. In doing so, Shakespeare illustrates the negative repercussions of primogeniture on brothers' relationships. Oliver and Orlando's relationship demonstrates the tension that such customs often elicited between two siblings from birth, and since their feud is introduced immediately as the play commences, it becomes important to the overall play and their characterisation. Oliver readily admits, 'I never lov'd my brother in my life' when propositioning Charles to defeat him in the wrestling match (3.1.14). Despite this lack of love, the tension between brothers is quickly resolved in the green space, when Oliver is saved from a lioness by Orlando and he is then 'committing me unto my brother's love' (4.3.143). The fact that their dispute comes to its conclusion so rapidly owes to the fact that the play is a comedy, but the anxiety over the brothers' relationship is hinted at when Celia says to Oliver, 'O, I have heard him speak of that same brother; And he did render him the most unnatural that liv'd amongst men' (4.3.120-3). Her use of the word *unnatural* demonstrates her uneasiness with their quarrel merely because they are brothers. The fact that everyone is troubled by Orlando and Oliver's disagreement shows that siblings were expected to have harmonious relationships with one another, and it was a source of apprehension when this was not the case. Shakespeare includes this commentary on the sibling relationships as a gauge of what is expected by the characters. Since the characters undoubtedly expect siblings to share a

[513]Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 440.

cordial and supportive relationship, Shakespeare demonstrates the importance of brother and sister bonds in his plays.

The brothers' animosity is not unique, however, as a parallel scenario occurs between Duke Frederick and Duke Senior at Court. After Frederick banishes his brother, he worries about the loyalties of his subjects; in particular Rosalind, whom he fears will be loyal to her father. His trepidation demonstrates the expected relationships within a family, as he goes to great lengths to ensure that Rosalind does not diminish his power in any way, presuming her allegiance to her father. In the end, when Frederick becomes a hermit and Senior can reclaim his Dukedom, everyone seems content, yet the real issue raised by the play remains unresolved. The play hints at the problem of primogeniture, or whether or not brothers are somehow instinctively placed in competition with one another when vying for their father's inheritance and title throughout their lives. Despite the fact that both sets of brothers reconcile, or at least terminate their battle with one another, by the play's conclusion, the play makes a larger point overall about the nature of the relationship between two siblings. While they may bicker over their inheritance, the play suggests that ultimately, brothers will succumb to the irrevocable bonds between family members as Orlando and Oliver do. Shakespeare shows that even though relationships between brother and sisters are often harmonious, inheritance rights taint the bonds between brothers.

Shakespeare investigates a similar competitiveness between same sex siblings in *The Taming of the Shrew*, this time with sisters. While Kate and Bianca are not contending for a title or inheritance, their futures are intertwined by their father in a way that neither desires. Bianca's coming of age and rite of passage into adulthood is halted by her sister's reluctance to approve of any suitor. Baptista has decided that 'the youngest daughter, whom you hearken for, her father keeps from all access of suitors,

and will not promise her to any man until the elder sister first be wed. The younger then is free, and not before' (1.2.258-62). Baptista makes Bianca's dowry contingent on her sister's, establishing a system of hierarchy and rivalry between them. Marjorie Garber argues that Kate is subsequently 'cast in the role of "curst shrew" or Ugly Duckling in the household of Baptista, where she is the "bad girl" or bad daughter and Bianca the good daughter' because she is blamed for suspending Bianca's progression into adulthood despite the fact that their father has introduced this impediment.[514] It is not an issue that Baptista wishes to ensure that both of his daughters are married and taken care of, but that it creates this tension between the sisters in doing so. Kate and Bianca are not in competition with one another, but strangely reliant on one another, each forced to wait for something that she does not want. Shakespeare introduces this relationship to show the way that same-sex sibling relationships are often problematic because of rivalry that is instigated by their parents. By comparing this family to the domestic manuals quoted above, it is clear that Baptista is to blame for his daughters quarrel with one another. In a similar way, the feud in *Romeo and Juliet* is initiated and abided by Lord and Lady Capulet and Montague. Responsibility for the relationships in the family falls to the head of the household in early modern discourse, and certainly this is the case in Shakespeare's plays as well. All of these families demonstrate the importance of parents supervising their children and rearing them according to the conduct manuals' instructions, as this thesis has already discussed.

Bianca comments on this rivalry directly in asking her sister, 'Is it for him you do envy me so? Nay, then you jest; and now I well perceive You have but jested with me all this while. I prithee, sister Kate, untie my hands' when her sister is abusing her to determine her favourite suitor (2.1.18-21). The cruelty between the sisters is

[514]Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 70.

reciprocated, for when Lucentio asks Bianca, ‘Mistress, what's your opinion of your sister? (3.2.241), she replies, ‘That being mad herself, she’s madly mated’ (3.2.242).Even though their dispute is never articulated in the way that Oliver and Orlando’s contempt for one another is, the sisters’ relationship is similar in that it contains the same motivation for hatred between siblings: rivalry imposed by parents. Kate summarises her feelings for Bianca in commenting ‘She is your treasure’ to their father (2.1.32). It is clear that Bianca is favoured, not only by the suitors, but by their father as well, which apparently bothers Kate. The relationship that the women share is largely dependent on their father’s treatment of them, which induces competition between them. Moreover, the sisters do not enjoy a reconciliation of any kind in this play, suggesting that their relationship is symptomatic of their positions in the family. These same-sex sibling relationships are shown to be problematic because of sibling rivalry that parents instigate or perpetuate. The other siblings that appear in Shakespeare’s plays are twins, who share more than just the family bloodline.

Twins are perhaps the ultimate example of siblings as they share an additional physical connection to one another in being from the same womb. In both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*, twins are continuously mistaken for one another, creating humour out of the fact that they are seemingly interchangeable. In *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon informs the audience ‘there had she not been long but she became a joyful mother of two godly sons; and, which was strange, the one so like the other as could not be distinguished but by names’ (1.1.49-52). Shakespeare complicates Plautus’ comedy *Menarchmi* of a lost twin searching for another by adding an additional set of twins to his own plot. The ongoing doubling and puns created from the Dromio and Antipoholus twins creates a farce; yet a more serious matter is hinted at when Dromio of Syracuse asks, ‘Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?’

(3.2.72). His question strikes at the heart of the issue of identity formation that runs rampant in this play. The physical attributes which culminate in forming a single identity have been doubled, and in doing so, no one seems to be able to differentiate one twin from another, so much so, that even the twins are bewildered as to their identity. The ongoing perplexity of identity demonstrates how physical appearance establishes individuality; something that the twins must confront when constructing their own personhoods in the plays.

However, in both plays, once the twins are revealed to the audience as separate beings, everyone first suspects that they are conjuring spirits in order to double their form. In the denouement of *Twelfth Night*, Orsino states, 'one face, one voice, one habit and two persons' upon seeing Sebastian and Viola reunited (5.1.209). Antonio asks, 'How have you made division of yourself? An apple cleft in two is not more twin than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?' (5.1.216-8). The fact that no one can distinguish between them mimics the scene in *The Comedy of Errors*, yet when considered more carefully, it is much more troubling than the confusion between the Dromio and Antipoholus twins, as Viola and Sebastian cannot be identical because they are male and female. As fraternal twins, Viola and Sebastian share nothing more genetically or physically than other brothers and sisters. This doubling of the siblings, despite the fact that they cannot be identical twins, demonstrates the bond and resemblance one sibling could easily have to another. What is perhaps more curious is that Viola consciously decides to imitate her brother's appearance upon her arrival in Illyria. While her disguise ensures her safety, she could have dressed as *any* man, but instead emulates her brother, causing further confusion as to each other's identity. Their connection observed in Viola's actions illustrates the attachment between some siblings,

suggesting the importance of that connection to the formation of identity. Early modern medicine delineated how closely twins were thought to be connected.

Early modern medical treatises stated that twins were produced from a single copulation, in which the seed divided to create two babies due to its abundance and fruitfulness.[515] Aristotle succinctly covered the topic:

> Question: Why doth a woman sometimes conceive twins? Answer. According unto Galen, because there are seven cells or receptacles of seed in the womb, and therefore a woman may naturally have so many children at once, as there doth seed fall into those cells: for there are three in the right side, and three in the left: in the right side boys are engendered, and in the left wenches. And in the middest of those cells or chambers there is another.[516]

This passage illustrates the perplexity of how twins were conceived at this time. Popular manuals stated that midwives and physicians would not be able to determine if a woman is carrying twins until the third or fourth month of pregnancy, at which time, they could notice the intense swelling of the belly and wrinkles formed between the two foetuses.[517] The lack of a diagnostic test meant that many pregnant mothers were uncertain as to whether they were carrying twins until the time of birth. Such an intertwined identity, both medically and mentally, meant that twins were often literally considered one child until birth. In fact, Plutarch stated that twins are 'members double' with 'two wit, two hands, two feet, two eyes, two ears, and two nose thrills.'[518] Saint Augustine even condoned the mistaken identity of twins, asserting that 'when one man is taken for another, two being alike; which oftentimes happeneth in twins; whereupon

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[515]Nicolas Culpeper, 143. John Merbecke, *A book of notes and common places, with their expositions, collected and gathered out of the works of divers singular writers, and brought alphabetically into order* (London: Thomas East, 1581), 293.Pierre de La Primaudaye disagrees with this in *The second part of the French academy wherein, as it were by a natural history of the body and soul of man, the creation, matter, composition, form, nature, profit and use of all the parts of the frame of man are handled* (London: G.B., R.N. and R.B. 1594), 398, citing that Aristotle claimed a whore gave birth to twins from different fathers and concludes they must be conceived at different times. Plutarch, *The philosophy, commonly called, the morals written by the learned philosopher Plutarch of Chaeronea*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1603), 843.

[516]*The problems of Aristotle with other philosophers and physicians* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldgraue, 1595), 47.

[517]James Guillimeau, 12. Thomas Chamberlayne, 81.

[518]Plutarch, *The philosophy,*174.

the Poet affirmeth, that mistaking in such cases, is an acceptable error in Parents.'[519] The fact that twins were considered mere copies of their brother or sister certainly confounded their identity. However, early modern people were aware that just because twins were physically identical, did not mean that their personalities were as well. It was acknowledged 'whereas there is small distance or none betwixt their births, yet they have as great difference as may be in their lives.'[520] Shakespeare explored the identity of twins in these plays, resulting in humour from the situations in which he placed them; however, these sets of twins are significant in terms of the innate bond that siblings share. Despite the fact that the three sets of twins are separated before their respective plays commence (some even at birth), the connection that they feel towards one another is instant and enduring.

While *The Comedy of Errors* was written early in Shakespeare's career, he focused on the characters and their relationships instead of relying on formulaic stock characters of early modern drama. Shakespeare made several significant changes from his source material, Plautus's *Menaechmi* and *Amphituro*. He made the wife a central instead of peripheral figure, thus decentralising the courtesan's role to that of a minor character in his play. In doing so, 'the family theme is strengthened' as increasing Adriana's role allows the sanctity of marriage to be considered, rather than the frivolous sexuality symbolised by the courtesan.[521] Even in the beginning of Shakespeare's career, 'his play deepens from farce, touching on the relations of husbands and wives,

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[519]Saint Augustine, *Saint Augustine his enchiridion to Laurence, or, The chief and principal heads of all Christian religion* (London: Humfrey Lownes, 1607), 50.
[520]Lucius Seneca, *The work of the excellent philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca concerning benefiting that is too say the doing, receiving, and requiting of good turns,* trans. Arthur Golding (London: John Day, 1578), 104-5. John Merbecke, 293.
[521]Charles Whitworth, ed. *The Comedy of Errors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20. See also Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 20.

parents and children.'[522] Shakespeare extends the play beyond farce, and in doing so, he privileges familial relationships.

While twins have already been studied at length elsewhere, sibling relationships as a whole have often been neglected.[523] Sibling relations in Shakespeare's plays are undoubtedly filled with competition, animosity and at times, even intense cruelty and murder. In contrast, the affection that these siblings pine for or anticipate from their brothers and sisters can be seen through their various statements on how siblings are expected to treat one another. Shakespeare shows that negative relationships between same-sex siblings are often mediated by parents. Despite the fact that these relationships are problematic, they demonstrate an inherent yearning for a bond or commonality between family members that, even when unachieved, is fully realised and desired. Even when the relationships appear in the most negative capacities—Claudius's murder of Old Hamlet, Oliver's abuse of Orlando, Kate's intense jealousy and beating of Bianca, and Isabella's refusal to sacrifice her morals to save Claudio's life—they subversively value the relationships between siblings by commenting on the unnaturalness of such malice within the family. Additionally, through his exploration of identity with twins, Shakespeare shows that siblings can be important in the formation of identity at this time. Shakespeare demonstrates the significance of people's relationships with their siblings in his plays, even when the characters act otherwise. In doing so, Shakespeare explores the relationships of the nuclear family, even when it is unnecessary to the narrative of a particular play. This chapter has shown that blood relationships in the family are valued in Shakespeare's plays and concludes my analysis of individual relationships in the family. The final chapter of the thesis will combine the

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[522]Bullough, 8.
[523]See Lisa Jardine, 'Twins and travesties: gender, dependency and sexual availability in Twelfth Night.' In *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York and London: Routedge, 1992).

previous chapters of this thesis by exploring the role of the entire nuclear family in Shakespeare's plays.

Chapter 5: Nuclear Families

'She is my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn' (Taming of the Shrew 3.2.12)

While the individual relationships that compose a family—husband and wife, parent and child and brother and sister—are important in understanding how the unit as a whole operates, this chapter will focus on Shakespeare's treatment of the nuclear family as a whole in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet*. This thesis concludes by exploring the nuclear family in its entirety, with respect to the individual relationships analysed elsewhere. Throughout his canon, Shakespeare highlights particular individual relationships in his plays which culminate in the family. In this chapter, I will investigate the way in which these relationships interact and assimilate in a nuclear family unit, and how Shakespeare explores this in his work, based on the studies of these relationships in previous chapters. I have chosen to discuss the family in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* both because it provides a nuclear family in its entirety and because it offers a comedic reading of the family. Shakespeare utilises similar plot devices and tropes across his comedies, and I will explore domestic relations in this play as a microcosm for the remainder of the comedies in the canon. *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet* offer more complex nuclear families, which are seldom studied as a collective entity. This chapter will consider the ways that Shakespeare chooses to depict the nuclear family in his plays as a whole, and how that compares to an early modern understanding of the family.

The Merry Wives of Windsor is unique to Shakespeare's canon for a number of reasons: it 'boasts the stunning fact of being the only play in the corpus still generally believed to have been composed for a specific court occasion and, even more specifically, as a compliment to Elizabeth' at her request; it is the only one of Shakespeare's comedies to be set in England; and it portrays middle class life with no

royalty or nobles present.[524] Yet one of the most striking elements of the play is, as the title hints, Shakespeare's treatment of the two wives who dominate the domestic space where the play is centralised. Shakespeare reconstitutes the expected locale of the character of Falstaff from his previous appearance in the political atmosphere 'to the confines of a citizen comedy set in a market town, where the middle-class morality prevails, family affairs and household duties take priority.'[525] Unlike the city comedies made popular by Jonson or Middleton, Shakespeare dramatises the typical provincial town, highlighting the importance of the domestic space above the rowdiness and variety of the city. In this play, Shakespeare strays from the typical courtship narrative and examines two portraits of familial life, with two mothers occupying the most powerful roles in the play.

The fact that the play celebrates marriage and maternity is certainly unusual for Shakespeare, who assigns no prominent roles to mothers elsewhere in his comedies. Furthermore, there are no whores in the play, which is atypical of Shakespearean comedy, and allows the dramatic action to entirely focus on these virtuous women and the functionality of their marriages instead of the formation of them as is traditionally the topic of his comedies.[526] Surprisingly for the patriarchal hierarchy present in early modern English society, it is the 'female rather than male householders who emerge as the true practitioners and guardians of what is ostensibly a masculine political culture,' as the play makes clear that the women prevail in this authoritative role.[527] In a period where husbands were constituted as superior to wives in the household structure, the freedom and dominance that Mistresses Page and Ford share is quite remarkable.

[524]Barbara Freedman, 'Shakespearean Chronology, Ideological Complicity, and Floating Texts: Something is Rotten in Windsor' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45:2 (1994), 190. Arthur F. Kinney, 'Textual Signs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993), 213.
[525]Kiernan Ryan, 138.
[526]Lisa Hopkins, 64.
[527]Phil Withington, 'Putting the city into Shakespeare's city comedy,' in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. David Armitage, Conal Condren and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 201.

Mistress Quickly makes plain the Pages' household dynamic when she claims: 'Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does: do what she will, say what she will, take all, pay all, go to bed when she list, rise when she list, all is as she will; and truly she deserves it, for if there be a kind woman in Windsor, she is one' (2.2.116-21).[528] It is evident both through Quickly's description and Mistress Page's actions throughout the play, that she is able to act as she pleases in her household and throughout the community of Windsor. This position is only solidified during the final scene in the forest with the 'fairies extend the merry wives' domestic authority beyond the household into the reach of the court, forest and myth.'[529] By establishing their power as not solely confined to the maternal space of the home, Shakespeare allows the women to experience eminence throughout the entire town of Windsor and establishes them as important, authoritative characters.

The women are able to construct a plan that manipulates all around them including their own husbands. Yet, they do this not through the use of masculine attire or the authority of an official as other Shakespearean heroines must wear in order to gain power, but solely through the domestic sphere that they dominate. Early modern marriage manuals established the household as the wife's domain since she was assigned the household chores of cooking and cleaning. Patrick Hannay states in his manual entitled *A Happy Husband*, that 'as it befits not Man for to embrace domestic charge, so it's not Woman's place for to be busied with affaires abroad.'[530] His comment demonstrates the conceptualisation of the home during this time as a space occupied by women. Mistress Quickly shows the tasks women were expected to complete when she states, 'I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress

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[528]Capp, 75.
[529]Wendy Wall, 'Why Does Puck Sweep?: Fairylore, Merry Wives, and Social Struggle' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52:1 (2001), 90.
[530]Patrick Hannay, *A Happy Husband, or Directions for a maid to choose her mate as also, a wife's behaviour towards her husband after marriage* (London: for Richard Redmer, 1619), C4.

meat and drink, make the beds, and do all myself' (1.4.94-97). The specificity with which she describes her role not only differentiates her character from the woman in the *Henry IV* plays, but also provides the audience with a very pragmatic and common portrayal of life in the household. When advising women on their role in the home in his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery*, Thomas Tusser listed baking, cookery, dairy, scowring, washing, malting and dinner matters as part of the wife's duties.[531] The fact that Mistress Quickly's description of her daily activities mirrors the advice given in contemporary manuals shows that Shakespeare grounds the events of this play in a realistic country town, and not a fantasy space. The emphasis on the locale of the piece—the country household—is integral to our understanding of the women in the play, because it is where they draw their power. Early modern England developed 'the late medieval country estate as a symbol of good housekeeping; a moral economy wherein all classes and all peoples lived in right relationship with each other.'[532] The women shown on stage are not of an elite status, but are grounded in the middle class lifestyle, made evident through their chores and terminology in the play. In many of the comedies, Shakespeare writes persuasive, intelligent roles for women, such as Portia, Viola and Rosalind. Notably, all of these women must disguise themselves as men in order to assert their superiority; yet the wives in this play, Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* do not. All of these women are confident, witty and manipulative; and eventually get their way by the play's conclusion, demonstrating that Shakespeare's fascination with strong women is not limited to his merry wives. Given what we know about early modern domestic conduct, I believe that these wives stand outside of the confines of the anticipated household structure and reign free in their society.

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[531]Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery* (London, 1586), 130-2.
[532]Kari Boyd McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A cultural study of landscape and legitimacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 1.

The wives also demonstrate that they are capable of being witty while still upholding their society's expectations for their roles within the household. Peter Erickson notes that their 'power is consciously presented as a direct challenge to orthodox sexual politics' which foregrounds the role of the male as the head of the household and dominant to the wife in society.[533] However, upon reading Falstaff's letter, Mistress Page comments, 'Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men' (2.1.29-30). Her assertion demonstrates that she envisions herself with tangible power, citing political authority given in parliament, not merely domestic authority. She uses this to show the audience that she is capable of more than the household duties that her role as a wife suggests. The wives are able to escape the normative view of women merely as property, instead asserting their opinions as important. Despite the play's emphasis on money, Ford states at the end that 'in love the heavens themselves do guide the state. Money buys lands, and wives are sold by fate' (5.5.202-3). This statement is particularly intriguing when examined in light of Elizabethan marriage negotiations, which were based on economic and social commodities, often carried out by the bride's father and groom alone, without the woman present. While this was society's view of marriage, Ford's comment demonstrates that within the play, wives are not viewed as commodities, but are instead, loved and valued. By dramatising marriage in such a way, Shakespeare validates the women's voices as necessary and powerful in domestic relations and emphasises these women as important to their society.

Both Mistresses Page and Ford's characters are not labelled as wicked or deceitful, since they are able to maintain their purity and honesty whilst exhibiting their wit and ingenuity. Mistress Ford stresses this to the audience when she tells her friend

[533]Peter Erickson, 'The Order of the Garter, the cult of Elizabeth, and class-gender tension in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,' in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The text in history and ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 117.

that she 'will consent to act any villainy against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty' (2.1.98-100). Later, Mistress Page summarises their personalities when she comments that 'wives may be merry, and yet honest too: we do not act that often jest and laugh; 'tis old, but true: still swine eats all the draff' (4.2.105-7). The wives are only able to serve as heroines of the play because of their uncompromised chastity, which the audience is assured of early on in the play. However, there is a strong undercurrent in the play that assumes that women cannot be both moral and merry, and the wives work to deconstruct this notion to both the audience and their husbands over the course of the play.

There was a great amount of anxiety at this time surrounding female gatherings such as those of Mistresses Page and Ford, which led to the branding of women as *gossips*, a pejorative term, if they regularly met other women in such a fashion. This unease is apparent in Samuel Rowlands' frequent writing on the topic in his pamphlets '*Tis Merrie When Gossips Meet* (1602), *A Whole Crew of Kind Gossips* (1609) and *The Gossips Greeting* (1620), all of which present these women as 'irresponsible, spendthrift, bad neighbours and treacherous wives.'[534] He begins his second pamphlet by urging husbands: 'my masters that are married, look about, for matter of complaint is coming out against your persons, stand upon your guard, either your wives be bad, or you deal hard.'[535] Rowlands overtly demonstrates the threat that women posed to male dominance, as men perceived women's gatherings to always insult their husbands. After detailing the conversation of gossips abusing their husbands, Rowlands questions, 'shall I maintain an idle housewife so? There's not an honest man but will say no.'[536] The image that the pamphlet paints of gossips demonstrates the anxiety surrounding this

[534]Capp, 49.
[535]Samuel Rowlands, *A Whole Crew of Kind Gossips, All Met to Be Merry* (London: John Deane, 1609), A2.
[536]Ibid., section entitled: 'the first, accused by his wife to be miserable.'

issue, because any conference that women conducted alone was constructed as a potential threat to patriarchal supremacy. Early modern society was fraught with angst over the power of the female tongue and its ability to slander. In fact the legal punishment for a common scold increased in severity during this time, with many scolds sentenced to the stocks, cages or most-frequently, the cucking-stool.[537] Between the 1550s and 1700s, dunking a scold in the water to tame the heat of her tongue became popular, demonstrating the anxiety surrounding the prattling of women. This ruthless punishment demonstrates the severity of the concern about the role that women played in society at this time, particularly in how they interacted with one another. Despite his society's anxiety about gossips, Shakespeare focuses on the agency and authority of the wives in his play.

While this trepidation is certainly present in the play, most aptly through Ford's character, the power of the merry wives is never undermined by it. Peter Erickson has argued that the wives are manipulative and ethically questionable.[538] However, I believe that their humiliation of Falstaff establishes and corroborates their honesty to their husbands, as their teasing of him becomes a public spectacle in which they are proven chaste. Their entire goal in the play is to maintain their integrity and uphold their households' reputations, a serious issue at this time. In fact, when the severity of the situation is heightened with Ford's second searching escapade, the wives reveal their entire plan to their husbands in order to sustain their honesty. The fact that their purity is asserted and maintained throughout the play casts Ford as a jealous fool, because it is evident to the audience that he is irrationally obsessed with his wife's faithfulness when

[537]Martin Ingram, '"Scolding women cucked or washed": a crisis in gender relations in early modern England?' in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, ed. Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 58.
[538]Erickson, 123.

he has no justification for such a concern. Ultimately, Shakespeare mocks this fear of female friendship by assigning the women so much probity despite their dominance.

The play lightly hints at the serious nature of female adultery or the suspicion of such that prevailed during this time. The implication of female power in the household is illustrated through Ford's belief that he is being cuckolded by his wife. Early modern English society believed that 'adultery involved a certain assertion of female autonomy,' because it required her to place her own sexual satisfaction before her submission to her husband in marriage.[539] Furthermore, 'a wife's infidelity was construed as a kind of theft, taking a husband's property from his rightful heirs' as the woman was considered her husband's property and risked producing a bastard child who would threaten her husband's assets and status.[540] Samuel Rowlands explicitly states this common belief in his warning to not take advantage of a married woman 'because the wife is another man's commodity.'[541] The fact that the 'lubricity of the woman is thrown upon the man, and her dishonesty thought his dishonour, who being the head of the wife and thus abused by her, he gains the name of cuckold.'[542] Ford epitomises this prevailing notion of women by telling Falstaff that his love is 'like a fair house built on another man's ground, so that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it' when disguised as Brook (2.2.215-7). His use of *a fair house* and *land*, two physical commodities belonging to a man, to describe his love for a woman denotes his conceptualisation of women as objects to be possessed. Notwithstanding the hilarity of the wives' actions, this angst is hinted at on a more serious level as Ford searches for Falstaff in his house, accusing his wife of infidelity. He tells his friends, 'Here, here, here be my keys. Ascend my chambers, search, seek,

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[539]Gowing, *Domestic Dangers,* 195.
[540]Mendelson and Crawford, 48.L. Stone, 316; Houlbrooke, 116; and Capp, 245.
[541]Rowlands, *'Tis Merry When Gossips Meet* (London: W.W., 1602), A4.
[542]George Rogers, *The Horne Exhaulted, or Room for Cuckolds, being a Treatise concerning the reason and original of the word cuckold, and why such are said to wear horns* (London: J Cadwel, 1660), 4.

find out' in an attempt to regain control over his household (3.3.162-3). The fact that he must hand over his keys—the most tangible signifier of the house—to other men is symbolic of his assumed position in his marriage, because he believes he has lost the possession of his wife as well. It is evident that the traditional view of domestic relations with the woman viewed as male property is mocked in this play, as the only character who expresses this view is ridiculed repeatedly. This hunt for Falstaff occurs twice over the course of the play and is riddled with comedy at Ford's expense.

Throughout the play, the men are construed as fools while the women remain insightful and manipulative characters. A female pamphlet writer, Susana Jesserson, warned that a woman should feel 'much ashamed to show herself wiser than her husband in company, as some pragmatical gossips are proud to be thought.'[543] Shakespeare ignores this advice, writing Mistress Ford much wittier and wiser than her husband. Ford is continuously scorned in his conversations with Falstaff as his alias, Brook, and by his fellow townsmen when he runs rampage attempting to prove his wife's promiscuity in his house. Over the course of the play, he is mocked by his friend, Page, who muses with the other men: 'trust me, we'll mock him' as he accuses his wife of adultery (3.3.228-9); he taunts his wife, claiming, 'the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband!' (4.2.130-2); and he even ridicules Page for trusting his own wife, saying: 'Though Page be a secure fool, and stands so firmly on his wife's frailty, yet I cannot put off my opinion so easily' (2.1.233-5). These scenes certainly characterise Ford as dim-witted, but they also suggest that men should trust their wives and permit their independence or female company, despite the anxiety surrounding these circumstances during the early modern period.

[543]Susana Jesserson, *A Bargain for Bachelors, or The Best Wife in the World for a Penny* (London: E. A., 1675), 5.

Given this disruption of the hegemonic male supremacy present in the play, Anne Parten has argued that a 'healthy marriage is threatened, in which women have gained the upper hand, in which masculine ineffectuality is equated with cuckoldom' and the relationship must eventually reinstate patriarchal control.[544] However, this does not prove true by the conclusion of the play, which sees Ford, and not his wife repenting for his actions, suggesting that women may trick their husbands as long as they are honest. Ford apologises to his wife, requesting, 'Pardon me, wife, henceforth do what thou wilt. I rather will suspect the sun with cold than thee with wantonness' (4.4.6-8). His repentance is met not with cynicism, but instead accepted by his wife and the Pages who are also present. Instead of restoring the masculine power that has been displaced in the play through the wives' ruse with Falstaff, Shakespeare concludes with the women continuing to dominate the men in their respective relationships. Unlike his other comedies in which the women must eventually relinquish their power permitted only through their temporary disguises or situations, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* concludes with no scene that restores patriarchal control. Rather, the play extends the wives' independence in their relationships and publically acknowledges the foolishness of men in questioning the integrity of women. Moreover, Ford not only apologises to his wife, but permits her to act with no accountability in the future, which elevates the power that she already has been given in the play. Thus, the play concludes with insight into the future of the couples' marriages as continuing in this pattern of female authority. Despite the fact that some critics such as Peter Erickson feel that 'female power is duly acknowledged but subject to residual male discontent' in this play, this is not true for anyone but Ford.[545] I believe that the women are given power and control in the play with no ramifications, other than mocking the husband that is not

[544]Anne Parten, 'Falstaff's Horns: Masculine Inadequacy and Feminine Mirth in *The Merry Wives of Windsor' Studies in Philology* 82:2 (1985), 187.
[545]Erickson, 134.

wholeheartedly trusting of their actions. While Ford is unhappy in his jealousy, he is made to look ridiculous by both his wife and the townsfolk, particularly in the scenes where he searches his house for his wife's suitor while his friends stand by. Furthermore, Page's trust of his wife is obvious throughout the play, and he does not regret this at the conclusion, even though she arranges for a suitor for their daughter whom he disapproves. The fact that these two characters are shown with varying reactions to their wives' freedom suggests some discomfort with the female dominance present in the play. However, since the women are not required to renounce their power at any time, Shakespeare allows the female dominance to be extended beyond the scope of the play. Given the play's conclusion, it is clear that the women are not reprimanded for their control over other characters, and only Ford is made to look foolish.

Male anxiety surrounding the issue of female submission derived from men not wanting to be labelled a cuckold. Since 'both fornication and adultery were exclusively male prerogatives,' female infidelity was a serious issue that had ramifications for a man and wife in society.[546] While gaining the reputation of being an unchaste woman was harmful to both husband and wife, it was considered far more detrimental to the husband's honour because it was 'a slur on both his virility and his capacity to rule his own household.'[547] Since wives and their sexuality were constructed as part of their husbands' property, surrendering dominance over one's wife was indicative of a disruption to the hierarchy within the marriage and entire household. The way in which the household was appropriated for political discourse during the early modern period has already been discussed. Given the importance of the structure of the household throughout society, it is clear that cuckoldry would have been considered far more damage than within the confines of the household itself. Ford demonstrates the gravity

[546]L. Stone, 315.
[547]Ibid., 317.

of this accusation when he states, 'Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends; but Cuckold! Wittol!—and Cuckold! The devil himself hath not such a name' (2.2.297-30). Only a few lines later, he rants, 'Fie, fie, fie! Cuckold, cuckold, cuckold!' because he is so plagued by the idea of being labelled this term as it was tantamount to being called a devil in his mind (2.2.313-4). It seems that all in the community of Windsor understand marriage in this way, because Mistress Page chides Ford when he hunts for Falstaff in his house, 'you do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford' (3.3.205). It is telling that she uses *yourself* instead of *your wife*, because this phrasing shows that she interprets the ramifications of female adultery extending beyond just herself because of the way it was constructed in their society.

Similar to Ford, Falstaff is swindled by the wives when carried away in a laundry basket, thrown into the Thames, dressed as an old woman, beaten by Ford and when he must don horns and be pinched by 'fairies' in the forest. Mistress Ford devises a plan in which 'Falstaff should meet us disguise'd like Herne, with huge horns on his head' to represent Herne the hunter (4.4.42-3). However, Ford's comment, 'now, sir, who's a cuckold now? Master Brook, Falstaff's a knave, a cuckoldly knave; here are his horns' to Falstaff shows that they understand his horns to be demonstrative of cuckoldry (5.5.9-11). An early modern treatise devoted to cuckoldry explains, 'why they are said to have horns, because their goodness makes them easily persuaded to do anything. As horns being held to the fire, you may bring them to what shape you will, and so you cannot do teeth, or nails or bones. But these all rather signify a wiling cuckold.'[548] While traditionally the cuckolded husband wore horns as a sign of his stupidity and emasculation, this scene shows the cuckolder wearing them. These horns become 'an emblem of Everyman as both cuckold and cuckolder, victim and offender; "the savage

[548]George Rogers, 14.

yoke" of marriage subjugates all men.'[549] This scene is evocative of the early modern practice of skimmington, a spectacle of public shame and humiliation to serve as punishment for cuckolds.[550] Mistress Ford hints at this when she tells her friend, 'I warrant they'll have him publically sham'd, and methinks there would be no period to the jest, should he not be publically sham'd' (4.2.219-21). The practice of turning a seemingly private event between a husband and his wife into a public demonstration shows the consequences that a woman's adultery had on her husband, since he was forced to walk the streets with horns on his head for everyone to witness his degradation. Ford revels in this form of justice that Falstaff receives at the end of the play for attempting to ruin his reputation, emphasising the fact that adultery, while based on a woman's actions, was something that could be conceived as one man's authority over another. The vigor and excitement with which Ford treats Falstaff in horns demonstrates his assertion of dominance over his wife by humiliating Falstaff in lieu of himself in this public charade. However, the women who were also involved in the plot (albeit never intending to tarnish their honour) are never even scolded for their participation in this ruse or for deceiving their own husbands, suggesting a higher amount of autonomy in the play than Elizabethan England afforded them.

During this forest scene, Anne Page announces her marriage to Fenton despite her parents' choices to the contrary, seemingly demonstrating a limit to the wives' power. However, this episode subversively affirms feminine power, as Anne's ability to marry the suitor of her choice extends the pattern of female supremacy in the play, affirming that it is not merely unique to the two wives. Throughout the play, 'the overt and threatening sexuality and wit of the women and the misogyny they generate are mitigated by the construction of sexuality as a social and socially useful commodity, by

[549]Kahn, *Man's Estate*, 150.
[550]L. Stone, 317.

the women's self-regulation, and by the appropriation of the power and chastity of Elizabeth in the service of the stability and harmony of the citizens of Windsor.'[551] Many critics have noticed the wives' power as indicative of the problematic female power of Queen Elizabeth as the head of state that was a source of anxiety at this time. If Shakespeare is commenting on female dominance in relation to Elizabeth, it is telling that he uses the most middle class of his plays to do so. Instead of showing political power in a court, Shakespeare removes sovereigns and uses the most familiar and mundane of spaces: the urban house. There is an inverse relationship at work in the play in using middle class women as a tribute to the Queen, particularly when the play was written for a specific garter ceremonial performance. Shakespeare deliberately reverses the societal expectations for these women to be submissive, silent housewives and instead assigns them with agency, intelligence and significantly, chastity. While Shakespeare is able to play with the conventions for these women in some aspects, he does not alter their sexual honesty to their husbands, allowing the audience to find comedy in their situations, knowing they are faithful.

Over the course of the play, the routine activities of common men and women are given priority over the lives of nobles, creating a tableau of household tasks and situations. Through this domestic locale, Shakespeare elevates the status of the women in the play, who dominate their individual households, and eventually all those around them as well. By focusing on their story and relationships with one another, their husbands and their pseudo-wooer, Shakespeare allows women to dictate the narrative of this play. Moreover, his treatment of the women provides them with more agency than was typical at this time in early modern England. Shakespeare allows the women a more prominent role in the household and writes these characters and their mundane lives as

[551]Carol Thomas Neely, 'Constructing Female Sexuality in the Renaissance: Stratford, London, Windsor, Vienna' in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 219.

the focal point of this play, highlighting the normal rhythms of family life. In doing so, Shakespeare demonstrates that families take precedence over dramatising the political or regal. For the purposes of this thesis, I have explored this family as a microcosm for the families in the comedies. While not all of them deal with the same issues as the Fords and Pages, similar tropes and plot devices arise in many of the comedies, most of which are resolved by the play's conclusion. Of course, Shakespeare also depicts complicated families in his tragedies, which I will now turn to.

Coriolanus

Coriolanus is widely recognised to be the most political of Shakespeare's tragedies.[552] Critics such as T. McAlidon have identified it 'a thoroughly political tragedy with no obvious metaphysical overtones, [...] concerned with class conflict and the manipulation of power in a realistically conceived, historically specific society.'[553] Riddled with the citizens' outbursts and riots, *Coriolanus* is the only play written in the early modern period to open with the dramatisation of public violence, which critics have linked to the Midland Riots of 1607, often dismissing the play as topical and therefore, irrelevant.[554] Despite these strong political associations and the celebration of savagery throughout the text, I will show that *Coriolanus* emphasises and esteems the domestic space and the family that it contains. A. C. Swinburne was assured of this element of the play, leading him to label it as 'rather a private and domestic than a public or historical tragedy.'[555] Since there was no contemporary precedent for *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare made a 'more deliberate literary and artistic choice than either of the other two Roman plays.'[556] Instead of depicting the tale of a Roman warrior, Shakespeare privileges the family and their position in the play, underscored by Coriolanus' failure as both a Roman and Volscian soldier. The play emphases broken families through its portrayal of the causalities of war: the widows and orphans of those

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[552]Harold Bloom, 577. John Palmer, *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1945), p. 250; T. McAlidon, 'An Essentialist Tragedy' *The Review of English Studies* 44:176 (1993), 506; Stanley Cavell, '"Who does the wolf love?": Coriolanus and the Interpretations of Politics' in *Representations* 3 (1983), 1-20; Andrew Gurr, 'Coriolanus and the Body Politic' *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975): 63-9; Ralph Berry, 'The Metamorphosis of Coriolanus' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26:2 (1975), 172; Zvi Jagendorf, 'Coriolanus: Body Politic and Private Parts' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41:4 (1990), 455-469. For critics who disagree with this, see Willard Farnham, 'Tragic Pride,' in *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*, ed. B. A. Brockman (London: Macmillan Press, 1977), 93; Edward Dowden, 'Critical Comment,' in *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*, 33; and H. J. Oliver, 'Coriolanus as a Tragic Hero' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10:1 (1959), 55.
[553]T. McAlidon, 505.
[554]Philip Brockbank, ed. *Coriolanus* (London: Methuen, 1976), 95. Jarrett Walker, 'Voiceless Bodies and Bodiless Voices: The Drama of Human Perception in *Coriolanus*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43:2 (1992), 173. For this and other topical views of the play, see Robin Headlam Wells, '"Manhood and Chevalrie:" Coriolanus, Prince Henry, and the Chivalric Revival' *The Review of English Studies* 51:203 (2000), 395-422.
[555]A. C. Swinburne, 'Critical Comment,' in *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*, 41.
[556]T. J. Spencer, 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans' in *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*, 115.

whom Coriolanus has killed in battle and his own fatherless family. *Coriolanus* investigates the complicated family unit and how it functions in what appears to be a deliberate attempt to domesticate warfare and the fierce Roman reputation in early modern drama. Drawing on the work done in previous chapters about the individual relationships in the family, I will explore how the family unit functions in this play and takes precedence over the political atmosphere.

While the thematic concern of the play is combat, the domestic sphere is evoked verbally even when not physically present. Ann C. Christensen has laid the groundwork for this section in arguing this the 'home in fact exerts immense "shaping power" in the play; it functions rhetorically and dramatically to compete for Martius' (and other warriors') identification.'[557] I will further this assertion by showing that Coriolanus associates his actions as a warrior with his victims' domestic circumstances. Instead of dramatising a stoic and aggressive warrior, Shakespeare characterises Coriolanus as someone interested in the families of his victims and the repercussions of war on the household. Coriolanus struggles with his role in the public tribunes and participation in archaic rituals, eventually culminating in a conflict between his family and his position as a soldier. Long before this divergence is realised, however, combat and political actions are introduced through domestic terminology by many characters in the play. When Cominius describes war, he states, 'you have holp to ravish your own daughters, and to melt the city leads upon your plates, to see your wives dishonour'd to your noses' (4.6.81-3); the first servant asserts that peace 'is a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men' (4.5.225-6); and Aufidius describes Coriolanus by relating that 'in this city he hath widowed and unchilded many a one' (5.6.150-1). In fact, the family is even used as the rationale to kill Coriolanus when the people cry, 'He killed

[557]Ann C. Christensen, 'The Return of the Domestic in *Coriolanus*' *Studies in English 1500-1900* 37:2 (1997), 298.

my son! My daughter! He killed my cousin Marcus! He killed my father!' as a way of stating the consequences his decisions have brought on all families in Rome (5.6.121-2).Notably the people and Aufidius do not focus on Coriolanus' treason or caprice; instead, they lament his destruction of their individual families, a strong statement considering the overwhelming political nature of the play. By allowing military decisions to be influenced or justified by their detriment to the family, Shakespeare elevates the importance of the individual family to the play as a whole.

But perhaps the most contemplative on this matter is Coriolanus himself, who only dwells on war in terms of the families it destroys. When he chides his wife for crying at his return, he envisions 'such eyes the widows in Corioles wear, and mothers that lack sons' (2.1.178-9). His imaginative response of the widows in Corioles shows that his attention is placed on the devastation resulting from his position as a Roman warrior at the familial and not community level.[558] Upon reaching Antium, he greets the city with: 'A goodly city is this Antium. City, 'tis I that made thy widows; many an heir of these fair edifices 'fore my wars have I heard groan and drop' (4.4.1-4). The fact that Coriolanus describes war by the victims that it produces, and not by his accolades or wounds as those around him do, demonstrates his preoccupation with the family even while at war. Harley Granville-Barker has labelled Coriolanus as a 'man of action seen in action,' but I believe that he displays an ambivalence about annihilating families that is unique for a contemporary Roman soldier.[559] His obsession with family contrasts him with Titus Andronicus, who is so deeply invested in honour and tradition that he sacrifices his own family to uphold these values. Similarly, in John Webster and Thomas Heywood's *Appius and Virginia*, Virginius kills his own daughter to preserve his reputation as a soldier; and Macro sacrifices his family for political influence and

[558]Katherine Stockholder, 'The Other Coriolanus' *PMLA* 85:2 (1970), 230.
[559]Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* 5 (London: B. T. Batsford, 1948), 59.

nobility in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall.* Honour was an imperative virtue to the Roman warrior in early modern drama, yet Shakespeare distinguishes himself from this thematic pattern in this play, conversely valuing the family over military glory.[560] Coriolanus' musings suggest that he cannot separate his personal notion of the family's importance from his actions at war due to the cataclysmic repercussions of his martial decisions. His preoccupation with the family and the military's affect on it powerfully establishes how the domestic sphere and warfare compete for his attention, yet are intertwined throughout in the play, even in his mindset. Shakespeare alters the traditional warrior stock character to enable Coriolanus to care about his victims and spoils of war. In doing so, Shakespeare highlights the importance of family ties in the most contradictory of settings.

The conflation of military and household affairs is demonstrated again when Volumnia and Virgilia are sewing together. As the scene opens, the stage direction from the First Folio reads: *Enter Volumnia and Virgilia, mother and wife to Martius; they set them down on two low stools and sew* (1.3.0). Their actions are commented on again when Valeria enters the house, observing, 'You are manifest house keepers. What are you sewing here? A fine spot, in good faith' (1.3.51-53). The fact that the women are sewing together provides the overarching setting and constitutes the terms of their daily household activities. During the early modern period, 'monotonous work such as knitting and spinning devoured huge swathes of women's lives, and company helped to relieve the tedium.'[561] Women began to gather to sew, knit, embroider and milliner, 'making the home a social as well as domestic space.'[562] While textile trades occupied the time of various types of women, sewing in particular was seen as a task reserved for

[560]For the importance of honour and virtue to Roman warriors on the Elizabethan stage, see 'Roman Virtue on English Stages' in Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-26.
[561]Capp, 52.
[562]Ibid., 51.

gentlewomen, a recreational activity in which only high class women would engage.[563] In fact, 'elite women had intimate friendships among female relatives, including those related by marriage as well as birth, and sustained their sociable ties by correspondence and frequent visits,' such as the one dramatised in this scene.[564] In *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, Mary Astell surmised that 'our Sex are generally more hearty and sincere in the ordinary Friendships they make than Men, among whom they are usually clogg'd with so many Considerations of Interest, and Punctilio's of Honour; to which last perhaps are owing the greatest part of those honourable Actions, which are mistakenly imputed to Friendship.'[565] Her value of friendship is also evident in her correspondence with a friend, which was compiled and published during the late seventeenth century. In her letters, she concludes that 'Friendship [is] the most substantial pleasure in the world,' because of the profound trust and loyalty that she shares with her friend.[566] Women placed a large amount of importance on friendship with other women throughout this period, which demonstrates the pleasure that they received from these ties, even if they often occurred during domestic chores such as in this scene. Virgilia, Volumnia and Valeria casually discuss topics while sewing, establishing their characters as independent and reigning over the domestic space that they inhabit.

Despite the joy derived from female friendships, these gatherings of women caused anxiety among many husbands, because they provided a gendered and unique space, solely for women to discuss their ideas and problems with one another, without

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[563]Mendelson and Crawford, 322.
[564]Ibid., 232.
[565]Mary Astell, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (London: A. Roper and E. Wilkinson at the Blackboy and R. Clavel at the Peacock, 1696), 132-3.
[566]Mary Astell, *Six familiar essays upon marriage, crosses in love, sickness, death, loyalty and friendship written by a lady* (London: Thomas Bennet at the Half Moon, 1696), 65-6.

the threat of male dominance.[567] Early modern manuals warned that 'it was shameful for him to trespass on his wife's domain and vice versa,' thus secluding the women in this space.[568] Therefore, women congregating to complete domestic tasks created a segregated female space and culture that was unattainable to them elsewhere in society. Since female meetings were notorious for the male angst that they produced, this scene provides an opportunity for early modern male theatregoers to witness a social event from which they were otherwise excluded. Given the period's unease with women assembling alone, this scene's inclusion in the play suggests a deliberate attempt to solidify the authority of the female characters in the domestic space, as its presence disregards any male apprehension by overtly depicting them gossiping together in the home.

Despite the fact that the women are engaging in a highly domestic and feminine activity, their discussion centres around warfare. They contemplate battles and wounds, which fascinate Volumnia yet frighten her meek daughter-in-law.[569] The ongoing contrast between the two spaces vying for validity and recognition is made explicit in this scene, as the women discuss warfare and bloodshed whilst sewing, whereas Coriolanus reflects on the family during his time at war. Volumnia vividly imagines her son at war, stating:

> Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum
> See him pluck Aufidius down by th'hair;
> As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him.
> Methinks I see him stamp thus and call thus:
> "Come on, you cowards, you were got in fear,
> Though you were born in Rome!" His bloody brow
> With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,

[567]Public concern is shown through various publications on the matter: Rowlands, *Well Met Gossip, or Tis Merrie When Gossips Meet* (London: Thomas Vere, 1675); W. P. *The Gossips Greeting, or a New Discovery of Such Females Meeting* (London: Bernard Alsop for Henry Bell 1620); and Patrick Hannay. See also Capp, 50.
[568]Capp, 50.
[569]Critics have noted the sexual connotation of *wounds*, see Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 213.

> Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
> Or all or lose his hire (1.3.29-37).

Her detailed description of her son fighting for Rome is gruesome and shocking especially considering the women's domestic setting. Volumnia's persona as 'the awful Roman matron' manifests in this scene through her obsession with her son's wounds and honour.[570] In stark contrast to her mother-in-law, Virgilia 'opposes the Roman code and its incarnation in Volumnia,' feeling affronted and worried about the possibility of her husband's injuries or subsequent death.[571] The two women remain transfixed on the subject despite their differing opinions with respect to war. When Valeria enters, she immediately announces that 'the Volsces have an army forth; against whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of our Roman power' (1.3.96-8). Shakespeare demonstrates that brutality is the expected form of masculinity in their society through the women's response to warfare in this scene. Surprisingly, it is Virgilia who is alienated by the discussion in this scene, as she is the only woman who is actually worried about war and not interested in idealising it. The fact that Virgilia's aversion to war, the stereotypical feminine view, is mocked by the other women shows the removal of gender boundaries in the play. Shakespeare works to accentuate the differences between the domestic space and the battlefield by reversing the normative gender boundaries in this scene and elsewhere in the play.

A keen interest in warfare and savagery is repeated when Valeria comments on how young Martius 'mammock'd' a butterfly with his teeth solely for the purpose of leisurely entertainment one afternoon (1.3.73). While Volumnia finds this reminiscent of his father and Valeria calls young Martius 'a noble child' because of his bestiality, his mother has a contradictory reaction to her son's behaviour (1.3.74). Virgilia claims

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[570]Edward Dowden, 35.
[571]Robert S. Miola, 'Coriolanus: Rome and the self,' in *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 172.

that he is 'a crack,' meaning that her son is a rogue because of his excessive viciousness (1.3.75). However, the other women's approval of young Martius' actions shows the emphasis on combat in this Roman society, even in the most domestic of scenes. While the two mothers discuss their sons, the supposed inherent opposition of war and maternity is shattered, providing a 'troubling, richly problematic treatment of the cultural nexus between bearing children and bearing arms.'[572] With the focus on violence even within the household, Volumnia, Valeria and Virgilia show the indistinguishable nature of these two realms in the world depicted in the play.

One of the major changes that Shakespeare made to his two primary source materials, *The Roman Historie of T. Livy* (1600) and *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579), was the introduction of more scenes with the family. The alterations to the source materials suggest that 'Shakespeare wished to show Martius' relations with his family, and in particular with his mother,' as the vast majority of Volumnia's scenes were created by Shakespeare alone with no precedent.[573] Of all of Coriolanus' relationships, the one that has been scrutinised most frequently is that of his strong ties to his mother. Her domineering attitude and preoccupation with war have propelled her character to the forefront of critical response to the play. janet Adleman famously argued that Coriolanus' 'masculinity is constructed in response to maternal power, and in the absence of a father' throughout the play.[574] However, it becomes evident that this is not the case when consulting the source materials and analysing the modifications that Shakespeare made for his narrative. In Plutarch, 'Coriolanus' errors were the result of the early loss of his father which robbed him of the discipline he needed [... making him] eager for praise, especially from his mother on

[572]Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare*, 147.
[573]Bullough, 479.
[574]Janet Adleman, *Suffocating Mothers,* 146.

whom he lavished all his affection and respect.'[575] Coriolanus' father is not a precursor to his downfall in Shakespeare's play, but instead, his own weakness and bashfulness in the face of his mother's valour and determination destroy his military prowess. While critics such as Adelman have focused on Coriolanus' absent father and therefore condemned the play as disrupting the nuclear family, I believe that the family is emphasised by Shakespeare in creating scenes between Coriolanus and his mother, wife and child to characterise him for the audience. Furthermore, Volumnia's strength and obsession with war overcompensates for her son's lack of interest in the plebeians and their revolts. She revels in his injuries, rejoicing, 'Oh, he is wounded; I thank the gods for't,' knowing how the people will praise him when he returns from war (2.1.120). Their relationship contradicts the normative pattern for a mother and son, as, due to the absence of his father, Coriolanus was presumably not separated from his mother at the age of seven as was traditional for boys in early modern England. Thus, he is more dependent on her and fully invested in her judgement of him, far more so than any other Shakespearean son.[576]

Coriolanus is deeply concerned with his mother's opinion of his actions. When he refuses to go to the marketplace to win the vote of the people, Menenius, Cominus, the senators and the nobles all attempt to convince him to change his mind, yet he remains steadfast in his resolve. Once his mother enters, he confesses 'I muse my mother does not approve me further' and proceeds to ask her outlook on the matter (3.2.7-8). Clearly, he has no general interest in others' views of him and his actions, as he blatantly states to the remainder of the characters on stage, since he will not demean himself by acting what he believes to be dishonourably. However, he desperately desires his mother's approval of his decisions, even when it challenges his own beliefs.

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[575]Bullough, 473.
[576]Frank Harris, *The Women of Shakespeare* (London: Methuen and Co, 1911), 217.

Volumnia pleads with him, 'I am in this your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles' to persuade her son (3.2.64-5). Her argument pointedly places the family before the state officials and people, showing their respective levels of importance to her son. When he relents, he makes the motive for his decision clear to the senators and nobles by announcing, 'Mother, I am going to the market-place: chide me no more' (3.2.131-2). In the end, he yields to her wishes, in a precursor to his ultimate submission to her in the tribunal scene.[577]

Paula D. Berggren has criticised Volumnia for 'throw[ing] her motherhood up to him almost savagely, equating herself with Mother Rome in an exaltation of the womb to which the bewildered boy-hero can only yield.'[578] Yet, it is her pleading with her son as his mother that continuously changes his actions throughout the play. I believe that her evocation of family honour and duty that causes her son to respond is integral to our understanding of the family dynamic in this play. Regardless of the type of mother Volumnia is to her son, her maternity is the reason that he follows her so willingly in the first place. Shakespeare clearly uses the expected roles of family members to illustrate their importance to the characters in this play. Due to Volumnia's imposing presence in her son's life, she is 'rhetorically placing him in the position of a boy or youth' in the audience's minds.[579] When she first greets her son, Volumnia calls him, 'my boy Martius' and she recalls his childhood to his wife, correlating his character with youth in the audience's minds (2.1.100). Especially when considering the fact that Coriolanus reacts to the use of the word *boy* as an insult when Aufidius uses it towards him, Volumnia's characterisation of her son as a child emphasises his dependence on

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[577]Carol S. Sicherman believes that this is due to his failure of language in her 'Coriolanus: The Failure of Words' *ELH* 39:2 (1972), 190.
[578]Paula S. Berggren, 'The Woman's Part: Female Sexuality as Power in Shakespeare's Plays,' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carol Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 27.
[579]Lucy Munro, '*Coriolanus* and the little eyases: the boyhood of Shakespeare's hero,' in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, 87.

his mother.[580] Several critics have noted that he is 'notoriously the victim of his dominating and devouring mother, Coriolanus is an overgrown child,' similar to Richard III's relationship with his own mother, as I have already discussed.[581] Because Volumnia is still present not only in the play, but in his house, he acts similar to a child in his dependency on her, removing his ability to properly provide for his family in establishing his position as the head of household. The citizens realise this as well, as his success at war is reduced to a bid for his mother's affection and approval. In the opening of the play, the first citizen claims that 'though soft-conscienc'd men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother' (1.1.37-9). By allowing another character to declare this of the eponymous character's stimulus before he has even been introduced to the audience, Shakespeare characterises Coriolanus as instinctively vying for his mother's attention and praise. This is only substantiated over the course of the play, summarised by Volumnia when she states their unique bond to one another, claiming, 'there's no man in the world more bound to 's mother' (5.3.158-9). Similar to Romeo and Juliet who are transfixed in adolescence, Coriolanus cannot fully enter adulthood because he is idealistic and ignorant due to his mother's unremitting presence and control in his life, preventing him from maturing into adulthood. Shakespeare dramatises this angst between Coriolanus and his mother to demonstrate the disruption to the household when the normal cycle of life is not adhered to.

Young Martius, Coriolanus and Virgilia's son, appears only to complete the nuclear family in the play, as he is not characterised to a greater degree. With only two

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[580]For more on this insult, see Ralph Berry, 'Sexual Imagery in Coriolanus' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 13:2, (1973), 305.

[581]Harold Bloom, 578. Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare*, 211. Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 77. L. C. Knights, 'Shakespeare and Political Wisdom: The Personalism of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus,' in *Shakespeare: Coriolanus*, 112. F. H. Rouda, 'Coriolanus—A Tragedy of Youth' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 12:2 (1961), 106.

lines, young Martius is barely given a role at all, but it proves important in the way that his parents and grandmother conceive of him. Throughout the play, 'Coriolanus seems to think of his child less as his son than the embodiment of his own childhood and of the child that remains within him; even when we are first told about the son, he seems more a comment on Coriolanus' childhood than on his fatherhood.'[582] In this way, Coriolanus recalls Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, in that he wants his son to replicate himself. Shakespeare returns to similar devices in his plays as a way of highlighting family relationships and anxieties. Volumnia calls him a 'poor epitome of yours' to Coriolanus (5.3.68); while Virgilia comments that she 'brought you forth this boy, to keep your name living to time' to her husband (5.3.126-7). The fact that both women comment on young Martius only to make a statement about Coriolanus suggests that his role in the play is merely to provide Coriolanus the opportunity to be a father, and not a character with his own autonomy. He proves similar to his father in action, by tearing a butterfly with his teeth, a deed that Volumnia calls 'one of 's father's moods' (1.3.66). In his only lines in the play, he asserts, 'A shall not tread on me. I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I'll fight' (5.3.127-8). His sentiments mimic those of his father in desire and aptitude to fight whenever possible. His sole purpose in the play seems to further Coriolanus' fatherhood and his own immaturity, since other characters frequently compare the two. With young Martius' character serving this solitary end, the play suggests that Shakespeare went to lengths to characterise Coriolanus in such a way, as a family man before a warrior.

Coriolanus' relationship with his wife differs greatly from his other relationships in the play. Others before me have noted that critics rarely discuss this relationship in the play. In fact, 'amid all the turbulence and bluster of this play, Martius and Virgilia

[582]Janet Adleman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 161.

have an apparently stable and unproblematic bond within and about which nothing need ever be said' by critics.[583] Virgilia is considered to be the perfect wife, both in and outside of the play. Valeria comments that she 'would be another Penelope,' a figure known for her chastity and loyalty to her husband, Ulysses (1.3.82). Katherine Stockholder has argued that she is the only character 'who sees Coriolanus differently. Her tender feeling for her husband deepens our sense of him, for her love has no basis in admiration of martial powers, valour, or oaken garlands.'[584] She is not interested in his wounds, honour or military record as his mother is; but instead, she is profoundly concerned with his safety on the battlefield, showing anxiety and emotion when this matter is discussed. Virgilia cowers at the thought of her husband injured at war, crying, 'Oh no, no, no' (2.1.119); she humbly and reverently greets him as 'my lord and husband!' exemplifying her role as subservient to him (5.3.37); and she notably does not argue with her husband during the tribune when the women encourage him to return home to Rome. Instead, she only greets him honourably and comments on their son, not arguing anything for herself or dismissing her husband's decisions, persistently showing Coriolanus respect, honour and diligence in all of her scenes on stage.

While Virgilia is often represented as a weak woman and daughter-in-law, she adamantly protests and remains resolute when Volumnia and Valeria insist that she leave her house with them. She dutifully reports, 'I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars' (1.3.74-5). After probing, she declares that she will not leave the house: ''tis not to save labour, nor that I want love,' but out of duty to her absent husband (1.3.81). The fact that she will not depart from her house while her husband is at war suggests that she has no existence without his presence. Early modern women were expected to stay at home during war, which was regarded as a masculine

[583]Jarrett Walker, 179.
[584]Katherine Stockholder, 230.

activity.[585]Virgilia takes this advice to the extreme, not even desiring to leave her house until her husband returns. In *The Civil Wars of Rome* (1631), crossing the threshold of the house is linked with promiscuity while one's husband is at war, so it was advised that 'the Bride forbid her on the threshold tread,' to ensure her chaste reputation.[586] Given these salacious associations in early modern England, Virgilia's refusal to leave her home is indicative of her strong desire to maintain her purity and fidelity to her husband.

The functionality of the household in the play is also significant to the study of the family, as it establishes roles and identity for the characters. It is clear that Volumnia is the head of the household where she and her son's family reside through the way that she interacts with her son's family. Coriolanus tells his mother and wife 'Ere in our own house I do shade my head' after returning from war (2.1.193-4). His use of *our* to both of them, and not solely to Virgilia, reflects that Volumnia resides with them and that he views the household as belonging to all of them, collectively. His submission to his mother is indicative of the negation of his role as head of household. Similarly, Virgilia exhibits this level of reverence towards Volumnia while they are sewing. She asks Volumnia, 'beseech you give me leave to retire myself' after the announcement of Valeria's arrival (1.3.27). While Virgilia could be acting polite towards her mother-in-law in asking her permission to depart, Volumnia's response, 'Indeed you shall not,' demonstrates her obedience to her mother-in-law (1.3.28). Women's duties in the early modern household were intensified while men were away at war, because they were expected to manage all of the domestic affairs in their husband's absence.[587] However, Virgilia does not assert herself in this role, but looks to a replacement for dominance in

[585]Mendelson and Crawford, 394.
[586]Lucan, *Lucan's Pharsalia, or the Civil Wars of Rome, between Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar*, trans. Thomas May (London: Augusta Matthews for Thomas Jones, 1631), 28.
[587]Mendelson and Crawford, 310.

the position that her husband would generally occupy; in this case, Volumnia. Given her status as a widow, Volumnia is already assigned a greater role of authority than a wife was throughout society. Volumnia uses this power, along with her daughter-in-law's subservience, to act as the head of the household while Coriolanus is at war. However, upon his return, she does not relinquish her position, thus emasculating Coriolanus and forcing him to assert his manhood elsewhere: on the battlefield.

Notwithstanding its elevated importance in the play, the home is seen as an estranged place by Coriolanus since he has been on the battlefield from his youth. Ann C. Christensen notes that he 'challenges expectations concerning "home" as protected space, the source of familiarity and comfort, by constructing public and private in mutually constituting tension.'[588] It is my contention that despite his overt challenges of the home as a comforting place, he uses the language and aspects of the domestic to comfort him while at war. Due to its association with surrendering, death or the weak and lame who are unable to fight, the home is viewed as a space of discomfort and restlessness by Coriolanus, in anxieties similar to those of Othello. When the plebeians revolt, Coriolanus must be encouraged numerous times to retreat to his home, as he prefers to stay and fight. Menenius instructs him, 'Go, get you to your house; be gone, away!' (3.1.228-9); followed by the first senator, who pleads with him, 'I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house' (3.1.233-4); after which they must ask him a further six times to go to his house before he complies. Coriolanus demonstrates his inverted relationship to the home and battlefield by refusing to return home when any conflict occurs. It is not merely that he is an honourable soldier, but that he begins to associate the battlefield with his home, and the domestic fear as foreign and frightening.

[588]Ann C. Christensen, 296.

Even while at home in Rome, combat and protocol for Roman warriors permeates Coriolanus' thoughts and discussions. He proudly announces 'As for my country I have shed my blood, not fearing outward force' to the senators (3.1.75-6). He does not wish to participate in the rituals of warfare by showing his wounds to the people, instead insisting that 'I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private' to the citizens (2.3.76-7). While Coriolanus does not have the luxury of having such a precise distinction between private and public spaces because he is a public figure, his hesitancy to show his wounds to the people stems from his discomfort in the domestic realm. His lack of interest in the home, even as it relates to war, demonstrates how uncomfortable he is once he returns from war. It is not surprising or coincidental that Coriolanus is never seen in his own home throughout the play, but only on the battlefield, in army camps, in public places and in the home of Aufidius. Coriolanus' absence from the household is highlighted by the scene dedicated solely to domestic activity in his own house, when his mother, wife and friend are shown together sewing. His alienation from his own domestic space can also be seen in his decision to join the Volscian army, as he strongly prefers to fight for *any* army rather than stay at home. In fact, Coriolanus uses *home* to represent the battlefield when he instructs his soldiers 'mend and charge home' early on in the play (1.4.38). His constant desire to remain on the warfront instead of at home shows the audience his estrangement from the domestic sphere. This characterisation of Coriolanus provides a paradox in which he values the home in battle, but is far happier fighting than he ever is while at home with his family. Shakespeare is clearly interested in this interchange between military culture and domestic life in this play, as he examines the role of the warrior at home, and his level of anxiety and discomfort in this position. Similar to Othello, Coriolanus is uneasy in

the domestic space, which is construed as alienating and unnatural when compared with the warzone.

In order to eradicate himself from his part in destroying families and therefore, the home, Coriolanus attempts to isolate himself from his family in efforts to reconstitute his status exclusively as a warrior. When banished from Rome, he tells his family, 'Farewell, my wife, my mother, I'll do well yet,' as though seeking their approval (4.1.20-1). Janet Adelman argues that in 'exiling Coriolanus, Rome re-enacts the role of the mother who cast him out,' adding a familial element to his political banishment.[589] However, he cannot completely separate himself from his family despite his efforts to do so. His first action as a man without a family or home is to forge these filial bonds with someone else in order to replicate his previous domesticity. After departing from Rome, Coriolanus travels to Antium without delay, where he endeavours to befriend Aufdius. He describes the place as 'a goodly house! The feast smells well, but I appear not like a guest,' immediately attempting to establish his role within the household even though he was previously its enemy (4.5.5-6). What follows is a homoerotic discussion between the two men suggestive of courtship and marriage. Aufidius welcomes Coriolanus, saying:

> Let me twine
> Mine arms about that body, where against
> My grained ash an hundred times hath broke,
> And scarr'd the moon with splinters. Here I sleep
> And anvil of my sword, and do contest
> As hotly and as nobly with thy love
> As ever in ambitious strength I did
> Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
> I lov'd the maid I married; never man
> Sigh'd truer breath, but I see thee here,
> Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart

[589]Janet Adleman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 157. For more associations between Rome and Volumnia, see Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151.

> Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
> Bestride my threshold (4.5.106-118).

His language is highly suggestive of erotica, particularly as it occurs between opposing military generals.[590] This language is not specific to Aufidius, as Coriolanus later calls his friend 'my partner in this action,' returning to the symbolism of a union such as marriage through the use of *partner* (5.3.2). The fact that Aufidius compares his relationship with Coriolanus to the intimacy he shares with his wife emphasises this connection between the two men, suggesting that the relationship between two generals must contain an oath or vow as instinctively strong as that of marriage. Even though military decisions contain their own rhetoric and rituals associated with allegiance, Aufidius and Coriolanus must mimic the ties of the family. The family is established as irrevocable and powerful during this scene.

Despite his endeavour to eradicate himself from the domestic space, Coriolanus desperately clings to household bonds as a form of familiarity in appropriating a dwelling and bond with Aufidius. Ironically, in his attempt to validate himself as an independent warrior by alienating himself from his family, Coriolanus highlights the importance of the family and home to the audience. Later, the audience learns that Coriolanus has a pattern of cultivating kinship bonds with people outside of his family. Menenius recalls that 'he call'd me father,' demonstrating Coriolanus' deep seated need for domestic bonds, even if they are only mimicked with others (5.1.3). This characterisation of Coriolanus as resistant to the family and domestic space yet simultaneously reliant on its occupants, establishes these ideals as integral to the characters in the play, because they cannot escape their significance even when they attempt to do so.

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[590]For an overview of criticism of their relationship, see Maurice Hunt, '"Violent'st" Complementarity: The Double Warriors of Coriolanus' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31:2 (1991), 309-325.

His allegiance to the family is illustrated most prominently when his family visits him from Rome to persuade him to spare his native city from the Volscian army. He claims that their pleading is futile because 'I'll never be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand as if a man were author himself, and knew no other kin' (5.3.34-7). Although he tries to negate his responsibility to his family, he quickly forgets his protests and yields to their pleas. Volumnia implores him to not 'triumphantly tread on the country's ruin, and bear the palm for having bravely shed thy wife and children's blood' (5.3.116-8). When her endeavour proves asinine, she beckons her grandson to persuade his father, instructing him 'speak thou, boy; perhaps thy childishness will move him more than can our reasons' (5.3.156-8). The fact that Volumnia is assured of her son's compliance, despite his reluctance, underscores the value of his family. The women form a tribune knowing that they are risking their lives to save Rome, but it hardly seems likely that they would encroach on the Volscians' camp with young Martius if they actually believed they were in any danger. Instead, it seems that Volumnia and even the Volscian army are assured of Coriolanus' eventual surrender to his family. Critics have argued that 'his loyalty to his family and state is urged against his determination to keep faith with himself.'[591] However, Coriolanus is unable to remain stoic in the presence of his family, and eventually yields to them in the ultimate confrontation of the warrior and the family in the play.

The fact that the family is used for this military purpose is fitting in this play, given its ongoing dialogue between war and the household, but seems unnatural on the surface. Since Coriolanus is introduced and established as a military hero throughout the play, it is strange that he would meet an end that is cowardly when analysed through his position as a warrior. Due to the fact that war is integral to Coriolanus and his

[591]E. A. M. Colman, 'The End of Coriolanus' *ELH* 34:1 (1967), 15.

characterisation, this scene, in which he forfeits the fight and retreats with his family, elevates the role that his family is given in the play. When he is persuaded to withdraw the Volscian army, he cries, 'O mother, mother! What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope, the gods look down, and this unnatural scene they laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!' (5.3.182-5). This scene is *unnatural* because a grown man continues to succumb to his mother, a deference that he should have outgrown before reaching puberty. Yet, Coriolanus acts in this way regardless of his own assertion that he should act in a contradictory manner. He tells his family, 'Ladies, you deserve to have a temple built you. All the swords in Italy, and her confederate arms could not have made this peace' (5.3.206-9). Yet again, he establishes their value in terms of military honours and glory instead of his personal emotions or family values, demonstrating that he can only conceive of situations as a warrior, since he is most comfortable in this specific role. However, the constant reminder of his military prowess, even present in this scene when he acts in an opposing manner, emphasises his personal conflict between family and war. Shakespeare includes the language of a warrior in this scene to highlight the gravity of Coriolanus yielding to his family, as he desperately clings to a singular characterisation a soldier.

The household serves a significant function in *Coriolanus*, as it is a place of both alienation and comfort. Even though Coriolanus desperately attempts to rid himself of his familial bonds and home, he is unable to do so, repeatedly searching for replicates of his household situation. Volumnia's dominant role in the household even after her son returns from war characterises as Coriolanus as a child, dependent on his mother and her opinion of him. His resistance to this in his efforts to prove himself as an aggressive and ruthless warrior only underscores the influence and weight of the family on his character and the play. Through the titular character's continual submission to his

family and his concern for the families that he devastates at war, *Coriolanus* emphasises the importance of the family and domestic space, even in a non-traditional family ruled by Volumnia. By esteeming the family over the warzone, Shakespeare works against the Elizabethan concept of a Roman warrior, highlighting the inviolability of the family in this play. I have shown that Shakespeare is interested in the nuclear family and how it operates under extreme conditions, and will continue to explore how this works in *Hamlet* as well.

Hamlet

Amidst the issues of regicide, invasion and rebellion present in *Hamlet*, 'the action of the play shows the royal family destroying itself from within.'[592] The play examines the sanctity and intimacy of the relationships that compose the nuclear family: husband and wife; parent and child; and brother and brother (or sister), and questions if they can withstand tragedy and transformation. Given the high mortality rates of infants and the 'frequency of remarriage, the experience of living in a "reconstructed" family must have been a common one' in early modern England.[593] However, Hamlet struggles with his mother's remarriage and subsequent reconfiguration of his family, subversively demonstrating the importance of the family to him, as he cannot live in a complicated family unit. His anxiety and trepidation concerning the integrity of the family manifests itself in anger, madness and repulsion of all those around him. While literary criticism has often focused on only one relationship in the play such as Hamlet's dysfunctional relationship with either his mother or his father, I believe that we must restore all of the characters to their families and analyse their actions as members of those families in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their characterisation and purpose in the play.[594] The lack of social boundaries become instigators of the disruption of the domestic space and its occupants throughout the play. While some critics have noted the play's similarity to *The House of Atreus* in the family's ability to destroy themselves from within, *Hamlet* provides an introspective focus on individual

[592]Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 190.
[593]Houlbrooke, 215.
[594]See See Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*; Avi Erlich, *Hamlet's Absent Father* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Richard Flatter, *Hamlet's Father* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1949); Carolyn Heilbrun, 'The Character of Hamlet's Mother' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 8:2 (1957), 201-206; Alexander Leggatt, 'Hamlet: A figure like your father' In *Shakespeare's Tragedies; Violation and Identity*, 55-83 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1949).

characters and their response to their family's ruin, rather than a curse on an entire family.[595]

The intersection of private and public spaces as well as the lack of distinction between the two erases the expected physical barriers in the characters' relationships, as both are rendered useless once the particularity of them is obscured. '*Hamlet* is one of the most peculiar, private, and detailed among all of Shakespeare's plays,' as many of the conversations take place between only two characters, and most of the *dramatis personae* are not even aware of key components of the plot, especially Old Hamlet's murder.[596] Various events in the play, including Polonius' voyeurism in dealing with Laertes, Ophelia and Hamlet; Claudius' use of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for espionage; Ophelia's return of Hamlet's letters with her father and Claudius secretly eavesdropping on their exchange; Gertrude's request for Polonius to spy on her conversation with Hamlet in her closet; and Hamlet's inappropriate barging into Ophelia's closet without invitation all introduce a level of publicity to the otherwise intimate exchanges.[597] The anxiety about boundaries between Hamlet and the remainder of the characters is evident through the destruction of intimacy in the physical spaces.

Typically, Shakespearean fathers provide for their daughter's chastity by keeping her in the safety of the house; but Polonius is unable to do this, because as a counsellor to the king, he 'does not have a household because she and Polonius are part of the court household, where Hamlet is the heir.'[598] Polonius is concerned about Ophelia's reputation, and chides her because ''Tis told me he hath very oft of late given private time to you, and you yourself have of your audience been most free and bounteous' (1.3.90-2). The fact that Polonius focuses on the manner of their encounter as *private*

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[595]For similarities between *Hamlet* and *House of Atreus*, see Gilbert Murray, *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types* (New York: Oxford University Press American Branch, 1914).
[596]Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 467.
[597]R. A. Foakes, 'Hamlet and the Court of Elsinore' *Shakespeare Survey* 9 (1956), 39.
[598]Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters*, 249.

demonstrates the sinister connotation of the word to Shakespeare's audience. Polonius is not merely apprehensive about Hamlet's intentions towards his daughter, but also the opportunity to destroy her chastity and value in the marriage market if the two of them are frequently alone with one another. Given the dearth of physical borders for Polonius to ensure his daughter's purity, he attempts to shelter Ophelia by instructing her to ignore Hamlet's letters. However, due to Hamlet's residence in Elsinore, Ophelia's refusal of him becomes ineffectual, as they inhabit the same space in the Danish court.

The lack of confinement in Ophelia's lodgings is most apparent in an exchange that transpires off stage which Ophelia later recounts to her father. She informs him, 'as I was sewing in my closet,' Hamlet burst in, dishevelled and unsuitably dressed for public appearances, shook his arms and sighed at her (2.1.74). Polonius is shocked by Hamlet's audacity, and is immediately assured of Hamlet's love for his daughter because of his bizarre appearance and actions. The containment and expected privacy of closets has already been discussed in this thesis. So ingrained was this ideology that when discussing how to pray, Samuel Slater instructed people to 'enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, make all as close and private as thou canst, when thou art so alone, as that nobody can come at thee.'[599] In fact, the term *closet* became synonymous with privacy during this time, because the two were intrinsically correlated in early modern thinking. In John Ford's tragicomedy, *The Lover's Melancholy*, performed at both Blackfriars and the Globe shortly after Shakespeare's death, Thamasta says to Kayla, 'We are private, thou art my Closet.'[600] The strong association that closets held with privacy at this time demonstrates the severity of Hamlet's

[599]Samuel Slater, *A discourse of closet (or secret) prayers* (London: Jonathan Robinson and Thomas Cockerill, 1691), 29.
[600]John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy* (London: H. Seile, 1629), 17. See also John Norden, *A Pensive Soul's Delight* (London: Will Stansby for John Busby, 1615), 218; John Ford, *The Ladies Trial* (London: E. G. For Henry Shephard, 1639), 23; and Jeremy Taylor, *An Apology for Authorised and Set Forms of Liturgy* (London: R. Royston, 1649), 67.

intrusion, and what it would have signified to Polonius and consequently, Shakespeare's audience.

In Hamlet's famous closet scene with his mother, he assumes its inherent intimacy and begins speaking unreservedly to her immediately upon entering. His reaction to hearing Polonius demonstrates his notion of the closet space, as he presumed that his mother would be alone due to her location in the house. Upon hearing a noise, he cries, 'How now? A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!' whilst blindly stabbing into the arras (3.4.24-5). Given Hamlet's infamous delay in avenging his father, the audience is well aware of his particularly contemplative persona. Thus, his aggressive spontaneity is shocking and unbefitting of his character, unless he is genuinely surprised by another person's presence in the supposedly private space. The privacy of the closet has already been discussed in a previous chapter. The public nature of a presumably private conversation is a frequent feature in this play, and becomes emblematic of the entire Danish court. Claudius' 'court becomes a labyrinth of deceit in which all human relationships are poisoned: fathers spy on sons and daughters; friends betray friends; private utterances become public, invariably distorted in the process with disastrous consequences.'[601] This lack of separation between private and public spheres has drastic ramifications for the relationships in the play, as the normative expectations of intimacy are corrupted from within. Shakespeare disrupts the normal boundaries between public and private as a way of exploring the affect on the family.

Perhaps more than any other Shakespearean character, Gertrude has endured heated critical debate as to her true motives and personality in the play.[602] She has been

[601]Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 200.
[602]For critics who believe Gertrude to be a weak, destructive character, see A.C. Bradley. Anges Mure Mackenzie, *The Women in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: William Heinemann, 1924); Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Hamlet* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Drama, 1995); and Baldwin Maxwell, 'Hamlet's Mother' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15:2 (1964). For defenders of Gertrude, see John W. Draper,

described as 'intelligent, penetrating, and gifted with a remarkable talent for concise and pithy speech.'[603] Conversely, critics have deemed her 'stupid, coarse and shallow' and condemned her actions to be the root of the entire tragedy.[604] Of all of the attacks on Gertrude's character, she is most regularly chastised for her relationship with Claudius, because critics surmise that her hasty remarriage is emblematic of her unfaithfulness to Old Hamlet. Whether or not Gertrude committed adultery with Claudius previous to Old Hamlet's death is disputed by critics, who often use her supposed adultery as justification for her involvement in the murder of her husband or the treatment of her son after his death.[605] I believe that she did not commit adultery with Claudius before Old Hamlet was dead, based on the language present in the play.

The ghost informs Hamlet that Claudius, an 'incestuous, that adulterate beast, with witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts—of wicked wit and gifts that have the power so to seduce—won to his shameful lust the will of my most seeming virtuous queen' (1.5.42-6). His 'attack is predominately sexual: she is incestuous, adulterous, a creature of loathsome lust,' which permeates Hamlet's perception of his mother.[606] Although our modern understanding of the word *adulterate* leads us to conclude infidelity on Gertrude's part, this word was defined as 'all manner of uncleanness, about desire of sex, together with occasion, causes, and means thereof, as in the seventh commandment' during the early modern period.[607] With this understanding of the word,

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The Hamlet of Shakespeare's Audience (London: Frank Class & Co, 1966), 109-126; and Carolyn Heilburn, 'The Character of Hamlet's Mother' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 8:2 (1957).

[603]Carolyn Heliburn, 206.

[604]Angus Mure Mackenzie, 225; 200.

[605]Richard Flatter, *Hamlet's Father* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1949), 26. See also Joseph Bertram, *Conscience and the King: A Study of Hamlet* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953), 16-9; Carolyn Heilbrun, 206; Rebecca Smith, 'A Heart Cleft in Twain: The Dilemma of Shakespeare's Gertrude,' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, 202; and Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 15.

[606]Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*, 74.

[607]Thomas Wilson, *A Christian Dictionary* (London, 1612). Lancelot Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine At Large, or, A Learned and Pious Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (London: Roger Norton for George Badger, 1650). William Perkins, *A Golden Chain* (London, 1616), 58. Joseph Bertram, 16-9. Carolyn Heilbrun, 206. Rebecca Smith 202. andAdelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 15.

the ghost's accusation of Claudius is not necessarily accusing Gertrude of being unfaithful to him, but is referring to the unseemly nature of their marriage. Elsewhere in Old Hamlet's speech, he indicates that he 'still considered himself married to Gertrude,' referring to her as his wife in the present tense.[608] If his use of this word *adulterate* is meant to show her disloyalty to him, it could also be intended to show that Gertrude's current marriage to Claudius is offensive to the ghost as her husband, since he is still present in the play (in some form) for both Hamlet and the audience to see.

Given the ramifications for a man's status and reputation throughout the community, a man, much less a warrior and king, in early modern England would have been reluctant to publically challenge his wife's chastity. If a 'man who accused his wife of adultery in this period, [he] exposed himself as a cuckold and risked public ridicule and humiliation' in society.[609]The slander to his wife's honour would result in the destruction of his family's reputation as well as his own construct of masculine authority. Without sufficient evidence of infidelity, a husband would rarely accuse his wife of such a crime, because the matter ensured grave consequences for his entire household. This is evidenced elsewhere in Shakespeare's canon, by Othello's demand for proof of his wife's infidelity before publically accusing her. Given the early modern definition of this word and their perception of a man with an unfaithful wife, it is highly unlikely that Old Hamlet is actually condemning Gertrude of adultery. In fact, the ghost's language focuses on Claudius, who is depicted as being as lusty, deceitful and manipulative, and accused of employing witchcraft in order to entice Gertrude in the first place. In Shakespeare's source material, François de Belleforest's *Histoires*

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[608]Carolyn Heilburn, 206.
[609]Elizabeth Foyster, 'Marrying the experienced widow in early modern England: the male perspective,' in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Essex: Longman, 1999), 122.

Tragiques, the queen is an adulteress who is privy to the murder of her husband.[610] Shakespeare sympathises Gertrude for his play, leaving her involvement in Old Hamlet's murder ambiguous, which strengthens the audience's connection to her character and her marital relationship with Old Hamlet. The changes that Shakespeare made to his source materials yet again highlight as aspect of family life, in this case, the importance of a companionate and faithful marriage.

Throughout the play, infidelity and remarriage are equated with murder in Hamlet's mind. In his reprimand of his mother in the closet scene, Hamlet states that his actions are 'almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king and marry with his brother' (3.4.28-9). His use of the word *brother* instead of *wife* shows that he is referring to Gertrude's role in his father's death, and not merely Claudius'. While the subject of her participation is abandoned, his accusation demonstrates her involvement in *his* tragedy, because of her remarriage. Similarly, in the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, the Player Queen states that 'the instances that second marriage move are base respects of thrift, but none of love. A second time I kill my husband dead when second husband kisses me in bed' (3.2.163-6). By introducing remarriage as analogous to murder, the player implicates Gertrude in Old Hamlet's fate. She draws this parallel again when she claims: 'Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife, if once a widow, ever I be wife!' (3.2.203-4). The blame for Old Hamlet's murder shifts to Gertrude in this scene, as Hamlet attempts to understand her participation in his father's death. Janet Adelman has suggested that 'beneath the story of fratricidal rivalry is the story of the woman who conduces to death, of the father fallen not through his brother's treachery but through his subjection to this woman,' Gertrude.[611] Hamlet's relationship with his mother has been interpreted through a psychoanalytic reading of the text since Freud used his

[610]Bullough, 12. Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*,113-4.
[611]Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 24; Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, 45; and Frank Harris, 51.

character to explicate oedipal theory.[612] While I am not intending to evoke this reading of the text, it is obvious through Hamlet's obsession with his mother's involvement in his father's murder and her remarriage, that he is focused on *her* actions throughout much of the play instead of those of his uncle. The validity and rationale behind remarriage surface as predominate concerns for Hamlet throughout his dealings with his mother. I believe that Hamlet's preoccupation with his mother is based on his expectations of maternity and family bonds. Hamlet interprets his mother's hasty remarriage as indicative of her callousness towards her previous husband and family, and is therefore disgusted by her. In fact, Hamlet holds his mother to a higher standard regarding family integrity than was expected in the early modern period.

Hamlet's disgust at Gertrude's union with Claudius suggests that remarriage was uncommon and ridiculed during the period, yet the truth is to the contrary. In the late sixteenth century, about one-fifth of people were widowed, probably due to the fact that women frequently outlived men at this time.[613] The courts provided widows with more authority than other women, and 'common law gave the widow a right of dower in a third of her husband's lands, a right usually waived in return for a jointure agreed in the marriage settlement.'[614] A man usually 'stipulated in a testament that his wife could keep the jointure following his death, as a kind of pension or as a source of money for a new dowry.'[615] Thus, security for widows became an important feature in marital negotiations, with a set jointure or estate often arranged for a woman in the event of her husband's death, generally conditional upon a woman's chastity.[616] Widows often found it challenging to reintegrate themselves into society because of the stigma attached to

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[612]See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1949).
[613]Houlbrooke, 208.
[614]Ibid., 209.
[615]Robert J. Kalas, 'The Noble Widow's Place in the Patriarchal Household: The Life and Career of Jeanne de Gontault' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24:3 (1993), 521.
[616]Houlbrooke, 85.

widows 'as a subversive counsellor of young married women, teaching them how to undermine their husband's control' attributed to their new role as head of household.[617] An escape from this stereotype was remarriage, whereby widows could maintain their subordinated place in the patriarchal hierarchy of early modern society. Consequently, around half of all widows remarried during this time.[618] In fact, ecclesiastical records indicate that remarriage habitually occurred only a short amount of time after the first spouse's death, as thirty seven percent of widows remarried within one year of her first husband's death.[619] While reasons varied, 'for many a young widow or widower, remarriage was virtually a necessity and this fact explains the swiftness with which it could be undertaken,' due to economic or practical concerns of running a household, managing finances or raising children alone.[620] Remarriage was repeatedly encouraged by the widow's family or society, as it reinstated the woman into a system of patriarchal control, since she would be expected to be submissive to her new husband. The stigma of widows was prevalent in society, making it difficult for a widow to live by herself and survive without enduring viscous bouts of scrutiny from society.

Widows were often construed as over-lusty or sexually prowess when they remarried because of the amount of legal rights that widows were afforded, and therefore, it was thought that the marriage was solely a means to resume the sexual relations.[621] In his *Instruction to a Christian Woman*, Vives warned that 'in deed I would have greater virtue and perfection in a widow than a wife. For a wife must apply herself to the will of her mortal husband to whom she is married,' but a widow was only

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[617]Barbara J. Todd, 'The Virtuous Widow in Protestant England,' in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Essex: Longman, 1999), 67.
[618]Mendelson and Crawford,182.
[619]Houlbrooke, 214.
[620]Keith Wrightson, 103.
[621]Elizabeth Foyster, 110. Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. R. Hyrde (London, 1529).; and J. Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (London, 1667).

provided with her own morals as a gauge for her actions.[622] Therefore, he instructs widows that are 'wanton, hot and full of play, ignorance and riotous that can neither rule their house' nor their own bodies, to take a husband in order to ensure her purity.[623] One domestic manual makes plain the ideology of the period in stating 'though I make no difference of maid or widow by God's law, yet I would counsel you to take a virgin or maid whom you may form and instruct after your own manners and she will sooner apply to your mind, and more entirely love you than a widow.'[624] Additionally, medical advice books suggested that sexually related diseases were often contracted by 'lecherous women, and lusty widows that are prone, and apt to Venery, are most subject to it: but married women that enjoy the company of their husbands, and such as are with childe, are seldom invaded by it.'[625] The contrast between widows and married women in relation to sexual activity demonstrates the way in which remarriage was constructed in early modern England. It was widely thought that 'the second occasion why marriage was ordained was that the wife might be a lawful remedy to avoid whoredom, fornication, and all filthy and unclean lusts' since women were considered the weaker, and therefore, more lascivious sex because they were unable to control their passions.[626] Despite the commonality of remarriage for widows, society frequently criticised this decision because of the attached assumption that it was at least in part due to sexual promiscuity.[627] Shakespeare was well aware of this stereotype of the carnal nature of widows, as it is mocked in his *The Taming of the Shrew*. Tranio claims that Hortensio will 'have a lusty widow now, that shall be woo'd and wedded in a day' (4.2.50-1). The colloquialism of this statement demonstrates the established conception of widows

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[622]Juan Luis. Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, Part 3 ch. 4: 'of the chastity and honesty of a widow.'
[623]Ibid., Part 3 ch. 7: 'of second marriages.'
[624]*A Glass for Householders*, two pages after c iiii.
[625]Nicholas Fontanus, 55.
[626]Cleaver, 156.
[627]Elizabeth Foyster, 108-110.

widespread in early modern society, which Gertrude's character would have been subjected to not only from her son, but from the audience as well. Hamlet even articulates this viewpoint in his scolding of Gertrude, because he believes that 'you cannot call it love, for at your age the heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble' (3.4.68-9). His sense of her heightened sexual desire and passion, which he believes to be uncommon at her age, displays this notion that widows only remarried in order to express their sexuality that marriage contained.

However, one of the remaining issues with Gertrude's marriage to Claudius that both Hamlet and his father broach is the fact that it is 'incestuous because the dispensation was based on false pretences.'[628] Ecclesiastical law stated that a woman's marriage to her husband's brother was considered incestuous, an issue at the forefront of the nation's consciousness after Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon on such grounds. While Gertrude focuses on the rapidity with which she and Claudius marry, and Hamlet is concerned with the manner in which it deprives him of his succession, Elizabethan audiences would have been well aware of the taboo nature of this marriage because of the members involved, regardless of these successive consequences. Despite this, Joseph Bertram notes that 'there is no suggestion that he is anything but an ideal king, with all the superb qualities which that implies' when the audience first meets Claudius.[629] Since Old Hamlet is characterised as barbaric and Claudius is shown to possess an eloquent sophistication, Hamlet's defence of his father and hatred towards his uncle and mother appears unjustified in the scope of the play. It is evident to the audience that Claudius genuinely loves Gertrude; and thus, Hamlet's immediate friction with his uncle initially seems unnecessarily pessimistic of the prince. Consequently, the only rationale for Hamlet's disgust at this remarriage is his loyalty to his father and their

[628]Rebecca Smith, 203. Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, 39. Baldwin Maxwell, 240.
[629]Joseph Bertram, 52. G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Routledge, 1989), 37.

family legacy. Shakespeare includes genuine feelings between the remarried couple and Claudius' legitimate courtly behaviour to demonstrate that regardless of everyone else's opinion, Hamlet is disgusted by his uncle's ascendency because of the ramifications for his family. Hamlet's actions overemphasise the importance of family honour and memory, even when the social decorum was to the contrary. When addressing the court, Claudius shows aptitude for completing his regal duties, gives an expressive speech about his grief over the loss of his brother and acceptance of his new role as king and even welcomes Hamlet into his family as 'our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son' (1.2.117). It is this sympathy that his character contrives early on that allows the audience to understand Gertrude's attraction to Claudius, because of his charm, wit and articulateness in the second scene of the play.[630]

It must also be remembered that while Hamlet seems to be tortured by the fact that Gertrude has married Claudius, the remainder of the Danish court are not concerned with the legality of their marriage in the least. Hamlet forces his mother to remember his father in the closet scene, and takes it upon himself to insert his father into the play, despite his absence. When attempting to solidify his father's memory and importance, Hamlet specifically focuses on marriage, and the destroyed nuptials of his parents. In the final scene of the play, he assaults Claudius with the poisonous cup, declaring, 'Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, drink off this poison. Is thy union here?' (5.2.3-4-5). Hamlet conflates the meaning of *union* to signify both the poisonous pearl that Claudius has placed in the cup and the incestuous marriage of his mother and uncle.[631] His corrupted view of matrimony is indicative of the defilement of marriage that Gertrude and Claudius have generated in Hamlet's understanding of the entire social practice.

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[630]Alexander Leggatt, 'Hamlet: A figure like your father,' in *Shakespeare's Tragedies; Violation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70.
[631]Claudius states that 'in the cup an union shall he throw' (5.2.244).

Before the tragedy ensues, Laertes warns Ophelia that Hamlet 'may not, as unvalued persons do, carve for himself, for on his choice depends the sanctity and health of his whole state' (1.3.19-21). The fact that Hamlet has to consider not only his family's concerns, but also those of the entire nation, establishes his distorted relationship to marriage from the outset of the play. Laertes and Polonius are well aware that Hamlet presents 'a threat to Ophelia's chastity and his madness endangers the stability of the entire kingdom' because of his royal status.[632] Throughout the play, Hamlet's dealings with wedlock become dismal, as he 'always speaks reverently about the sanctity of marriage vows,' because his mother has tarnished them in his mind.[633] He berates his mother for making 'marriage vows as false as dicers' oaths' (3.4.44-5); informs Ophelia that 'we will have no more marriages (3.1.141); and insists to Claudius that 'Father and mother is man and wife. Man and wife is one flesh,' referring to his parents (4.3.49-50). His preoccupation with marriage when others are seemingly indifferent to it centralises the audience's attention on the regulations and practice of matrimony itself, and not merely on individual marriages. Despite his erratic nature when discussing this topic, Hamlet is always in support of upholding the sanctity of marriage and elects himself to campaign the matter to those around him. The fact that Hamlet is adamant about the sacred nature of marriage recalls the way that Othello treats the union. Due to his mother's marriage to Claudius, 'love, in his mind, has becomes synonymous with sex, and sex with uncleanness.'[634] This becomes evident in the nunnery scene, when Hamlet viciously attacks Ophelia, informing her:

> If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery. Farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men

[632]Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play and Duel: A Study in Hamlet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 136.
[633]Arthur Kirsch, 'Hamlet's Grief' *ELH* 48:1 (1981), 28.
[634]G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 27. See also Avi Erlich, *Hamlet's Absent Father* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 153.

> know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery go, and quickly too. Farewell. (3.1.134-39).

His ramblings are focused on marriage because of the wedding that he believes has destroyed his happiness and his father's memory. Thus, 'his aborted relation with Ophelia is played off against his perception of his mother's incestuous marriage to Claudius.'[635] His corrupted notion of sexuality and marriage permeates his relationship with Ophelia, who eventually goes mad as a result of his treatment of her, since he distances himself from everyone, including her.[636]

Before her onslaught of madness, Ophelia is given attention due to her unique relationship with Hamlet, one that characters and critics alike have admonished strongly. The question of the nature of her relationship with the prince has overshadowed much of the critical analysis and reception of her character, as varying opinions have surfaced as to the nature of her intimacy with Hamlet. It has long been recognised that much of his dilemma with Ophelia is the fact that she 'becomes dangerous to Hamlet insofar as she becomes identified in his mind with the contaminating maternal body.'[637] Since he views Gertrude's sexuality as depraved, all women in the play collapse into a single identity of possessing this distorted sexuality. Hamlet famously scolds Ophelia by insisting 'get thee to a nunnery,' playing on the double meaning of the word and thus polarising female sexuality (3.1.119). This brazen discussion of Ophelia's sexuality (or lack thereof) has been considered cruel and brash of Hamlet, even if he is aware of the nearby eavesdroppers.[638] Ophelia's interaction with suitors is a prominent feature in this discussion, and would have been important to

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[635]Charney, *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*, 73.
[636]Marianne Novy, 'Shakespeare and Emotional Distance in the Elizabethan Family,' *Theatre Journal* 33:3 (1981), 320.
[637]Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 14. See also Stockholder, *Dreamworks*, 49; and Anges Mure Mackenzie, 214.
[638]Carroll Camden, 'On Ophelia's Madness' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15:2 (1964), 249. See also Carol J. Carlisle, 'Hamlet's "Cruelty" in the Nunnery Scene: The Actors' Views' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18:2 (1967), 130-1; and Alexander Leggatt, 72.

her characterisation for an early modern audience, as it would have been recognised as the cause of her madness.

By the end of the sixteenth century, around the time *Hamlet* was written, intercourse was seen as a medical necessity for women, since they were believed to regularly produce a seed that needed to be expelled from the body.[639] Without such a discharge, women were thought to develop green sickness, which manifested itself in a form of melancholy or madness that young people were particularly prone to develop.[640] During the period, 'the ancient medical concept of melancholy had become widely available as a mode of understanding the emotions ad trouble of mind.'[641] Based on the publication of numerous medical advice books detailing the causes, symptoms and cures of various types of melancholy, it can be surmised that the public were interested in this topic at the time. Even on the stage, green sickness was a concern, as seen in Middleton's*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* when Maudlin Yellowhammer worries that her daughter has come down with the disease after not entertaining men enough.[642]

When Gertrude refuses an audience with Ophelia, Horatio encourages her to talk with Ophelia because, ''Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds' (4.5.14-5). While Horatio's concerns are for Denmark's political welfare, Ophelia enters, detached from her quotations and songs that contain nothing but personal prattle about her dreadful state. She focuses only on the deterioration of the domestic as 'she narrates the arbitrariness, instability, and

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[639]See Alexander Ross, *Arcana microcosmi, or, The hid secrets of man's body discovered in an anatomical duel between Aristotle and Galen concerning the parts thereof* (London: Thomas Newcome for John Clark, 1652), 5; Thomas Laqueur, 40; and Mary E. Fissell, 187.
[640]Patricia Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth century England,' in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fields (London: Routledge, 1990), 6-7; and *Aristotle's' Masterpiece*, 56-8. See also Mendelson and Crawford, 23.
[641]Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 2.
[642]See 1.1.4.

corruption of love and the family.'[643] Despite the fact that Claudius immediately interprets her madness as a result of her father's death, her focus on unrequited love suggests that Hamlet's refusal of her is partly, if not entirely, to blame. Her chilling line, 'Before you tumbled me you promised me to wed' underscores this point, showing the audience her tragedy in the midst of Hamlet's ongoing family battle (4.5.63). As she appears 'larded all with sweet flowers,' Ophelia distributes daisies, rosemary, pansies, fennel and violets to her observers (4.5.38). The flowers become an extension of her troubled language and song, in symbolising mourning, matrimony and maturity to Shakespeare's audiences.[644] Menstruation was commonly referred to as *flowers* in early modern England, thus indicating a woman's sexual maturation and hence availability for marriage.[645] Flowers were also predominately featured at weddings and funerals as part of the celebration or mourning process for guests.[646] The fact that Ophelia focuses on flowers while mad would have signified these various rites of passage to an early modern audience. Her conflation of these events: menstruation, marriage and death correlates these ideas for the audience in terms of her position within the play, and domesticates her insanity from the political atmosphere that Horatio initially assumes.

Due to her familial concerns when mentally unstable, 'Ophelia's behaviour and appearance are characteristic of the malady the Elizabethans would have diagnosed as female love-melancholy, or erotomania.'[647] By presenting her madness in this way,

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[643]Carol Thomas Neely, '"Documents in Madness": Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42:3 (1991), 335. For Ophelia's madness as a form of conception, see Philippa Berry, 70.

[644]See James Stone, 'Androgynous "Union" and the Woman in Hamlet' *Shakespeare Studies* 23 (1995), 88. See also Neely, 'Documents in Madness,' 320; and Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism' in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), 81 for more on the representation of these flowers. For the symbolism of the specific flowers, see John Gerard, *The Herbal, or General History of Plants* (London: Adam Aslip, Joice Norton and Richard Whitakers, 1633); and William Langham, *The Garden of Health* (London: Harper, 1579).

[645]Jorden.

[646]For use of flowers in weddings, see Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 360-363; and in funerals, see 472. Flowers are present at Ophelia's funeral, see 5.1.199.

[647]Showalter, 81. See also Carroll Camden, 254.

Shakespeare relies on his culture's fascination with and understanding of melancholy. One recommended cure for erotomania was marriage, 'which institutes regular sexual relations and thus aids in evacuation of fluids and brings the wild uterus under the husband's control.'[648] Through regular expulsion of the woman's seed, a man would be able to eradicate his wife's green sickness, because her emotions would be under his supervision. In his treatise about erotomania, Jacques Ferrand advises:

> for the cure of which Disease he prescribes speedy Marriage: otherwise it is to be feared, that through Madness and Impatience, they will make away themselves, either by drowning or hanging; falsely persuading themselves, that by these Remedies, being very sure ones, and as they conceive, the best they can find; they shall set a period to their miseries.[649]

Ophelia's sexuality would have been considered the focal point of her malady, because it was understood as both the cause and cure of her madness. Therefore, her sexuality is integral to our understanding of her mental illness, as it is the rationale Hamlet gives for rejecting her in the nunnery scene; the focus of her verse and songs when mad; and the typical remedy for her madness prescribed by the advice literature of the period.

Alan Stewart has persuasively argued that Ophelia and Hamlet are contracted to be married at the play's opening, which is 'conveyed through a complex interplay of spatial and transactional markers, represented through architecture and gift-giving, that would have been vividly evident to the play's early audiences.'[650] Aside from the evidence provided by Hamlet's letters to her, it is clear that whether or not a contract had been formally procured, Ophelia was intended to be Hamlet's wife. Not only are Polonius and Laertes aware of their relationship, but Gertrude even comments at Ophelia's grave that 'I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife' (5.1.211). By establishing Ophelia as Hamlet's future spouse, the play allows the audience to glimpse

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[648]Neely, 'Documents in Madness,' 320.
[649]Jacques Ferrand, *Erotomania or A treatise discoursing of the essence, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and cure of love, or erotic melancholy* (Oxford: L. Lichfield to be sold by Edward Forrest, 1640), 97.
[650]Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters*, 231.

the certainty of their union, since everyone around the couple appears to be assured of it. But, this also works to contextualise her madness, as it is not merely the hope of regulated sexual activity that would have cured her, but the promise of it provided by her impending marriage to the prince. The fact that Elizabethans believed that marriage would treat Ophelia's melancholy, and that the play allows her character the promise of marriage from Hamlet, combines the idea of marriage and madness in the audience's understanding of Ophelia's descent into insanity.

The familial relationships in *Hamlet* reconstitute the ensuing revenge tragedy that was popular on the Elizabethan stage.[651] Despite the dissolution of certain relationships, the intensity of allegiance and sentiment between family members motivates the characters to act. While the lack of barriers between private and public space present throughout the play works to obscure the expected boundaries in relationships, Shakespeare references the individual family in order to provide a point of identification for his audience. Despite the vicious subject matter of family members killing one another, this play offers audiences an example of a reconstructed family, which was common in the early modern period, but is resisted and denigrated by Hamlet. Shakespeare demonstrates the importance of the family to individual characters in this play by depicting how various characters are traumatized once a family is destroyed. Even though critics have traditionally examined these characters in isolation, if we analyse them as part of their families, we gain a better understanding of their decisions and motivation for their actions. In dramatising Hamlet's struggle with his mother's sexuality; Ophelia's loss of mental stability after her father's murder and Hamlet's cruelty; and Laertes' struggle with his sister's death, Shakespeare investigates how the family operates and interacts with one another in his tragedies. Since these characters

[651]Paul A. Cantor, *Shakespeare: Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25-9.

cannot function properly once their families are devastated, it is clear that the family is valued throughout the play.

This chapter has shown how the family unit functions as a whole in Shakespeare's plays. I have argued that familial relationships outweigh other political and regal concerns in these plays, even when the subject matter would suggest the contrary. Shakespeare's inclusion of families in these plays, particularly where his source materials omit them, demonstrates his direct emphasis on them throughout his work. Families are not merely included to carry the plot, but become the focal point of so many of his plays that are otherwise political in nature. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare focuses on rural domestic life, which was unusual to depict on stage in early modern London. Similarly, in *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet*, Shakespeare highlights the family drama over the ongoing political battles to demonstrate the family's importance to the individual characters and the play itself. These plays have shown that the family not only occurs in plays of all genres and periods in Shakespeare, but they become the focal point of them as well.

Conclusion

In the dedicatory epistle of his popular household manual, *Of Domesticall Duties*, William Gouge states, 'Necessary it is that good order be first set in families: for as they were before other polities, so they are somewhat the more necessary: and good members of a family are like to make good members of Church and common-wealth.'[652] His understanding of his manual raises significant questions about the purpose and structure of the family in the early modern period: What made people 'good members of a family?' What does he mean by 'good order' in families? How was conception and reproduction viewed and understood at this time? This thesis has attempted to provide some answers to these questions with respect to how they are depicted in Shakespeare's plays. I have examined the way that Shakespeare highlights the rhythms of family life by focusing on every day domestic activities and relationships presented in Shakespeare's plays. In doing so I have argued that Shakespeare consistently alters his source materials to emphasise familial interactions, and offers a sustained interest in the family throughout his career and across genres.

This thesis has reconstituted the roles of characters in Shakespeare's plays by analysing their actions through an early modern understanding of anatomy, domestic interiors and household conduct. While recent criticism has often highlighted the broken aspects of the nuclear family in Shakespeare's canon including the absent mother and the overbearing father, it has failed to recognise the emphasis on family relations throughout Shakespeare's career as a playwright. By exploring the family through contemporary conceptions and representations, I have shown that Shakespeare underscores the importance of the household and the relationships it contains. Although

[652]Gouge, 1.

the families in Shakespeare's canon are by no means blissful or even amicable at times, they are valued by the narrative, or by the characters themselves. Regardless of genre, Shakespeare privileges the family over the political and patriarchal concerns prevalent in his plays. Coriolanus is the epitome of this prioritisation, as the Roman warrior considers the ramifications of his actions in terms of the families they have destroyed, instead of the military accolades he has accrued. He repeatedly places the family ahead of his political role, and even attempts to replicate this bond elsewhere for comfort.

This thesis has been organised with respect to the formation and growth of the family, yet it could equally be arranged thematically. Several chapters have engaged with early modern medicine, particularly with its notions of greensickness, breastfeeding, menstruation and conception. The anxiety that was present in the early modern period surrounding the female body and its divergence from the male form permeates these writings, and is integral to our understanding of the way these medical disorders and functions are portrayed in Shakespeare. The issue of the reproduction, purpose and maturation of children can be seen throughout Shakespeare's plays. While the presence of children solidifies succession and thus stabilisation of the family, their legitimacy and worth is often questioned previous to or immediately upon birth. *The Winter's Tale* depicts the importance of children possessing physical and personal attributes similar to those of their parents, especially their father, in order to secure their title and claim to inheritance. This relationship is underscored by the fact that early modern medicine theorised that personality traits were imparted to the child *in vitro*, based on the sexual pleasure and thoughts of the parents at the time of conception. I have also explored the relationship between sexual activity and madness in *Hamlet* and how it mediates our understanding of Ophelia's predicament. In understanding greensickness, it is clear that Ophelia's madness is brought on by what early modern

people believed was a dangerous state for a woman, not being able to release her seed periodically. In addition, I have analysed Lady Macbeth's most popular speeches through this medical lens to better understand the pact she is making with her body to forgo maternity in preference for her marriage. By delineating the incompatibility of breastfeeding and sexual activity, I have shown that Lady Macbeth takes drastic, physical measures to ensure her husband's fidelity. These various chapters have focused on early modern medicine, and have analysed Shakespeare's characters with the concepts with which his audience would have been familiar. This physiological understanding of the body is crucial to our interpretation of families in the plays because they mediate how people believed families were created and nurtured in the early modern period.

Other chapters have honed in on a series of social anxieties, such as cuckoldry, gossips and the distinction between private and public spheres. Suspicion of adultery occurs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Othello*, both of which contain faithful heroines who uphold their marital vows. I have shown that Shakespeare reverses the expectation of women to be trustworthy, instead writing the husbands as overly suspicious and foolish. Perhaps what is so troubling about plays such as *Othello* is the fact that the play acts as a domestic comedy for the first three acts. Shakespeare highlights the way in which the concerns of domestic comedy: cuckoldry, female empowerment and marital arrangements, can quickly evolve into tragedy if handled incorrectly. In this way, his tragedies hint at the serious nature of the topics at stake in his comedies. While the comedies have been criticised for using similar plot devices and tropes, they are invested in the relationships and importance of familial roles, particularly those of husband and wife and father and daughter. I have examined *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as a microcosm of sorts in this thesis, as it deals with many of

the social and familial issues that the comedies explore. The topics of cuckoldry, female supremacy and patriarchal power surface in many of his developed comedies, including *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, but are thoroughly explored in this play. *Romeo and Juliet* taps into a number of early modern anxieties about marriage preparation as the young lovers attempt to transition from childhood to adulthood, but are unable to do so. In understanding the household as a marker of adulthood, I have argued that Romeo and Juliet are forever transfixed in the liminal space of adolescence. *Hamlet* also explores the alterations to relationships when private spaces are invaded, and questions what happens when boundaries are obstructed and ignored. Throughout all of these plays, Shakespeare examines the way that family relationships are mediated by a series of social anxieties and situations. Although not all of these families remain intact, Shakespeare often depicts situation that challenge his own society's notion of familial roles.

At the heart of this thesis is an exploration of early modern household conduct, especially of how marriages were negotiated, child were raised and siblings were treated. The precociousness and ingenuity of children is explored in *Richard III*, which sees the princes repeatedly outwit their uncle. All of the children's parts in this play are greatly expanded upon from their counterparts in the source materials, illustrating Shakespeare's preoccupation with writing family dialogues and interactions. I have also explored how siblings were expected to treat one another in early modern England, and how these relationships surface in Shakespeare's plays, showing that brothers and sisters frequently share an amicable, close-knit rapport with one another. While same-sex sibling relations are often more volatile, Shakespeare dramatises them in such a way that implicates the parents in facilitating rivalry between brothers or sisters.

Shakespeare's treatment of this demonstrates the importance of parents behaving appropriately and raising their children accordingly.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that Shakespeare privileges the domestic space over all others, intentionally highlight the significance of the family. I have shown that Shakespeare is interested in the domestic in his plays. More work needs to be done in this area to analyse how Shakespeare's treatment of the family compares to that of his contemporaries, and to think more about the rationale for Shakespeare's fascination with this topic. I have used early modern domestic manuals, medical discourse and personal writings as my tool for the analysis of household relationships and interactions to gain an understanding of the notion of family prevalent in the early modern period. By analysing the plays through this contemporary expectation of domestic behaviour, I have demonstrated its importance in interpreting and analysing Shakespeare's plays.

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