Shakespearean Subjectivity: Scenes of Desire, Scenes of Writing

by

Alan Lewis

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Department of **ENGLISH**

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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Dissertation Abstract: Shakespearean Subjectivity: Scenes of Desire, Scenes of Writing

The dissertation explores Shakespearean representations of subjectivity. I investigate how Shakespeare's text anticipates contemporary discourses of the divided subject, divided in terms of gender and sexuality, a subject "cut off" from himself by the forms of castration and by the unconscious. My first two chapters look at specific plays, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet, investigating how these dramas stage desire via the subject's shaping phantasies of the other, also considering the poet's subject's implication in this "other" at scenes of identification. My title also speaks to the idea that the Shakespearean text is a precursor to Freudian and Lacanian theories of the divided subject, providing an important field of reference in which psychoanalysis will recognize and elaborate itself as theory. The use of psychoanalytic theory as a method for reading Shakespeare's text is complicated, then, by my claim that this Renaissance dramatist invents a type of literary subjectivity we can call "Shakespearean." One result is a deprivileging of psychoanalysis as a master discourse. Read from the position of Shakespearean drama, this discourse is implicated in its critical object by its shaping phantasies of gender puissance and its participation, willy-nilly, in a punitive gender ideology. With Harold Bloom, Joel Fineman, and Marjorie Garber as among my critical precursors here, my argument fleshes out their contention that psychoanalysis, rather than being an ahistorical or anachronistic methodology for studying Renaissance texts, is a repetition and elaboration of the Shakespearean vision, a Shakespeare that "writes" Freud.

Working from the Shakespearean text outwards, this study of "Shakespearean subjectivity" investigates intersubjective relations between the dramatic characters, between the characters and audience, between the text and critic, and in the third chapter, imaginary relations between the author and his literary rival at a scene of writing, and between the phantasied author and the critic. I find in the Shakespearean text an exemplary theoretical understanding of desire and misrecognition operating in these relations, arguing that Shakespeare's text presents us with meditations on specular or theatrical, ideological and sacrificial misprision. By locating my critical methodology in the Shakespearean text (for example, when I look at desire or the spectator's misprision), meshing my object of inquiry with my methodology, I grant the inquiry a certain integrity while also negotiating for a "Shakespearean" authorization of my arguments.

In the first part of the dissertation, the Introduction and the first two chapters, I examine Shakespeare's allegories of desire in Dream and Romeo and Juliet, allegories involving Cupid's originary wounding of the lover and desire's consequent attachment to an imaginary castration and lack. The allegories are presented by Oberon and the drama's staging and language of desire in Dream, and by Mercutio in the mercurial poetic language of the "name of the rose" in Romeo and Juliet. I observe how these "psychoanalytic" allegories of desire are presented in translations of the religious language of the subject's union with the "other," focusing on how misrecognition of the other and violence sub tend identity and the sacred respectively. I also investigate the specular - and speculative - constitution of gender, the role of phantasy in maintaining gender identity, and how the playwright's staging of masculinity revolves around the imaginary threat of castration in proto-psychoanalytic terms. The research makes original interpretations of individual plays while contributing to an assessment of Shakespeare's place in a literary history of imagining subjectivity.

The third chapter makes an investigation of Shakespeare's negotiation of the literary influence of Christopher Marlowe at a "scene of writing," or how this has been theorized. The chapter initially engages Harold Bloom's work on the anxiety of influence and Shakespeare's exemplary invention of the human, reading Bloom for his investments - as infected by gender ideology - in authorial puissance. I examine Bloom's work with that of some of his contemporaries to suggest that a transference to paternalist authority is at work in our idealizing versions of "Shakespeare." I show how Bloom participates in and speculates on this dynamic. I ask why the critics cast the playwright into a homoerotic scene negotiating the castration of influence, and how this scene might work rhetorically as a seduction within the contradictory logic of fetishism. In presenting my own uncannily repeating, Shakespearean scenes of writing, I make a contribution to the critical tradition of casting Marlovian influence into a metadramatic, originary scene, making the poet's writing an apotropaic defence and a cryptic testament of spiritual-sexual autobiography. However, I complicate the Bloomian narrative lines by playfully multiplying the sources of influence and the nature of authorial lack sustaining the scene of writing. I end by showing how Oscar Wilde's novella, "The Portrait of Mr W.H.," theorizes through its titular portrait the type of interpretative misprision elaborated by Bloom in his theory of influence, oddly anticipating and "framing" Bloom's quasi-religious participation in Shakespeare's ideal authority.
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Introduction

The basic claim in what follows is that Shakespeare’s representation of poetic subjectivity anticipates the Freudian and Lacanian discourses of the divided subject. In fact, I ask if Shakespeare’s poetic subject might be the model of the divided subject of psychoanalysis. The playwright’s text repeatedly bears witness to how the poetic subject is “cut off” from himself. The chapters that follow variously flesh out this assertion about the divided subject, where the subject is split along lines of sexuality and gender. I look especially at unconscious desire in poetic language and at “dramas” of gender identification. In the first two chapters, I read *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, considering how the masculine poetic subject is staged as split, divided by what Freud calls the “stage of the unconscious” and by the subject’s constitutive misrecognitions through identification with projected, inverted “mirror images” of himself. I track how the misrecognition of alterity at the *stade du miroir* is aligned with the poetic subject’s fitful pursuit of stability and puissance through his misrecognition of dependence on his negated, constitutive others. That is, I focus on the manner in which the masculine subject pursues self-presence and autonomy (“[a]s if a man were author of himself” [*Coriolanus*, 5.3.36]) in gender identification and its various and often conflicting scripts. This dissertation develops an account of how Shakespeare represents gender’s ideal integrity as forged vis-à-vis the feared threat of effeminization posed by the levelling forces of desire and lack.

If in the Shakespearean text the desire for women and homoerotic desire both provoke the threat of effeminization or castration, I provide paths for understanding how the poetic subject pursues this

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1 This somewhat overreaching point has been made, in different ways, by Joel Fineman and Harold Bloom. I review below their respective positions. By describing a “poetic subject” as the model for the divided subject of psychoanalysis, I refer to Fineman’s argument that the lyric persona of Shakespeare’s Sonnets is the model for consequent imaginings of literary subjectivity, while also locating, as he does, this “poetic subject” in the dramas. See *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Bloom’s reading of a Freud whose corpus is isomorphic with Shakespeare’s is presented in “Freud: A Shakespearean Reading,” where he makes Freud a belated and anxious inheritor of a Shakespearean poetics of the subject. In *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994).


3 Citations of Shakespeare’s text are from the Signet editions, general ed., Sylvan Barnet, and in some cases, the New Penguins, general ed., T.J.B. Spencer, with assoc. ed., Stanley Wells.
subversion in desire. My itinerary also extends from the representation of the Shakespearean subject’s subversion in desire through cleaving to ongoing meconnaissances, to theoretical articulations of the place of the divided spectator-subject in relation to this seductive spectacle. In the third chapter, I look at some critical reproductions of the author Shakespeare at a “scene of writing” where he negotiates influence, showing how these scenes position him as a transcendent phantasm of authority. I likewise investigate how Shakespeare becomes a critical fetish of sorts. The analysis emphasizes the critical construction of, and imaginary participation in, Shakespeare’s authority, suggesting how gender ideology and phantasy inflect these readings.

The first two chapters examine “dramas” of gender identification, investigating phantasy’s role in the poetic subject’s pursuit of a fictive integrity and imaginary puissance in sexual difference; I explore the shaping phantasies that support and regulate the ideal gender identifications of the dramatis personae. The chapters also look at phantasy’s staging of desire for the poetic subject, a desire for the other’s desire that cleaves to the rem(a)inder of a lost primordial unity with the “object.” Identifying allegories of desire within the plays, I then track the playwright’s staging of the masculine subject’s revisitation of his split in desire and/or phantasy’s attempted displacements of lack onto his others. Briefly, I ask if Shakespearean drama might be a literary precursor to psychoanalytic discourses of sexual difference (and the heterosexual

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4 In my view of the author, the master capitalizes on the theater’s staging of desire and imaginary identification’s “mispriision,” the failure of imaginary puissance or an achieved, sovereign identification. “Shakespeare” thus tends to become an implied God figure in his absence. This is a common notion of the author or playwright, one that Shakespeare seems to entertain of himself, for example, in The Comedy of Errors and The Tempest. Regarding the former drama, see the essay by Jonathan V. Crewe, “God or The Good Physician: The Rational Playwright in The Comedy of Errors,” Genre 15:1/2 (1982): 203-23, where he suggests that the “implied playwright” assumes his divinity by analogy through his transcendence (with his audience) from the created scene, and by his poetic vision of order and its superiority to his erring precursor of the Menaechmi (see esp. 203-09). The Tempest has been read by a continuing Romantic tradition as such a testament of spiritual autobiography. See Howard Felperin, “The Tempest in Our Time,” in The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), for a review of the manner in which postcolonial and new historical critiques have effectively rewritten The Tempest, while still contributing to its continued place in the canon.


6 See Bruce Fink, The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), for an account of the subject and the other’s desire (object a), esp. 59-61.
which revolve around the staging and restaging of an imaginary, threatened castration. In the fourth section of the Introduction, “Love, Desire and Phantasy: A Shakespearean Cupid,” I provide a preview of this Shakespearean poetic subjectivity in *Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In the chapters, I foreground how these dramas articulate a critique of gender ideology, while, on the other hand, the texts also provide for imaginary participation in these punitive dramas of desire and gender identification, as one witnesses in the critical literature. For instance, the third chapter locates these dynamics at an authorial scene of writing, following and critiquing Harold Bloom’s well known theory of literary influence and his recent book on Shakespeare - *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*.

The first two chapters show how the divided poetic subject pursues the abjection of his constitutive others in desire, and further, how his castration and splitting is staged as (the repetition of) a “sublime” masochistic excitation. I conceive of the Shakespearean subject’s erotic attachment to lack, his pursuit of his own dissolution in desire, as his repetition of the trauma of a “castration”; of course, Freud views this castration as splitting up the subject. Such an economy of desire thus follows the “structure of the fetish” where the poetic subject’s castration is both disavowed and affirmed through the other, the other of desire who resembles the substitute of the fetish. In this allegory, desire is presented as taking its cue from “love’s wound” (*MND*, 2.1.167), where an undecidable castration or lack is misrecognized in, and displaced in phantasy onto, the other of desire, while simultaneously present as the lover’s fundamental condition. This discourse juggles two definitions of the subject’s (relations to) “castration.” First, as in Freud’s article on fetishism, I refer to the male child’s disavowal of the “reality” of the mother’s castration,  

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7 I owe my language of theorizing gender identification here, and throughout the dissertation, to Judith Butler’s work. Her essential reading of the “heterosexual matrix” governing gender identification occurs in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 35-78.


the traumatic sighting that occasions the splitting of the ego and the formation of the fetish: the objects of narcissistic preservation in this anxious disavowal (of castration) are the subject’s sense of phallic integrity and that of his substitute object of desire via the fetish. Crucially, castration in this scenario also functions as a literalizing male phantasy securing difference and a punitive ideological narrative dictating feminine lack. And second, castration is understood as the subject’s lack entailed by Lacan’s *stade du miroir*, where “[t]he ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is the projection of a surface” (*The Ego and the Id*, 11, 364), a projection that anticipates Lacan’s observations regarding the *I*’s precipitation in the subject’s anticipation of unity and “alienating destination” through projecting himself into this statue.¹⁰ I also employ, in a less rigorous manner, Lacan’s notions of the subject castrated by his subjection to language and his assumption of prohibition.

In the first two chapters, the dissertation is largely about these scenes of desire that repeat for the Shakespearean subject. In giving critical readings of *Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, I tend to focus on dramatic scenes that stage the masculine subject’s imaginary constitution via his others, though particularly on the manner in which the dramas stage the poetic subject’s erotic deconstitution in desire. As in the playwright’s presentation of “Pyramus and Thisby,” I propose that the Thesean spectator-subject’s own negated lack and his “phantasmatic gender” are coordinates that frame spectatorial participation and pleasure.¹¹ The first two chapters on the Shakespearean staging of desire and phantasmatic gender suggest how such an ideal masculine gender identification for the *dramatis personae* is haunted by its constitutive others, the woman and the sodomite. The dissertation’s bias in focusing on phantasmatic gender is a deconstructive strategy of reading for the masculine subject’s instability, reading for how his hegemonic difference is confounded through phantom identifications made with those diacritical others. I track how

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¹¹ By “phantasmatic gender” I mean the failure of the “assumption” of heterosexual masculinity due to this gender’s specular, melancholic structure and its performative status. Such a masculinity’s repeated staging of the repudiation of its others (sustaining its imaginary puissance) testifies to gender’s phantasmatic status, as it also testifies to its tacit identification with its abjected spectres. I use the term “phantasmatic” to indicate gender’s specular, melancholic structure as well as to indicate the structuring action of unconscious phantasy in the performance of gender, referring finally to the manner in which shaping phantasies of gender can dominate the subject’s entire life. Regarding the term “phantasmatic,” see the entry for “phantasy” in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, by Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1973), 314-19, where it is briefly discussed (317). Regarding gender’s specular, melancholic structure, see Butler, as cited above, and the first section of my introduction below.
the poetic subjects in these dramas repeatedly negate a castrating desire or identification, bearing witness in the language of negation to precisely these (sustaining) repressions:

Thus the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on the condition that it is negated. Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed, it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed. We can see in this how the intellectual function is separated from the affective process. ("Negation," 11, 438)

Negation is a category of phantasy and defence in which the subject names the repressed that is being disavowed, a repudiation that Freud links particularly to the function of the “original pleasure-ego” and its relations to outside objects, their status in relation to the incorporative ego outside or (taken) inside, i.e., the regulating abjections supporting this ego’s sense of boundaries (“Negation,” 11, 439). I argue in these chapters that the playwright stages negations that are designed to trace, often playfully or comically, the masculine poetic subject’s self-division in the pleasurable “lifting of repression,” especially via his phantom identification with a negated other.

In the chapters on Dream and Romeo and Juliet, my arguments further situate the dramas of phantasmatic gender in the liminal space of alterity, the theater, a marginal space from which they might interrogate while being the purveyor of Renaissance culture’s gender ideologies. Within that misogynist and intermittently “homophobic” culture generally, desire was a harbinger of death, degradation, emasculation and castration. The subdued note of fear and anxiety regarding sexual union in both the dramas speaks to this staged threat of nondifference in desire. Desire and sexuality are infused with a sacred violence in these dramas, where phantasy supports the vision of difference in sexual union and its catastrophic inversion - the “[t]wo distincts, division none” of opposition without difference that we find in “The Phoenix and the Turtle” (line 27). In tragedy, gender and sexual difference tend to be sacred.

12 For the notion of the stage as a liminal and “other” space, see, for example, Louis Adrian Montrose, “The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology,” Helios 7 (1980), 53-74.
13 In Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of sexuality in Shakespearean drama (New York: Routledge, 1991), Valerie Traub presents an ideological critique of the linking of anxiety to desire in Shakespeare’s drama, a linking that she views as problematic in terms of gender ideology (3). I agree with Traub’s view that Shakespeare mounts masculinist phantasies and anxieties in his representations of sexuality. The linking of anxiety with the staging of desire in the Shakespearean text often appears as a dramatic technique of engagement. At any rate, it is an influential pairing for psychoanalysis and for Bloom’s theory of the travails of poetic influence.
placeholders of difference that threaten to dissolve with desire, where the poet often highlights the instability of such differences in the drama's representation of sacrificial crisis.¹⁴

I show how *Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* both display dynamics where the violence of desire, a desire appropriating the other's "being," is misrecognized and projected into a transcendental sacred. While the victimage mechanism or sacrificial surrogation can be viewed as working through projection and misrecognition on Shakespeare's stage ("What do you see? You see an ass-head of your own, do you?" [*MND*, 3.1.117-18]), this is also a matter of *meconnaissance* undergirding the poetic subject's relations to alterity in gender identification and desire, suggesting that such *originary* misrecognitions contribute to the formation of the unconscious and the divided subject. That is, the dramatic texts under study move between an anthropological or social perspective on violence and the sacred, bridging this vision with another, more psychoanalytic perspective on sacrificial gender ideology and erotic desire. For example, the playlet "Pyramus and Thisby" substitutes for other "sports" (5.1.42) on the menu, scenes of collective violence or victimage, the staging of transgressive desire and erotic self-sacrifice that is subject to misrecognition. As is often noted, the playlet is the comic version or even a parody of the erotic plot of "young affection" (2nd Prologue, 2) in *Romeo and Juliet*.¹⁵ While I argue that Shakespeare as a dramatist nearly inevitably speculates on the audience's participation in his stagings of illicit phantasy and the violence of desire, the playwright also frames the nonrecognition of this violence of desire, mounting a critique of the sacrificial dimension to gender identification and gender ideologies neglected in Rene Girard's analyses of cultural order and the Shakespearean text.

¹⁴ See Rene Girard's chapter on Dionysus in *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977). The reading of *The Bacchae* is uncharacteristic in his attending to gender difference. Girard locates the sacrificial crisis in terms of "the loss of sexual differentiation" (141), without putting this feared indifference in relation to the blurred relations of man to beast and god in Euripides' drama.

The first chapter investigates phantasy's function of staging desire and regulating masculine identity in *Dream*. I suggest ways in which the drama covertly upstages an ideal Thesean masculinity and foregrounds Oberon's punitive staging of desire, subjecting these censoring visions to a displacement of their mastery. If the failure of the subject's phantasied projection of integrity and an imaginary puissance founds the divided subject, this puissance remains a lure governing the subject's participation in shaping phantasies of gender's form. The opening sections of the chapter study masculinity's imaginary implication in what it is *not* as the dramatic background to the masculine subject's repeated performances that attempt to consolidate its hegemonic difference. Where the instability of masculine difference is due in part to specular desire and to phantasy's incorporation of the prohibited-lost other, this subject stages its difference-in-unity with the other in phantasies that structure the dramatic action.

The staging of an illusory puissance in phantasies of sodomy and defloration suggests how the spectator-subject's anxious pleasure might be bound up with his own unstable difference from the feminine, an anxiety that appears to be erotic. My analysis moves from the drama's reflective and penetrative erotics of what I call hymeneal phantasy to the staging of the subject's relation to a sodomitical other through Bottom. I locate the dramatic heart of the drama in Bottom's various punning translations, elaborating how his emblematic repression-sacrifice subtends the trajectory of desire's idealization in *Dream*'s sublime vision of Love. As Bottom is the allegorical, sacrificial support of this vision, I specify how Bottom's own dream of his plenitude is modelled on phantasies of participating in God's Love, where he becomes a sort of misrecognized, Christic *pharmakos*.

The phantom sodomy that circulates through this drama is not limited to the slightly ludic, cryptic, displaced embodiment of homophilic desire in Bottom's asinine metamorphoses. A phantom sodomy radiates from the aptly named Bottom in his staging of transgressions of gender hierarchy and of distinctions of kind (animal: human: immortal); I also indicate how the critical axes of social hierarchy and race are related to these subversions of order, how challenges to that order tend to be displaced onto sexuality and "preposterous" phantasy. I take the dream-vision of "Bottom's Dream" (4.1.219) to be a model for the spectator-subject's imaginary participation in the drama-as-dream in an economy of theatrical
pleasure. Bottom functions like the Prologue's speech, himself "nothing impaired" (5.1.125-26) for the spectator-subject's pleasure, a spectacular "nothing" (5.1.311) in his negation; Bottom's transgressive being as "mimic" (MND, 3.2.19) is negated like the playlet ("And it is nothing, nothing in the world" [5.1.78]), a censoring negation sustaining the drama-as-epithalamium's official, sublime vision of romantic Love. Yet Bottom's emblematic repression-sacrifice conserves for a Thesean masculinity the pleasures of its transgressive phantasies.

Returning to the theme of theatrical pleasure, the chapter ends with an examination of the erotics of the play-within-the-play and its critical framing, reflecting on the theater's erotic power as a version of Titania's bower. I locate the instability of phantasmatic gender identification as an erotic motive for imaginary participation in the drama, the ground for the spectator-subject's participation in such "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5) that projectively misrecognize and attribute lack to a feminized mirror double (the artisans and Bottom). It is this sacrificial play of specular desire and the speculative constitution of the gendered self that, I submit, the drama gets in sight. When Bottom declares "let the audience look to their eyes" (1.2.27-28), he is pointing up the spectator-subject's astonishing (non)recognition of reciprocity precisely at the point of the subject's sympathy and tearful engagement; the spectator of the playlet is permitted to misrecognize the phantasies of rape and defloration that have also permeated the drama despite the heavy-handed symbolism of "Pyramus and Thisby." Illicit phantasy is enjoyed here in the structure of the fetish by the Thesean spectator and his critical representatives, where the displacement of lack and the censoring of transgressive desire also permit the pleasure of a lifting of the repression of desire.

Looking at another drama like Dream with a dream-like appeal, the second chapter investigates gender and phantasy in Romeo and Juliet. In this chapter, I begin by tracking how desire destabilizes the subject in its relations to alterity via repetitions of the "name of the rose." Briefly, I look at the two sides of specular and unconscious desire: the attempted assumption of the other's being as ideal "Rose," and the alternating phantasy of the fragmented body and the self's erotic dissolution in sexual union on the other side of this mirror. As a meditation on imagining literary desire, the romantic tragedy engages and surpasses the sonneteering tradition of an idealized, unattainable feminine Rose, briefly alluded to in the Rosaline who
will “not be hit/ With Cupid’s arrow” (1.1.211-12). The action moves into the drama of Juliet’s “prettiest
sententious” (2.4.217) or verse on “rosemary” and her rose, Romeo, and their fatal romantic passion. I also
observe the reversal of gender norms in the drama and the eroticization attendant on this crossing. In the
first part of the chapter, I attempt to show how Shakespeare stages desire through the “name of the rose,” a
letter in the unconscious that dictates the subject’s psychic self-shattering in desire. Starting from Jonathan
Goldberg’s analysis, I ask why this poetic letter is imagined as penetrating the subject in a figurative
sodomy that thereafter traces desire. I submit that if the letter R is imagined in an “obscene” relation to the
body, as the arse, the letter is also ob-scene to designate the off-stage location of a preFreudian unconscious
staging desire. I take “rose” and “rosemary” in this text to be veritable crossroad words supporting the
poetic subject’s potency, preserving his transgressive jouvissance in the letter, a letter that figures the direct
fulfilment of desire in the fetishistic articulation of poetic language; I argue that this type of wordplay also
stages desire for the audience. A letter of castration directing the subject toward his annulment in desire, the
name of the rose points towards the subject’s masochistic phantasies of self-dissolution (the legacy of the
go’s specular constitution). In an extended example, “rosemary” is shown to function as a poetic
rem(a)inder of the death within desire, illustrating how an immortal “death-marked love” (1st Prologue, 9)
takes its cue from loss and death, and how the drama’s poetic language of flowers is further marked by
phantasies of death and murder.

The second part of the chapter investigates the formal literary and rhetorical devices used by the
playwright in the representation of his “star-crossed lovers” (1st Prologue, 6). I particularly delineate the
Petrarchan genealogy of Romeo’s love-sickness and sublime loss of self, and Mercutio’s ribald opposition
to “this sir-reverence love” (1.4.42). I follow Joel Fineman in pursuing how the subjectivity effects of
Shakespearean character often arise from rhetorical forms, as in the dramatization of a love-death embrace.

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16 Jonathan Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” in Queering the Renaissance, ed. Goldberg (Durham:
17 The second chapter discusses the playwright’s troping on the ideal “Rose” of a literary tradition, the
mimetically overinvested status of the “rose,” and the drama’s own elaboration of this tradition with
“rosemary.” I suggest how this approaches a meditation on the letter in the unconscious, drawing on Serge
Leclaire’s lucid presentation of Lacanian principles in Psychoanalyzing: On the Order of the Unconscious
and the Practice of the Letter, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and John
Fletcher’s essay, “The Letter in the Unconscious: The enigmatic signifier in the work of Jean Laplanche,”
through figures of oxymoron and a chiasmus George Puttenham calls the “cross-coupler.” The third part examines the masculine subject’s subversion by homoerotic rivalry in his insecure difference from the sodomite, mirror double to the amorous friend. I follow Joseph Porter in identifying some phantom characters in the drama, “brother Valentine” (1.2.69) and “Signior Valentio” (1.2.72), i.e., taken as “signifiers” of fraternal love. I ask if these names are not revenants of lost love, revenants of a mirroring plenitude that has been lost and encrypted in a phantom identification that motivates the repetition of this cleavage in the fratricidal violence of Mercutio and Tybalt. The fourth part balances the third by looking at the death-bound, masochistic subjectivity of the romantic lovers that is the normative focus of the drama, the lovers’ sublime transcendence in an eroticized staging of death. I follow the drama-as-dream metaphor in Romeo and Juliet, investigating, as in Dream, the drama’s staging of desire for the spectator-subject. I suggest how the dream of immortality and pleasure in Romeo’s final dream is made available to the spectator-subject or reader, a dream coordinated between Christian theology and a religion of love, translating the former’s sacrificial contract into erotic phantasy and a sublime experience of Love.

The general argument of the third chapter might be posed as an intervention and participation in the current critical reproduction of Shakespeare’s literary authority. I pursue the question of what counts as the “authentic Shakespeare,” and how this phantom acts to legitimate competing visions and ideologies. I demonstrate how some critics that invest in Shakespeare’s ideal authority make a backprojection of his authorial mastery at a fratricidal scene of writing, scenes grafted onto his staging of illicit desire and rivalrous conflict. Paradoxically, while Shakespeare interrogates the sacrificial dimension of phantasmatic gender identity via homoerotic rivalry, it is precisely these scenes that tend to be grafted onto, or critically backprojected into, a metadramatic scene of writing with Marlowe. I would maintain that while Shakespeare’s “authority” is due, at least in part, to his engaging staging of transgressive erotic desire, the

18 The structure of chiasmus and Puttenham’s trope of the “cross-coupler,” whose crossings of “kinds” is a kind of spur to desire, is a recurring model in Joel Fineman’s work on Shakespearean subjectivity. See, for example, Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 37-38.
playwright's authority might be better justified through studying his anatomy of gender's failure and legacy of violence. I generally pursue both these projects by balancing an approach to the playwright's staging of desire with his representation of phantasmatic gender and critique of gender ideologies.

The chapter's epilogue takes off from questions raised by the investigation of Bloom's theory of literary influence and a Shakespearean "scene of writing" with Marlowe. I ask again about Shakespeare's "author function" and his positioning as an ideal authority through his scene of writing, again suggesting how the reader or critic can be implicated at this scene by his imaginary participation in the author's psychomachia or spiritual autobiography. I turn to Bloom's ideological and psychic investments in reproducing Shakespeare's ideal authority through the Sonnets - a guiding text to his readings of influence and catastrophic creation - where he maintains the sonneteer's illicit desire in the structure of the fetish. For Bloom, the scene of writing in the Sonnets supplements the implied fratricidal agon with Marlowe in Falstaff's creation-negation, where the continuity of the scenes is evident in the submerged homoeroticism of each. According to Bloom, in the Sonnets the author writes out of his homosexual loss that consolidates for "Shakespeare" an exemplary reflexivity, interiority and self-divided heterosexuality. Bloom's narrative of Shakespeare's transcendent authority and autonomy (the fratricidal agon with the prime precursor where the primal repression of castration in influence supports the writer's being) is supplemented by another scene of writing with the poet's self-wounding in the Sonnets, eliminating influence in an interiorizing turn as the godlike poet's creative dialectic apparently becomes anchored, for Bloom, in the primal repression of "castration" in proper gender identity. As the sonneteer says, refusing such social castration: "No, I am that I am, and they that level/ At my abuses reckon up their own" (sonnet 121). I conclude by looking at how Oscar Wilde's novella, "The Portrait of Mr W.H.," puts into fiction the "Shakespearean" problematic of stable identity and the erotic draw of textual indeterminacy, gender

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21 Although I do not find the category as problematic as many do, the third chapter also investigates, especially in the epilogue, the question of critical investments in Shakespeare's authority and how this gets played out in relation to questions of gender and sexuality. For a similar view of the author function that touches on issues of gender and authority, see Peter Erickson, "Shakespeare and the 'Author Function'," in Shakespeare's "Rough Magic": Renaissance Essays in Honor of C.L. Barber, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppelia Kahn. London: Associated University Presses, 1985.
ambiguity and illicit phantasy. As in the first two chapters, I propose that such indeterminacy and transgressive phantasy decidedly contribute to the staging of desire. This is part of an argument demonstrating how Wilde’s novella theorizes interpretative misprision through its titular portrait. Wilde’s novella is an intervention in a nineteenth century literary critical history of reading Shakespeare, a text that anticipates and oddly “frames” Bloom’s identification with Shakespeare’s melancholic authority.

I. Gender Theory: Melancholic Identification

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff ’tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself. (The Merchant of Venice, 1.1.1-7)

In The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing, Lynn Enterline studies how the masculine subject consistently experiences loss and alienation through a reflective erotics: “In both the literary and the psychoanalytic texts studied in these pages, the entanglement of narcissism in melancholia, or of self-reflection in self-loss, disturbs the representation of a stable, or empirically knowable, sexual difference. This book argues that implicitly in these Renaissance texts, and explicitly in psychoanalytic theory, melancholia disturbs the presumed sexual “identity” of self-representing masculine subjects.” Going against a contemporary trend of historicization, Enterline focuses on how the masculine subject’s melancholia is a name for losses that provoke the discoherence or instability of the subject, particularly within the problematic of language and figurality. “Lacan’s linguistic reading of the subject and the mirror stage,” Enterline writes, “leads one to suspect that the melancholic narratives of self built as they are around a story of past losses and (always vanishing) dreams of restoration, are “rooted in illusion.”

22 See, for example, Shakespeare, 295-96.
24 In “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” the portrait and the name “Willie Hughes” both lure the interpreter with a dream of visionary self-presence, a loss troped as the effect of displaced homosexual desire, but framed as impossible of any but a forged, phantom restoration. Fineman notes with appreciation the “argument” (which resembles his own) of Wilde’s novella in the introduction to his Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 28.
26 Enterline, The Tears of Narcissus, 15.
His theory of the mirror stage gives the self the strange temporality of an "anticipated belatedness," launching the self-regarding subject on an unending, "fictional" path of self-representation that is hollowed out by temporal dislocation.  

However fictional the narratives of melancholia's original losses might be, these narratives nevertheless have explanatory value when they address the prohibitions on homosexual desire and the mourning of its loss. That is, despite claims of the fictional status of the subject's losses, clearly these losses can be socially mandated and can escape the subject's knowledge; this is perhaps the case of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* where the audience appears invited to understand the want-wit's enigmatic melancholia as a question of his unavowable desire and its substitutive path.

One theoretical source of melancholic gender identity is the psychic defence or strategy of the melancholic incorporation of lost loves, where the subject identifies with the lost object to substitute for a prohibited libidinal cathexis. As Butler argues, melancholia's strategy of internalization contributes to the formation of the gendered ego. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud describes the acquisition of character, what is also gender identity, through identifications substituting for loss:

> It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects. At any rate the process, especially in the early phases of development, is a very frequent one, and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-choices and that it contains the history of those object-choices. (11, 368)

Following Butler, Enterline suggests how the masculine subject who consolidates a sanctioned gender identity by renouncing his love for his mother, ends up adopting a strategy of melancholic identification.

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27 Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus*, 16. Enterline does not engage with the proliferating catalogue of the "fictional" narratives of melancholia's prognosis found in Robert Burton's book, but see her analysis of *Merchant* in her fourth chapter, "Errors and Dam(n)’d Confusions: Shakespearean Subjects on Trial."

28 If the playwright might appear to furnish an explanation for Antonio's melancholia in the notion that he is in love with Bassanio, one could argue that this explanation is linked to the economy of capitalist trade and the merchant's speculation on personal debts for his "being." For a version of the latter position, see Girard's chapter in *A Theater of Envy*, "Sacrificial Ambivalence in *The Merchant of Venice and Richard III*," esp. 244-48. In this connection, see also Marc Shell's chapter, "The Wether and the Ewe: Verbal Usury in *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

29 My reading of Freud here is indebted to Judith Butler's rereading of the Freudian text. See *Gender Trouble*, esp. 57-65; Butler cites this passage from *The Ego and the Id* in her argument (58).
with femininity to compensate for the loss.\textsuperscript{30} Another of normative masculinity's losses, that of an ungrievable homosexual object, means that this loss is subject to recuperation through, paradoxically, a melancholic incorporation of homosexuality and this prohibition defining proper masculinity,\textsuperscript{31} an identification that further disturbs the "fictions" of a stable gender through this phantom homosexuality's association with an ideologically debased feminine.

Where gender identity follows the career of the specular ego, the masculine subject's structural dependence on its others can take the form of a repeated misrecognition and repudiation of that relation. While gender identification can be understood in such a theory as an ego formation of deflected desire and unfinished grief,\textsuperscript{32} crucially, masculine gender functions as a regulating fiction and primary, organizing binary for personal experience as well as for cultural orders: but such a gender identity also subverts the masculine subject from within through its phantom identifications with its defining "effeminate" others. Freud positions "perverse desire" as central to the functioning of the individual psyche and culture, from the normative subject's sublimation of perverse desire and identification with the (paternal) super-ego, to the satisfactions of the renunciation of desire and the self-aggression of conscience.\textsuperscript{33}

Masculinity is assumed under the threat of privation and revolves around a fear of punishment, especially a fear of castration (as its spectacular instance), but castration itself is projectively visited on the constitutive others of masculinity in phantasies that attempt to reassert its secure boundaries. I contend that these boundaries are central to Shakespeare's drama, and I try to make this attention to constitutive margins

\textsuperscript{30} Enterline, \textit{The Tears of Narcissus}, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{31} Enterline does not explore this particular undoing of gender identification's integrity in a melancholic identification with the prohibited object and the prohibition. See Butler's account of how desire becomes heterosexual via the threat of "feminization" or castration in heterosexual culture, in \textit{Gender Trouble}, 57-65. Regarding masculinity's identification with homosexuality and its prohibition, also see Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," \textit{The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), esp. 137-40.
\textsuperscript{32} See Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," 132-35.
\textsuperscript{33} For such a dialectical reading of Freud's work, see Jonathan Dollimore's essay, "The Cultural Politics of Perversion: Augustine, Shakespeare, Freud, Foucault," \textit{Genders} 8 (1990): 1-16. See Butler's "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification" for an important reading of Freud and the notion that renunciation "becomes the aim and vehicle of satisfaction" (143) for a gender maintained by repudiation.
as among the playwright's intentional projects. An ideal masculine identification is haunted by the spectres it psychically (and ideologically) abjects or repudiates: the feminine as its castrated or powerless other, an other that is also an ideal. I argue that the repudiation of homophilic desire is a phantom counterpart here, where the repression of desire likewise splits the object of desire, contributing to the defining alterity's ideality. Freud compares such instances of repression to the contradictory "structure of the fetish" where the remainder of the originary repression (of "castration") contained in the fetish sustains desire: "it is possible for the original instinctual representative to be split in two, one part undergoing repression, while the remainder, precisely on account of this intimate connection, undergoes idealization" ("Repression," 11, 150). In the case of both its defining others, the woman and the sodomite, such normative masculinity is misogynistic, defending itself against the threat of effeminization in desire. Phantasmatic identification with an ideal “masculinity” is bound up here with a misogynist desire for the feminine and a volatile homoeroticism that both subvert the subject's conceit of autonomy, where violence repeatedly marks the relations of repudiation to the negated other.

II. Gender in Renaissance Terms and Shakespearean Texts

My account of gender needs to be historicized. I take this opportunity to review some recent work in the area, particularly as it is relevant to the chapters that follow. I turn first to Thomas Laqueur’s book, Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud, and then to some recent critical texts that debate the manner in which we might discuss desire and the instability of erotic identity in the Shakespearean text, taking Twelfth Night as an example.

34 The manner in which hegemonic orders are subject to their own subversion is aptly suggested by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in the introduction to their The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London: Methuen, 1986): “A recurrent pattern emerges: the ‘top’ attempts to reject and eliminate the ‘bottom’ for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other (in the classic sense that Hegel describes in the master-slave section of the Phenomenology), but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the constructions of subjectivity: a psychological dependence on precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded on the social level” (5). One of the recurring observations made in this dissertation is the manner in which Shakespearean drama is adept at tracing the displacement of the power conflicts of class and race into the arena of gender and sexuality, granting subversions of the dominant order an additional axis of erotic transgression, for the “Bottoms” in the drama and the audience. This also suggests how relations of power
Laqueur argues that in the Renaissance, a stable system of the two sexes or sexual difference as we “know” it today did not exist, although gender ideology and roles functioned as a primary, organizing binary in culture. Rather, Laqueur suggests that a different “fiction” was culturally dominant; he proposes that a one-sex model of the body prevailed, a model that makes the assignment of rigid gender boundaries difficult, or does so from a contemporary vantage. In this Hippocratic-Galenic medical model, male and female were distributed along a gradation of perfection, the male defined by his heat and more perfect, outward form. In an instance of mirroring inversion, the female reproductive system is supposed to be in an analogous relation to the male, a relation of “introverted homology,” where this homology conveys the sameness and difference between the sexes. As with many of the Renaissance medical texts he studies, Laqueur appears fascinated by the figure of the hermaphrodite as embodying the potential for a category crisis in the one-sex model; in Laqueur’s analyses, the hermaphrodite also appears to embody a certain self-presence and sexual indifference, escaping lack and enforced gender identification. On one level, Laqueur’s project attempts to make a more negotiable, labile gender (in “culture”) rather than rigid anatomical sex (in “nature”) the ontological ground stabilizing the scale of values. However, as a sharp review of his book points out, Laqueur’s thesis of a one-sex model ignores countervailing historical views such as an Aristotelian two-sex anatomical model. Laqueur wishes to read the early modern period’s consistent metaphysical oppositions between the sexes as mere rhetoric, leaving out difference in this system of analogy, unwilling to accept as anything but a more fluid “gender” the oppositions between men and women not based in a scientific understanding of anatomical difference.


Katharine Park and Robert A. Nye, “Destiny Is Anatomy,” review of *Making Sex*, by Thomas Laqueur, in *New Republic*, Feb. 18, 1991, 53-57 (54). As the reviewers note: “Laqueur’s myopia is ironic: he proposes a sophisticated critique of nineteenth century biologism, but he cannot acknowledge as real any early medical concept of sexual difference not exclusively grounded in anatomy and the material world” (55). In sum, Laqueur repeatedly mistakes the Renaissance habit of mind of analogy for identity, as if the principle of analogy did not also pose important differences (54-55). As the reviewers note, this tends to
In his essay on Shakespeare's transvestite theater and *Twelfth Night*, "Fiction and Friction," Stephen Greenblatt identifies another cultural fiction of a "twinned gender identity" or sexual nature in one person.38

This duplicity of the subject is aptly conveyed in the lines where Orsino addresses a Viola-Cesario in disguise who outwardly resembles her twin brother Sebastian:

> One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons -
> A natural perspective that is and is not! (5.1.216-17)

The thematic of twins then is a means to address the "twinned gender identity" of the individual, of gender ambiguity despite Viola's seductive aside that she lacks a "little thing" (3.4.313). Greenblatt suggests the audience here assumes that there is a female body beneath the clothes to resolve the question of gender ambiguity, establishing the drama's natural telos: "But this transformation [of Cesario into a natural Viola] is not enacted - it remains "high fantastical" - and the only authentic transformation that the Elizabethan audience could anticipate when the play was done was the metamorphosis of Viola back into a boy."39

Indeed, the drama might appear to stage an erotic indecision about gender identity bound up with a notional one-sex model, what Greenblatt views as resulting in a sort of residual homoeroticism in sexuality.40 But the important point here is that the cultural fiction of a "twinned gender identity" in one person means that such resolution is only provisionally available and subject to performance.41

The hermaphrodite is the literal, ideologically monstrous instance at the level of biology of the gender confusion and possible subversion posed by Shakespeare's theater of cross-dressing boy-actors: an inherent duplicity and undecidability to gender mandates its constant performance and policing, dynamics reflected

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39 Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," 92.
40 Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," 92-93. Reviewing Greenblatt's argument in *Impersonations: The performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University-Press, 1996), Orgel notes that "the teleology of masculinity implied by the medical and gynecological theories" might end up directing an anxious (and homoerotic) refusal to have the cross-dressed women returned to their natural state. As at the ending of *Twelfth Night*, "Shakespeare shows on occasion an unwillingness to allow them to return to being women" (50).
41 The stagey aspect of a melancholic Olivia's grieving for her dead brother might be linked up with these other twinnings and lost brothers, as in the "fictional" (theoretical) narrative recounted above of gender identity's melancholic structure due to specular identification's hollowing out of the self.
The presence of both genders in a single person is represented in both brother and sister. Orsino describes the attraction of Cesario's youth in a manner that points to the circulation of a homoeroticism through gender ambiguity and semblance in Shakespeare's comedic text:

For they shall yet belie thy happy years
That say thou art a man, Dian's lip
Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative of a woman's part. (1.4.30-34)

Note that Orsino here figures Cesario's eroticized and feminized voice/throat in an inverted "phallicism" ("thy small pipe/ Is as the maiden's organ"). Viola-Cesario is figured as a man coming of age, like her brother: "Not yet old enough for a man nor young enough for a boy" (1.5.155-56). If Viola-Cesario is still double at the drama's end, so Sebastian articulates this duplicity and mirrors it when he addresses Olivia:

So comes it, lady, you have been mistook.
But nature to her bias drew in that.
You would have been contracted to a maid;
Nor are you therein, by my life, deceived:
You are contracted both to a maid and man. (5.1.259-63)

Sebastian's quibble on his being a "maid," a male virgin, perpetuates the confusion regarding a "twinned gender identity." The drama can promise to deliver us from the danger of such confusion through the proposed marriages, but nature's "bias" still reflects an internal deviation (the feminine within the masculine) defining a natural identity and its trajectory of desire.

Greenblatt's essay assumes gravity by making Viola-Cesario's sartorial trespass into a potential tragedy, beginning his essay by putting this "play" in relation to a historically punished case of a female to male impersonation. This "new historical" illustration precedes another of one historical Marie le Marcis and this hermaphrodite's transformation into a man, marriage, discovery as a fraud, the so-called tribade's trial, medical examination, sentencing for sodomy, and Marin's consequent appeal and another medical examination and court decision, all recorded by the expert examiner in the last case, Jacques Duval, in his

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42 For an instance of this policing of gender, consider how the lack of Viola's "maiden weeds" (5.1.255) prevents her embrace of her brother Sebastian (5.1.249-53). At the drama's close, Orsino enjoys addressing "her" as Cesario, rather as Orgel thinks Shakespeare is reluctant to return women to their role, while the sartorial and performative dimensions of gender are pointed up in the "other habits" (5.1.389) Cesario-Viola still needs to recover from the sea captain.

Beyond conveying a notion of the danger attendant on such performances of the masculine, the social anxiety and fascination with such transgressions infringing on masculine (phallic) territory and prestige, the historical example of Marie-Marin and the recounting of a paternalist medical discourse is supposed to suggest something about the manner in which Shakespeare imagines erotic desire and identity.

In Greenblatt’s retelling of Duvall’s narrative, the expert decides Marie-Marin’s gender by “probing” deeper into the matter, producing with his touch a friction (and presumed heat) that allows Marin’s masculine attributes (of semen) to emerge. Fineman has taken issue with how Greenblatt introduces this literal sexual friction as a model for Shakespeare’s language of desire or verbal friction and its playful chafing. If Greenblatt adds that “at moments the plays seem to imply that erotic friction originates in the wantonness of language,” it is this proposition that Fineman insists on as the only valid manner of conceiving desire in Shakespeare’s text. In effect, Fineman would rather pursue his own claim that Shakespeare’s original literary imagination of the erotic makes desire derive from the “wantonness” of words themselves (“it is Shakespeare’s historical achievement, in literature, to have derived desire from the wantonness of words, and to have done so in a matter that precludes putting things the other way around, i.e., as though the erotic charge of language might be derived from the experience of desire”). In the passage in question, the Clown tries his wit on Viola:

    Clown. You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence is but a chev’ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!
    Viola. Nay, that’s certain. They that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.
    Clown. I would therefore my sister had had no name, sir.
    Viola. Why, man?
    Clown. Why, sir, her name’s a word, and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton. But indeed words are very rascals since bonds disgraced them.
    Viola. Thy reason, man?
    Clown. Troth, sir, I can yield you none without words, and words are grown so false I am loath to prove reason with them. (3.1.11-25)

44 See Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction,” 73-86. Greenblatt also briefly discusses another case of prodigious sex change recounted by the Renaissance physician Pare, the case of Marie Germaine (81).
45 See Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction,” Shakespearean Negotiations, 89-90, for the section of his essay that Fineman critiques: “Shakespeare realized that if sexual chafing could not be presented literally onstage, it could be represented figuratively: friction could be fictionalized, chafing chastened and hence made fit for the stage, by transforming it into the witty, erotically charged sparring that is the heart of the lovers’ experience” (89). Fineman provides a critique of this fiction in a lengthy endnote to an essay entitled “The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction,” The Subjectivity Effect, n.34, 83-87 (see esp. 84-86).
46 Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” n.34, 85.
Greenblatt rather tenuously links the “enactment of verbal friction” here to an authorial “perception of the supleness of language, and particularly its capacity to be inverted, as imagined by the chev’ril glove. It is as if the cause of Marie le Marcis’s sexual arousal and transformation were now attributable to the ease - the simple change of one letter - with which Marie is turned into Marin.”47 If Greenblatt’s “as if” is only somewhat persuasive, this is because it invites us to participate in a phantasy of the power of language while failing to take account of the necessarily authoritative character of the language that effects such a change, not to mention the gravity of a failed performance. After all, “Marie” was initially sentenced to death for sodomy because her glove was not turned outward, which meant that she was usurping masculine prerogatives, assuming the wrong role in its phallic phantasies of puissance.48

As suggested above, gender factors in negotiations for social power in Renaissance culture. In Twelfth Night, such power can be understood as circulating through patronage networks and homosocial desire, including the institution of the theater. While Twelfth Night stages the spectacle of a (boy-actor playing a) woman cross-dressing as a male youth, gender transitivism here is part of a staged phantasy of power and class climbing. Cesario-Viola’s erotic attraction is partly due to his being a phantasy object of desire (a “violet”), defined by his lack of power, dependency, and possible erotic availability in professional service, to Duke Orsino, to Olivia, and as a boy-actor (to the audience).49 Arguably, Cesario-Viola is also attractive for her staging of a phantasy of class mobility in which the audience might vicariously participate as

47 Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction,” 90. In a comparable passage in R&I, in banter with Romeo, Mercutio draws his friend’s “wit of cheveril” (2.4.87) from his erotic stretching the meaning of words. The “broad” meaning of these words circulate around an unstable and open body, here the “broad goose” (2.4.91), or prostitute, that Romeo ends by turning Mercutio into.

48 The debate between Greenblatt and Fineman concerns the nature of the relation between desire and identity, between a Shakespearean theatrical method of “the representation of the emergence of identity through the experience of erotic heat,” a heating which paradoxically differentiates the genders (where one might rather speculate, according to the medical model Greenblatt is employing, that this heat would make them more similar; or that sexual union, with its “[t]wo distincts, division none” would confuse difference), and Fineman’s counter that heat has nothing to do with it (this is merely a fiction), that desire and identity are an effect of the signifier and metaphoricity’s substitutions at their shared origin. See Greenblatt, “Fiction and Friction,” 88, and Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote,” n.34, 86.

spectators to such a romantic spectacle. In serving the Duke, she pursues self-promotion through sartorial trespass, a transgression which is fortunately resolved through the proposed match at the end and the Duke’s revelation of her noble parentage. Cesario-Viola navigates for power by becoming a “man,” courting Olivia for Orsino, and winning Orsino’s love through such service. (The possible arousal of anxiety from Viola’s class mobility appears displaced onto the figure of a scapegoated Malvolio, the male and mal Viola.) Any gender anxiety about Cesario-Viola’s intimacy with Orsino is negotiated, as is Antonio’s passion for Sebastian and Cesario-Viola’s remarkable disavowal of his claims of friendship (a phantastic difficulty of “plot” routinely ignored by critics), and then resolved in the anticipated “solemn combination” (5.1.385) of the Orsino-Viola and Olivia-Sebastian marriages.

While cross-dressing and hermaphroditism do not figure in the dissertation, the monstrous and the prodigious do figure in my tracking of the instability of gender identity. For instance, I argue that Bottom’s comedic, “effeminate” metamorphoses into an ass are due to his transgressive, monstrous desire, both as an aspiring actor, and in his union with the goddess. The tragic love of Romeo and Juliet is of “[p]rodigious birth” (1.5.142): the playwright stages their sublime passion as emplotted, in a play of reversals, in a reversal of gender identities, as echoed in the play’s final couplet giving Juliet possession of Romeo: “For never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo” (5.3.309-10). In this broad view, I argue that Shakespeare’s theater stages phantasies of identity’s liminality, and that these phantasies are bound up with the questions of proper masculine gender identification, its imaginary puissance and threats to it, and an erotic anxiety attending desire. That is, I investigate how gender is presented as unstable, in the direction of female to male or vice versa, and how this instability and gender ambiguity are staged as erotic motives for spectatorship.50 When the actors “imitate” and identify with other people, they provide a dangerous model for the audience of a contagious mimetic desire that testifies to the lack of stable identity.

50 My position on this point resembles that of Peter Stallybrass in a brilliant essay that demonstrates how gender functions as a fetish in the Renaissance theater, particularly in the contradictory use of boy-actors to highlight the indeterminacy of gender and the mobility of specular lack. In “Transvestism and the ‘body beneath’: speculating on the boy-actor,” in Erotic Politics, Stallybrass argues that the Renaissance theater regularly represents fixed gender as a prosthetic covering of lack and a “fetish.” He argues that the stage reveals gender to be a fetish by representing the spectator’s gaze as fixed on an arbitrary and contradictory
The discourse of contemporary antitheatricalists who fear the stage's magical, illicit influence represents from another quarter an appreciation of the theater's erotic engrossment. Following Laura Levine's early article, I suggest that the antitheatricalist tracts of Stephen Gosson, Phillip Stubbes and William Pynne all index an anxiety about theater's threat to the masculine subject due to the gendered self's instability. Levine traces contradictory attitudes towards the theater's magical influence on the spectator-subject, making them wanton imitators of wanton actors and sexually monstrous in their desires, both attitudes reflecting an anxiety that the category of a gendered self was empty. Levine reads the diatribes against the cross-dressing actors that, as Stubbes remarks in his Anatomie of Abuses, "may not be improperly called Hermaphrodites, that is monsters of both kindes, half women, half men," as based in a projected fear of gender instability, with the further prospect of a preposterous reversion through the theater's incitement of sodomitical desire: "everyone brings one another homeward of their way very friendly and in their secret conclaves they play sodomite or worse. And these be the fruities of playes and Interludes for the most part." One can take as pathological Gosson's anxiety about a phantom sodomitical desire in the theater when he sees the "women" on the stage as mere covers for homoerotic desire. Yet Stubbes's anxious anatomy of abuses also testifies to the erotic power of the theater, its power to ravish the spectator-subject's imagination with its spectacles, even if his testimony appears a bit overstated. As Stubbes's less sanguine counterpart, Autolycus in The Winter's Tale is a playful figure, perhaps even a figure for the playwright advertising his wares, whose licentious songs are promoted for their more or less "delicate burdens of dildos and fadings" (4.4.194-95).

In Greenblatt's essay, the "inherent twinship" of identity poses an opposition of "male and female principles" in constant battle with each other, a tension which admits of resolution in an individual's single sex (where a hermaphrodite is the monstrous suspension of this resolution). This discourse of gender designation of gender, for example, looking at the boy's bosom in a state of undress in a recurring erotic tableau, ie., in a radically alternative sighting to "nothing" compared to much psychoanalytic theory. 


52 Laura Levine, "Men in Women's Clothing," 135. Both citations from Stubbes are from Levine's text.

53 See Orgel's Impersonations, 26-30, which follows Levine's argumentation.

54 Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," 78.
relates the oppositional "tension" and dissonance within the individual to the "drama" of amorous relations, rather as it is an organizing dramatic principle in Dream and its challenged Thesean vision of concord out of discord. This vision compasses a harmonious unity from difference in sexual union and masculine rights of possession. Puck recites this popular "knowledge":

And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown.
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (MND, 3.2.458-63)

This popular "knowledge" or ideology of gender difference ("the country proverb known") - of opposition and the subordination by possession of a debased maternal-feminine ("The man shall have his mare again") - was also present in theological tracts and religious sermons, marriage manuals, philosophical texts, and so on. This is to say that while several competing medical discourses on gender were circulating in the Renaissance, these were also in relation to a wide range of other important discourses informing Shakespeare's drama of gender identity and conflict.

Stephen Orgel writes that masculinity in Renaissance England was something assumed "through an effort of will," a condition to be performed, striven for, and maintained. Moreover, sexuality was by definition misogynist, and gender ideology a means of attributing corporeal grossness, fault and lack to man's double, woman. Orgel writes pointedly about how the "feminine" is invariably used in Renaissance ideology for a hegemonic project of masculine self-definition. Whether man was imagined (in an anatomical model) as an ideal in a teleology where woman is defined as a less perfect version of man by her deficiency in vital heat, whether Galen's model of an anatomical inversion between the sexes is used, or whether the mode of comparison is more essentially oppositional, the medical and other discourses are still ideologically invested in masculine hegemony: "The difference in degree of perfection becomes in practical terms a powerful difference in kind, and the homological arguments are used to justify a whole range of

59 One the morning of their marriage, the lovers comment on the music of Theseus's hunting hounds, the hounds of love. The vision of concord in strife is expressed in terms of a "musical confusion" (4.1.113) by Theseus, and as "one mutual cry" (4.1.120) within "[s]o musical a discord, such sweet thunder" (4.1.121) by Hippolyta, suggesting something less than perfect harmony.
male domination over women.” I suggest, however, that the very proliferation of discourses prescribing these differences can be read as symptomatic that the dominant gender ideology was under significant pressure; Shakespeare’s staging of the competing discourses of proper masculinity participates in this.

The problem of masculine self-definition recurs in these pages. I focus especially on the split of the subject in identification, a split that structures an ideal gender identification and its failed performance. In Dream, gender’s performance is made a source of comedy, of anxious pleasure perhaps, where a monstrous transgression of hierarchies is given playful reign. A tragic subtext remains, submerged in the final playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby” and Oberon’s final blessing of the bridal bed against any “mark prodigious” (5.1.415) of their progeny (the fate of Hippolytus comes to mind). In Romeo and Juliet, the performance of gender in relation to a violent patriarchy is among the causes of the tragedy, though I suggest the tragedy is also a matter of desire’s phantasies of erotic dissolution and death.

We have looked at the monstrous prospect of a woman literally becoming a man in the Renaissance, how the twinned gender of the “prodigious” transvestite variously figures as a model, in dramatic terms of projection and identification, for an erotic gender indecision and transformation, an anxious eroticism derived from the fundamental instability of normative gender identity.

Another threat to a hegemonic masculine identity comes from the possibility of its “regression” to the feminine, also glimpsed above, the Orgel, Impersonations, 19, 25.

The dissertation’s conviction that gender identification is a crucial, central category for the analysis of Shakespeare’s drama owes much of its inspiration to the work of feminist critics like Janet Adelman, Coppelia Kahn, and Dymphna Callaghan. In the final chapter I attempt to show how gender, when not foregrounded, becomes a critical blindspot in Harold Bloom’s estimate of Shakespeare’s literary influence by Marlowe, testifying to the power of just those phantasies of a puissant masculinity in murderous rivalry that Shakespeare anatomizes.

Before leaving this topic, I should note the important essay by Phyllis Rackin, “Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the Renaissance Stage,” PMLA 102 (1987): 29-41. Rackin puts the cross-dressing boy-actor in relation to two images, the “idealized image of the androgyne” in Neoplatonic and occult traditions, and also to the monstrous hermaphrodite: “Increasingly ... the high Renaissance image of the androgyne as a symbol of a prelapsarian or mystical perfection was replaced by the satirical portrait of the hermaphrodite, a medical monstrosity or social misfit, an image of perversion or abnormality” (29).

Also of interest is Marjorie Garber’s book, Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety (New York: Routledge, 1992). Her thesis is that transvestism should be read for various displacements of class and race tensions onto a category crisis of gender embodied by the transvestite (17). Garber’s first chapter on Elizabethan sumptuary laws and a Shakespearean transvestite theater tackles familiar problems of gender roles and ambiguity from a poststructuralist vantage.
threat occasioned by the instability of gender in desire. Reviewing a range of Renaissance discourses on generation, sexual difference, grammar, narrative, and theatrical performance, Patricia Parker writes about how the reversal of a proper and "natural" gendered order is described as a "preposterous regress." Parker notes how masculine anxiety about becoming effeminate, losing cultural prestige or power, is belied by repeated protests that this preposterous prospect is unnatural: "what underlies so many straightforward iterations of the official sequence is precisely the fear of preposterous regress, the fear that instead of progression towards the telos of a "perfect" male, transformations of gender might proceed in reverse." But if regression to the feminine is proclaimed a monstrous impossibility, in desire or love it is this potential loss of power marked as "effeminate" that is constantly being negotiated and defended against.

III. Subjectivity (Sexuality)

A Shakespearean poetics of the subject includes the notion of a "twinned gender identity," where masculine and feminine principles battle within the male subject, with an attendant threat of gender inversion or regression in desire. If we have been speaking of gender thus far, we have also been speaking of subjectivity. With Fineman, I contend that Shakespeare's corpus articulates a model of the split subject (in a Lacanian sense) where the subject is split at the stade du miroir by his identity's reliance on specular others and is also "cut off" from himself by his subjection to a duplicitous language. It is helpful here to review the first part of Fineman's argument to situate my own supplement, particularly in the direction of following the poetic subject's phantasies that repeatedly dramatize origins and loss. Further, reviewing

59 Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43:2 (1992): 186-213 (187). As Laqueur suggests, some Renaissance medical authorities assert that such a transformation is an impossibility, presenting vague metaphysical arguments that as nature tends to perfection, and as men embody the perfection of nature, so they could not regress to this imperfect state of being (*Making Sex*, 141-42). Parker has also written an essay detailing this masculine fear of regression to the feminine. She frames her essay as a corrective to recent texts like Greenblatt's and Laqueur's which tend to make the medical record unduly univocal, a tendency she views as invested in their articulation of those exemplary Renaissance reiterations of the impossibility of masculine impuissance. See "Gender Ideology, Gender Changes: The Case of Marie Germain," *Critical Inquiry* 19:4 (1993): 337-64 (339-41).

60 In Fineman's account of Shakespeare's invention of poetic subjectivity in the Sonnets, the subject falls into language and desire from the self-presence of a visionary, epideictic ideality. In this narrative plotting of the Sonnets, the subject becomes a "perjured eye/I" by his duplicitous or equivocal desiring speech, a self-forswearing fall from the mirroring sameness of an ideal identificatory passion (see sonnet 152). I return to the question of Fineman's claims regarding Freud's debt to Shakespeare as a theorist of subjectivity, see *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, 46.
Fineman’s claims for a Freudian or Lacanian subject in Shakespeare’s poetic *corpus* leads to the question of the “proper” subject’s positioning in relation to a notional homosexual desire, what is relegated to the imaginary or an identificatory passion in Fineman’s model. My use of Fineman’s work here aims to foreground his argument’s status as concerning a *literary* history of subjectivity, and to examine how his claim for Shakespeare’s invention of a heterosexual poetics of subjectivity can be brought in relation to more historically nuanced accounts of homophilic sexuality in the Renaissance.

In his essay, “Fratricide and Cuckoldry: Shakespeare’s Doubles,” Fineman presents an early version of his later argument about Shakespeare’s invention of poetic subjectivity in the Sonnets. Fraternal enmity-amity is presented as a transposition of formative mirroring relations with the maternal out of which the “self” is precipitated; the subject tends to repeat the dissonance of cleavage in the stagings of desire:

> The only constant from the twins of the *The Comedy of Errors* to Leontes and Polixenes, from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to Prospero and Antonio, is the violent relationship between male equals, the enmity of enemy twins. The duality of brothers that generates singularity, along with the mirroring complexities of dual reflexiveness and defused images of the discrete self, is the masculine rephrasing of the original relationship of son and mother, of son and his discovery of an outside world from which he is separated and to which he is attached. The violence between brothers is for Shakespeare the projection in dramatic terms of the infantile experience of cleavage. For, as Shakespeare understands it, fratricide is the road to and away from the mother: a violence of desire that confirms the experience of self; a violence that separates equals and joins ... opposites who have no difference between them.  

Lacan’s *stade du miroir* appears to be the model guiding the formulation of this theoretical paradigm of the split subject: the emerging masculine subject is implicated in a negated femininity from the start, where the subject distinguishes himself in opposition to this first sense of self and lack. Fineman reads fratricide in Shakespeare as an authorial myth, his “projection in dramatic terms of the infantile experience of cleavage.” On the other hand, in Shakespeare’s representation of “character,” fratricide appears motivated by the fear of nondifference and the incipient rivalry and aggression due to the subject’s identification through an alienating image (i.e., the “fraternal” double of the mirror). By working with both Girardian and

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Lacanian models in his essay, Fineman points to their possible rapprochement in a Shakespearean subject's passion for identity and "being."  

Fineman relates the homoerotic to the Lacanian imaginary through the latter's production of aggressivity arising from the rivalry with "fraternal" mirror doubles in the process of identification. Rather as in a Girardian account of enemy twins and the violence of an appropriative mimetic desire whose goal is an impossible ontological self-presence, the "fraternal" other becomes a model for the subject's desire as well as his being. Crucially here, phantasy is the ego's narcissistic defence against loss, specifically here the loss of mirroring self-presence with the specular other. The subject's failure to assume this ideal image leads to aggression and a momentous inward turn of aggression, a phantasied internalization of the drama of aggression dividing the subject. In Dream and Romeo and Juliet, the subject's self-division leads to the phantasy scenarios that attempt to shield the subject from lack while functioning to repeat the masochistic excitation of (self-)aggression. Of course, the imaginary relations sustaining the self need not be characterized as fraternal or homoerotic, but as Fineman's essay demonstrates, Shakespeare's corpus often dramatizes them in such a manner.

On the side of heterosexual desire, Fineman's psychoanalytic model explains misogyny as the predictable byproduct of establishing a hegemonic gender difference, where a phantom identification with the feminine or maternal has always already occurred. Whether in fratricide or misogynist desire, the "violence of desire" describes the dissonance of the subject's experience of cleavage that it aims to repeat.

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63 Fineman, "Fratricide and Cuckoldry," see esp. 86-89.
65 Jean Laplanche uses the term "phantasmatization" to describe this phantasied incorporation in his Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 97-102. Laplanche's analysis of Freud's essay on beating phantasies leads him to reflect that "it is in the transition to the phase 2 that the fantasy, the unconscious, and sexuality in the form of masochistic excitation together emerge in a single movement" (100). The "turning around" of this second scene describes "an internalization of the whole of the action [of aggression towards the sibling rival or lost object] on the psychical level (97), and the phantasied incorporation acts as a source of masochistic excitation. Whether in the incorporation of aggression that divides the subject, or in the identification with the rival, phantasy supports an unconscious economy of masochistic sexuality.

Although his position is rather different from Fineman's here, I do attempt to flesh out Bloom's assertion in The Western Canon that the poet is Freud's great precursor: "Freud was anxious about Shakespeare because he had learned anxiety from him, as he had learned ambivalence and narcissism and schism in the
In Fineman's expanded version of this argument presented in his book on the Sonnets, the perjured, desiring "eye/I" is due to the fault of language's lack of univocal reference, to language's duplicity troped as a feminine fault. In "Shakespeare's Ear," Fineman recounts what he sees as the rhetorical argument of the Sonnets, their "entropic evacuation of a poetics of idealization," in a manner that brings out a certain misogyny structuring desire. Fineman suggests that Shakespeare works from the orthodox poetic tradition of epideictics, but tropes the visionary self-present subject's identificatory desire as "homosexual," thus inventing a "poetics of heterosexuality" in which homosexual desire appears idealized and encrypted.

I think it is worth noting that Fineman's account imposes an asymmetry for the sonneteer's erotic desire between the male (as "kind" and ideal) and female (as "unkind" and abject) beloved. Although this rigid gender ideology is circulating in the Sonnets, the Shakespearean corpus also complicates and interrogates this paradigm by continually bringing the (a)symmetry to the point of evident contradiction. For instance, "woman" is far from uniformly excoriated in the dramas, although women do tend to be cast into sacrificial roles highlighting their epistemological function in relation to a misogynist masculinist order.

Likewise, if masculine friendship in the Sonnets is idealized despite and in contrast to the intrusion of the dark lady's sexuality, one can nevertheless read a phantom sodomy between the lines of this friendship. Some recent critics, following the lead of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, have read this charge of a scandalous sodomy as properly directed to the abject figure of the dark lady. That is, speaking historically and within the terms of the Sonnets, the woman is more obviously the source of a disorderly desire the period called, with its wide range of meaning, sodomy. I would further note that in Shakespeare's corpus, both women self" ("Freud: A Shakespearean Reading," 394). I elaborate some of the ways in which the Shakespearean subject is divided.

67 A whole cast of Shakespearean heroines are required to act as chaste mediators and reflectors of masculine desire (from the tragic Cordelia and Ophelia to Rosalind, Viola, and the daughters of the Romances). While acting as faithful guarantors of "truth," as suggested by a pastoral name like "Fidele," these women also reflect on this function, facilitating critiques of masculinist ideology.
and men are the attributed, phantasied source of sexual corruption linked to counterfeiting and representation. In Twelfth Night, for instance, the homophilic Antonio cries out against Viola-Cesario, whom he thinks is Sebastian, for undoing the Platonic harmonies embodied in the “fair, kind, and true” (sonnet 105) youth who guarantees a speculative unity in the sonneteer’s rhetorical argument:

> But, O, how vild an idol proves this god!
> Thou hast, Sebastian, done good feature shame.
> In nature there’s no blemish but the mind;
> None can be called deformed but the unkind.
> Virtue is beauty; but the beauteous evil
> Are evil trunks, o’erflourished by the devil. (3.4.377-82)

This railing might be placed next to the sonneteer’s repeated protestations of the youth’s beauty and truth, the “entropic evacuation of a poetics of idealization” whose repetitions threaten to perjure the speaker’s self-present “eye/I” in the sonnets addressed to the youth also: “Let not my love be called idolatry,/ Nor my beloved as an idol show” (sonnet 105).

As Sedgwick points up, the speaker of the sonnets is self-divided but adopts differing psychic strategies for displacing this self-division; I would submit with Fineman that these are also extremely self-conscious rhetorical, literary strategies. The sonneteer first displaces this division in his ideal identification with the always unified youth, whose faults he takes on himself, and then through attributing his originary self-division to the dark lady. Sedgwick's argument with the Sonnets is that Shakespeare writes as a mouthpiece for his culture’s masculinist gender ideology; she sees the text as reflecting a gender ideology that devalues the sonneteer’s heterosexual erotic bond with the dark lady, an asymmetry in valuing the erotic relation under the apparent symmetry of the persona’s “Two loves.” Sedgwick’s case against the Sonnets is essentially about the gendered axis of displacing lack and the “fall” into (hetero-)sexuality, interrogating the homosocial and the problematic place of a mediating, exchanged woman cementing male “erotic” bonds and power (not that it really works out this way in the Sonnets, though the lyric persona...

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71 See Gayle Rubin’s important gender critique of Levi-Strauss and the economy of woman as gift-exchange in the exogamous marriage ritual, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in
might initially take this route in imploring the youth to marry). Yet Sedgwick’s criticism seems a bit overreaching when she fails to acknowledge that these displacements and mediations are the subject of Shakespeare’s critical scrutiny in the Sonnets, “The Rape of Lucrece,” and in many of the dramas.

The Mirror Doubles of Ideal Masculinity: Friendship and Sodomy

If identifications with a proper masculinity and a purchase on homosocial power and pleasure in the Renaissance are obviously pursued through a variety of relations to women, masculine puissance is at least as critically derived from relations to other men. These relations range from the eroticized exchange of “woman” between men in the erotic triangles of the marriage ceremony and its inversion in cuckoldry, to the unmediated intercourse of friendship. Male-male friendship in particular is often represented in Shakespeare’s texts as haunted by a phantom homophilic desire, i.e., the erotics of friendship might harbour that disorderly desire called “sodomy.” As Alan Bray argues, the signs and conventions of friendship and sodomy were so similar as to make accusations of the latter sort of intimacy possible in political strategems for and of power. 72

As a bastion for ideal masculinity in the Renaissance, male friendship, especially when articulated in the language of epideictic ideality, likeness, emulation and identification, 73 is often haunted by a phantom sodomy or, on the other hand, an erotic violence that I am describing as fratricidal. As glimpsed above in discussing the Sonnets and Twelfth Night, I review here the problematic “duplicity” of friendship and


72 Alan Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” Queering the Renaissance, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). Bray concludes his essay by suggesting that in the absence of the essential category of the “homosexual” in the Renaissance, a category upon which the crime of transgression could be projectively fastened, homosocial desire was particularly open to rhetorical charges of impropriety: “the study in this essay of the Elizabethan sin of Sodom places it outside a discrete history of sexuality; its shadow was never far from the flower-strewn world of Elizabethan friendship [or the flower-strewn world of “heterosexual” desire, as we will see in MND and R&J] and it could never wholly be distinguished from it” (56-57).

73 For a historicist analyses of some of these matters, see the first chapter of Laurie Shannon’s Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).
sodomy in Shakespeare's England. The aim is to survey the historical conception of sodomy, its social
dimension and disordering potential or significance within a framework of "the double," an approach that
heeds the way in which the indeterminacy of these signs provokes a normative masculine power's need to
(mis)recognize sodomitical desire. A further aim is to record my most significant debts to the work of Bray,
Goldberg, and Gregory W. Bredbeck, and to indicate the direction in which I take their work in the
following chapters.

In his landmark book, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, Bray would follow Foucault in arguing
that "homosexuality" is an anachronism for discussing homosexual desire in the Renaissance, notably
because such an "identity" did not exist. The name for what we might call male "homosexuality" today, a
distinct identity, did not exist except in what was considered the aberrant practice of sodomy: it rather
"existed as a potential for confusion and disorder in one undivided sexuality .... What sodomy and buggery
represented - and homosexuality was only part of these - was rather the disorder in sexual relations that
could break out anywhere." Bray explains how a notional "homosexuality" was imagined in other terms:

To talk of an individual in this period as being or not being a homosexual is an anachronism and
ruinously misleading. The temptation to debauchery, from which homosexuality was not clearly
distinguished, was accepted as part of the common lot, be it never abhorred.

The essential point here is that sodomy was viewed anxiously as a potential debauchery to which all
men were subject as *subjects of desire*. Bray's first chapter makes clear that a phantom sodomy
threatens a cultural ideal of order, where sodomy becomes a trope for describing a range of
transgressions of the existing power structures and sexual prohibitions. Further, what is now usually
"understood" by sodomy, a specific sexual act between men, was more broadly aligned in the

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1978), Foucault makes his famous declaration: "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality
when it was translated from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyne, a hermaphroditism of
the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43). Contrary
to Foucault's genealogy here, I have suggested that both a phantom sodomy and this kind of interior, ideal
androgyne inform Shakespeare's staging of desire for the cross-dressed boy-actors.


76 Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 16-17. Bray often appears to lapse from this type of
awareness in his recognition of homosexual acts where the historical actors avoided "recognising it for
what it was" (67), i.e., recognizing sodomy as an indicator of a homosexual identity where no such identity
existed, or where the society conveniently refused to recognize "it." For example, see the language of his
discussions on 70, and 76-79. Interestingly, the book itself is plotted like a coming out of a nascent
Renaissance with treason and blasphemy as part of a propagandistic, persecuting "mythology, 
embracing werewolves and basilisks, sorcerers and the devilry of the Papists; and it was within its 
mould that the images of the sodomite were cast." Analyzed from a psychoanalytic and/or Girardian 
perspective, the law's prohibition and punishment of sodomy can lead to the further eroticization of 
such interdicted acts, their projective scapegoating lending them an ubiquitous association with the 
sacred. 

Goldberg felicitously embraces Bray's work on the difficulty in English Renaissance culture of 
distinguishing between the images of the ideal friend and an excoriated sodomite. In Sodometries, 
Goldberg traces how the latter image is routinely projected onto a whole range of others in a 
"sodometrie." Goldberg's work tends to situate this phantom sodomy in the public sphere of power 
where, as a term of projective (mis)recognition, a "sodometrie," in which a sexual self and monstrous, 
demonized other are anxiously distinguished: this deconstructive focus emphasizes the instabilities 
generated by the self's construction out of its others, an instability that follows from the specular 
constitution of the ego; his analysis also observes the mutual implication of prohibition and the 
production of desire. Following Bray again, Goldberg emphasizes how a demonized sodomy was 
conceived as "treason against the King of Heaven." Sodomitical phantasy appears to be a trope 
describing the subject's wishful participation in "sovereign" power in dramas as different as Dream 
and Romeo and Juliet, with Marlowe's depiction of the sovereign's career in Edward II as an 
influential text for Shakespeare.

"homosexual identity," culminating in the fourth chapter's record of the emergence of a "brilliantly 
different" homosexual subculture in the Molly houses at the end of the seventeenth century.

77 Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England, 21.
78 See Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England, 27-32, 71-77. This dialectic of interdiction producing 
desire can doubtless also be viewed as a ruse of power for enjoying itself in the production of sexuality.

79 See Sodometries, where Goldberg defines his nonce word "sodometrie" (xv-xvi). And see, for example, 
his analysis of the potential misrecognition of friendship and sodomy in Marlowe's Edward II, esp. 119-20.

80 At the beginning of his chapter "Desiring Hal," Goldberg elaborates the trajectory of imaginary 
identification with a specular, sovereign ideal of power and its legacy of a masochistic propensity of self-
punishment (esp. 145-55), a critical elaboration the dissertation returns to. See also his programatic 
statement regarding the reading of sodomy and friendship at the end of his chapter, "The Transvestite 
Stage: More on the Case of Christopher Marlowe" (141-43).

81 Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England, 20.
82 In Impersonations, Orgel comments on Marlowe's drama: "For Marlowe to translate the whole range of 
power politics into sodomy certainly says something about his interests and that of Elizabethan audiences,
the sovereign, instances of _laesae majestatis_, a wounding that is most assaultive because it is so constitutive of the structures of power.” Although Goldberg’s analysis might appear to fetishize power and its reification in the sovereign, arbitrarily troping sodomy as such an assault, such cultural phantasies may have had currency due to the historical practice of absolutist sovereignty and the spectacular nature of this power. This model recurs in the first chapter, but in a moment we see how this wounding of the “sovereign subject” (of desire) is troped by Shakespeare in a meditation on Cupid’s arrow.

Like Goldberg’s book, Bredbeck’s _Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton_ is a historically informed text that uses a post-structuralist methodology for reading sodomy in Renaissance texts. Bredbeck’s description of “the sort of undifferentiated catalogue of otherness to which early Renaissance sodomy belonged” makes _sodomy_ the flexible trope condensing a range of perceived assault on proper masculine identity: the stake is a punitive difference between a masculine subject and a host of demonic, sodomitical others. Bredbeck contends that through the seventeenth century the “rhetorical legacy of undifferentiated vice” indicated by the word sodomy increasingly gave more precise definitions to the acts and identities encompassed by a specifically male homophilia. He describes the language used to represent an increasingly specific “male sexual activity” of sodomy:

The change in the language of sodomy during the Renaissance is best thought of as a movement from synecdoche to _ironia_, and particularly that subdivision of _ironia_ that Fraunce terms _negatio_: “A kinde of pretended omitting or letting slip of that which indeed we elegantly note out in the verie shewe of praetermission, as when we say; I let this passe; I passe it over with silence.” For while the later specifications of sodomitical behavior all serve to constrain and suppress the social status of homoeroticism, they also “elegantly note out” the first linguistic genesis of homoerotic behavior as homoerotic behavior. The linguistic model indicated by the difference in semantic status between the early and late Renaissance is one in which the discursive concern with the documentation of prurience leads to an ever-increasing reification of sodomy...

...but it also has to be added that it was probably safer to represent the power structure in that way than it would have been to play it, so to speak, straight” (48). Orgel appears to argue that as long as male-male sodomy is perceived as foreign (not English), paradoxically, this allows the dramatic representation of a sodomitical deposition where the sexuality aired deflects from the drama’s inquiry into power.


Bredbeck, _Sodomy and Interpretation_, 16-20 (16). Bredbeck’s argument is that “the entire process of specification demonstrated in legal language and lexicography marks a movement from general demonic condemnation ... to specific sexuality” (20).
sexualities and sexual behaviors and, at the same time, creates a linguistic movement from
synecdochal articulation to ironic silence.\textsuperscript{86}

Bredbeck’s general line of argument is that “Renaissance homoeroticism is figured and refigured as a
slippery category that is at once both a type of sexual meaning and an effacement of sexual meaning,”\textsuperscript{87} a
formulation that recalls Michel Foucault’s description of “that utterly confused category” in sexual
epistemologies.\textsuperscript{88} The large and rather totalizing claims Bredbeck makes for the importance of this
discourse of sodomy for a genealogy of the modern subject is nothing if not provocative. His work
proposes to “demonstrate that the rhetorical and epistemological development of Renaissance sodomy on
the one hand marks the birth of modern sexual and gender epistemology as we know it, but on the other
hand also encodes the potential for radical disruption of that meaning.”\textsuperscript{89} Bredbeck’s apparent motive here
is to claim for “sodomy” the ability to disrupt proper gender identity.

From the above discussion of Bray, Goldberg and Bredbeck’s work, we can see that sodomy is a
particularly flexible term for describing transgressive desire that would participate in phantasies of power.
In the work reviewed above, sodomy is aligned with the provocative destabilization of the subject, an act
troped for describing the subject’s phantasied relation to the other of desire. The critical descriptions of
Goldberg and Bredbeck emphatically attribute to sodomy a type of demonic, transgressive force -
provoking the subject’s discoherence and crisis - granted to sodomy by contemporary Renaissance
discourses written in ethical, medical and legal language. Such critical interpretations of sodomy often
appear to participate in this sodomy’s phantasied power, its power to provoke the subject’s incoherence and
crisis. Such is the import of some of Goldberg’s recent work, for instance his essay on the “Open Rs” of
\textit{Romeo and Juliet} whose focus on a homoerotic open body and the “open arse” of desire privileges,
precisely in his claim that the anus is a site of erotic pleasure for both sexes, “the erotic fantasies, powers,
and practices of men.”\textsuperscript{90} Such interpretations of sodomy often participate in phantasies of masculine power,
in sodomy’s phantasied reversals of lack, although this is imagined as a return to sender of sodomy’s

\textsuperscript{86} Bredbeck, \textit{Sodomy and Interpretation}, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{87} Bredbeck, \textit{Sodomy and Interpretation}, 21.
\textsuperscript{88} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, 101.
\textsuperscript{89} Bredbeck, \textit{Sodomy and Interpretation}, 22.
\textsuperscript{90} See Mario DiGangi, “Opening Up the Renaissance Corpus,” review of \textit{Queering the Renaissance}, ed.
abjection, sending lack back to the dominant term in a “political” criticism (though it remains unclear in Goldberg’s work why the “presumptions” of heterosexual feminists need entail their occupation of this dominant term). Bredbeck similarly explains his monocular focus on reading sodomy as a strategy for challenging the supposedly complacent authority of the normative “white straight male” who embodies a sort of impregnable “hegemonic power.”

I would reframe what Bredbeck calls a “poetics of sodomy” in the terms provided by Shakespeare’s drama, putting this poetics centre-stage in the playwright’s staging of desire. I look at the playwright’s allegorical development in *Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* of Cupid’s wounding of the lover, indicating how the poetic subject’s attempted appropriation of the other’s sovereign puissance is described in terms of sodomitical phantasy. In the section on a Shakespearean Cupid that follows and then in the first and second chapters, I consider how the playwright grafts a phantom sodomy onto phantasies of self-presence via the other, and further, how this poetics tropes the subject’s self-shattering in desire as a phantom repetition of Love’s sodomy. Describing the travails of the desiring subject in *Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, I argue that the playwright pictures Cupid in an allegory of desire where Love’s figurative sodomy of the “sovereign subject” is the phantom cause and trajectory of desire. If I note above the problematic range of sodomy as a slippery category denoting transgression and provoking the discoherence of gender identification, I also argue that this range of a phantom sodomy is present in a Shakespearean portrait of the desiring subject’s subversion by the “other” of desire.

In the first chapter’s discussion of *Dream*, I develop Bredbeck’s model of a “poetics of sodomy,” asking if Bottom might encode a type of disruptive sexual meaning by the synecdochical substitutions of a language of “bottoms.” I also ask how sodomitical phantasy is repeatedly staged in the desire that “Bottom” and others name through an ironic *negatio*, a negation whose psychoanalytic valence is drawn out in respect to the divided subject’s articulation of desire: “I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream … It shall be called “Bottom’s Dream,” because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the

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Duke" (4.1.207-10; 218-21). The second chapter's discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* develops the notion of desire being determined by a literary signifier, what I call, following Goldberg, the "name of the rose," and the manner in which sodomitical phantasy is repeatedly staged through an ironic *negatio* of the letter of desire.

IV. Love, Desire and Phantasy: a Shakespearean Cupid

The figure of Cupid flits through *Romeo and Juliet* and *Dream*, a mythological agent of desire whose varied portraiture contributes to a reflection on the desiring subject's self-division and instability; Cupid also contributes to a reflection on the lover's relations to his ideals of Love. In his representation of Cupid in these dramas, Shakespeare negotiates with Christian moralizing against pagan *cupiditas* (desire) in favor of *caritas* (love), and more importantly perhaps, he directs a Neoplatonic allegorical tradition of Cupid's interpretation, again starting from the duality (profane/sacred) and dialectical elevation of passion, toward a "psychoanalytic" understanding of the desiring subject caught up in fetishistic displacements of lack. In both dramas, Cupid is described at an originary scene of desire, as the cause of desire and as the phantom object of desire.

In the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, Cupid is closely associated with the "name of the rose," with a sort of poetic letter on the ob-scene stage of the unconscious dictating desire and its metamorphoses. In *Dream*, Cupid is invoked as the Greek deity responsible for desire. As he is associated with Puck, Cupid presides over the union of Bottom and Titania; Puck attends to the application of the flower "love-in-idleness" (2.1.168) or "[f]lower of this purple dye" (3.2.102) to the lovers' eyes. And Cupid is recalled in desire's *perjury* of the speaking I/eye (1.1.234-41), as the errant Puck is responsible for desire's specular "misprision" (3.2.90). Both dramas then position Cupid at an originary scene of desire, a scene of a

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92 Goldberg, "The Open Rs of *Romeo and Juliet.*" His interpretation and my divergence from his rhetoric are reviewed in the second chapter. His essay investigates the passing of desire through the letter R or the "name of the rose" (229).

93 For a review of the Medieval literary tradition Shakespeare was heir to, see Theresa Tinkle's *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). As the text and footnotes to Chapter One suggest, I am indebted to Jan Kott's Neoplatonic reading
Cupidinous, *specular* wounding. This wounding describes an originary displacement of aim that repeats itself in the poetic subject’s phantasied repetitions and/or displacements of lack. As we will see, there is in this picture of Cupid an anatomy of the sacrificial within desire, an anatomy of the subject’s murderous misrecognition of the other of desire and conversely, the internalization of this sacrificial speculation on the loved object and a self-sacrifice of the body allowing an ideal identification with Love. I turn to the allegorical representations of Cupid as Love in these dramas for the subject’s desiring relations to his constitutive others and how these relations are staged as originating in an imaginary assault on his integrity, a wounding that precipitates a paradoxical, ongoing identification with (the other of) Love.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio gives a brief inventory of the mercurial forms taken by Love in ravishing his friend Romeo:

> Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead: stabbed with a white wench’s black eye; run through the ear with a love song; the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind-boy’s butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt? (2.4.13-17)

I discuss this passage again briefly in the second chapter. For now it is worth noting a few prominent features of the speech. First, a fatal desire/love (“he is already dead”) is pictured here as being engendered by a trangression of bodily integrity. Insofar as this account assumes that the position of penetration is that of mastery, it is gendered masculine; thus desire/love is *phantasied* as originating in an erotic penetration. But the account also clearly subverts any such gendering of penetration by describing Romeo’s love sick condition as due to a woman’s active look (“stabbed with a white wench’s eye”). Secondly, a specifically...

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94 The metaphor of Cupid’s phallic bolt of love is not original to Shakespeare, nor are the specular terms of Love’s wounding wholly innovative. Shakespeare, or rather Romeo, follows tradition again when the lover identifies with a warlike Cupid; for instance, when we see Romeo describing his love as a siege on Rosaline, complaining to Benvolio: “She will not stay the siege of loving terms,/ Nor bide th’ encounter of assailing eyes./ Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold” (1.1.215-16; my emphasis). As Paul Allen Miller notes, the metaphor of Cupid’s arrow as a “phallus” and the motif of a “warlike Cupid” are Ovidian and Petrarchan before they are anglicized in the text of one of Shakespeare’s precursors, Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*. See Miller’s “Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid, or imitation as Subversion,” *English Literary History* 58 (1991): 499-522 (512-17; 508).

literary provenance of desire, as might be suggested by a mimetic model of desire, is indicated in Romeo's further ravishment ("run through the ear with a love song"). Taking the liberty of anticipating later readings, we might identify this "love song" with a Petrarchan tradition, with the Roman de la Rose, and with tales of a "Cupid's Paradise" in a religion of Love (telling of the lover's blissful transcendence in going to death to meet his lover). Here and in the second chapter, this take on a literary model for desire is developed in the direction of a psychoanalytic notion of desire. Though the "love song" appears to be figured as a "bolt" shadowing the description, crucially, both genders here are subject to giving ("stabbed with a white wench's black eye") and receiving Love's wound.

According to Mercutio, Romeo has had "the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind-boy's butt-shaft." In keeping with a phantom sodomy haunting desire in the rest of the text, this description of "the blind-boy's butt-shaft" (2.4.16) appears to speak in a language of the body when it says "butt-shaft," a speaking that might wink at such "blind" desire. In A Dictionary of Sexual Puns and Their Sexual Significance, Frankie Rubinstein suggests that "heart" is often to be read as a sexual pun for "arse," which would further this reading. This substitution of the bottom ("arse") for the top ("heart"), or their crossing, is consistent with the drama's representation of the sources of eroticism and a dialectic of desire's idealization. Although Love is pictured as figuratively sodomizing Romeo, one could no doubt deflect this fanciful impropriety, pointing to Mercutio's own desire in propounding such a "primal scene" of desire, making the speech into a matter of Shakespeare's representation of Mercutio's desire. Or one could similarly ask whether such a

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97 I cite several essays in the second chapter that deal with the importance of Petrarchan poetics to R&J. See also the first part of The Romance of the Rose, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, trans. Charles Dahlberg (London: University Press of New England, 1983). For an excellent account of the competing places of "Christianity and the Religion of Love in Romeo and Juliet," see Paul N. Siegel's article in the Shakespeare Quarterly 12 (1961) 371-92.

98 See the entry for "heart" in Frankie Rubinstein's A Dictionary Of Shakespeare's Puns And Their Sexual Significance (London: Macmillan, 1984). In her Oxford edition of Romeo and Juliet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Jill L. Levenson notes the bawdy quibble on "pin" but overlooks the one on "heart." She deflects the quibble on "butt-shaft" (an unbarbed practice arrow) into a reference to its presence in another drama, Love's Labours Lost.

repeating “primal scene” of desire is not likewise an interpretative phantasy of mastery on my own part. These cautionary reservations are due here, but the point is that Mercutio’s vision of desire tropes the origin and object of desire as sodomitical, where the trope contributes to the playful elaboration of a psychoanalytic conception of desire and phantasy’s fetishistic displacements of an originary lack.

From Romeo’s state of emasculation, phantasy might dictate the reversal of Love’s wounding through a repetition reclaiming agency. This is Mercutio’s advice: “Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down” (1.2.48). Benvolio gives much the same advice to cure Romeo of his love sickness, advising Romeo to “Turn giddy, and be holp by backwards turning” (1.2.48), where the giddy turning of phantasy is to reverse his present state of effeminization, that of being “sore enpierced with his [Cupid’s] shaft” (1.4.19). Such a reversal is grounded in a figurative turning backwards of memory and a “turning around” of direction of the wounding sodomy. Romeo’s exchange with Mercutio here traces a dialogue between two positions regarding love, Romeo’s embrace of a position of masochistic enjoyment that is typed as feminine by a discourse espousing male sprezzatura, versus Mercutio’s refusal of “love’s heavy burden” (1.4.22):

Mercutio. You are a lover. Borrow Cupid’s wings
And soar with them above a common bound.

Romeo. I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers; and so bound
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
Under love’s heavy burden do I sink.

Mercutio. And, to sink in it, should you burden love -
Too great oppression for a tender thing.

Romeo. Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
Too rude, too boist’rous, and it pricks like thorn.

Mercutio. If love be rough with you, be rough with love;

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100 Fineman comments on psychoanalysis’s own “obsessionality” in interpretation, where the “culminating moment of Freud’s analysis of the obsessional Ratman comes, for example, when Freud’s interpretation participates in the Ratman’s deepest homosexual fantasies ... I would say that we can follow out the same language and desire [Fineman has cited Freud’s text where he provides the inarticulate Ratman with the locus of his penetration, provides, as it were, the “missing portion” to reconstruct this primal scene], not only in Freud’s biography, but in psychoanalytic theory and metatheory - a hermeneutic sodomy.” “The Structure of Allegorical Desire,” in The Subjectivity Effect, n.41, 27-28. The interpretation of sodomitical desire here “takes the hermeneutic form of attempting to plug up what are thematized as gaps” (n.41, 27). Regarding the pleasure of mastery in psychoanalytic interpretation and how it figures as an anal erotic activity in Freud’s rhetoric of persuasion, see Stanley Fish’s essay, “Withholding the Missing Portion: Power, Meaning, and Persuasion in Freud’s ‘The Wolf Man’,” Times Literary Supplement, August 29, 1986, 935-38.

101 Briefly, as I argue in the second chapter, Romeo’s masculinity is in question here because he enjoys being ravished by Love. This dramatizes a contradiction of an ideal masculinity defined as active, sadistic and inpenetrable, versus the inward turn of aggression in the subject that founds sexuality and phantasy in the masochistic excitation troped as Love’s sodomy.
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.
Give me a case to put my visage in.
A visor for a visor! What care I
What curious eye doth quote deformities? (1.4.17-31)

Mercutio’s vision of transcendence in love recommends taking Cupid’s position: “You are a lover. Borrow Cupid’s wings/ And soar with them above a common bound.” The proper male lover is Cupid in

Mercutio’s account of desire-love here. Mercutio’s request for a visor here seems to give him a trace of a “purblind” (2.1.12) Cupid himself: he asks for a mask but more precisely for “a case to put my visage in.”

Thus, in one discourse of masculinity articulated by the “brave Mercutio” (3.1.118), Romeo’s “very friend” (3.1.112), a phantom sodomy accompanies desire, as when Mercutio says, “If love be rough with you, be rough with love; Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down” (1.4.27-28). In these lines, Mercutio on one level is advising Romeo to alleviate his love-sick condition, to “beat love down” by detumescence. But a further meaning of aggressive bawdry (the note in which the drama opens with Sampson and Gregory) is suggested in the pricking and beating. Mercutio’s advice is one of “turning around” Love’s ravishment: if Cupid pricks you, prick Love for pricking, and you are no longer sinking under Love’s burden, ie., this reversal makes desire “light” or “giddy.” This phantom sodomy describes the phantasied repetition or displacement of lack that haunts the narrative of romantic love and desire in the drama.

In Mercutio’s amatory discourse, the lover Cupid is blind, a blindness entailing the displacement of desire’s aim, a displacement again joined to a phantom sodomy:

If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
Now will he sit under a medlar tree
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
As maids calls medlars when they laugh alone.
O, Romeo, that she were, O that she were
An open arse, thou a pop’rin pear! (2.1.33-38)

The originary displacement of desire in Cupid’s missed mark (“If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark”) is more fully elaborated in Oberon’s allegorical speech about Cupid and “love’s wound” (2.1.167) in

My citation departs here from the Signet edition’s “open et cetera” of 2.1.38, following recent editions that recover the “open arse” of a phantom original text. For instance, see the Arden edition of Brian Gibbons, or Levenson’s Oxford edition. Regarding the phantom of an original text, see Goldberg’s essay, “‘What? in a names that which we call a Rose,’ The Desired Texts of Romeo and Juliet,” in Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance, ed. Randall McLeod (New York: AMS Press, 1994). In his “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” Goldberg tactfully declines to become bogged down in “the textual crux of
Dream. As in Dream, the displacement of desire's aim in Romeo and Juliet often seems haunted by a revenant of sodomy.

An occluded sacrificial dimension to Cupid's force might be linked to his flagrant transgression of a gendered epistemology and identity's gender norms (for example, an active, forming male opposing [ie., above] a passive, impressionable female). As the mythic cause of disorderly desire, Cupid is a general sacrificing deity of Love and a convenient scapegoat for desire's ills: "Cupid is a knavish lad/Thus to make poor females mad" (MND, 3.2.440-41). Might this sacrificial dimension to desire and Love motivate Mercutio's nicknaming Cupid "Young Abraham Cupid" when he addresses an absent Romeo?

Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word,
One nickname for her purblind son and heir,
Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so true
When King Cophetua loved the beggar maid! (2.1.11-14)

Cupid in this scenario threatens to overturn the social order in his emblematic assault ("he that shot so true") on the sovereign's body. The transgression of social order in a king loving "the beggar maid" can be named, in this era, as sodomy, what is "prefigured" here in Cupid's assault on the sovereign's body, an erotic crossing of high and low and a reversal of "penetration" beggaring the sovereign subject. This loss of distinctions between king and beggar maid, refers back, in mythical fashion, to "Young Abraham Cupid" (2.1.13) who is blamed for this disorder. Might "Young Abraham Cupid" also point to the paradoxes of divine Love, its sacrificial covenant or union?

In my reading, the contradiction of the phrase "Young Abraham Cupid" points to a sacrificing father, the father who is exalted because he would sacrifice "himself." If God gives us his Son as Abraham gave his

2.1.38," what would throw light on his own similar agenda of recovery were he to question the motivations of Gibbons in putting the "open arse" in his text (229).

103 In this respect, see Juliet's invocation of the deity Cupid to her nuptials, in her famous "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds" speech (3.2.1-31). Speaking as an eager bride, Juliet's bridal song transgresses the gender norms of the conventional epithalamium where maidenly modesty and fear are the keynotes; this transgression fits in with her invocation of "love-performing night./That runaways' eyes may wink/and Romeo/Leap to these arms untalked of and unseen" (3.1.5-7), ie., where the runaway is Cupid winking on their illicit nuptials. For a discussion that conclusively identifies the "runaways" with Cupid, see the fine essay by Gary M. McCown, "Runaways Eyes' and Juliet's Epithalamium," Shakespeare Quarterly 27 (1976): 150-70.
son to God, both these gifts of Love describe an economy of exemplary "self"-sacrifice literalized with Christ's Passion, the model for the subject's participation with divinity. That is, if Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac foretells God's gift of his Son, this model of renunciation effects a sacred covenant and identification with God for the religious subject. The nickname "Young Abraham Cupid" points to the censored, though not-so-occluded presence of sacrifice and death in the drama's transcendental vision of Love's ideal unions. Translated from the language of an union with God supported by self-sacrifice, and specifically the sacrifice of the body, these ideal unions are presented as numinously sexual while the renunciation grants a substitutive satisfaction. These paradoxes of the death in desire and the lover's sacrificial passion for proper identity - stabilized through subject's ideal union with Love - are central, challenging, perhaps intractable problems in Romeo and Juliet. Might Mercutio's playful naming of Love's "sacrifices" point laconically to the identification with God in (self-)sacrifice and to the violence constitutive of the sacred also present in (masochistic) sexuality?

The second chapter elaborates this sacrificial vision of desire and love in Romeo and Juliet, a poetics of the desiring subject's "sacrifice" of the other in its "purblind" (2.1.12) misprision, where the converse internalization of erotic aggression conditions the sublime vision of Love. In the passion of Romeo and Juliet, the ideal object of an identificatory passion is in alternation with desire's "scattering" of the subject, mediated by the "Rose" and the "name of the rose" respectively. In short, phantasy orchestrates the romantic lovers' union with the specular other in an imaginary identification whose movement towards sufficiency also translates into phantasies of erotic dissolution and death.

Regarding the range of these standard gender oppositions in the Renaissance, see Ian Maclean, The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Sciences in European Intellectual Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

104 My reading also allows the notion of "Abraham" here being short for "Abraham-man," a gloss discounted by Levenson in the Oxford edition, but recorded as "Abraham"= 'Abraham-man', a ragged beggar that might be blind, almost naked, crippled, wily, or mad" (Levenson, Romeo and Juliet, n.14, 204). I submit that the lover also becomes a beggar, like "Abraham-Cupid," through the levelling force of desire.

105 The obvious theoretical model here is Lacan's stade du miroir that emphasizes the subject's relations to a specular ideal, his assumption of this ideal image and a legacy of failure. The phantasmatic identification would shield the subject from castration or lack, the subject's separation from the object, but that division becomes internalized through the alienating, imaginary identification with the specular other: "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation - and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic - and lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's
In Dream, Cupid also occupies the drama’s argument about desire and a “blind” love. Oberon describes the magic love-potion as originating in the displacement of Cupid’s “bolt,” where Oberon’s own desiring look would master the scene’s displacement of aim that he describes. Oberon’s allegory of desire thus describes a gaze modelled on both the suspension of and the act of phallic (de)floration:

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

The origin of the lover’s desire, in Cupid’s deflected gaze, is described in metaphors of phallic penetration and floral receptivity: “young Cupid’s fiery shaft,” his “love shaft” and his “bolt” that falls upon a “little western flower,/ Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound.” Notably, desire or “love-in-idleness” is born of Cupid’s missed mark, in a deflection from an original aim, in the failure of the penetrative look or specular desire that would appropriate the other’s phantastic sovereign “being” and virginal integrity.

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entire mental development” (Lacan, “The mirror stage,” 4). The failure of identification is encapsulated in a minimal scene for Lacan, the drama of the stade du miroir, of the ego’s specular constitution and structuring by an ongoing misconstruction of the other. Of course, I relate this to an ideal masculine identification and its “repudiation of femininity.” The subject is then caught up in a succession of phantasies of bodily integrity, of totalization and misrecognition of the self in the ideal other against (and towards) the phantasy of fragmentation.

106 The “imperial vot’ress” is generally taken to be an allusion to Queen Elizabeth. In The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), Louis Montrose maintains that the reference is an allusion rather than a sustained allegory, but that “Shakespeare’s ostensible royal compliment may be seen as a complex mediation of the charismatic royal presence that pervaded late Elizabethan culture and as an appropriation of the cult of the Virgin Queen” (176). I argue that the playwright’s appropriation of the cult of the Virgin Queen here is effected in order to develop an allegory of desire.

107 The rape phantasy submerged in the drama is congruent with this phantasy of appropriating the other’s “being.” I call this the drama’s staging of hymeneal phantasy, a phantasy that involves the masculine subject’s desire for self-presence through the other’s virginal reflection of his desire, providing him the illusion of origination, and also his phantasied appropriation of the other’s virginal integrity in a phallic penetration.
I argue that the place of the "imperial vot'ress" (2.1.163) in this allegory of desire is that of the prohibited, impossible object of desire instituting the metonymic economy of desire. The "fancy-free" (2.1.164) maiden, unscathed by Cupid's bolt, is an ideal model for the desiring subject who would similarly pose as the cause of desire and a projected integrity. In *Dream*, the Thesean subject wishes to negate his own self-division in desire by becoming the cause of the other's desire, appropriating to himself an imaginary plenum of "being" in the look's reflective erotics and in phantasy's staged repetition of cleavage that recasts lack as a feminine flower.

As Titania remarks as she leads Bottom to her flowery bower: "The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye; And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,/ Lamenting some enforced chastity" (3.1.198-200). These lines can be read from the perspective of the affronted virgin goddess, the moon who "looks with a wat'ry eye," a goddess who is not quite Titania, or from the perspective of a figuratively violated, sacrificed Bottom in his ob-scene *hieros gamos*. In a transformation of phantasied sexual violence into a sacred principle, it is unclear who is ravishing whom in this dream vision of Love: is the moon weeping for her tearful, "flowering" rape, violated by Bottom and sacrificed/shamed by Oberon? Or is Bottom crowned and uncrowned of his garland of flowers in a veiled act of erotic sacrifice by Titania? I argue that the ambiguity, such as that of an "enforced chastity" (3.1.200), contributes to the drama's calculated erotic appeal in staging such "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5) of sexual union, of defloration and rape, of sodomy and sacrifice, for a range of audience participation. My focus on giving shape to the repressed, sexual "bottom" of the dream can be read as an extended footnote to Northrop Frye's resolutely mythical approach to "themes of descent" and the dreamer's divinity.  

The language describing the originary scene of desire proliferates meanings according to but also exceeding a phallogocentric narrative. The possession of "love's wound" (2.1.167) is common to the stained flower and the fallen bolt, the cut cunt and the pricked prick alike denoting the "castration" of the

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subject of desire. Oberon’s description of “love’s wound” locates the origin of desire in a trauma that repeats itself, with the suggestion that this love is a jouissant “love-in-idleness” (2.1.168). One sort of psychoanalytic reading might identify “love’s wound” as derived from the author or Oberon’s fear or phantasy of woman’s castration, rather as Freud grounds his theory of castration anxiety in the infantile primal scenes and their mistaken knowledge, a misrecognition and disavowal of “castration” understood to ground masculinity. Oberon’s allegory of desire appears to participate in such a phallogocentric myth of origin revolving around castration, wherein sexual difference grounds a gendered cultural epistemology. Oberon would orchestrate desire’s repeating scene for his pleasure, aligning himself with Cupid’s power through his vision, valorizing sight as self-presence: “That very time I saw, but you couldst not” (2.1.155); or: “Yet I marked where the bolt of Cupid fell” (2.1.165). Critically for my argument, however, Oberon’s exegesis of desire is also subject to interpretation and displacement in the rest of the drama: the displacing interpretation of that originary fiction is that it is a desire for structure based on a hegemonic discourse of sexual difference and the phallic appropriation of origins. In the first chapter, I theorize through the figure of the *chora* - a figure for the impressionable and reflective virgin, mother, and womb - how the playwright upstages a Thesean masculinity’s appropriation of feminine origins through an erotics of similitude. I situate the wide-ranging masculinist speculation on a feminized, negated “nothing” in *Dream* in a theatrical economy of pleasure in spectacle, viewing phantasies that entail the displacement of a spectatorial position of mastery.

In his ambivalent representation and function, Puck approaches the status of a sort of Anglicized Cupid figure of Renaissance mythography. We can hear a moralizing Renaissance description of Cupid in Helena’s description of Love, which does not prevent her from pursuing Demetrius:

> Love can transpose to form and dignity  
> Things base and vile, holding no quantity.  
> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
> And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.  
> Nor hath Love’s mind of any judgment taste;  
> Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedly haste:  
> And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
> Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.  
> As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

109 See Fineman, *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye*, for an analysis of how the self-divided sonneteer identifies, in chiasmatic fashion, with the “pricked prick” of the young man and the “cut cunt” of the lady (293).
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere. (1.1.232-41)

As Erwin Panofsky has documented, the popular Renaissance iconography of the blindfolded Cupid is largely due to Christian proselytizing against the base, voluptuous desire Cupid is made to represent.\textsuperscript{110} However, this tradition is counterpoised or subverted by, first, another medieval literary tradition of poetic Love of which we also hear echoes in \textit{Romeo and Juliet}, and second, a Neoplatonic espousal of Love as blind and therefore of the intellect.\textsuperscript{111} If Helena begins by railing against Love's transformation "to form and dignity/ Things base and vile, holding no quantity," she appears to momentarily slip into an idealistic justification for her infatuation, rallying behind the Neoplatonic doctrine: "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,/ And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind" (1.1.234-35). Helena then resumes her railing against Love's lack of judgment and mindless perjury, a sort of \textit{precis} of the action to come wherein "the boy Love is perjured everywhere" (1.1.241).

I have briefly examined Oberon’s mythography of Cupid, looking at the originary displacement of the lover’s desire from a prohibited object of phantasied plenitude. So the waggish Puck declares against his alter ego: “Cupid is a knavish lad/ Thus to make poor females mad” (3.2.440-41). Indeed, it is the “poor females” in this drama who are subject to the mad displacement of desire’s object in Lysander and Demetrius’ “erring” passions. Puck’s application of the “love-juice” both contradicts and demonstrates Helena’s “[l]ove looks not with the eyes,” for desire in the play is decidedly specular, while desire is also “blind” in its misrecognition and attempted appropriation of the other’s being. In latching the lovers’ eyes, Puck’s “misprision” (3.2.91) is a simulation and the cause of the their amorous misrecognition of the other of desire.

Puck’s dramatic function is to produce the errors of vision and desire that are then precariously righted at the drama’s end; he is the harbinger of the nightmarish metamorphoses of desire, an Ovidian conjunction of desire with rape, violence and death. Importantly, this desire upsets gender differences and man:god:animal distinctions. Desire upsets proper order and rank; it threatens reversals whose figures in rhetoric would

include the *hysteron proteron*, nicknamed “the preposterous” by Puttenham. In Puck’s description of his own perverse pleasure in reversals of order, “those things do best please me/ That befall preposterously” (2.1.120-21). Desire threatens to return men to their constitutive others, those in whom a threatening sexuality is projectively totalized; desire threatens to turn men into women and social inferiors, often with a phantom trace of the bestial and sodomy in this desire, ie., as in Bottom’s assification in two of the plots of *Dream*, or in Oberon’s possible designs on the Indian boy. Similarly, a masculinist gender ideology dictates that women’s desire turns them into beasts, in the country proverb known (“The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well” [3.2.463-64]), in Helena following Demetrius like his spaniel, in Hermia and Helena’s fighting, in Titania’s elevation and shaming through her union with Bottom (“My Oberon, what visions have I seen!/ Methought I was enamoured of an ass” [4.1.79-80]). In the first chapter, I pursue the way in which a puissant, sovereign masculinity attempts, in the staging of phantasy, to displace lack onto a split, castrated feminine and the feminized artisans.

Sigmund Freud on *Dream* and why he wants to be Puck, with Oberon’s authority

The founder of psychoanalysis finds in the text of *Dream* a site in which he recognizes his theoretical project of interpreting phantasy and dream. More precisely, Freud might have recognized in the drama masculine phantasies of power and the “righting” of the sexual and social order through gender ideology and the emblematic punishment of feminine sovereignty. In a letter Freud writes to Wilhelm Fliess before the publication of his *Traumdeutung*, his meditation on *Dream* is evident in several allusions to the drama. I would give particular emphasis to how, in Freud’s (correct) analysis, Titania’s degrading

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111 A standard account of Neoplatonic love in the Renaissance is Edgar Wind’s *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (2nd ed. London: Faber, 1967); see esp. the fourth chapter, “Orpheus in Praise of Blind Love.”


113 Notably, Freud’s theory of castration, his epistemological bedrock of sexual difference, and his gender politics generally, might both be informed by his historical experience in an Ayran culture which viewed Jewish males as feminine. In *Freud, Race, and Gender*, Sander L. Gilman persuasively argues that psychoanalysis’s construction of a theory of gender addressed and displaced anxiety about the Jewish male’s social “castration” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For example, see the “Introduction,” 11; and in the second chapter, “The Construction of the Male Jew,” 77-89.
punishment is instrumental in restoring proper patriarchal order. Freud interprets how Titania is made to love Bottom, whom Freud calls the “fantasy ass.” As Jeffrey Masson notes, this letter marks Freud’s first formulation of the theory of the symptom as a satisfaction of the repressed impulse. Freud suggests that symptoms, “like dreams, are the fulfillment of a wish,” more precisely here in an erotic satisfaction obtained in punishment: “The motives of libido and of wish-fulfillment as a punishment then come together.” The author seems to be tracing the phantasy’s “transposition” of repudiated desire from Oberon onto Titania, making her “full of hateful fantasies” (2.1.258) by which she is punished instead of Oberon. Freud would appear to be arguing that Oberon’s projective charge of his sodomitical wishes onto Titania acts as his defence against, while mediating the symptomatic fulfillment of, the same desire: “In the neuroses belief is displaced; it is denied to that which is repressed if it forces [its way] to reproduction and - as a punishment, one might say - transposed onto that which is defending. Titania, who will not love her rightful husband, Oberon, is obliged instead to bestow her love on Bottom, the fantasy ass.” More than being an issue of displaced belief here, the issue is one of displaced desire in an intersubjective relationship involving a punitive gender ideology rather than Freud’s misleading intrapsychic drama. One might also observe here in embryo, in this Freudian reflection on literature, his later theory of the mechanisms of defence (projection) in paranoia, the negation of homosexuality (“It is not I who love the man - she loves him”) common to the paranoiac’s symptoms. Might Freud’s interpretation here also approach the status of a symptomatic wish-fulfillment?

In a previous letter to Fliess in the same month, Freud describes his intellectual excitement as his pleasure in a secret knowledge of desire: “Now I have been finished and am thinking about the dream [book] again. I have been looking into the literature and feel like the Celtic imp: “Oh, how glad I am that no one knows …” No one even suspects that the dream is not nonsense but wish fulfillment” (May 16, 1897). Masson’s note on the quotation indicates that “Freud is quoting from the brothers Grimm -

116 The locus classicus for Freud’s formulation of the defences in paranoia against homosexual phantasy occurs in Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides), with the various symptomatic negations of a homosexual phantasy (9, 200-03 [202]).
Rumplestilzchen, whose name nobody knows. Why Freud would call him a Celtic imp is not clear.\textsuperscript{117}

Masson does note, however, the translation of the first edition of the letters, \textit{The Origins of Psycho-Analysis}, which runs: \"How glad I am that no man’s eyes have pierced the veil of Puck’s [?] disguise\" (201).\textsuperscript{118} If one grants, reasonably, that Freud is preoccupied with a reading of Shakespeare’s \textit{Dream} at this time, as his letter of May 31\textsuperscript{st} shows, it seems plausible that the Celtic imp is indeed an allusion to Shakespeare’s Puck. The Puck allusion fits in with the quotation from the brothers Grimm by reserving for the unknown dreamer Freud the rapture of his knowledge, the knowledge that will make a name for him. This knowledge is that of his interpretation of dreams and the symptom, where both are phantasied fulfillments of a repressed wish.

Further, as Fineman has suggested, Freud’s \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams} might also be a model for understanding the desire in interpreting desire,\textsuperscript{119} what I would call a psychoanalytic desire for structure based on a hegemonic discourse of sexual difference and the phallic appropriation of origins, ie., rather like the punitive phallic phantasy of Oberon’s allegory of desire, though perhaps without the literary text’s framing of the interpretation of desire. In the \textit{Traumdeutung}, one of Freud’s metaphors for his reading and the interpretation of desire is a violent sexual unveiling, where the interpretation is a substitute for a transgressive, Oedipal desire. In \textit{Psychoanalyzing}, Leclaire interprets Freud’s desire to know, his \textit{“desire to force open the secret of desire, to unveil the reality of sexual life,“} through the series of botanical words in his \textit{“Botanical Monograph”} dream. In Leclaire’s reading, Freud’s \textit{“transgressive”} intellectual activity can be traced back through his passion for books that begins when his father makes the child a gift of a book with colored plates for him to destroy with his sister (to tear apart like a flower, to enjoy like the mother’s body), what he experiences and recalls as an \textit{“extraordinarily satisfying defoliation and transgression,”} apparently because it is a substitute for Oedipal desire.\textsuperscript{120} Does Freud frame and discreetly authorize this link between his \textit{“monograph”} book on dreams and the \textit{“mother-book”} of his childhood (4, 257-58), a

\textsuperscript{117} Freud to WF, \textit{The Complete Letters}, May 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1897, 243; n.3, 245.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{The Complete Letters}, May 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1897, n.3, 245.
\textsuperscript{119} Fineman, \textit{“The Structure of Allegorical Desire,”} \textit{The Subjectivity Effect}, 4.
\textsuperscript{120} Leclaire, \textit{Psychoanalyzing}, 22, 27.
repeating scene at which he betrays his desire and authors his own book?\textsuperscript{121} Freud’s sly identification with Puck, “the Celtic imp,” similarly acknowledges, if barely, the pleasure taken in his masterful interpretation of dreams and phantasy.\textsuperscript{122}

Puck not only stages desire, but like Cupid he is the mythical cause of desire at its \textit{mise en scene}. This is a phallocratic “paternal” position that Freud might aspire to in his interpretations of primal phantasies, interpretations that put the castrating, phallic father at the center of the primal phantasies (of origins, of seduction, of castration), placing him at the origin of desire.\textsuperscript{123} Similarly, Freud’s essay on beating phantasies, “A Child Is Being Beaten,” would seem to provide an example of the author’s unconscious desire in the key structural position occupied by the punishing (symbolic) father in the subject’s phantasies. In the cases of both female and male subjects’ phantasies, Freud arrives at the same conclusion: “\textit{In both cases, the beating-phantasy has its origin in an incestuous attachment to the father}” (10, 186). In the girls’ characteristic sequence of beating phantasies, while the three phases represent different relations to the phantasied punishing agent, it is the second phase that Freud says can be properly called phantasy. Here, the sadistic pleasure of a first phase conveying sibling rivalry (“My father is beating the child whom I hate,” ie., he loves only me) is converted to the masochistic excitation of phantasy, a phase which remains unconscious, which is “a construction of analysis, though no less a necessity on that account”: “\textit{I am being beaten by my father}” (10, 170-71). In the boys’ phases, the first phase is a phantasy of being loved by the father which is repressed to “evade” homosexuality (“\textit{I am being beaten by my father}”), so that in subsequent phases the surrogate beating figure becomes the mother while he still maintains a masochistic,

\textsuperscript{121} Freud declines to quite spell out the apparently Oedipal motivation of his writing: “There is, however, no need for me to carry the interpretation of the dream any further, since my only purpose in reporting it was to illustrate by example the relation between a content of a dream and the experience of the previous day that provoked it” (4, 259).

\textsuperscript{122} In the \textit{Traumdeutung}, Freud makes other embattled identifications with a phantasied \textit{paternal} power. For instance, in an apt footnote, Freud the aspiring analyst hides behind the name of the biblical Joseph (not the bad, counterfeiting uncle of his own story) who was also imprisoned (unjustly this time) but whose divine power of prophetic dream interpretation wins him fame and honor (4, n.2, 624). For an often persuasive account of the traumatic role of Freud’s “secret,” counterfeiting uncle (Josef Freud) in his dreams (for example, the “Dream of the Uncle”), see Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok, \textit{Questions for Freud: The Secret History of Psychoanalysis} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 166-80.

\textsuperscript{123} In interview with Jean Laplanche, “The ICA Seminar,” in \textit{Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives}, John Fletcher comments on the manner in which Freud’s formulations of various primal scenes,
so-called feminine attitude (10, 182-87). As Darian Leader clarifies in a discussion of the beating phantasies, “Freud’s insistence on the centrality of the father” can be explained by reference to his function as an agent of the symbolic, where the “sequence of beating phantasies thus becomes the narrative of the passage of the imaginary into the symbolic, the story of the effects of language on the subject.”

Crucially, in the transition from the first to the second phase we are presented with the apparent turning around of sadism into masochism, a transition from the specular imaginary and its rivalry, to the symbolic of language and the prohibition on incest. If the beating of the second stages signifies the father’s love, this phantasy supports a fiction of the father’s phallic puissance, a father whose love is a castrating sodomy in the male subject’s unconscious. This symbolic father embodies a sacred violence in the subject’s phantasy of his castrating, punitive attitude, somewhat like “Young Abraham Cupid” (R&J, 2.1.13) might be imagined by Mercutio, but without the lightness of wit.

Starting from the observation that Freud makes an identification with Puck as knowing the secret of dreams and phantasy, I suggest that this identification extends to the pleasure taken in this pursuing this knowledge and Puck’s “mythic” dramatic function of being the perverse cause of desire. If Puck is pleased by things that “befall preposterously” (MND, 2.1.120-21), so too does Freud appear to occupy the position of those subjects in the beating phantasies who look on, an active position of staging the scene. He seems to participate in this theater of masochism precisely in his “interpretation” of the second constructed, necessary phase that never existed. Like Oberon in Freud’s own analysis, the analyst’s masterful detachment from the scene is precarious. If he assumes the position of the castrating, symbolic father in his interpretation, might Freud actually participate in this phantasy through a projective displacement of his “castration” in his active punishing, rather as Titania was made to love the “fantasy ass” Bottom. In one reading, the authority of Oberon or Freud depends on his “magical” control of a punitive gender ideology, as embodied in a masculinist discourse of sexuality with its seductive originary narratives.

scenarios which pose as narrative solutions to the enigmas of sexuality, are dominated by the phantom of a seducing and castrating symbolic father (83-84).

124 Darian Leader, *Freud’s Footnotes* (London, Faber, 2000), 153-88 (154, 163). Of course, this Lacanian narrative makes the beating phantasies into a phallocratic drama in which the father’s phantasied violence (of the castration of language and prohibition) approaches the sacred.

125 Leader, *Freud’s Footnotes*, 159-60.
The Freudian affinity with Puck is appropriate for a number of further reasons. As a sort of Cupid figure, Puck’s “changeling” metamorphoses might be likened to those of a perverse libido or instinct that Freud was to investigate so passionately. As this type of Cupid figure, Puck also represents a polymorphous perversity that must be sacrificed for the constitution and maintenance of normative, adult gender identity (for example, see Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 7, 109). That is, despite his emphatically *ordering* function of making sure all turns out well again in the epithalamic drama’s ironic vision of “[t]he course of true love” (1.1.134), Puck also reveals how precarious these anticipated resolutions are: “Now the hungry lion roars,/ And the wolf bewails the moon” (5.1.373-74). As I argue in the first chapter, the threatening metamorphic, animal, and sodomitical desire embodied in the character Bottom is figuratively sacrificed as the source of this ideal, sublime vision of a coincidence of opposites wherein a masculinist gender ideology sorts out conflict (“The man shall have his mare again, and all will be well” [3.2.463-64]). And I also investigate Puck’s pleasure in what befalls preposterously (3.2.120-21) as well as his jestful staging of phantasy for Oberon (2.1.44-58). I theorize how Shakespeare suggests that this Puckish pleasure is based on the repetition or reversal of lack while the joke similarly aims at the recuperation of power in phantasy’s fictions. To further anticipate that argument, Puck’s labile poetic language stages an anxiety regarding the reversability of the masterful spectatorial position, an anxiety paradoxically contributing, in my analysis, to theatrical pleasure.

The spectator-subject, reader and critic are necessarily implicated in these stagings of desire, the ironic reverse side to the staging of an ideal love. In my own particular misprision, the playwright’s genial subversion lies in seducing the audience with a phallic imaginary while also critiquing its transgressive phantasies. Both the staging of illicit and castrating desire and their rhetorical negation or “censoring” are important because they figure in the fetishistic economy of desire through which, the third chapter argues, the authentic “Shakespeare” and his authority is reproduced.

126 In the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* where he develops his normative dialectics of (hetero)sexuality, Freud submits that neurotic “symptoms are formed in part at the cost of abnormal sexuality; neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions” (7, 80). While the “in part” might seem crucial here, Freud often reads the structuring of phantasy as determined entirely within this dialectic of normalization. See for instance, his footnote following the last citation, where he detects the content of conscious phantasies of so-called perverts in “the delusional fears of paranoics” and “the unconscious phantasies of hysterics” (7, n.1, 80).
Chapter One

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Shaping Phantasies of Gender and the Displacement of Mastery

This study of Dream examines scenes of the masculine subject's imaginary (de)constitution, the staging of desire by phantasy, and the phantasmatic nature of scripted, performed gender identifications. The chapter focuses on what is a major problem in psychoanalysis, the function of phantasy in staging desire and regulating an ideal gender identity. In the type of analysis adopted here, such an ideal identification is itself a provisional, phantasied projection of an integrity and totality that is mediated or enforced through governing gender ideologies, their scripts and prohibitions. Speaking in Theseus's terms, gender holds its form through the poet's noting of an "airy nothing" (5.1.16), where gender is an imaginary form that is projectively assumed by the phantasying subject. Thus the poet's "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5) offer to give shape to the subject's "airy nothing" (5.1.16) of imagination:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And in imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (5.1.12-17)

In this drama, an ideal Thesean masculinity constitutes itself by an "overwriting" displacement of its own lack: a formless "airy nothing" (5.1.16) is gendered feminine in the staging of gender's "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5). In some ways this chapter takes its cue from Louis Montrose's essay, "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form." However, whereas Montrose basically views the playwright's text as reflecting and reproducing a patriarchal ideology, I follow the manner in which the drama stages such seductive shaping phantasies of gender, but also gets the

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1 This description is characteristic of the sort of reading of gender performance evident in a spate of critical essays published in the wake of Butler's Gender Trouble. Because of gender's iterative, scripted nature, gender identity is something that can never be definitively achieved. As Butler theorizes gender, it is the performance of a putative essence, an ideal coherence or truth produced by iteration. Gender is also produced by this wish for an ideal coherence; gender identification in this phantasmatic sense is governed by the ego's anticipatory, specular identification with an ideal totality, a projected image of integrity and power as depicted by Lacan's stade du miroir. As reviewed in the Introduction, Butler also argues that gender identification can function as a way of refusing lost love through melancholic identification with the lost object.

sacrificial play of specular desire and the speculative constitution of the self in sight. I suggest that the audience might, at Bottom’s request, “look to their eyes” (1.2.27-28), and rather than Hermia’s chastisement by Theseus, the playwright might ask the spectator-subject to “question your desires” (1.1.67). In a similar vein, the chapter is also in dialogue with Barbara Freedman’s reading of the drama, “Dis/Figuring Power: Censorship and Representation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.” Her reading examines the drama as a complex meditation on various types of censorship, the difficulty of “figuring the mind without disfiguring it,” the distortion of vision necessary to the order of right vision, and the distortion of the Freudian dreamwork that likewise makes their presentation “a constitutive distortion of an original that is nowhere to be found.” While Freedman ultimately views the playwright as in fawning collaboration with state and aristocratic, patriarchal ideology, celebrating this “shaping vision,” I endeavour to use her mode of argument regarding spectatorial misprision to show how the playwright might displace masculine right vision and hegemony in the final playlet.

This chapter attempts to track the (up)staging of a Thesean masculinity in *Dream*. The drama is redolent with rape and defloration phantasies, much of it at the level of the poetic language, in imagery and symbolism, phantasies that are present in much of the epithalamium and upon which the play-within-the-play reflects critically. I propose that both hymeneal and sodomitical phantasies are presented as dynamic structuring forces in the drama, bridging the critical “objects” of character portraiture or the *dramatis personae* and the spectator-subject whose theatrical pleasure is framed in the final act. What I call hymeneal phantasy here refers to the masculine subject’s wish for self-presence through the other’s “virginal” reflection of his desire, with the illusion of origination in a specular circuit, as well as to his phantasied appropriation of the other’s virginal integrity and “being” in a phallic penetration. As an epithalamium, *Dream* stages defloration as a punitive male phantasy of feminine castration, precisely as Oberon’s description of “love’s wound” (2.1.167) at the origin of desire attempts to locate a captivating lack with the feminine, as the erotic vesture of a purple feminine flower, though the masculine poetic subject also assumes castration in submitting to prohibition and desire’s metonymic economy. Sodomitical

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3 Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 166, 179.
4 Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 155, 158.
phantasy in *Dream* circulates through the amiable Bottom. I take “Bottom’s Dream” (4.2.219) to be a *hieros gamos* that transgresses social hierarchy and distinctions of kind. I argue that Bottom thus functions to mediate such sodomitical phantasy and also to comically interrogate the masculinist ideal of mastery through his (self-)sacrifice subtending the dream-vision of Love.

These shaping phantasies of a Thesean masculinity are examined below in a consideration of the playwright’s presentation of Theseus’s character in the drama, in a general economy of desire operative between the aristocratic lovers wherein the woman acts as a virginal *chora* figure, in Puck’s preposterous jests, in the interlude between Bottom and Titania and in “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219), and in the symbolism and censoring of the artisans’ performance of the playlet “Pyramus and Thisby.” Oberon’s allegory of desire presented in the Introduction decidedly colours my interpretations. Notably, the direction of the threat of a figurative castration in these phantasies of defloration, death, and sodomy is unstable, where the feminine embodiment of castration is either deflected or is reflected back to the provisional “masculine” implicated in its other. One can note how Demetrius’ comment, “A mote will turn the difference, which Pyramus, which Thisby, the better” (5.1.320), belies a paradoxical spectatorial pleasure in detecting the fluidity of gender difference, a volatile difference protected here by a class boundary, offhandedly appealing to God for the sanctioning of the former sacral difference, “he for a man, God warr’nt us; she for a woman, God bless us” (5.1.321-22). The attributed feminine fault of gender, like the perceived “mote,” can return to the masculine, displacing it in a *turn*. In this vein, the mechanicals function as sacrificial butts for the undecidability of a performative gender that they act out within the conventional designation of a “feminine” theatricality. As the “asinine” other of the aristocratic male (and especially of Oberon), Bottom functions like the women in the drama whose difference is also speculated on.

In staging the playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby,” the final act of the drama critically reflects on the defensive function of the masculine phantasies, particularly those that rely on a projective misrecognition and attribution of lack to a feminized other for the subject’s power-pleasure. The final section of the chapter returns to its beginnings in looking at the displacement of Thesean mastery, drawing together many

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5 Alan Bray notes that rape and sodomy are proximate discourses in Renaissance ideology. A study of the
strands from the previous sections in its discussion of Theseus’s censorship of the various theatrical “sports” (5.1.42), the “overwriting” interpretations of the playlet, negation, misrecognition, and theatrical pleasure. I argue that illicit phantasy is enjoyed in the structure of the fetish by Theseus, where the displacement of lack and the censoring of transgressive desire also permit the pleasure of a lifting of the repression of desire or the negated other. For example, in another instance of misprision, the rapacious leonine in Theseus - “lion vile hath here deflow’red my dear” (5.1.292) - is located with some satisfaction in the meek, conscientious Snug the Joiner. The chapter ends by noting how a certain critical orthodoxy from Paul A. Olson to Harold Bloom reads the play from this available Thesean perspective. I briefly engage Bloom’s reading in particular for its attempt to naturalize a punitive masculinist gender ideology and phantasy. For instance, Bloom describes Oberon’s taming of Titania’s allegedly voluptuous sensuality - when Oberon fills her with “hateful fantasies” (2.2.258), in what appears as a projection - as the magical attributes of Oberon’s legitimate power: “Power in Dream is magical rather than political …”.  

“Shaping Fantasies” (5.1.5), Structuring Conflicts, and Theseus’s Ideal Masculinity

Theseus is on one level of the drama the spectacular instance of an ideal masculinity sanctioned or recognized by the playwright’s culture. Theseus is often taken by an older critical orthodoxy to embody the ideal of paternalistic authority, an assumption that is queried at the latter end of this chapter for its imaginary investments in the drama’s staging of (violent) shaping phantasies. I argue that the drama delivers this ideal of Theseus in the epithalamium as a point of spectatorial or readerly engagement by censoring his well known rapacious treachery towards women. I argue that this ideal requires that his past and future life of sexual treachery (known to readers from many classical texts such as Sir Thomas North’s 

staging of phantasy in MND bears this out. See Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England, 14-16.  


7 The observation that Theseus is largely taken to be an ideal representative of masculine authority by an extensive, enduring tradition of Shakespeare criticism is noted by Jeanne Addison Roberts, The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 168. In The Purpose of Playing, Montrose also notes this critical tendency of idealization (n.43, 147), which I also look at briefly. Montrose develops a hedging thesis regarding how “Shakespeare’s naturalization and legitimation of the domestic economy deconstructs itself” (145) in the play through the haunting textual presence of another literary tradition of a malign Theseus. Crucially, I develop this thesis in the direction of the playwright’s framing of a Thesean authority’s displacement in desire.
translation of Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans\(^8\) be censored despite the fact this unkindness appears to contribute to that ideal, i.e., the ideal requires the violent undertow of Thesean desire go unremarked while it is being tacitly endorsed. This contradictory position is true of the drama's rhetorical presentation of itself as a dream that can be easily dismissed. As Oberon says of the magical powers of his spell: "When they next shall wake, all this derision/ Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (3.2.370-71). Or in Puck's famous disclaimer at the drama's end:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{If we shadows have offended,} \\
\text{Think but this and all is mended:} \\
\text{That you have but slumb'red here,} \\
\text{While these visions did appear. (5.1.425-28).}
\end{align*}
\]

The spectator's desire can follow a Thesean trajectory as the noble duke censors his desire, or attempts to. In the final act, Philostrate warns Theseus against the performance of "Pyramus and Thisby," failing to dissuade him, though Theseus does pass over the others "sports" (5.1.42) on the menu that might too closely reflect his illicit, violent desire. As I argue in the final section, the artisans' playlet still stages the displacement of the bestial metamorphoses of desire and an unrecognized hymeneal phantasy (through the farcical action of the Moon and the Wall); this phantasy is evident in Bottom's telling parapraxis of the vile Lion deflowering Thisby.

Notably, the starting point of the play is Theseus's desire for Hippolyta, the defeated Queen of the Amazons. If Theseus's lust is potentially emasculating, commentators like Olson read a chivalrous, princely Theseus as taming the concupiscent soul of Hippolyta within the overarching dramatic framework of marriage:\(^9\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour} \\
\text{Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in} \\
\text{Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow} \\
\text{This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,} \\
\text{Like to a stepdame, or a dowager,} \\
\text{Long withering out a young man's revenue. (1.1.1-6)}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^8\) See the selection from The Life of Theseus in Geoffrey Bullough's Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1.384-89.

\(^9\) In "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage," Olson uses the authority of Chaucer's The Knight's Tale in elaborating the patriarchal ideology of the marriage presented in the drama: "Wedlock fulfilled its part in the concord of things when the male ruled his mate in the same way that reason was ordained to control both will and passions" (99). This is the context that Olson puts the initial dramatic exchange into, Theseus's promised taming of the Amazonian threat to "natural" order (102-04).
D'Orsay W. Pearson writes convincingly on the extensive Renaissance mythographic tradition regarding Theseus whose reputation “as an unnatural, perfidious, and unfaithful lover and father far outweighed either his accomplishment of organizing the demes of Athens into a single political unit or his reputation as an icon of the virtue of friendship.” Pearson suggests that Dream, contrary to the “myths” in the literary criticism in which Theseus has successfully metamorphosed into an ideal prince, draws on the tradition in which he is known for his treacherous lust and ignobility. He argues that Theseus’s “opening speech, which so many critics have viewed as establishing a frame of order against which the disorder of young love can be projected, thrusts him immediately in the Renaissance stereotype.” The audience need not be versed in classical or Renaissance texts to pick up on this dissonance in the character of the noble duke, on the evident self-censoring of Theseus where he is less taming Hippolyta’s unruly passion as much as phantasying love’s injuries, pompously anticipating a sexual triumph over Hippolyta:

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

When he is undermined in the final act by his spectatorial misprision, I submit that the playwright stages a Theseus divided by his puissant desires.

Theseus’s first lines stage his unchaste desire that is more generally linked for many in the audience to anxiety through the spectre of potential emasculation in desire. The tempering of desire with anxiety is validated if the auditor happens to recall Theseus’s career of sexual treachery, deceit, rape, and ignoble end. Shakespeare’s representation of Theseus allows his auditors to view the Duke as an ideal ruler, but

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10 D’Orsay W. Pearson, “‘Unkinde’ Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography,” English Literary Renaissance 4 (1974): 276-98 (276, 292). Pearson persuasively glosses the lines about the moon’s comparison to “a step-dame or dowager/ Long withering out a young man’s revenue” to suggest a certain ingratitude and breach of filial feeling in the face of an overriding “love avarice” (292-93). Pearson also disparages Olson’s selective reading of the complex mythographic tradition and Shakespeare’s text (278).

11 Drawing on Pearson’s essay, in The Purpose of Playing, Montrose investigates this aspect of the drama in his chapter, “Stories of the Night”: “Among the cultural materials employed in the construction of the gender system that is figured in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, those of classical myth are perhaps the most conspicuous. The play dramatizes or alludes to numerous episodes in classical mythology that were already coded by a venerable tradition of moral allegorization, and its treatment of such mythographic traditions is, like the traditions themselves, far from unequivocal” (124). Montrose rightly emphasizes the drama’s equivocal treatment of “such mythographic traditions” that tend to offer “moral allegorization” from a decidedly patriarchal position. The playwright’s equivocation is corrected by Montrose’s ethical emphasis, what he might claim is a shift from a theatrical discourse of Theseus’s “anxious misogyny” (148) and its
the representation is also deliberately equivocal, conveying something of the hero’s traditional infidelity and unkindness towards women in the classical sources, texts available to the poet’s educated audience. Montrose presents the playwright’s deliberate equivocation as the textual residue of Theseus’s violent, excessive desire in these other texts that shape the poet’s phantasy:

The mythology of Theseus is well supplied with examples of terror, lust, and jealousy; and these are prominently recounted and censured by Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* and in his subsequent comparison of Theseus to Romulus. Shakespeare uses Plutarch as his major source of Theseus lore, but does so selectively, for the most part downplaying those events “not sorting with a nuptial ceremony” (5.1.55) nor with a comedy. At their first entrance, Oberon accuses Titania of abetting (or actually compelling) Theseus’s abuses - an accusation that she dismisses as “the forgeries of jealousy” (81):

Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna, whom he ravished;
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiope?

(2.1.77-80)

This is perhaps the play’s only explicit reference to Theseus’s checkered past. However, as Harold Brook’s Arden edition has convincingly demonstrated, the text of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is permeated by echoes, not only of Plutarch’s parallel lives of Theseus and Romulus but also of Seneca’s *Hippolitus* and his *Medea* - by an archeological record of the texts that shaped the poet’s fantasy as he was shaping the play. Thus, sedimented within the verbal texture of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are traces of those forms of sexual and familial violence that the ethos of romantic comedy seeks to neutralize or to evade: acts of bestiality and incest, of parricide, uxoricide, filicide, and suicide .... It is precisely this lurid mythological subtext of unchecked, violent, and polymorphous desire that the text’s dominant discourse seeks to contain.12

Montrose suggests that “a counter-discourse is active in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and that this counter-discourse intermittently disrupts and destabilizes the normative discourse of patriarchy that dominates both Elizabethan culture and Shakespeare’s play.” The status that Montrose confers on this counter-discourse is ambiguous, implicitly placing Shakespeare in support of patriarchy, and reducing his critical reflection on patriarchal ideology and its “shaping fantasies” (5.1.5) to a conflicted reflection of it, where the text would be mere symptom and imaginary resolution of these conflicts.13 However, Montrose

paternalist commentators to a critical anatomy of gender politics; however, Montrose ends up having little to say about phantasy in this reproduction.

13 For Montrose, it is the contradictions evident in this *ideology* that produce the play as a sort of dream and its “textual and performative ironies, dissonances and contradictions” (151). Montrose’s approach promotes attention to irony and destabilization, and a lack of closure (121), general emphases of attention that might be profitably shifted to that of representations of the divided subject’s illusions of autonomy and his radical deconstitution in phantasy, focusing on the playwright’s representation of this in relation to gender ideology. While texts reproduce culture in a reciprocally constituting and dialectical manner, this style of criticism tends, despite itself, to obliterate the radicalism of the drama by occluding the author’s mediating
is forced in the next paragraph to note how “Shakespeare’s play actually calls attention to its own mechanisms of mythological suppression” in Theseus’s censoring rejection of the first two offered entertainments in act five, on the grounds that “they are already too familiar.” That is, although Montrose is correct to maintain that the character Theseus is intent on not viewing a near version of his own “monstrous” past, or a learned, keen satire on the bestial sublime in a theater of desire, Theseus is emphatically not Shakespeare. The poet censors his representation of Theseus in drawing from his textual sources, but he is also “keen and critical” (5.1.54), drawing attention to this process and to the censorship of violence in “the dream,” what “the ethos of romantic comedy seeks to neutralize” from generic constraint rather than authorial complicity. After all, to secure the return of the audience, the theater’s staging of desire in the drama-as-dream aims to be engaging, navigating between the illicit and ideal.

It is highly appropriate that “the only explicit reference to Theseus’s checkered past” comes in our introduction to the fairy world where desire and phantasy reign. Pearson makes the wonderful point that Shakespeare crosschecks the masculinist reading of the drama through Theseus’s association with Titania:

And if the critics who see Oberon as the representative of reason and Titania as his opposite, sensuality, are correct, Shakespeare was working far more carefully with his materials than has hitherto been realized. For in assigning Theseus a guardian genius, Titania, who is responsible for his past infidelities, the dramatist is deliberately pointing up the perfidy and fraud in his protagonist’s legendary amours and at the same time pointing towards the next quarrel of his anthropomorphemic deities and Theseus’s next infidelity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the final action of the play, the fairy blessings of the marriage beds.

consciousness, participating in both the “death of the author” and a Freudian reduction of “creative writing” to the status of wishful phantasy (for example, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” I4, 132).

14 Montrose, The Purpose of Playing, 148. I return to this question in the final section of the chapter.

15 If Theseus is the “ideal” image of masculinity that the play might appear to legitimate, one manner in which it does this is by setting up Egeus as the surrogate for his own faults, as a sort of bogey bad patriarch whom Theseus genially overrules. However, the initial symmetry and effective nondifference between Theseus and Egeus is evident in the terms they use to describe paternal rights of property and perogative in relation to Hermia (1.1.20-127). Montrose notes that in the poet’s use of Plutarch’s The Life of Theseus, “by choosing the name of Theseus’s father, Egeus, for the Athenian patriarch whose will is overborne by the Duke, Shakespeare effects a displacement within his comedy of Theseus’s negligent parricide” (148). It accords the author more credence to suppose that when Shakespeare chooses the name of Egeus for Hermia’s father, this is to textually encode and stage what is being censored to maintain the ideal. Pearson comments on the incident recounted in North’s translation of Plutarch, in “Unkinde’ Theseus,” 290-91.

16 Pearson, “‘Unkinde’ Theseus,” 295.
As Pearson notes, the issue of that bridal bed was not fortunate: his son Hippolytus (in some sources) met a violent end by Theseus’s wrongful jealousy, a son whose name may even be purposely associated with Hippolyta’s in her naming, making the auditor aware of the ironies of Oberon’s fairy blessing:17

To the best bride-bed will we,  
Which by us shall blessed be;  
And the issue there create  
Ever shall be fortunate. (5.1.405-08)

On the level of dramatic structuring, the central “problem” of the play is the conflict between masculine power, its pleasure in authority and illicit sexuality, and its perceived threat by feminine power. In one dominant strain of criticism, comedy and marriage are socially conservative rituals that seek to contain disorderly desire and possible feminine subversion in mirroring aesthetic and social forms. In keeping with Theseus’s oddly poetic demi-god status in Plutarch’s text, Olson actually calls Theseus “King of Order.”18 In Dream, this threat is posed in terms of a feared sexuality that is constantly troped as bestial and feminine in an essential misprision, in terms of the risks of courtship and male-male rivalry, and of marriage itself and cuckoldry, the last particularly after the liminal rite of marriage; this is the case of the fairy lovers Oberon and Titania, and the source of the anxious banter of the male aristocrats on the eve of their nuptials. Within the critical perspective of the subject’s pursuit of “sovereignty,” the presence of Queen Elizabeth on the throne was a presence distinctly challenging patriarchal rule even when she appropriated a paternalistic discourse to legitimate her own rule.19 As Montrose argues, Elizabeth’s reign constituted “a fundamental cultural contradiction” by requiring a masculine submission to her power, particularly the aristocracy and courtiers, “within a social and political culture that was pervasively patriarchal.”20

Montrose’s earlier formulation of his argument pursues “the dialectical character of cultural representations: the fantasies by which the text of A Midsummer Night’s Dream has been shaped are also

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19 For an account of Elizabeth’s complex strategy of self-representation in legitimating her authority (and their bearing on this play), ranging from the paternalist (and hence not threatening, in principle, patriarchal hegemony), to the significance of the cults of the chaste Diana, the Virgin Mary, and the Amazonian warrior protecting her people, see Montrose, The Purpose of Playing, esp. part two, “The Shaping Fantasies of A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” See also his “Idols of the Queen: Policy, Gender, and the Picturing of Elizabeth I,” in Representations 68:3 (1999): 108-61.  
those to which it gives shape.

Montrose's analysis of the drama's deployment of "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5) assumes critical leverage by asserting a first homology between the author's own phantasies and his audience's, positing these subjects' shared formation by ideology and discourse or "cultural representations." A second relation of homology is asserted between the characters in the play such as Bottom and the audience, a relation which is never theorized or put into the frame of specular desire's "misprision" (3.2.90) that the drama upstages. Finally, the analysis assumes political clout by asserting the constituting relation between the historical subject and the spectacle or text as shaping phantasy. Basically, Montrose's general thesis about "the dialectical character of cultural representations" encompasses this staging of desire but denies the mediating consciousness of the playwright in theorizing the function of these shaping phantasies.

The only significant consciousness in this view of phantasy is the critic's redress of its gendered violence in a text that already does this. This chapter aims to extend and specify the function of phantasy in Dream, particularly in the violent dialectics of gender identification, tracing the poet's disclosure of the manner in which masculine dramatis personae are diacritically constituted in relation to a circulating phantasmatic lack.

In what follows, I attempt to demonstrate that the playwright stages phantasies for consumption by the contemporary audience, while orchestrating in the same staging the "aesthetic" appreciation of a Thesean, humanist tradition and its critical engagement with the drama that is permitted, in a "misprision" (3.2.90) upstaged within the drama, to misrecognize the violence of its desire. Of course, the poet could not have forseen this more recent academic history, but his framing of Thesean misprision nonetheless speaks to a contemporary appreciation of the drama.

The Shakespearean Subject's Misprision

I now elaborate a theory of phantasy in the poetic discourse of Dream with a view to the broader context of a history of poetic subjectivity. This literary history of the poetic subject is one of the dissertation's

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22 For a similar critique of Montrose and the new historicism, see Yachnin, Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Making of Theatrical Value (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 43-44.
23 Following the formulations of an article by Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, the subject employs phantasy as a defence against lack and loss that often reveals the mechanisms of repression and the fear of the "return of the repressed." The status of the phantasy can be conscious, unconscious, or a sort of middle "daydreaming," and consciously apprehended representations can become the material of unconscious phantasy. "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," The International Journal of Psychoanalysis 49:1 (1968): 1-18 (esp. 11-14).
concerns. The idea that Shakespeare is the inventor of poetic subjectivity is, of course, the subject of Joel Fineman’s book, *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye*. In his introductory chapter Fineman remarks that “contemporary speculation about subjectivity” in critical theory “repeats in a theoretical mode (and the visual etymologies that impose themselves here are important, for “theory” too begins as “seeing””) what literature accomplishes towards the end of the Renaissance.” Fineman’s argument for Shakespeare’s “originality” is at least as compelling when located in the drama, another “seeing place.” I cite Fineman here because he makes a case for the originary implication of psychoanalysis with the Shakespearean text:

This is a very general history of ideas indeed. However, if such a history of the subject of subjectivity were ever to be written, Shakespeare would necessarily occupy a privileged place within it, not only because Shakespeare invents strong characters, but because those characters have subsequently come to pose themselves to theorists of subjectivity as pressing problems to be solved. I am thinking here especially of Freud, who gives us the fullest account of subjectivity that we possess and to whom Lacan wants to serve as faithful annotation. One example can stand for many. In the letters that Freud writes to Fleiss, just prior to the announcement of the discovery of the Oedipus complex, Freud quotes Shakespeare. Soon after, armed with the Oedipus complex, Freud analyzes Shakespeare, sketching out for Fleiss the outlines of Freud’s famous reading of *Hamlet*. Reading these letters, hearing the Shakespearean echoes coalesce into science, it is difficult to determine who is accounting to whom. Perhaps the question is by now familiar: Is Shakespeare Freudian or is Freud Shakespearean?24

Though I agree with Fineman here, in this “history of ideas” it is difficult if not impossible to establish with precision the scope and nature of Shakespeare’s influence on Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. (Bloom’s own grand assertions in this respect never rival Fineman’s meticulous textual analysis of how “subjectivity effects” are generated by tropes.) This lack of precision is a shortcoming of the present inquiry, as the question of Shakespeare’s influence on Freud informs the following chapters even where it is bracketed as a speculative gadfly. The argument here and in following chapters makes a series of mappings that does not respect the interpretative priority of psychoanalytic discourse over the literary text, gesturing to the way in which the playwright’s texts contribute to what we understand as psychoanalysis and its discursive formulation of a literary subjectivity.25 The inquiry employs the poet’s text as a site for questioning psychoanalysis and for deconstructing its phallogocentrism, for instance in its theory of the castration complex. I claim that the drama of *Dream* stages a historically “anachronistic” critique of the rhetorical, discursive violence of the psychoanalytic, heterosexual dialectics of identification, as embodied in the

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25 See Shoshana Felman’s brief articulation of this position in her introductory article to a double-volume on *Literature and Psychoanalysis*. Felman notes how literature is situated to deconstruct psychoanalysis’s
theoretical tenet of the castration complex where castration is central to Freudian theory and Lacan's linguistic version of it.26

Also important is how the conditions of the playwright's theater facilitate the development of a proto-psychoanalytic theory of identification's spectacular, scripted nature, the stage being the place for specular identifications. Shakespeare's stage is conducive to the development of such a theory through his self-conscious employment of mimesis and his calculation on the spectator's imaginary participation in the drama. For example, Kenneth Burke argues for the playwright's calculated deployment of such mimetic desire in the theater that closely resembles Girard's theory of mimetic desire, conflict and scapegoating.27 The playwright works with the thematics presented by Aristotle's *The Poetics*, with theatrical mimesis, imaginary participation, reversal, (mis)recognition, victimage, pity and fear, and catharsis - to the end of affording theatrical pleasure.28

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26 Fineman asserts that "the psychoanalytic account of desiring subjectivity - from Freud's theory of castration to Lacan's *objet a* - is in fact an elaboration of Renaissance models of subjectivity, and Shakespeare's in particular. Fineman adds: "Even if this is not the case, it remains difficult, in several respects, to distinguish between Freud's strongest theoretical concepts and the theory of rhetorical trope from which, it is possible to argue, they derive" (Shakespeare's Perjured Eye, 47). Fineman's work with the rhetorical figure of chiasmus and chiastic structures illustrates, within the "psychoanalytic" paradigm, the manner in which the desiring (Lacanian) subject in language is "cut off" from himself.

The first chapter limits its investigation to that of a proto-Freudian castration at a "primal scene" of desire and this castration's specular counterpart.

27 The best representation of Burke's work is probably his collection, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966). Burke's critical engagement with scapegoating, largely through an Aristotelian framework of dramatic design, avoids the dogma of some of Girard's formulations. See, for example, Burke's essay on *Coriolanus*, "Coriolanus - and the Delights of Faction," 81-97, where he suggests that the dramatic conflict and sacrificial resolution to the drama also point to conflicts "outside" the play. Regarding the misrecognitions, substitutions and displacements centered on the scapegoat, Burke argues that the victim is there for the purification of the audience in what is often, as in the scapegoating of Iago in *Othello*, a "filthy enjoyment and purgation" of their own transgressive desires and phantasies. See "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," *Hudson Review* 4 (1951): 165-203 (170).

In what follows, it is assumed that the playwright follows a path of self-promotion and career success through a calculated ambiguity in such representations, speculating on the sacrificial and punitive participation, yet also critical of this attitude in a recuperation of prestige that might be ethically motivated. This is decidedly not the whole picture of the negotiations involved. However, it is an indication of an important split that follows old arguments about the orchestration of a two-tiered response to the drama, emphasizing the elevation of the ethical response.

28 For a historically informed treatment of the question of theatrical pleasure in Shakespeare and Marlowe's drama, reviewing the criticism and using "psychoanalytic" notions such as repression and release, identification, vicarious pleasure, masochistic and sadistic pleasure, staged anxiety, voyeurism, and phantasies of power, see Thomas Cartelli's *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), esp. part one, "The Economy of
The spectator-subject's imaginary participation in the dramatic action of the (mis)recognition of the victim in the theater repeats the subject's imaginary relations to alterity and his misrecognition of lack that is projectively totalized onto the scapegoat. For instance, as such a defining other for the male audience of the playlet, Bottom is collectively named an ace/one/nothing/ass (5.1.309-13). This naming might indicate the spectator-subject's internalization of otherness as well as describe the rejection of these constitutive mirroring relations of an imaginary order. At any rate, the analysis that follows assumes that the reader or spectator of the drama participates in a dream whose pleasure is staged for him by the playwright. The argument aims to demonstrate that the playwright's speculation on the audience's imaginary participation and theatrical pleasure in the drama is supported by the playwright's psychoanalytic, Lacanian understanding of the subject's lack, of the ego's perpetual (de)constitution through the lure of appropriating the specular other's being. From this homology between the specular constitution of the gendered self and the spectator-subject's imaginary participation in the drama, the chapter occasionally extends the object of analysis to the modern critical reader of the text who attempts, like the men interpreting "Pyramus and Thisby," to interpret the scenes of desire in his misprisnion.

In *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy*, Barbara Freedman observes how notions of "right spectatorship" and "spectator consciousness" are informed and subverted by the structure of misrecognition in Shakespearean comedy: "Theater plays upon our specular captivation by corporeal images; the body as a vehicle facilitates identifications that evoke the illusion of self-presence." As Freedman points up, "the relation between audience and performer is doubled at the level of narrative when each character seeks in the other its proper reflection. Both tragic and comic narratives stage
misrecognition in the quest for recognition” and a puissant self-presence. Such imaginary participation in the dramas is critically shaped by their representation of gender, where “masculinity” is an ideal projection of power and pleasure, unstable and susceptible to displacement as its imaginary legacy.

Freedman articulates this dynamic of the male spectator-subject’s unstable position of mastery in relation to the spectacle. She argues that Shakespearean comedy implicates the spectator in a constitutive misrecognition of specular others that subtend a phantastic identity, pointing up the spectator’s tantalizing desire to constitute himself as somehow outside a reciprocal gaze. Freedman characterizes the drama’s proffered spectator position of mastery as the lure of a spectator consciousness that fails to get specular misprision in sight, what might be viewed as the sacrificial dialectics of the masculine subject’s gender identification and its reliance on an attribution of the other’s “spectacular” lack. Historically grounding her argument through Renaissance theories of trick optical perspectives, Freedman elaborates a sophisticated dialectic of the subject’s subversion in which error and ignorance are staged as “insight,” where the subject’s own displacement in his gaze is the truth, reversing the notion of a Thesean right vision of reason and masterful self-consciousness. Briefly, the present chapter’s debt to Freedman’s work is twofold. First, in her theoretical articulation of a masculinist aspiration to “right spectatorship,” a position of mastery that is effectively displaced in the course of the drama through the spectator-subject’s misprision. She suggests in passing that Dream asks the spectator, as well as fair Hermia, to “question your desires” (1.1.67). From this recognition of the sacrificial misprision of specular desire in the drama, of the masculine disavowal of the violence that maintains the feminine other’s vision as erring, my argument follows how Bottom’s performance subverts the authority of Thesean authority and spectatorship by asking, “let the audience look to their eyes” (1.2.27-28). Bottom’s demand asks us to follow the return of the gaze in the play-within-the-play, catching the “I” of the Thesean spectator-subject in his misprision. Secondly, I also follow the different types of censorship governing and repressions supporting theatrical representation in Dream, though I tend to view the playwright as highlighting these constitutive distortions and their gendered violence as essential to the epithalamium’s dream of right vision.

31 Freedman, Staging the Gaze, 3.
32 Freedman, Staging the Gaze. My argument draws on Freedman’s first and fifth chapters.
33 Freedman, Staging the Gaze, 188.
The Chora and Lack: the Spectacular Nothing and Amending Pleasure

In my reading of Oberon’s allegory, desire originates in the failure of a specular identification and the subject’s displacement of lack. Notably, the original “object” of the desiring subject’s specular aim is the virginal “imperial vot’ress” (2.1.163), a captivating, ideal image of sovereign power and autonomy. The violent hymeneal phantasy of reflection and penetration stages the masculine subject’s “underground” attribution of lack to this ideal other in order to appropriate its phantasmatic and originary sovereign “being.” The present section situates this view of originary being in relation to the figure of the chora, that controversial (anti)figure of poststructuralist debate. Obviously running against the grain of abstraction inherent in this (anti)figure, I regard Hermia and Helena, Titania and Hippolyta, and more loosely, Bottom and the artisans, as chora figures in relation to the staging of masculine desire in Dream. I argue that the playwright presents dramatic scenes which describe the chora’s function of being the place of originary inscription in the Platonic theory of the forms. This embodiment indicates the chora’s position as a feminine lack or “nothing” on which phallogocentric desire speculates for its form and meaning. The chora of Plato’s Timaeus illustrates the contradictory position of the object of a speculative desire: “she” is figured as a virgin, receptacle, mother, womb, matrix, nurse, all in the masculinist language of creation that tends to erase its/her generative function.34 The figure of the chora thus effectively indicates the position of women within phallogocentric economies of the symbolic, naming, and desire. For my argument, I make the projective-receptive function of the chora dovetail with the notion of a desire fascinated by a “nothing” in the projection of lack.35

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34 This is part of Judith Butler’s reading of Luce Irigaray’s reading of Plato’s text in “Bodies That Matter,” Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’ (New York: Routledge, 1993), 36-49. See Plato, Timaeus, Loeb ed., trans. R.G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929), 48A-52D. Notably, the chora is something beyond the logos upon which it draws, a Place which is only “apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning” (52B). Timaeus likens the chora to something perceived in a “dreamy condition” (52B) and it/she is further defined as the “nothing” that is “neither on earth nor anywhere in the Heaven” (52B).

35 Luce Irigaray describes a masculine desire fascinated by and drawn to this no-place or nothing of the feminine, compelled by a “desire to force entry, to penetrate, to appropriate for himself the mystery of this womb where he has been conceived, the secret of his begetting, of his ‘origin’.” See “This Sex Which is Not One,” This Sex Which is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 25.
In "Bodies That Matter," Butler provides a summary of the chora's function in Platonic theories of representation and an overview of the poststructuralist debate surrounding this figure. She argues that Plato's chora is a feminized "inscriptional space of phallogocentrism, the specular surface which receives the marks of a male sigifying act only to give back a (false) reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency, without making any contribution of its own."\(^{36}\) In order to function in this masculine phantasy of self-presence, the chora traverses the contradictory roles of speculum (presence) and abyss (absence), a reflection of the masculine subject, his narcissistic parthenogenesis, and that which he defines himself against. In this paradoxical dialectic of "being," the chora's negation is conserved, becoming the source of "something"\(^{37}\) and difference. The traversal of contradictory roles by the chora as its/her function can be noted in a number of scenes in the drama where masculine desire speculates and founders on its "nothing."

In the first scene of the drama, Hermia's disobedience towards her father is cast in terms of her theft by Lysander, but more precisely his theft of Egeus's right to shape her. Egeus's complaint against his daughter's disobedience centers on Hermia's failure to reflect or copy his desire, a source of pleasure in self-duplication. Lysander has "stol'n the impression of her fantasy" (1.1.32), so that she no longer acts as a speculum for her father's desire, his desire to see himself replicated in his child, to be obeyed and his desire passively imitated, in what is a shaping phantasy of his own. Theseus responds to Egeus's complaint with a famous speech, describing a paternalist phantasy of authority, parthenogenesis and inscription:

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What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it. (1.1.46-51)
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A paternal discourse of woman as impressionable matter supports this phantasy of (dis)figuring.\textsuperscript{38} The trope of imprinting describes a gendered violence throughout the play. For example, Theseus represents his nuptials thus with Hippolyta, described in this context of Hermia’s refusing to yield up her “virgin patent” (1.1.80), as “[t]he sealing day” (1.1.84), or when an enamoured Demetrius addresses Helena as “this seal of bliss” (3.2.144).\textsuperscript{39} Quince “inadvertently” alludes to this same marring phantasy within figuration when the artisans are rehearsing for the play, wishing to perform it by a feminine moonlight: “Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine” (3.1.59-61).\textsuperscript{40}

As the playwright appears to highlight, Theseus’s speech cited above upholds a paternal phantasy of property and power as represented by the Athenian law. In effect, Egeus and Lysander are wrangling for this phantasy that aims to impress feminine desire with masculine form. The near incestuous phantasy of the virginal daughter’s obedient, mirroring simulation makes a law of itself demanding her death or perpetual virginity as the proper penalty for flouting her father’s will:

Either to die the death, or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires. (1.1.65-67)

Hermia’s desire is transgressive because it challenges her father’s desire: “I would my father looked but with my eyes” (1.1.56). If a dominant gender ideology dictates that she is supposed to be passively impressed by Egeus’s phantasy and simulate his desire, she reverses this priority. Egeus’s demand for

\textsuperscript{38} See Christy Desmet, “Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes: A Rhetorical Reading of \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream},” in \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Critical Essays}, ed. Dorothea Kehler (New York: Garland, 1998), 301. Desmet’s essay focuses on rhetoric’s gendered “art of figuration” (300), while Hermia is a figure here for Egeus’s godlike will that is only “like” a god’s (301).

\textsuperscript{39} Cited in Grainger, “‘Blind Cupid,’” 8.

\textsuperscript{40} Freedman reads Quince’s passage as literally referring to the state censor’s power to disfigure transgressors (160), oddly downplaying the gendered nature of disfiguring the moon and the anti-figural import of the speech. See Desmet, “Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes,” esp. 320-23, for a view of Starveling’s aesthetic of presentation in the final act as a “feminine rhetoric” (323).

The idea that the play-within-the-play is to be performed by moonlight harks back to the opening of the drama and its establishment of the symbolism of the moon and Diana as a chaste warrior. Hippolyta is associated with this moon and the time of Theseus’s deferred desire: “Four happy days bring in/ Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow! This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires” (1.1.2-4). Moonlight also refers us to the conflict between Titania and Oberon and her power that refuses to reflect Oberon’s desire: “I’ll met by moonlight proud Titania” (2.1.60). The epithalamium uses moon imagery in its elaboration of hymeneal phantasy’s desire for self-presence, as “when Phoebe doth behold/ Her silver visage in the wat’ry glass” (1.1.209-10).
Hermia to function as a speculum shades into the homoerotic, as Lysander’s comment suggests: “You have her father’s love, Demetrius; Let me have Hermia’s: do you marry him” (1.1.93-94). Such a homoerotic dimension to the exchange of the gift-bride between men is suggested in many of Shakespeare’s dramas. In act four, scene one, the marriage ritual is shielded from this homoerotic import when Theseus overrules the harsh Athenian law that Egeus demands (4.1.157-62).

If Oberon controls desire in the drama generally, the poet seems to suggest that Oberon wishes to see an image of himself in his desire, a dream of self-presence that would negate Titania’s claims to this power-pleasure. In a sense, the changeling child represents an object a to Oberon, the phantasy object that is a rem(a)inder of his imaginary union with the mother, a relationship conjured through the contentious changeling: “But she perforce withholds the loved boy, / Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy” (2.1.26-27). Through appropriating Titania’s page he aims to appropriate her status as the cause of desire and literal origin in her adopted maternal role. In “Bodies That Matter,” Butler recounts Irigaray’s reading of the erasure of the feminine chora as womb or receptacle in Plato’s theory of the forms: “Her reading establishes the cosmogony of the Forms in the Timaeus as a phallic phantasy of a fully self-constituted patrilineality, and this fantasy of autogenesis or self-constitution is effected through a denial and cooption of the female capacity for reproduction.” I contend that the playwright dramatizes precisely such appropriations of phallic phantasy.

In the speech in which she refuses to give Oberon the changeling child, Titania’s imagery of the sea compares the rich merchandise of the large sails of ships with the pregancy of her votress. On one level the conflict between Titania and Oberon can be viewed as originating in an attempted masculine appropriation of feminine origins and the womb’s generation of life. The conflict is also in a sense imitative, though the

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41 In Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and Nation-State (Madison: Associated University Presses, 1995), Jonathan Hall reads this scene and Lysander’s joke as making the audience “laugh at the whole patriarchal principle of ownership. In doing so, it briefly overthrows the hold of its own ideology” (100). He argues that “the audience is confronted with the serious issues that its own pleasure in Lysander’s joke has raised” (100). His analysis notes that “for an instant the normal order stands revealed as monstrous” (100), but neglects to spell out the “indecency” of the joke. The anxious pleasure of the joke, in Hall’s terms, would be in the spectator’s displacement and libidinal release in laughter (through the drama’s representation) of a troublesome investment in Egeus’s paternal pleasures.

42 Butler, Bodies That Matter, 43.
language of imitation and following in the passage appears to minimize this irony, where the masculine economy of trade might substitute for the wealth of bearing life:

_Titania._
Set your heart at rest.
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following - her womb was then rich with my young squire -
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.121-137)

Puck gives a different account of the Indian boy's genealogy than Titania's, where he is "stolen from an Indian king" (2.1.22). It is specifically a stolen child that Oberon desires to appropriate for his speculation. Puck's account does not contradict but rather fits with the thesis that what is at stake is a phantastic appropriation of prestige and invention of patrilineal genealogy in a phantasy of plenitude.

The foundational role of the _chora_ in masculine phantasy is evident in the economy of desire between the lovers in the forest. After Lysander's eyes have been anointed with the flower's love-juice, he awakes to exclaim: "Transparent Helena, Nature shows art,/ That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart" (2.2.104). Helena's appeal is that of the ocularly penetrable. Demetrius is similarly fascinated by Helena's penetrability, though she must also reflect him as a speculum. His first utterance upon awaking is, "O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!/ To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?/ Crystal is muddy" (3.2.137-39). H. Rachel Grainger writes of Helena's attraction to the male lovers: "It is as both an aperture and a transparent mirror that Helena first captures their gazes. She is emptied of significance in order that a phallogocentric heterosexuality and epistemology can converge into an infallible and pleasurable visual practice."43 The hymeneal phantasy, with its moon symbolism and flower imagery in the drama, represents a masculine phantasy of the power-pleasure of a look that would both penetrate the object and reflect the

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43 Grainger, "'Blind Cupid'," 10.
subject’s lack as presence. In another example of this reflective erotics, “Phoebe” has this fabulous property of chaste self-reflection in Lysander’s description of how the moon will lead the lovers out of Athens and into the fairy forest of phantasy:

    Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold
    Her silver visage in the wat’ry glass,
    Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
    A time that lovers’ flights doth still conceal,
    Through Athens’ gates have we devised to steal. (1.1.209-13)

This same moonlight of the lovers is disfigured, or presented, in the playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby” and its veiled presentation of hymeneal breach with the drama of the Moon, the Wall, and the Lion.

The dramatic interlude of “Pyramus and Thisby” presents a drama filled with prohibitions, obstacles and partitions that act to incite desire, notably focused on the figure of the wall dividing the lovers. Symbolically, this wall is both the wall dividing them through their fathers’s enmity, ironically echoing the message of fraternal amity through Christ’s redemptive Love in Ephesians, and a hymeneal wall.44 Again, the drama enacts at the level of its language describing desire and in mime what it formally, as an epithalamium, suspends, while celebrating the anticipated event: consummation and hymeneal rupture. The personified “Wall” that comes down in the scene and the dropped, bloodied mantle of Thisby repeat Oberon’s account of the mise-en-scene of desire. In the final section of the chapter, I return to the importance of Thisby’s dropped mantle as a symbol developing the theme of the chora and desire’s misrecognitions.45

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45 The blood-stained mantle is a tragic “token” of the misrecognition of violence, and the violence of misrecognition, in desire. The mantle is an ambiguous symbol for the violence of the masculine, phallic phantasy of hymeneal rupture or defloration, though the “token” is there for the audience to recognise. Several critics address the handkerchief symbolism in Othello as developing the thematics of masculine anxiety about feminine chastity, phantasied sexual violence, and lack. See Lynda E. Boose’s essay, “Othello’s Handkerchief: ‘The Recognition and Pledge of Love’,” which notes the ritual connotations of the handkerchief in its metaphoric equivalence to the hymen and wedding sheets. In English Literary Renaissance 5:4 (1975): 360-74 (esp. 363-65). See also Edward A. Snow, “Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in Othello,” English Literary Renaissance 10:1 (1980): 384-412. In “Othello’s Lost Handkerchief: Where Psychoanalysis Finds Itself,” Elizabeth J. Bellamy notes the dynamic by which psychoanalysis recognizes itself in the framing of the handkerchief, “locating the handkerchief in the lack of the castrated woman” (156). Her essay proposes to supplement some other psychoanalytic readings with an analysis that ties the handkerchief to anxiety about representation’s excess, to an excessive displacement
I am arguing that Dream is an inspired exegesis of the poetic subject's specular “misprision” (3.1.90) in desire and how the self is implicated in the misrecognized other. The attempted appropriation of the virginal chor(a)'s “being” in hymeneal phantasy is an instance of this “sacrificial” desire and a masculinist gender ideology. In my previous argument about Oberon's allegory of desire, this specular economy simulates and suspends a phallic defloration that is posited at the origin of desire or “love-in-idleness” (2.1.168). In the male subject's misrecognition of his own castration (when Oberon speaks of “love's wound” [2.1.167], it is unclear to whom the purple vesture belongs), this defloration is likened to a feminine flower in the Cupidinous displacement of lack. The drama puts this momentous misrecognition centre-stage in Oberon's speech, suggesting its informing presence and erotic draw in the cultural form of epithalamium that is Dream. The hymeneal phantasy structuring Dream thus articulates and questions a hegemonic discourse of sexual difference and the phallic appropriation of origins, rivalling in this manner Freud and Lacan’s theories of the castration complex that ideologically sanction the meconnaissance of castration, putting it at the origin of a desire fascinated by this generative “nothing,” of sexual identity, and even of knowledge.46

The symbolism of Thisby's dropped, blood-stained mantle is a sort of precursor to the poet's involved deployment of the handkerchief in Othello, and also appears in different forms, connected with a redemptive chor(a) figure, in Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale.

46 The hymeneal phantasy of Dream with its attendant masculine anxiety can also be aligned with an anthropological perspective pursued by Freud in “The Taboo on Virginity” (7, 265-83). Setting up defloration as a sort of liminal ritual, Freud's essay examines how the act of defloration often provokes a hostile reaction through the loss of a narcissistically invested organ and state of autonomy, motivating the woman's vengeful desire to castrate her lover that that is funded by the castration complex. The opposing tendency of the bride's defloration to create a “state of bondage” (265) to the husband is the “civilized consequence of binding the woman lastingly to the man” (282). (Like a child's sexual theory that often contains an element of truth, a truth of Freud's theory here appears to be that defloration is regularly imagined and experienced as an injurious “possession” and “violation” of the woman, so taboos on this act are motivated by a fear of the return of a feminine repressed.) Assuming a link between “primitive” cultures and his own, Freud seeks to explain the taboos surrounding virginity, but he begins by addressing the contrasting premium set on virginity in his own culture. This framing of his analysis downplays as a problem the patriarchal endorsement of a man's “right to the exclusive possession of a woman” (265), an attitude no doubt motivating feminine resentment which he then attributes to phantasies of revenge based on feminine lack (penis envy) and sexuality. This misses how masculinist culture enforces women's social castration. Representations of defloration in a culture that makes it equivalent to or confirming a woman's castration are bound to arouse a certain masculine anxiety, as we see in the final act of Dream.
Desire’s wish for a “nothing” on which to speculate is present throughout *Dream*: the masculine spectator-subject displaces his own lack in the spectacle through specular and interpretative misprision (or class and gender ideology). The privileged spectators of the final act’s play-within-the-play participate in an economy of masterful misrecognition towards the artisans and the scene of desire, but this final scene also indicates the theater’s potential for subversion through the spectator’s reliance on a “nothing” - a negation, a lack, an absence, a blank - for his identity and desire. The “nothing” in these analyses describes a spectacle that offers itself as such a lack, as a phantasied space - the virginal *chora* figure - for the masculine spectator’s self-reflection. This master subject blithely refuses to recognize itself in the lack that fascinates it, on which its desire is dependent, insisting on its right to signify and control phantasy. The women as *chora* figures, Bottom and the artisans, and the spectacle of the play-within-the-play: these can all be read to function in the drama’s phantasmatics as a “nothing” to be speculated on as the other of the masculine subject.

The seductive quality of the spectacle or of the object of desire is based as much on what is ostensibly denied to vision, or what is invisible, as what is presented to it. As Quince says in his prologue:

Our true intent is, *All for your delight,*

*We are not here.* That you should repent you,
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
You shall know all, that you are like to know. *(5.1.108-11; my italics)*

I argue that the “show” is destined for misrecognition and nonknowledge by its audience, as the poet obliquely suggests here. The spectators will not recognize the image of their own desire though they see a reflection of it.

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47 In ““Rude Mechincals’,” Parker makes a somewhat different argument about how the “rude mechanicals” (3.2.9) are artisans whose “mechanical” professions align them (in a class distinction) with the material realm and a disordered matter, which matter they also shape or mould. In *Subject and Object in Renaissance culture*, ed. Margreta de Grazia et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). She notes that “the *materia* or material to be formed and shaped has also (in the Neoplatonic and Neoaristotelian traditions so influential for the language of the *Dream*) a long-standing association with the “matter” of the female as something to be shaped, formed, and ruled” (63). The notion of a devalued matter that also actively shapes describes the *chora*’s contradictory position as epistemological matrix as well as the artisans’ position as “rude mechanicals” (3.2.9). Their shared embodiment of such a contradiction solicits an attribution of a putative lack that would appropriate their being.
In a metatheatrical moment, the playwright theorizes his drama’s attribute as a “nothing” to be speculated on when Philostrate warns Theseus about the play: “It is not for you. I have heard it over; And it is nothing, nothing in the world” (5.1.77-78). Theseus’s reply indicates that it is this “nothing” status of the spectacle and the players that captures his interest. If Hippolyta fears that “they can do nothing in this kind” (5.1.88), Theseus insists, “[t]he kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing,/ Our sport shall be to take what they mistake” (5.1.89-90). The three male members of the audience engage with vigour in an overwriting of the spectacle. The gross mimetic efforts of the overburdened actors are critiqued with an interesting ambivalence. The men are intent on picking out the play’s faults that redound to their sense of superiority. But the contempt vacillates with an attitude that would nonetheless find a reflection of its power in a dumbstruck show. For instance, Theseus praises a lack of expression: “Trust me, sweet,/ Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome” (5.1.99-100). Theseus’s reading of a fearful, loving duty reflecting his power in “this silence” can be taken to point up the complete silence of Hermia and Helena throughout the scene. Hippolyta’s fear that they can do “nothing” in the way of acting inspires Theseus’s remark that such shows are mere semblance and can be overwritten by a forming imagination:

_Theseus._ The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.  
_Hippolyta._ It must be your imagination then, and not theirs. (5.1.212-215)

Hippolyta’s rejoinder highlights the fact that it is Theseus’s imagination that is drawn to participate in the shadow life of the spectacle. If Quince’s prologue is, as Hippolyta describes it, “a sound, but not in government” (5.1.123-24), these spectators feel unduly confident in governing the “tangled chain” of his speech in their interpretative misprision: “His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?” (5.1.125-26)

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48 James L. Calderwood asserts that the drama is not Shakespeare’s private dream “but rather the audience’s dream made public and reexperienced as art” (142). See his chapter, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream: Art’s Illusory Sacrifice,” in _Shakespearean Metadrama_ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971). From his title, one might expect the general argument to be that Shakespeare’s dramatic art performs an illusory “sacrifice” of _something_, perhaps of “the feminine” to a paternal order, a sacrifice granted the status of illusion, as either dream or mere dramatic production. However, the general idea of the chapter would appear to be that the drama sacrifices nothing of life in showing the spectator his dreams, and that the drama affirms the indissoluble connection between the realms of reality and dream, world and stage, in the mythic presence of their synthesis-dissolution.
Intent on seeing fearfully tendered duty and love, Theseus is prevented from hearing the artisans’ intention - or is it Shakespeare’s? - to discontent the audience. Again, Quince’s prologue makes it clear that this meaning with/by “nothing impaired” depends on an overwriting interpretation by power:

If we offend, it is with our good will.  
That you should think, we come not to offend,  
But with good will. To show our simple skill,  
This is the true beginning of our end.  
Consider, then, we come but in despite.  
We do not come, as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight,  
We are not here. That you should repent you,  
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,  
You shall know all, that you are like to know. (5.1.108-117)

Nothing necessarily suggests that the “rude mechanicals” (3.2.9) are consciously engaged in subverting the dominant order through a representation of illicit desire disturbing the dominant vision of courtly love and marriage. However, the playwright’s staging of hymeneal phantasy in the playlet suggests Theseus’s misprision in relation to this spectacle, his lack of recognition that inspires an amending imagination while pointing up his reliance on this spectacular “nothing” for his pleasure.

Concern regarding the basis of the insolence contained in Quince’s hesitations is echoed in another metatheatrical frame by Puck, in his final address to the audience:

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended:  
That you have slumb’red here,  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,  
No more yielding but a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend:  
If you pardon, we will mend. (5.1.425-432)

Despite its “weak and idle theme,” the dream can yield an anxious, anticipatory pleasure: the dream-drama “shall restore amends” (5.1.440) despite disavowal in an economy of theatrical pleasure. Might an anxious pleasure lie in a formal misrecognition of the transgressive desires staged while participating in them? As Cartelli theorizes about the Renaissance stage generally, the gentle audience’s seduction to dreams of transgression also results in a countering resistance to this imaginary engagement with the erotic
transgressors. However, even anxiety in “the dream” can also, in Freud’s interpretative move, be read as a symptomatic effect of an illicit impulse’s wishfulfillment (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 11, 304). The tension between the offered pleasure of phantasy and the spectator’s resistances to these sources of aesthetic satisfaction is rather like the dialectical play presented at the end of Freud’s essay on “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming.” The aesthetic pleasure of the drama is arguably effected by the spectator’s enjoyment of its disguised representation of prohibited phantasies (while the censors slumber), in a “fore-pleasure” which accesses “still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources” (14, 141). By asking the gentles pardon for presenting such offensive dreams, the poet’s “shaping fantasies” (5.1.5) that they might well enjoy, the playwright, albeit ironically, formally allows the spectator’s pleasure.

A Framing Bower of Flowers and Tears: Titania’s Shaming, Oberon’s Spectatorial Pleasure

In the Introduction, I recounted Freud’s interpretation of Oberon’s punishment of Titania, asking if his interpretation also participates in a symptomatic wish-fulfillment or phantasy of phallocratic hegemony. Freud makes Oberon’s punishment of Titania a substitute for and fulfillment of an erotic wish, tracing the transposition of repudiated desire from Oberon to Titania. I suggested that Freud’s interpretation participates in Oberon’s authority/power through Titania’s surrogative punishment. Oberon’s control of “misprision” attributes to Titania and Bottom the monstrous body of sex, making “her full of hateful fantasies” (2.1.258), i.e., the Fairy King’s control over the discourse of sexuality is the means to his

49 See Cartelli on “The Terms of Engagement” in the theater, esp. along the lines of pleasure and vicarious transgression overcoming ethical resistances to this engagement (29-37). His analysis valuably details the range of satisfactions available to the spectator and the further important factor of “the psychic disposition of the playgoer” (36), while also acknowledging the finally speculative character of analyses of the spectator’s satisfactions.

50 The playwright and an Elizabethan theatrical culture aspired to success through strategies of self-promotion that represented the theater as a place of recreation and mirth for playgoers, aiming to please them every day and delegating political interpretation to the spectators. Paul Yachnin’s argument for a “powerless theater” notes the manner in which Elizabethan poets used a strategy of representing poetry as separate from politics - if not ethics - in the “poetry is dream” trope, a strategy of legitimation one observes here when “Puck begs the audience’s pardon for the “weak and idle dream” of A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” In Stage-Wrights, esp. 11-14 (13). In the traditional reading of MND, the festive renewal of the social order is witnessed in the drama. This renewal occurs in the theatrical mirth and “sport,” what Yachnin describes as legitimate “sexual and theatrical” sources of pleasure (78). The present argument contends that although the playwright promotes such a reception of his drama’s “sport,” this view is also ironized, for example in Philostrate’s faltering role as “usual manager of mirth” (5.1.35). My argument stresses the “illicit” aspects of phantasy in a “politics of theatrical mirth” (70).
hegemony. Oberon enforces Titania’s obedience through the magical spell of a controlling masculinist discourse of bodily shame and chastening that places “Dian’s bud o’er Cupid’s flower”: 51

But first I will release the Fairy Queen.
Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou was wont to see.
Dian’s bud o’er Cupid’s flower
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet Queen.
Titania. My Oberon, what visions have I seen! I thought I was enamored of an ass.
Oberon. There lies your love.
Titania. How came these things to pass?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now! (4.1.72-83)

The basic movement of the scene in Titania’s bower of flowers, as recounted by Oberon, is the reversal of their power relations through his orchestration of her “shaming.” 52 This power reversal effected by Oberon’s staging of Titania’s amorous interlude works through the surrogation of Bottom for the immortal changeling; Oberon’s staging of abjecting the feminine for a “monstrous sexuality” is replicated by Titania.

Might the phantasy-as-reality of cuckoldry in the fairy plot operate as a protective displacement and recuperation of repressed sodomitical desire for Oberon? Oberon’s desire for the Indian boy to be his “henchman” (2.1.121) suggests as much; of course, the boy is the cause of the dissension between Titania and Oberon. The protective defence of paranoiac phantasy’s staging of cuckoldry has a Freudian etiology in a “repressed homosexuality”: “It is not I who love the man, she loves him.” 53 In Freudian theory, the

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51 In “The Ritual of Midsummer: A pattern for A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Renaissance Quarterly 31 (1978): 21-29, Anca Vlasopolos notes the “peacemaking” attribute of “Dian’s bud” (21). The plant is identified as Agnus Castus, whose property was thought “to render men chaste by a radical method, by drying up the seed of generation” (25). The chastening that retores the lovers to what is deemed proper “judgment” by Vlasopolos is significantly directed to a woman here, Titania. In keeping with the catharsis thesis pursued in this section, mugwort was also associated with “Dian’s bud” in folklore and was used in Midsummer rituals remedying “a variety of illnesses, among which are impediments of vision, drug poisonings, and states induced by opiates” (25).

52 Regarding the Renaissance discourses disciplining the female body see Gail Kern Paster, The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Paster argues that Titania’s aim to “purge” Bottom of his “mortal grossness” (3.1.161) is “equally poised between, or inclusive of, ethical and physical reference, just as her interest in his physical state seems poised between the erotic and the maternal” (132). Titania’s prescription of a literal purge infantilizes Bottom and assumes a position of mastery over him (138). Titania’s own previous employment of this discourse of chastening encourages one to view this as a source of her subjection. She addresses Bottom: “And I will purge thy mortal grossness so” (3.1.161). This discourse of a medical-magical catharsis from the body’s grossness governs Oberon’s staging of the Titania and Bottom interlude.

53 Freud’s theories of paranoiac and neurotic phantasy bear a largely unremarked debt to Shakespearean drama, and to MND in particular. A mapping of Freud’s later texts on paranoia and the playwright’s
paranoiac defence of negation can be read as a symptom of repressed sodomitical desire. While Oberon appears mostly free of jealousy regarding his wife's staged infidelity, his jealous desire for the Indian boy is presented by Puck as an image of orderly procession in nature: "And jealous Oberon would have the child/ Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild" (2.1.24-25). In one such vision, Oberon's desire does not contradict but is part of the natural order of things, a sexuality whose meaning he controls. Oberon's punitive visitation of "hateful fantasies" (2.2.258) on Titania appears to be a means of gaining his own desire. Locating the playwright's representation of Oberon's staging of his own cuckoldry as possibly both a symptom of disavowed sodomitical desire and a representation of power's enjoyment of its "magical" control over the discourse of sexuality, one moves the analysis away from any final word accorded to psychoanalytic hermeneutics.

A further investigation of Oberon's spectatorial pleasure in witnessing Titania's erotic degradation with Bottom might begin with an examination of the scene's flower imagery. The examination of the flower imagery in the drama bears out the thesis that "natural" feminine beauty in Dream is often linked to an eroticized violence and suffering. I have already suggested that the flower imagery in the play often indicates a "phantasmatic" violence towards women identified with those flowers. In a contrary trajectory arousing masculine anxiety, the drama also entertains the inverse proposition of desire beggaring the male representation of Oberon's staging of desire as a "hysterical phantasy" might seem infelicitous, and is hardly intended as a final word here. Where Freud will locate a husband's projective jealousy in paranoia as functioning to keep his own homosexual desire repressed, in Shakespeare's drama the jealousy often appears legitimate. That is, this question is irresolvable within the Freudian terms when cuckoldry is located in reality as well as the world of phantasy. See "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality," 10, 197-208 (201). Notably, Freud cites Othello (Desdemona's "Willow Song") to demonstrate the reciprocity of ethical condemnation in accusations of infidelity (n.1, 198), not, however, strictly to the point in regards projective jealousy.

Regarding the eroticization of violence ("now purple with love's wound") in Shakespeare's text, in Twelfth Night, the violet is similarly the flower that names the spectator-subject's proffered relation of a rape phantasy towards Viola. In "Shakespeare's Will: the Temporality of Rape," Fineman writes: "We can add that in Twelfth Night all this [the author's "allegoricizing anagrammatics" in the characterological relations of the play] is initially thought or presented through the sound associated with the purple flower called up in the opening lines of the play - "the sweet sound/ That breathes upon a bank of violets" (1.1.5-6) - a violet, moreover, the play associates not only with "Viola" but also with the violence and violation of her imagined rape (violare)." In The Subjectivity Effect, 181. The resolution of will offered, what you will, is specifically in a signature that puns on the vicissitudes of voglio (as "will" or "bad-will").

In chapter six of The Interpretation of Dreams, "The Dream-Work," Freud discusses dream symbolism and the appearance of flowers in the dreams of a normal woman (4, 493-98). These pages are reminiscent of Fineman on Twelfth Night, recounting the manner in which "the language of flowers" is meant to express the female dreamer's divided thoughts on "the violence of defloration," with the author's particularly "bold" attention to violets (4, 495).
lover: “Flower of this purple dye,/ Hit with Cupid’s archery,/ Sink in apple of his eye” (3.2.102-04). If flowers stained by Cupid’s bolt are at the origin of poetic desire in this text, the magic potion is a “juice” or “purple dye” extracted from the flower, but the flower itself is also such a pharmakon, particularly as a sign of the woman’s castration or the (missing) phallus that psychoanalysis will always seek and find. “Flowers” are also menses or the blood of female generation, a signification of generativity that accords with another, darker source of “fecundity” in masculinist phantasy, that of defloration’s erotic bonding and the uncanny erotics of a feminine castration-sacrifice therein. In the following discussion, I discuss Oberon’s spectatorial pleasure in the bower scene of Titania and Bottom, following the playwright’s use of flower imagery and its association with “feminine” tears and catharsis.

Does Titania’s speech to her fairies attempt to align the spectator’s look with that of the chaste moon who, in viewing Titania’s anticipated violation, “looks with a wat’ry eye”? Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower. The moon methinks looks with a wat’ry eye; And when she weeps, weeps every little flower, Lamenting some enforced chastity. Tie up my lover’s tongue, bring him silently. Exit [Titania with Bottom and Fairies] (3.1.197-201)

For an essay that examines the flower imagery in the play from the perspective of their “blessed power” (4.1.77) as healing herbs, see Vlaspolos, “The Ritual of Midsummer.” The focus of that essay neglects to consider the possible genital signification of “Dian’s bud,” but provides a sketch of the Midsummer rituals in which plants associated with Diana and chastity are used, though “chastity in the context of the play means fruitful, generative monogamy rather than abstinence” (26). Pursuing the perspective of the comedy’s establishment of a proper masculinist order, Vlasopolos’s essay begins: “Interpretations of A Midsummer Night’s Dream have suffered from a hesitation or a downright refusal on the part of critics to consider the full significance of the ritual of Midsummer, or Saint John’s Day, in Shakespeare’s comedy. The play, like the ritual which informs its structure, maintains a dual frame of reference, Christian and pagan. Within this frame such seemingly unrelated subjects as the moon and dew imagery, the frequent reference to eyes, and the business of magic plants, particularly the peacemaking ‘Dian’s bud,’ become thematic components of the comic movement toward reconciliation of natural and lawful love ... The fertility rite of Midsummer Eve draws the lovers at last into harmony with each other and with the natural world” (21). The present analysis wishes to suggest how a “full significance” is ritualistically performed in the (up)staged “fertility rites” of the drama. A phallogocentric discourse’s phantasy of “full signification” or self-presence is reliant on the chora’s contradictory function of reflecting its desire and punishment. These “fertility rites” of defloration, or “enforced chastity,” are in the service of a masculine identity that appropriates and negates the feminine in this, to use Vlasopolos’s phrase, “peacemaking.”
Paradoxically, it is Titania who voices the pleasure of a “transgression” while silencing her beloved. The “seductive” ambiguity of these lines, of the weeping flowers of sorrow or joy,\(^{56}\) of an “enforced chastity,” works to implicate a masculine auditor in a rape phantasy. The phantasy of the look’s control and penetrative capacity is being staged where it is figured as a graphically sexual (de)floration. Titania’s speech is ambiguous, allowing for the supposition that she is complicit with an imaginary violation that the imagery (“weeps every little flower”) and ambiguous diction (“some enforced chastity”) suggests. While the ambiguity of the violent phantasy’s representation is capitalized on by the drama, allowing the audience to join in the phantasy of Titania’s violation, the scene also reflects that tearful desire back to the spectator.\(^{57}\)

Titania and Bottom are the players and Oberon the spectator-subject of a scene framed by a “flow’ry bed” (4.1.1). The scene as recounted by Oberon functions to stage the erotic allure of a violated *chora* figure in the drama-as-dream.\(^{58}\) In the passage describing Titania’s dotage, the affective valence of her tears is ambiguous, but they appear to signal the erotic penetration of a subject in crisis, where tears are the “thinking of the body” attempting to expell an invader.\(^{59}\) Titania’s crisis lends itself to masculine participation in the phantasied scene effected under the guise of a troublesome spectatorial “pity”:

Welcome, good Robin. See’st thou this sweet sight?  
Her dotage now I do begin to pity;  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,

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\(^{56}\) “Weeping flowers” might also refer to the female genitalia in a state of sexual excitation, though this can also fall within a masculinist erotics of her phantasied suffering.  
\(^{57}\) As I suggest in the next section, the drama also stages another perspective on this scene, where it is Bottom who is violated or sacrificed in a *hieros gamos*, the Bottom playing the lover who says, “let the audience look to their eyes” (1.2.27-28).  
\(^{58}\) There is considerable debate among scholars regarding the status of the interlude between Bottom and Titania, whether it is a tasteful, delicately presented work of pure fancy, or, as Kott would controversially suggest, a consummated passion. In *The Bottom Translation*, Kott participates in the drama’s proffered phantasies in the series of reversals afforded by neo-Platonic philosophy and carnival theory (29-68). In his previous *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (New York: Anchor, 1966), in his chapter on “Titania and the Ass’s Head” (213-36), Kott indulges in a long, faintly misogynistic reverie on Titania’s “pure animality” in her poetical rape of Bottom, and her entering “the dark sphere of sex where there is no more beauty and ugliness; there is only infatuation and liberation” (227-33; 233, 228), which betrays his own infatuation with both Bottom’s phallicism (for example, at 227) and the erotic allure of Titania’s sexuality.  
\(^{59}\) In “Perilous Balance: A Comic Hypothesis,” Girard emphasizes how tears seem to be a reaction to perceived attack or invasion of the proper body and the subject’s autonomy. He argues that tears are a metaphorical action on the part of the “mind-body complex,” responding to a demand for expulsion, expelling an imaginary invader or threat to the subject. In *To double-business bound*: Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978): 121-35 (123).
Seeking sweet favors of this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flouriets’ eyes,
Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes. (4.1.49-66)

Why does this scene offer itself to Oberon as a “sweet sight” (4.1.49) as a spectator? Surely Titania’s disgrace should have implications for Oberon, even or especially if it is a phantasy and punishing wish-fulfillment. Might the spectacle be a “sweet sight” (4.1.49) because it grants him participation in a transgressive phantasy and perverse pleasure in erotic degradation and punishment, a misprision that also grants him his desire and recuperation of sovereign power. Oberon’s belated sympathy - “Now her dotage I do begin to pity” (4.1.50) - seems motivated by an unconscious recognition of his own implication in the scene, not only in his cruel shaming of his wife and perhaps in his cuckoldry, but in the suggested reciprocity between Titania’s alliance with an “ass” and his own illicit desires (“I then did ask of her her changeling child;/ Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent/ To bear him to my bower in fairy land”).

The previous account of flower imagery and its eroticism might be extended to the function of a tearful catharsis from this eroticism’s force. The tears of the moon and the weeping flowers (3.1.198-200) are images of an outraged chastity and a natural purification from this violation. Similarly, the dew on the flowers crowning Bottom is likened to tears standing in “the pretty flouriets’ eyes,/ Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail” (4.1.59). If the dew on Bottom’s flowers is likened to Titania’s tears, together with their location on the chora figure, what might the contiguity of the flower and tear imagery suggest? In “The Thinking of the Body: Comments on the Imagery of Catharsis in Literature,” Burke notes the etymological connections between choai, libations, and cheo, to make rain, a stream, to dissolve; this cheo...
“can also apply to the shedding of tears,” a function that might be linked to a sacrificed chora figure. In this flower spectacle, does the playwright make poetic common ground between an aesthetic that eroticizes violence and feminine suffering, the drama’s poetic “language of flowers,” and the general Aristotelean function of a catharsis from pity, fear, and desire generally? On a critical level of sexual phantasy the function of scapegoat falls on Titania here, whether or not the auditor chooses to follow Oberon’s lead in projectively disavowing his illicit desire and his pleasurable “catharsis” focused on her erotic punishment.

In Titania’s bower Bottom is a sovereign scapegoat, crowned with flowers and then uncrowned by Oberon, as he is also assified and negated by the aristocratic audience. Oberon’s uncrowning of Bottom projects his own illicit desire onto the bestial other, negating the body in the dialectic of “Dian’s bud o’er Cupid’s flower” (4.1.76) that supports an ideal vision of Love, while still enjoying this spectacle of erotic degradation as a “sweet sight” (4.1.49). So that as Titania is scapegoated, her own plan to purge Bottom uses the same language of ethical and spiritual purification of the corporeal: “And I will purge your mortal grossness so,/ That thou shalt like an airy spirit go” (3.1.161-62). One reaches here one of the drama’s mysteries to which I return: what does one make of “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219)? Is he violated by Titania or sacrificed to the goddess in this hieros gamos?

Bottom is similarly negated by the aristocratic audience as a matter of class distinction, while in a similar fashion he is also ridiculed as a romantic “lover that kills himself, most gallant, for love” (1.2.24-25). In the latter role of self-sacrificing lover, on one level, Bottom certainly fails to deliver his promise to make the audience weep, though this failure seems to point up their refusal of reciprocity with his role:

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes.
I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. (2.1.26-31)

Admittedly, Philostrate confesses that Pyramus’s death in rehearsal, “[m]ade mine eyes water; but more merry tears/ The passion of loud laughter never shed” (5.1.69-70). This laughter is certainly class inflected. It also acts as an index of the ironic distance that Theseus and the rest maintain from the show of Bottom’s final “passion” in death: “This passion, and the death of a near friend, would go to make a man sad”

60 Burke, “The Thinking of the Body: Comments on the Imagery of Catharsis in Literature,” in Language
(5.1.289-90). As one who tells Hippolyta tales of carnage "in glory of my kinsman Hercules" (5.1.42) whose career he emulates, Theseus might have preferred Bottom's performance of the tyrant Hercules "to make all split" (2.1.31). So while Bottom fails to deliver the tears that might indicate a real crisis of the subject, a failure in part due to the audience's tacit identification with the tyrant rather than the self-sacrificing lover, this tyrant-lover can still be subjected to erotic bondage or fatal error, as when Hercules is subdued by Omphales or Theseus murders his son Hippolytus.

A "Poetics of Sodomy": Negation, Reversal, and Bottom's Asinine "Translations"

*Snout.* O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

*Bottom.* What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you? [Exit *Snout*]

*Enter Quince*

*Snout.* Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated. (3.1.115-120)

Bottom's specular and sacrificial relations to others form him and their diacritical, phantastic identities, as in his spectacular, chiastic translation here into the phantasy ass. Notably, it is through his very theatricality - his performance of an identity that is always failed because propelled by an ontological lack and the desire to be "translated" into some being\(^1\) - that Bottom functions as a sympathetic erotic mediator for self-definition and the pleasures of illicit phantasy. As such, Bottom is a figure for a rejecting identification through projective (mis)recognition in the play - "What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?" (3.1.117-18). Bottom can thus function in an economy of theatrical experience that negates alterity and illicit desire while enjoying it: when Oberon watches Titania crown her lover, when the masculine spectator-subjects watch the play-within-the-play, when a hypothetical audience of a Renaissance performance views the drama, and when the modern critics of *Dream*, from Freud and Olson to Kott and Bloom, read its romance.

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\(^1\) See Girard's chapter on the artisans and the pleasures of theatrical mimesis, including the pleasure of impersonation, ""More than Fancy's Images": The Craftsmen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,"" 59. I look at this pleasure in terms of imaginary participation in the drama implicit in Aristotle's discussion.
Expanding on Bredbeck's model of a "poetics of sodomy," I develop it specifically in relation to the translations of Bottom in *Dream.* I begin with the function of the dramatic *pharmakos,* which leads to questions of negation, dramatic reversal and a theatrical pleasure intricately with a phantasied "turning around" or repetition of lack. I also look at how Bottom encodes a type of disruptive sexual meaning through the playwright's manipulation of the synechdocal substitutions of a language of "bottoms" in Christian and carnival discourses. The title of this section gestures to the bewildering translations nominally undergone by Bottom in *Dream*’s "poetics of sodomy": beaten carnival ass, asinine Parousia, "fantasy ass" of a sodomitical interlude, arse as object of desire. Annabel Patterson notes the visual and "structural pun on ass" in Bottom's literal assimilation. This inquiry delineates some of the drama's further punning translations of "Bottom" and "ass" in a range of sodomitical transgressions, reversals, and dialectical translations of the abject to sublime.

As proffered dramatic *pharmakos,* Bottom is called on to embody cultural and psychic contradictions, conflicts, and excess, what his figurative sacrifice seems aimed to displace and purge in renewing the normative social and sexual orders. Burke's essay, "Tautological Cycle of Terms for ‘Order,’" helpfully suggests the manner in which the transgressions of the "sodomite" (in a religious framework) are grammatically necessary for the very idea of order. In a dramatic version of Burke's reflections, the "sodomite" as *pharmakos* would indicate the dominant gender epistemology's reliance on a performative *separation* of the transgressive sodomite to whose sacrifice the sacred order is indebted. Power can also vicariously enjoy this sacrifice as the source of its creaturely redemption (somewhat in the manner of redemption by Christ's vicarious suffering, though without the same conscious sense of debt and *identification*). Burke writes of order's necessary, constituting transgression whose fault is condensed on the scapegoat and his consequent definitional duality:

Arrived at this point, we might shift the problem of the "watershed moment" [of order, in finding a mythical cause for evil in the scapegoat] to another plane, by recalling that the same conditions of divisiveness also make for the inchoately "holy," inasmuch as the Hebrew word for "holy," *qodesh,* which means literally the "separate," the "set apart," as does the word

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62 Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation.* See the first chapter, "Introduction: History and the Scene of Sodomy," the first part of which promises to give an account of "The Poetics of Renaissance Sodomy," 3-30 (esp. 3-23). Bredbeck does not discuss *MND* in particular, but his theoretical approach that concentrates on a historically situated rhetoric of representation proves helpful for the purposes of this chapter.

63 Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice,* 67.
qadesh, which means “Sodomite.” This verbal tangle has often been commented on, and it applies to the New Testament word hagios, which means both “holy” and “accursed,” like its Latin counterpart, sacer.64

One can compare Girard’s formulation in Violence and the Sacred of the linguistic, poetic duplicity of naming the pharmakos:

The mutations of meaning from the human katharma to the medical katharsis are paralleled by those of the human pharmakos to the medical pharmakon, which signifies at once “poison” and “remedy.” In both cases we pass from the surrogate victim - or rather, his representative - to a drug that possesses a simultaneous potential for good and for bad, one that serves as a kind of sacred duality.65

This description “of sacred duality” could also be applied to a consideration of the playwright’s representation of the pharmakon of the “love-juice” (3.2.37), of desire’s “misprision” (3.2.90), and of the formal ambivalence that is projectively, cathartically attributed to characters such as Puck in Dream to maintain the dominant vision of “true love” (3.2.91).66 Dream discreetly upstages Bottom’s similar function as dramatic pharmakos, his purging of an excess to desire threatening and defining the sacred social and sexual orders, a purging the audience might enjoy as an index of their own subjection to power.

Looking at Bottom’s role as a sodomitical pharmakos in Dream, I am using a very wide sense of “sodomy” as transgressive or illicit desire threatening the sovereign subject with its alterity, a phantom sodomy whose punishment helps define the dominant orders. Before considering Bottom’s translations, I supplement Bredbeck’s model of ironic negatio with a psychoanalytically inflected consideration of theatrical pleasure taken in the negation of sodomy and reversal. Once again taking up Fineman’s claim about Freud’s debt to Shakespeare’s text and a theory of rhetorical trope, how might negatio compare here with Freud’s concept of negation? Further, might the dramatic trope of reversal or peripeteia traditionally centered on the tragic hero be a source of Freud’s other defensive phantasy of “turning around into its opposite,” an operation the dream-work often effects to the dreamer’s satisfaction: in Dream, this operation effecting a wished for reversal of power frequently condenses on a “fantasy ass,” Bottom, and an encrypted

65 Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 288.
66 Indeed, Girard makes a reading of Puck’s sacrificial function in “Sweet Puck': Sacrificial Resolution in A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” in A Theatre of Envy, though I would emphasize Puck’s scapegoating for specular desire’s “misprision” (3.2.90) as the structure governing such sacrificial misrecognitions.
trope of sodomy. Freud's poetics of subjectivity seems particularly indebted to the rhetorical and dramatic tropes of *negatio* and reversal which, when translated into phantasy's defences, describe the subject's displacement of lack.

To begin with negation. In Freud's thought negation is a category of phantasy and defence describing the subject's articulation of wishes that are disavowed within that enunciation ("Negation," *II*, 437-442). The language of negation stems a "return of the repressed" while the subject intellectually acknowledges what is still affectively rejected. In Shakespeare's drama, there is a show of negating transgressive desire by the *dramatis personae*: "I have had a rare vision, I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream ..." (4.1.207-10). The staging of transgressive phantasy and its negation is calculated to pleasurably engage the audience in a fairy tale of subjectivity haunted by its repudiations. When Bottom comes to play Pyramus in the dramatic interlude, his literal assification in the forest fairy scene is figuratively repeated. There he was the "fantasy ass" of Titania's amours, an erotic mediator of the spectator's and perhaps Oberon's sodomitical phantasies. When Pyramus dies in the playlet of "Pyramus and Thisby," the excessive performance of his death arouses a scorn articulated with anxious pleasure by the male audience, an abjection reflecting their visual misprision. Bottom's final utterance, "Now die, die, die, die, die" (5.1.307), sets off a cluster of puns whose latent innuendos name a desire for the subject's dissolution in death as a sexual *nothing*, a "nothing" (5.1.311) gravitating to the naming of an "ass" (5.1.313):

Demetrius. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.
Lysander. Less than an ace, man; for he is dead, he is nothing.
Theseus. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and yet prove an ass. (5.1.309-313)

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67 In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud records his impression that the dream-work's action of "turning around" a situation invariably contains within it a punitive, sodomitical valence: "I think, moreover, that all these dreams of turning things round the other way include a reference to the contemptuous implication of the idea of 'turning one's back on something'. [here a footnote reads: The German 'Kehrseite' can mean both 'reverse' and 'backside'. Cf. the vulgar English phrase 'arse upwards' for 'upside down', 'the wrong way round']. ... It is remarkable to observe, moreover, how frequently reversal is employed precisely in dreams arising from repressed homosexual impulses" (4, 440).

68 Compare the language and manner in which the masculine spectators look for a masterful self-recognition while wishing to erect a radical separation between themselves and the actors at the scene: Theseus. I wonder if the lion be to speak.
Demetrius. No wonder, my lord. One lion may, when many asses do. (5.1.153-54)
I consider Theseus's curious misprision in relation to the bestial, violent lion in the final section.
The banter between the men insists on their shared, hierarchical difference (a combination of “class” and gender distinction) from this asinine identity, Bottom’s attributed “nothing” (5.1.311). Is Bottom’s death here allied with a phantom sodomy that proclaims the death of the subject? Bottom’s repeated imperative to “die” generates its meaning for the audience in relation to “nothing” and an “ass.” Might Theseus’s speech point to a phantastical recovery of the perverse being of the “ass” (5.1.313) in Bottom’s death? The poet seems to be staging transgressive desire here in Bottom’s naming as a “nothing” (5.1.311) and an “ass” (5.1.313), anatomizing how such masculine phantasies of reversal are motivated by the displacement or projection of lack, as in the attribution of a “nothing” from which the (spectator-)subject might derive an anxious pleasure.

“Nothing” can name the sovereign subject’s wish for self-dissolution in desire, particularly in his self-abdication and desire for death. The inverse proposition of this uncrowning is the historical subject’s phantasies of power which tend to gravitate towards the sovereign: in a culture where sodomy is read as a literal assault on order equal to an assault on the sovereign’s proper body, all such transgressions carry an additional charge of a phantasmatic participation in power. The totalization of power invested in the sovereign’s body, or the phantasy of this articulated in the doctrine of absolutism, leads to this erotic

69 Negation in the Freudian language of defence is closely allied with projection, reversal and “turning around,” all of which are evident in the banter cited above and in the epigraph to this section. These defences sustain the spectator’s theatrical pleasure in the “sodometrie” of Bottom’s scapegoating. The term “sodometrie” is taken from Goldberg’s landmark book, Sodometries. In his preface, Goldberg writes: “Sodometrie is a synonym for sodomy current in English from around 1540 to around 1650, the Oxford English Dictionary notes. The word has been chosen to title this book not only because of its historical pertinence to the Renaissance texts to be discussed, but also for its nonce-word suggestiveness, as if sodomy were a relational term, a measure whose geometry we do not know, whose (a)symmetries we are to explore” (xv).

70 See David Willbern’s essay on “Shakespeare’s Nothing,” as already cited. See also a fine essay by Scott McMillin, “Shakespeare’s Richard II: Eyes of Sorrow, Eyes of Desire,” an essay that investigates the drama’s “strange meditation on ‘nothing,’” a meditation which surfaces in patches of difficult writing about the “eye” or the “I.” In Shakespeare Quarterly 35:1 (1984): 40-52 (40). McMillin writes of the tension in the sovereign Richard whose theatrical power and subjectivity is constituted by a “betraying” specular desire: “Once Richard had balanced a pun ... in front of the usurping King. “Aye, no, no, aye” he replied when Bullingbrook asked if he would resign the crown. His answer managed to set the word against the word in a perfect stalemate of signifiers. It was a balance of “I” against “nothing” and of “yes” against “no,” in reply to the question of whether the King was “contented” to resign the crown” (52). One might listen to the manner in which Richard plays on a desire for “nothing” in imagining his uncrowning by Bolingbroke: “But what’er I be,/ Nor I, nor any man that but man is,/ With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased/ With being nothing” (5.5.38-4). Most probably influenced by Marlowe’s Edward II, the drama’s uncrowning is figured as a sodomitical turn with a pun on “ass.” A language of sodomy is present-absent
implication of sodomy in disorder when the former is figured as laesae majestatis. In his introduction to The Regal Phantasm, Christopher Pye suggests that sovereignty touches upon its theatrical sources when it becomes involved in staging its own spectacular self-sacrifice, indicating sovereignty's ultimate power to mete out punishment and death and the possible reversal of this power. For the spectator-subject of Dream, Bottom is the comedic fulcrum for such volatile erotic phantasies of power, for imaginary participation in the transgression of a hieros gamos with the Fairy Queen, after which dream-vision Bottom still seductively retains something of the self-censoring and self-sacrificing, and from the opposing direction, for imaginary participation in his violation by the goddess, or his figurative sacrifice by Oberon and the aristocrats.

From the perspective of sovereignty's sacred genealogy in the originary (and regulating) power of sacrifice, one can note that Bottom acts as the festival mock-king who is “crowned and uncrowned” in the interlude with Titania, in his seeming death in that erotic union and in his acting in the playlet where the artisans act as bestial other to the aristocrats. Bottom’s playing thus participates through a range of discourses in the undocking or death of the pompous king’s second or mortal body. The spectator-subject’s “sodometric” of Bottom might be conceived as marking a point of disavowed identification, a crossing from the “low” discourse of the “rude mechanicals” (3.2.9) through the fairy world to the “high” discourse of the aristocrats and sovereignty. In Some Versions of Pastoral, William Empson suggests that the

when Richard thinks on Bolingbroke “that did usurp his back” (5.5.89): “I was not made a horse,/ And yet I bear a burden like an ass,/ Spurred, galled, and tired by jaunting Bolingbroke” (5.5.92-94).
71 As Pye argues, absolutism’s effect of centering power in the body of the sovereign means that the subject is constituted in a relation of abject submission to this regal phantasm of power. But this totalization of power also invites an imaginary identification with the monarch. This identification is further facilitated by the doctrine of the king’s two bodies, with the body of the state and the divine body of the ruler conflated. Pye further argues that this position reflects the subject’s own self-division and encourages a specular identification with the “double” sovereign. See The Regal Phantasm: Shakespeare and the Politics of Spectacle (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-4. The displacement of lack in this phantasy of power is arguably a source of theatrical pleasure.
72 Regarding the idea of the king’s two bodies in judicial and theological discourses, see Ernest H. Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

This doctrine may owe its existence to what Girard identifies at the origin of symbolicity and cultural order, the surrogate victim. See Violence and the Sacred, esp. 250-318. Girard discusses Kantorowicz’s book in the context of a discussion of the institution of sacred sovereignty and Shakespeare’s Richard II (304-05). This chapter traces scapegoating as a literal instance of the subject’s defences in phantasy, as evident in the punitive dynamics of projection, misrecognition, and totalization in a psychoanalytic register.
function of such "double plots" in Renaissance drama is often to deflate the pretensions or susceptible ideals promulgated by the main heroic action,\textsuperscript{73} rather as Bottom's ludic obscenity can gently suggest the hubris of Thesean "pomp" (1.1.19).

From the critical perspective of the drama's staging of sacrificial identities and the sacrificial within Love, one can link Bottom's character and function in the drama to the carnival ass of popular traditions. The carnival tradition and popular forms of festivity are among the cultural discourses that the playwright draws on for his specific theoretical purposes, transmuting his sources while reflecting on the pleasures and social functions of these rituals. In The Bottom Translation, Kott suggests that social rituals involving the "carnival ass" were forms of permitted misrule:

From Saturnalia to medieval \textit{hadi} the ass is one of the main actors in processions, comic rituals, and holiday revels. In Bakhtin's succinct formula the ass is "the Gospel - symbol of debasement and humility (as well as concomitant regeneration)." On festive days such as Twelfth Night, Plough Monday, the Feast of Fools, and the Feast of the Ass, merry and often vulgar parodies of liturgy were allowed ... The symbolism of the carnival ass and sacred drolerie survived from the Middle Ages until Elizabethan times.\textsuperscript{74}

The ass is a pagan, classical, Christian and popular symbol for what Bakhtin calls the energies of "the lower bodily stratum," a symbol for man's relation to animality through the "animality" of desire. Further, the ass is notorious as a beast of mythical phallic endowments who also punningly names another

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\textsuperscript{73} In a chapter in Some Version of Pastoral, "Double-Plots: Heroic and Pastoral in the Main Plot and Sub-Plot" (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1962), William Empson argues that the subplot, often dealing with the blending of magical ideas in the pastoral mode, can functions ironically, deflating the ideals of the heroic action. This is appropriate in considering MND because of the bifurcation of the high heroic plot between the world of Athens and the Fairy Queen and King, and then the former's separation also from the world presented by the "rude mechanicals" (3.2.9). The evidently idealistic vision of love celebrated by the Athenians is insistently undercut by the dismissed "dream" action, from Puck's agency to the violent phallicism of "I wooed thee with my sword" (1.1.16), forces that dialectically contribute (through misprision) to phantasies of puissance.

\textsuperscript{74} Kott, The Bottom Translation, 43-44 (43). Regarding the carnival ass, also see Robert Weimann's work, Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function, ed. and trans. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978). He comments there on "the surprising continuity of the ass head motif from the \textit{mimus} down to A Midsummer Night's Dream," a tradition of associating the clowning mimes with animals (50). Regarding "Saturnalian patterns," C.L. Barber's Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom (1959; reprint, New York: Meridian Books, 1963) remains a seminal text for a carnival criticism of Shakespeare that is sympathetic to psychoanalytic readings of social and textual forms. The introductory chapters are valuable for their lucid pursuit of historical variations of a "Saturnalian" pattern of experience, the famous formulation "through release to clarification" (3-57). If Barber has been recently
erogenous zone, the ass, what might be taken as an object of phallic desire, a comically fortunate condensation in this symbol of the penetrability of the phallic subject through his asinine or animal attributes. The ass is also a symbolic representative for the sacrifice of this desire in high discourses. The punishment of the body, what the ass emblematically suffers in these rituals celebrating desire, constitutes that subject's proper identity and sacral status as well as affording it an erotic satisfaction; while Bottom embodies this pharmacoic sacrifice and the ecstasy of the religious visionary, in the instance of sacrificial surrogation, another suffers for the subject's vicarious enjoyment and redemption.

In the Bakhtinian formulation of carnival inversion centered on the sovereign's power, Bottom is a substitute king, Oberon's fool. This is part of the ritual of "crowning and uncrowning" Bakhtin notes is present in Shakespeare's theater of authority and power:

The analysis we have applied to Rabelais would also help us to discover the essential carnival element in the organization of Shakespeare's drama. This does not merely concern the secondary, clownish motives of his plays. The logic of crownings and uncrownings, in direct or indirect forms, organizes the serious element also. Bakhtin notes the location of the sovereign as the dynamic structural, imaginary center of power. The renewal that the violence of uncrowning effects is largely for and of the order that stages its uncrowning in a surrogate. As we have seen in Titania's interlude with Bottom, carnival inversion is followed by the revenge of Lent. The dramatic spectacle has the effect, as Bottom's assification does, of reiterating the enoblement of sovereign power through its sublime status, a sacred status in part derived from the scene of sacrificial surrogation: "Bless thee Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated" (3.1.119-20).

criticized for his Freudian, (hetero)normativizing, totalizing description of carnival forms, this objection is equally well directed against carnival forms themselves, Bakhtin's text, and much carnival criticism.  


76 At the beginning of the chapter on "Popular Festive Forms," Bakhtin explains a passage in Rabelais where the "image of a "king" and "two kings" is ... directly introduced in order to describe the highest degree of happiness achieved by the Catchpole who has received his reward. But the image is essentially related to the gay thrashings and abuse as well as the red snout of the Catchpole, to his apparent death, sudden return to life, and jumping up like a clown who has received a beating" (197). According to a Girardian interpretation of this text that would reveal sacrificial processes, the transcendence of the second "king" - "But the churl rose, happy as a king - or a pair of kings, for that matter" (197) - indicates the scapegoat's surrogation for the real king, while making his surrogate death the source of the first king's rejuvenation. Incidentally, on the island of the Catchpoles the "inhabitants earn their living by letting
Bottom seems to undergo a veiled scapegoating by his fellow artisans in the scene that they “rehearse most obscenely” (1.2.107-08) at the Duke’s Oak. In one of his essays on *Dream*, Girard makes a plausible argument for Bottom’s “translation” that views it as a collective hallucination of the artisans. Girard draws back from making Bottom the “monstered” victim of a sacrificial rite, despite the ritualistic Saturnalian fertility associations of the Duke’s Oak as a grove; I view this scene as a possibly sardonic glance at the ritual origins of drama by the poet.77 With a gift for separating out the real victim, Girard prefers to see Puck as the sole agent of sacrificial resolution in the drama.78 However, there are many indications in the text that we should draw a line between Puck and Bottom, specifically on the basis of their role and function in scapegoating, and on the further basis of their staging and involvement in events that “befall prepost’rously” (3.2.121). In the scene of the artisans’s rehearsals (3.1), the collective hallucination of Bottom’s “translation” into an ass points to his scapegoating and its cause in his projected “monstrous” being. The mimetic antics of the rehearsal might contribute to his “translation,” but in keeping with Girard’s interpretation of Puck’s role, it might be part of Puck’s function as the *deus ex machina* of sacrifice to metamorphise the favorite “bully Bottom” (3.1.8) into the sacrificial ass of the Duke’s grove.

77 For example, J.G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged ed. (London: Papermac, 1987), details the reverence and sacrifices made to the oak god Zeus in Greek culture; the fertility of the sacred oak grove was also common to Celtic culture (159–61), with which the playwright was acquainted.

78 Girard, ““More Than Fancy’s Images’: The Craftsmen in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” 57–65, and “‘Sweet Puck’: Sacrificial Resolution in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” 234–42. Perhaps Girard does not wish to pursue Bottom’s sacrificial status because it is specifically troped as Christic and might wreck havoc with his thesis that Shakespeare understands the unique status of the Gospel as a revelation of sacrifice.

Speaking very schematically, Bottom functions as a point of phantasmatic identification for the spectator through his embodiment of his split and contradictions (tyrant-lover, unconscious-conscious, masculine-feminine, etc.). Puck more starkly embodies the ambivalence of desire so that the spectator can project his own ambivalence upon this *cause*. See the next section and, for example, 3.2.345–53, 3.2.439–41. Bottom exceeds the categories of Girard’s theory through his approach to what psychoanalysis would describe as the split subject.

If Bottom as a Christ figure speaks the truth, this is a truth of a certain non-recognition of violence; there
are signs that his scapegoating wards off for his fellows the recognition their own faults as “asses”:

*Snout.* O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?
*Bottom.* What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you? [*Exit Snout.*]

*Enter Quince.*

*Quince.* Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated.
*Bottom.* I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. (3.1.115-122)

The language describing Bottom’s exit before the “translation” suggests that he is such a Christ figure. As
Pyramus he is spoken of in anticipation of his translated return, making him a strange sort of Christ:

*Pyramus.* But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear. [*Exit.*]

*Puck.* A stranger Pyramus than e’er played here! [*Exit.*]

*Thisby [Flute].* Must I speak now?
*Quince.* Ay, marry, must you. For you must understand he
goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again. (3.1.87-93)

The promised resurrection of Christ is alluded to here, a recovery which arguably points to an allegorical
narrative. Might Bottom’s misrecognition and scapegoating also be an index of the sacrifice of the body
and its “animal desires”? Might Bottom’s role as an ass gesture to the common allegory of the sacrificed
body (in the Passion) being the means to an ideal Christic identification (with the Name)? At any rate, this
(self-)sacrificed God is available (as a model) for our vicarious redemption.

On another level of surrogation gestured to at the end of the last section, Bottom works as a surrogate for
the “king of shadows” (3.2.347), temporarily replacing Oberon as Titania’s lover so that the Fairy King can
regain his power. The surrogation of Bottom is complex in Oberon’s control of Titania’s “hateful fantasies”
(2.1.258), where Bottom is in a substitutive relation to both Oberon and the changeling. (Like Bottom, the
changeling himself is another figure of formal crossings and exchanges, a figure who is described in tropes
of metaphoric exchange and switching and is a pawn in such actions.) As she will later crown Bottom,
when Titania keeps the changeling, “Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy” (2.1.27), the
child usurps Oberon’s place of affection and puissance. Bottom’s “crowning and uncrowning” is effected in

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79 This passage is cited in Parker, “Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition.” Parker
notes: “Both ‘by and by I will to thee appear’ and the Pyramus who ‘is come again’ recall the
disappearance and return of Christ” (49).
order that Oberon regain his place of affection with Titania - “Now thou and I are in new amity” (4.1.90) - and his possible homoerotic pleasure in possession of the changeling. Although Oberon’s staged punishment of Titania’s asinine passion might effect the recovery of his own desire in a sort of negatio, Bottom’s “uncrowning” can more generally be taken to represent an emblematic sacrifice rather than the fulfilment of the energies of the lower bodily stratum symbolized in the ass. This official sacrifice effects a critical displacement of the charge of an abject desire onto Titania, indicted by her own remorse: “O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!” (4.1.83) In Oberon’s gaining of her page, his tutelage would change the meaning of her sodomitical transgressions to an expression of masculinist power and order.81

“Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) might appear to involve homophilia only obliquely in Oberon’s surrogation of Bottom to attain the changeling child. But a Shakespearean “poetics of sodomy” encodes a transgressive desire directed to a phantom sodomy precisely where it is negated, as in Bottom’s naming of his bottomless dream: “I will get Peter Quince to write a ballet of this dream. It shall be called “Bottom’s Dream” because it hath no bottom” (4.1.217-20). Bottom’s own representation of his interlude with Titania further participates in a “poetics of sodomy” through its alliance with a language of a knowing negation, reversal, and a translating vision. Bottom embodies his name through his sodomitical desire, its reversal of bottom for top, where he is also perceived as a bottom object (or “ass”): his name and assification in both the plots punningly remark on a dynamic “structural pun on ass.”82 I submit that the playwright allows a series of punning slippages to generate on “ass,” from the libidinal carnival beast subject to elevation and debasement, whose celebration and punishment was the focal point of many rituals, to the erotic object of the ass as “arse,” to a Christian ass that bears Christ into Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy: “Tell ye the


81 Although it is Puck who places the ass’s head on Bottom, it is Oberon’s plan that the object of Titania’s desire be an animal, making her bestial (2.1.176-82). This is the mode of his pharmaconic magic, an incitement of her “unnatural” desire and her subsequent shaming. Sacrificial surrogation obviously works here through harnessing the force of discourses that control social meaning through gender ideology, interpellating the subject.

82 In “Bottom’s Up: Festive Theory,” Patterson attempts to establish Shakespeare’s own politics of “festive theory” through the writings of C. L. Barber, Victor Turner, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Patterson comments on the “structural pun on ass” in Bottom’s literal assification, and the preparation for this pun by Puck’s “bottom” humour. In Shakespeare and the Popular Voice, 52-70 (66-67). Puck’s preposterous antics or “popular fundamentalism” (67) are considered in the next section of the chapter.
daughter of Sion: behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass used as a yoke" (Matthew 21 WTB). As the punishment of the “sacrificed” body is subject to eroticization, so the carnival ass and Christic imitatio (of a renunciation of fleshy desire) offer identificatory phantasies supported by this perverse economy of “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219).

On one level, the obvious content of the dream is Bottom’s sodomitical interlude with Titania: but what does it mean to call this “a most rare vision” (4.1.208)? To call a sodomitical interlude a “most rare vision” (4.1.208) translates into sexual relations, with the support of phantasy, a transcendence usually reserved for the experience of a vision of the sacred, whether classical or Christian. In Neoplatonic hermeneutics, the classical literary theme of a mortal beloved by a god was commonly aligned with a subject’s union with the Christian God, a participation in eternal bliss and an union in death. Neoplatonic elements in the drama suggest the divine is supported by passion, where divine love is put in dialectic with a spiritual cult of the senses and death; this is an aspect of Bottom’s union with Titania. Further, Bottom being loved by a classical goddess can be aligned with an union with the Christian God. The mystic’s participation in eternal bliss and an union in death is presented as sexual in Bottom’s vision of Love’s unions, though translated “down” from the language of an ideal union with God supported by the sacrifice of the body. The poetry of

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84 There is a significant literature detailing Bottom’s vision of the sacred in the play, commentary which investigates the possible Neoplatonic, Orphic and Christian resonances of the dream. This critical phenomenon attests to the drama’s seduction to an imaginary participation in the experience of divine love. Frank Kermode’s essay dealing with MND, “The Mature Comedies,” might represent the beginning of this trend of criticism, though Olson’s earlier essay has also been influential. Kermode, Early Shakespeare, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), 210-27. Following Olson, Kermode makes the important case for the drama as one “of marked intellectual content” (214). In his analysis, the drama holds in opposition two interpretations of love or desire, where the love of “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) is of a second sort transcending that of “love-in-idleness” (2.1.168). Kermode follows Bottom’s transformation and vision as derived from The Golden Ass: “Apuleius, after his transformation, might not speak of the initiation he underwent; but he was vouchsafed a vision of the goddess Isis” (219). See also, James A. S. McPeek, “The Psyche Myth and A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Shakespeare Quarterly 23 (1972): 69-79, and Ronald F. Miller, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream: The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things,” Shakespeare Quarterly 26 (1975): 254-68. Following Olson and Kermode, Kott’s chapter, “The Bottom Translation,” as already cited, also provides a Neoplatonic reading of the translations of Cupid’s blind love.
Bottom’s erotic union Titania is perfectly ambiguous regarding the direction of the sacrifice, as the flower and tear imagery indicates: does he sacrifice the goddess of chastity, Diana, the Titania whose name is taken from Ovid’s naming of her in the Actaeon episode, or does the goddess ravish him?

Bottom’s chastity when seduced by Titania is the protective, comedic instance of the masculine subject blissfully invulnerable to the goddess’s appeal, while allowing a discreet enjoyment of the ecstatic dream-vision of a hieros gamos. That is, on one level, the playwright’s staging and Bottom’s own negation of erotic transgression in “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) allows the audience to participate in these phantasies. In this sense, Bloom proves himself the ideal, seduced reader when he protests against contemporary readings of Dream for “orgiastic bestiality,” a censoring that allows for Bottom’s experience of childlike wonder with the immortals:

Though Titania will follow this colloquy of innocents by ordering the elves to lead Bottom to her bower, it remains ambiguous exactly what transpires there amidst the nodding violets, luscious woodbine, and sweet musk roses. If you are not Jan Kott or Peter Brook, does it matter?86

One can also read “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) as such a transgressive phantasy that functions to displace Bottom’s social subjection into a dream of puissance: if Bottom is a socially castrated “ass,” his interlude with the Queen of the Fairies would seem to confirm his phallic being,87 a shaping phantasy also available to the reader or audience of Dream. The neophyte’s experience of God’s Love notably affirms a translation of the low into the high, affirms the erotic phenomenon of their crossing in a series reversing

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86 Bloom, Shakespeare, 162-63. Earlier, Bloom cites the description of Titania’s bower “when, in one of the play’s most exquisite passages, Oberon plots the ensnarement of Titania” (159), marking the “aesthetic frisson” (160) of its description of Oberon’s plans for erotic vengeance. Compare his introduction to William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987): 1-5.

87 In “Shaping Fantasies,” Montrose examines the drama in terms of the social phantasies it depicts and forms in Bottom’s sleeping with the Queen. Montrose uses Simon Forman’s record of his dream, in which he sleeps with the Queen, to claim that this phantasy must have been common in a patriarchal culture ruled by Queen Elizabeth, a phantasy, like “Bottom’s Dream,” or will to power mediated by the maternal lover and queen (see esp. 109-14). One might shift Montrose’s emphasis from Shakespeare’s complicity with Oberon as “the play’s internal playwright” (113), reversing relationships of dependency to powerful women, to the spectacle of Bottom’s interlude as a Shakespearean “case study” framing up such phantasies. Patterson’s essay, “Bottom’s Up: Festive Theory,” is also important here for providing a social context of rioting artisans in Shakespeare’s day. While I agree with her suggestion that festivity is a means of maintaining the present social order, I show how the drama anatomizes this displacement of social conflict into a promissory mediation - Puck’s “[w]e will make amends ere long” (5.4.436) - and into sexual phantasy directed to recuperating masculine power.
"Dian's bud o'er Venus' flower" (4.1.76), with an ass's head on a Christic Bottom rather than Christ meekly sitting on the ass. The disordering libidinal economy of the carnival inversion also translates back down. When Bottom awakes from his dream he exclaims:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was - there is no man can tell what. Methought I was - and methought I had - but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. (4.1.207-217)

Bottom's evidently fearful self-censoring here - "Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream" - is balanced by a salacious reverence for the dream as sacred vision. If the "most rare vision" (4.1.208) is a wish-fulfillment of libidinal trends, it is also motivated by a social lack that is translated by the "dream-work" into social power: "Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the Duke hath dined" (4.2.34-35; my italics). This is one Freudian interpretation of the dream-work, which would indicate the censoring of the still recognizably sexual content. For critics dismayed by the category of the individual, this might be an unsatisfying endpoint for interpretation because it blithely downplays the vision of social transgression in the dream. However, such an analysis traces how sexual phantasy substitutes for social lack, as here when Bottom displaces Duke Theseus in his fabulous amours. Bottom's "lack" is translated into two types of transcendence: that of sexual phantasy, which the spectator is invited to participate in, and the religious phantasy of (subjection to) God's Love that reclaims another sort of "perverse" power and masochistic pleasure, which the spectator can also participate, i.e., the religious phantasy is supported by the sexual phantasy, where the sexual is wrapped up in the religious.

The evident parody of Corinthians in Bottom's speech when he awakes from his "dream" indicates Bottom's consciousness of his low place in society that the "dream" translates into the high. The speech indicates that Bottom, from the "bottom" of his society, might be perversely interpreting his vision of the goddess on the model of the perfect Christian's subjection to the Love of God:

That we speak of, is wisdom among them that are perfect: not the wisdom of this world, neither the rulers of this world (which go to nought), but we speak the wisdom of God, which is

88 Incidentally, in the *Traumdeutung*, Freud makes such a passing interpretation of MND. Freud considers the play's lion to conceal "the figure of Snug the joiner" (4, 598), where the lion is a figure mediating a wish-fulfillment. Of course, the artisans make much ado about unconcealing the role of the lion as Snug the joiner (in rehearsal at 3.1.27-46, and in Snug's later speech at 5.1.219-26).
in secret and lieth hid, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which wisdom none of the rulers of the world knew. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: The eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But God hath opened them unto us by his spirit. For the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the bottom of God's secrets. (I Corinthians 2:8, WTB)

In “Bottom’s Up: Festive Theory,” Patterson argues that Bottom’s jumbling of this text should not distract from its context of a “profound spiritual levelling” offered by the Christian text, that is, between the bottom and “the rulers of the world (that go to naught).” The further context might be added that what is being espoused in this Scriptural passage is the love of God in a Chrstic imitation, a wisdom of the spirit that can look down in its Passion on its oppressors through imagining God’s Love. One might contend that this translation of signs or transvaluation is often motivated by a lack of power except through recourse to the consolations of God’s Love. The doctrine of Christian self-sacrifice - Nietzsche’s horror at the appalling paradox of a God on the cross - ratifies the subject’s pleasure in its submission to “the rulers of this world” in an erotic, masochistic turn.

As Patterson notes, Corinthians further develops a metaphor of the (social) body made whole in Christ, a metaphor which includes the revaluation of the “bottom” parts of that body: in an erotic inversion, the necessary “ungodly parts have most beauty on,” and “most honor to that part which lacked” is given, belying a general economy of social unification by the lure of inversion in another, spiritual order (I Corinthians 12: C). Might “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) gesture to “the bottom of God’s secrets” and the translation of these secrets out of spiritual vision into sexual phantasy circulating around the “bottom”? In another interpretation of “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219), recalling Bottom’s vision of the spirit searching “the bottom of God’s secrets,” does the true wisdom reclaim power through a sublime renunciation of fleshly desire, a renunciation rewarded with its own unconscious satisfactions? In a “poetics of sodomy,” might the vision of God’s Love be figured as a phantasy of being penetrated by Him in His puissance? Does this

89 In The Bottom Translation, Kott notes the confluence of carnival, Neoplatonic and Christian discourses here: “In carnivalesque literature, the first letter to the Corinthians is quoted as often as in the writings of the Neoplatonists,” generally focussing on the trope of a reversal of values between the base and the powerful, foolishness and wisdom (41). Bottom’s speech refers to the vision of “the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” after Christ’s example, a vision whose disordering of the senses is perhaps due to their presence in this “bottom of God’s secrets.”


91 Patterson cites this passage of Corinthians, in Shakespeare and the Popular Voice, 68.
phantasy not also work as an erotic submission to power in a "turning around," as in Bottom's abysmal
dream-vision where it is unclear who is ravished? A Renaissance literary milieu with a penchant for
Christian allegorizing might recognize in "Bottom's Dream" (4.1.219) such a meditation on a perverse\textsuperscript{92}
economy of identificatory phantasies sustaining the Copula or Passion.

My interpretation must now draw back from the error of the master analyst submitting the interpretation
of "Bottom's Dream" (4.1.219), while acknowledging that such moments of totalization stalk any reading.
The drama seems to invite competing interpretations and hold them in a sort of dialogue, for instance,
between Bottom as sacrificed or self-sacrificing in his vision of divine Love, or between Bottom as a
sublime ass or arse. As in the wonderful play on Bottom's name, no literalist reading is adequate just
because they are available. This is especially the case if what is being unfolded here is something like the
circuit of the letter of desire, of desire passing through the letters Bottom and ass, in desire's economy of
(sacrificial) misrecognition and the displacement of lack. Further, pursuing the drama's meditation on the
repressions supporting presentation, the enigmatic repression-sacrifice of Bottom and his ensuing
translations might be aligned with the support of his "bottomless" dream-vision and that of Dream.

The translation of the spiritual into bestial sex and illicit phantasy and vice versa are speculative
trajectories in the analysis of "Bottom's Dream" (4.1.219). The uncertain direction of translation might be
considered witty as well as following a Platonic tradition where "animal" passion is in communication with
the divine worship of love. This dialectical playfulness finds support elsewhere in Dream. Another
informing "Corinthian" text to this vision is that of Apuleius's The Golden Ass. This is already a "carnal"
text though it also contains Lucius's spiritual "vision of the goddess Isis" or Diana.\textsuperscript{93} In Apuleius's text,
transformed into an ass, Lucius is seduced and mounted by a voluptuous Corinthian matron.\textsuperscript{94} The classical

\textsuperscript{92} I mean "perverse" with its division into the opposing parts of pere-version and pere vers(e).
\textsuperscript{94} As cited in the introduction, an article by Sister M. Generosa was the first to note the correspondance
between this scene and Shakespeare's. Reasonably, she emphasizes the differences between the scenes and
Shakespeare's delicacy in presenting the amour of Titania for Bottom; see "Apuleius and A Midsummer
Night's Dream: Analogue or Source, Which?" 202-03. That "delicacy" of treatment can be attributed to the
necessities of dramatic production, and to the erotics of what I am calling a "poetics of sodomy." This
poetics adopts specifically literary, rhetorical strategies for representing transgressive desire that work
text recounting the adventures of Lucius transformed into an ass is the apparent source for both Bottom’s translation and his amours with Titania. In this novel, Lucius is initiated into the mysteries of Isis, but the seductive Corinthian presence informing “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) might be of sexual spirits as divine spirit.

When Bottom offers us a sort of an interpretation of his dream, the disordered citation of Corinthians, this enigmatic gloss (as above) affords us a final opportunity to remark on his name. In an article attempting the sort of interpretation that Bottom’s naming seems to demand, Thomas B. Stroup writes on “Bottom’s Name And His Epiphany” with reference to the passage from Corinthians cited above: “I maintain that the phrase ‘the bottom of Goddes secretes’ in this passage is a source, if not the source, of Bottom’s name.” Stroup’s article admirably aims to redress the common assumption that Bottom derives his name solely from his weaver’s trade, supplanting this (now dated) consensus with his own supposition that Bottom’s name derives from what he twice refers to as the “perverted” allusion to the Biblical text: “The Scriptural allusion, perverted as it is, nevertheless brings Bottom to his epiphany, his self-recognition.” While Stroup’s analysis is guided by the language of proper vision that the drama offers, he (mis)recognizes the source of Bottom’s name in order to participate in the dream of a redemptive vision.

The orthodox religious vision attributed to Bottom is insistently sublime despite - or because of? - Bottom’s perverted discourse: “That Bottom’s dream “hath no bottom” is only apparent nonsense; it turns out to be wisdom, whether he is aware of it or not… His bottomless dream still belongs to the eternal world of spirit.” The avoidance of Bottom’s materiality (his naming derived from his profession as a weaver) which is Stroup’s initial point of critical departure becomes his article’s visionary (end-)pleasure as he censors the other aspects of Bottom’s name: his embodiment of a bottom, his punning and erotic affiliation through the resources of poetic language, the tropes of ironic negatio and dramatic reversal, and their psychic counterparts in negation and reversal.

95 In addition to Generosa, of interest here are Kott, his title chapter of The Bottom Translation, and J.J.M. Tobin, Shakespeare’s Favorite Novel: A Study of the Golden Asse as Prime Source (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 32-41, who provides a review of the critical literature on Apuleius’s importance to Shakespeare’s text and his own account. In his study of a mythic background to MND, McPeek makes Titania into a Psyche figure “conveyed to the paradisal garden of Cupid,” where she is laid on a bed of flowers and punished with the love of a “vile beast” (The Serpent Bridegroom). See McPeek’s “The Psyche Myth and A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” 75, as already cited.

with the arse.\textsuperscript{98} Stroupe's critical sacrifice of Bottom's materiality is made in the spirit of Oberon's elevating dialectics, producing a Bottom in the realm of the cherished idea.

Reviewing the previous line of argument about Bottom's translations and a "poetics of sodomy" might allow us to get a better view on his dramatic function as comedic pharmakos. The drama stages the emblematic punishment of the body precisely through Bottom's translations into an "ass" that point to a sacrifice, though the punishment remains a linguistic and discursive phantom, ie., a phantom from the constellation of discourses within which Bottom is located, discourses in which the "ass" and "bottom" are sacrificed or punished. Bottom thus names the socially abject, the beaten, punished, sacrificed, erotic body. An animal traditionally involved in popular festivities and iconography, the "ass" is the external object or "other" upon which libidinal excess is projected in rituals and festivities affirming, though almost invariably punishing, the sacrificed "lower bodily stratum." Secondly, the "ass" is the "bottom" and support which is to be punished and redeemed in such carnival inversions, as the "arse" is the point of imaginary or phantasied reversals.\textsuperscript{99} That is, the "ass" is the punning mythic source of desire and the "arse" its sometimes object, the "ass" is beaten in a redemptive scheme and the "arse" is used sexually in the erotic reversal of sodomy. In such an account, the punished "ass" (as the animal body) is sacrificed to God in a proper identification with his Name (by killing the body, the body destined for resurrection), while the "arse" becomes a point of phantasied erotic exchanges between God and man modelled on the unconscious satisfactions of the Passion (where the Passion is figured as man's erotic subjection to power and the punitive law, his "castration"). This may appear a slightly zany interpretation, but it is grounded in a popular Renaissance understanding of ass symbolism as well as a more literary appreciation of the resonances of Bottom as a "Christic ass." (Francis Barker convincingly argues that the punished body of Christ is at the "signifying centre" of Shakespeare's culture, where incarnation secures a "presence of

\textsuperscript{97} Stroup, 81, 81.

\textsuperscript{98} Stroup does footnote one exception to the "unquestioned acceptance" of the weaver derivation thesis: "One strange deviation is the Freudian explanation that comes from Weston Gui. He maintains that Bottom's is a wish-fulfilling, infantile dream, and that his name "supports the interpretation that he is a child in the dream, if we may speculate that Elizabethan babies had 'bottoms' like our own." See "Bottom's Dream," in The American Imago, 9 (1952), 55." n.2, 80; my italics. If the article is a bit brash in its confidence in psychoanalytic paradigms, I think this strange deviation is admirably on track.
meaning" through punishment.) As dramatic pharmakos figure, Bottom’s veiled sacrificial punishment and his self-censoring provide the spectator-subject with points of imaginary participation in the “dream” action of the drama. I have suggested that the negation (“Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream” [4.1.209-10]) that Bottom articulates regarding “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) is designed to engage the spectator-subject in Bottom’s drama of Love’s (self-)sacrifice.

The imaginary reversal of a Thesean misprision traces the spectator-subject’s imaginary lack. This lack is displaced in phantasy into the scene (and onto constitutive others) with an anxious pleasure that is subliminally trooped, in Bottom’s name, as due to the repetition and/or reversal of a sodomitical ravishment. Dream deploys a “poetics of sodomy” that works by negatio and negation, unveiling and veiling a phantom homoerotic desire in its representations that threaten to undo the proper masculine subject. The negation or repression of homoerotic desire is one of the sources of the Shakespearean subject’s anxious pleasure through the threat of a castrating sodomy. The proper masculine subject imagines himself in opposition to a bestiary of sodomitical others in this “poetics” of the subject. The

99 Consulting the OED, Paster notes the difficulties on the basis of historical usage of making “bottom” refer to “buttocks” or “ass” to “arse.” But as her analysis suggests and my carnival perspective bears out, Bottom’s name and dramatic function suggest such “somatic troping” (The Body Embarrassed, n.23, 126).
100 Francis Barker suggests how the Renaissance subject is produced by a domination aligning his punished body with the “spectacular” model of Christ on the cross. See The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 21.
101 Less “subliminal” instances of this sodomitical ravishment abound in Shakespeare’s text and the rival he learnt from, Marlowe. In Henry V, the king stages his own treason in terms of sodomy in order to consolidate his authority and shift the responsibility for punishment onto the traitorous parties. This treason is notably described in terms of counterfeiting and coining that summons up the spectre of the sovereign’s body under sodomitical assault. For an analysis of this scene, see Goldberg, Sodommetrics, 175. I note the sodomitical trope that Richard uses for his deposition above. Many scenes in Richard II represent the sovereign subject’s complicity in staging his own undoing, as suggested by Girard in Violence and the Sacred, 304-05. For an exemplary discussion of Richard II, see Alison Findlay’s chapter five, “Queens and Subjects,” in A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999). She discusses Richard II employing feminist, psychoanalytic, and new historicist discourses (see esp. 192-95). Also see Pye, “The Betrayal of the Gaze: Richard II,” in The Regal Phantasm, 82-105.

In Marlowe’s Edward II, the sodomy trope is literalized in Edward’s “end” at Lightborn’s execution, or this is how it is consistently imagined. Lightborn seems to be ironically named for his mortal task of crushing Edward, a task that might be “light” from the spectator’s perspective who is not being made to confess “his” crime. For an account of the drama’s staging of the scene of Edward’s death for the sadistic phantasies of the audience, see Cartelli’s essay, “King Edward’s Body,” in Christopher Marlowe, ed. and intro. Richard Wilson (New York: Longman, 1999), 174-90, reprinted from his book.
102 The slippage in my use of “sodomy” to describe Bottom’s hieros gamos as well as a specifically homoerotic sodomy is something the drama’s staging of desire through a character named “Bottom” might appear to encourage.
proper subject is in constant danger of collapsing into his demonized other, while the negation of the other is the source of his own idealization. Where the self is transparently other, the “poetics” of a dramatic pharmakos can precipitate the spectator-subject’s imaginary participation in the scenic action of the drama through the vicarious, sadistic punishment of an imaginary “sodometrie” (Bottom’s violation of Titania, or the spectator’s negation of Bottom), and/or in an inverse masochistic satisfaction through identification with Bottom as comedic, erotic pharmakos (Titania’s violation of Bottom, or Bottom’s sacrifice of the animal body to God). If the cryptic revelations of “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) can work for the spectator-subject’s participation in the drama-as-dream, this dream is of a transgression and plenitude with the absence of what is still an uncannily haunting punishment. This accords with the more general thesis that the playwright stages in Dream a theatrical pleasure derived from vicarious transgression, from participation in “shaping fantasies” (5.1.5) of defloweration and sodomy that trace the spectator-subject’s lack in their attempt to appropriate the other’s “being.” This pleasure and participation is balanced by the vision of a sublime Bottom who embraces his lack, an amiable Bottom whose union with the goddess (or God) is a dramatic translation of Love’s sacrificial unions.

If “Bottom’s Dream” (4.1.219) is the climax of the drama, its visionary moment that the audience is to take seriously, it seems that Bottom’s epiphany is a memory of a phantastic plenitude in imaginary unity and transgression. Bottom’s dream-vision is awake to the rapture of a visionary poetic discourse.

Sweet Puck’s Staging of Desire: Preposterous Phantasies

“I jest to Oberon, and make him smile” (2.1.44)
“And those things do best please me/ That befall preposterously” (3.2.120-21)

Puck reigns in the dream world of desire and phantasy whose sovereignty extends to the “reality” of the waking action. The drama presents Puck as a fictional cause of desire and mystified scapegoat whom we

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103 Regarding the threat of bestiality as a literal practice in the play, and its proximity to male desire for the feminine in the misogynistic rhetoric of Oberon and Puck, see Boehrer, “Bestial Buggery in A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” in The Production of English Culture, ed. David Lee Miller, Sharon O’Dair, and Harold Weber (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), esp. 126-29. In the drama’s darker poetic language, the lovers metamorphose into beasts, making love’s union and its world into a dangerous, figurative bestiary. Bottom might also comically upend the religious zeal with which the threat of sodomy was often defended against.
blame for the ills of our desire. As indicated in the Introduction, Puck as a perjured Cupid figure is blamed for desire’s “misprision” (3.2.90) in the specular and sacrificial senses that subtend an ideal vision of Love. Oberon addresses Puck: “Of thy misprision must perforce ensue/ Some true love turned, and not a false turned true” (3.2.90-91). Desire’s “misprision” (3.2.90) is traced with a phantom threat of bestial desire and sodomy in Dream, “mistakes” dialectically constituting the ideal. And of course, it is Puck who places the ass’s nole on Bottom, producing the sacrificial misrecognition of his fellow artisans, a misprision replicated in the performance of “Pyramus and Thisby.” As the agent of Bottom’s metamorphosis, Puck tenders the staging of Bottom’s sacrifice and the preposterous phantasies elaborated in the last section.

This section examines Puck’s specific dramatic function of staging the anxious misogynistic desire of the spectator-subject in the audience, anxious because tied to a projected imaginary castration and its possible reversal. In this analysis, the position of the spectator-subject is rendered potentially unstable by his implication in phantasies that stage illicit and sodomitical desire. The modality of Puck’s staging of desire is somewhat textual, its pleasures punningly homophonic, and its scene a matter of phantasy. Notably, Puck’s character combines phallicism and obscenity, giving voice to the rapacious and sodomitical phantasies that are the censored, ironic reverse side to the poet’s celebration of love in this comedic epithalamium. Puck’s staging of “festive mirth” reflects (on) the gendered violence of its spectators’ engagement with those preposterous phantasies, gendered in the abjection of women against the threat of a phantom sodomy. If my interpretation appears guided by the type of phallocratic phantasy I argue sustains Freud’s interpretation of the beating phantasies, I blame it on Puck and try to track the displacement of such mastery in desire.

The exchange between Titania’s fairy and Puck in act two, scene one is critical for assessing Puck’s relations to the Fairy King Oberon and, more importantly, through an examination of the passage’s themes and the ambiguities of the poetic language, in assessing Puck’s role of providing preposterous phantasies for the anxious pleasure of the audience/reader:

Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and making quite, Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,

Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And sometime make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no balm,
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speakest aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip’s bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And “tailor” cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon. (2.1.32-58)

Puck’s service to Oberon is to entertain him with pranks, “I jest to Oberon, and make him smile” (2.1.44). These jokes are played on “the maidens of the villagery,” “the breathless housewife,” “the gossip” and “the wisest aunt.” The “whole quire” (2.1.54) here is a dramatic audience suggesting a sort of choir audience, a company, even a sacred chorus of sorts, emphasizing their participation in their laughter in the scene as a parodic “carnival” inversion of religious rituals; there is perhaps even a pun on the “quire” as material manuscript. At any rate, the chuckling choir or chorus responds to Puck’s tendentious jokes, jokes whose angle is delight at another’s discomfort, the staging of a sadistic satisfaction for the auditor or “chorus” in viewing sexualized scenarios of “leveling” and debasement. For instance, in Urban Moren’s reading of this

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105 Regarding the word “quire.” *OED. n. & v. ME. [Ofr. qua(î)er (mod. cahier quire, copybook) f. Proto-Romance, f. L. quaterni, four at once, set of four: see QUATERNARY.] A. n. 1 A small pamphlet or book consisting of four folded sheets of parchment; a short poem, treatise, etc., which is or might be contained in such a pamphlet. Long obs. exc. Sc. ME. 2 A set of four sheets of parchment or paper folded to form eight leaves, as in many medieval manuscripts; gen. Any gathering of sheets folded into leaves and set one within another in a manuscript or printed book. Also, 25 (formerly 24) sheets of writing-paper; a twentieth of a ream. LME.
passage, "hour" (2.1.57) is a homophone, in Elizabethan pronunciation, of a merry "whore" being wasted at this imagined scene.\textsuperscript{106}

This said, hearing the passage of Puck's exploits in performance might impress upon the auditor only a sense of decided misogyny and a vague sexual transgression. The rendering of the passage developed here, concentrating on the poetic language's and Puck's disseminating resources, can only be comprehended by the spectator-subject at a sort of subliminal level. The passage is working, at least in part, on a level directed to the spectator's unconscious, using the force of the drift of language as a resource to produce a phantasmatic scene and staging of desire. Close reading of this passage for bawdy homonymity and associations imagines sexual scenes being played in several of Puck's encounters with his victims.

Titania's fairy recounts how Puck's adventures spoil feminine work with his own "labour." This is appropriate, considering the context of Oberon and Titania's dissension and its cause, the changeling boy, and how that conflict revolves around desire and the (mis)appropriation of the page granting Oberon a homoerotic pleasure while erasing feminine bonds and the work of generation and childrearing. In an article devoted to explicating the bawdy innuendos of the dialogue cited above, Moren details the manner in which Puck's name, an old word for devil in popular language, is supposed to also be derived from an association with a particular magical milk-stealing creature.\textsuperscript{107} This fits in well with the fairy's identification of Puck as someone noted for skimming milk or stealing cream. What is interesting is the manner in which this theft is linked to the suggestion of a sexual scene and the housewife's errant labour. On a first reading of this passage, the theme of stolen milk is pointed to by the allusion to Puck's skimming the milk (2.1.36), a slamming of cream associated with theft. Moren's analysis passes over the possibility of the housewife being literally bootless in favor of the modifier bootless referring to her fruitless labours.

\textsuperscript{106} Urban Moren's essay details some of the bawdy homonymity and resonances of the passage cited above. "Antique Fable' Epitomized by Puck," \textit{English Language Notes} 38: 1 (2000): 16-40. Moren notes that hour = whore (31). His Bakhtinian analysis generally adopts a spectator position that I argue Shakespeare is thematizing and in part critiquing. Moren seems to assume that the drama is straightforwardly misogynistic in intention, especially when he fails to note that Puck's jests are for a male audience. The "festive laughter" (24) of Oberon and the "whole quire" (2.1.55) is not free from the dynamics of abjection and gendered violence.

\textsuperscript{107} Moren, "Antique Fable' Epitomized by Puck," 19-22.
of churning as well as to the unshod state of a satyric Puck. Moren’s analysis invites the reader to envision, through a lack of clear reference for “bootless,” a satyric Puck making the housewife breathless from a churning sexual activity. In Moren’s reckoning, there is a theft of milk and its *imaginary usurpation* by Puck’s phallic pleasure principle: “The climax that the hussy’s “churning” could lead to presents another drink interpretation. In the Rabelaisian vein Puck’s drink goes through a transformation from beer, or milk, to semen.” This type of interpretation is governed by - or seduced by? - an appropriating phallic imaginary not unlike that of Oberon’s company, the festive chorus which might be the playwright’s model for the spectator-subject’s participation.

In Puck’s reply to Titania’s fairy, homophonic portmanteau puns on “aunt” and “tailor” conjure dizzying preposterous phantasies. The scenic action of the aunt’s “fall” encodes a sodomitical trespass in Puck’s punning language, a spectacle at which the “whole quire hold their hips and laugh” (2.1.55):

> The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
> Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
> Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,  
> And “tailor” cries, and falls into a cough. (2.1.51-54)

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives the first line cited above as its example for one of its entries of “aunt”: “An old woman; a gossip. Only in L16.” The final entry is “A bawd, procuress; a prostitute. E17-M19,” which is the identity that “the wisest aunt” seems to also fall into (when “hour” sounds homophonically as “whore”). From a female gossip, the verbally incontinent, to the sexually available and corrupting bawd or prostitute, the historical progression of the term suggests how the

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108 See Moren, ““Antique Fable’ Epitomized by Puck,” 23.

109 Moren, ““Antique Fable’ Epitomized by Puck,” 26. The critic’s “pressing home” in this interpretation seems intent on “striking out” readings that do not contribute to his phantastic identification with Puck and what might be called a Puck principle. I cannot quite muster consent for this particular “drink interpretation,” but Moren’s suggestions regarding Puck’s theft of milk appears cogent and intentional on the part of the playwright. On the other hand, Moren’s “drink interpretation” replicates this theft on a symbolic level. In the other scenic action involving the incontinent “aunt,” there is a similar forcing of the overt action towards an exaggerated version of her “fall,” a phallic action that punishes an abject feminine. Though one might agree these scenic actions are encoded in the poetic “language as symbolic action,” one might emphasize the *anxious* status of the pleasure staged. These scenes are discussed below in evaluating the general complicity of a carnival discourse of inversion and laughter with gendered violence.


111 Also see Paster on Puck’s misogyny and scatology, in *The Body Embarrassed*, 126-27.
corrupting, illicit female body is scapegoated for the contingencies of signification. This duplicity of language is put to use in a phantasy that makes use of linguistic excess for desire.

As phallic satyr figure, Puck metamorphoses to take the appearance of a “three-foot stool” (2.1.52) that is an illusory phantasm and a possible allusion to defecation. In a first reading of the passage, Puck makes the aunt fall because she mistakes a metamorphic Puck for a stool. In another reading, the stool metamorphoses further to refer to what is inside the aunt’s bum, rather than what is pressed against it. “Then slip I from her bum” (2.1.53) allows the cogency of this reading by introducing the deliberate, somewhat grotesque pun on “stool,” a pun that is very much historically available. This scatalogical reading may be further emphasized by the aunt’s cough, presumably to disguise the noises of this bodily ejecta. While Puck appears to identify himself as the stool outside the wise-aunt’s bum, another three-foot stool (or “yard”) inside her bum is conjured in a punning phantasy. “Then slip I from her bum” (2.1.53) might also suggest the conclusion of a somewhat gratuitous sexual “toppling” of the aunt as whore.

If one continues the reading of a phantasy scenario further, the aunt’s cry of “tailor” contributes, in its range of signification, to a number of possible scenarios and meanings. Moren writes: “Hilda Hume is close

112 See the essay by William C. Carroll, “The Virgin Not: Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare,” for a review of this dynamic in Shakespeare. In Shakespeare and Gender: A History, ed. Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps (New York: Verso, 1995), 283-301. Carroll tends to precipitously collapse this ideological, discursive representation of woman as linguistic and sexual impropriety with the poet’s symptomatic participation in the process by which women are scapegoated for the straying of signification inherent in language. Fineman argues for a distinctively Shakespearean erotic, where desire is produced by linguistic duplicity or impropriety. The classic essay in Shakespeare studies regarding the regulation of women’s bodies by masculinist ideology is Peter Stallybrass’s “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” in Rewriting the Renaissance: Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe, ed. Margaret Ferguson et al. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), 123-42.

113 The OED provides several entries for “stool” relevant to this reading, variants that indicate that before “stool” became a seat without arms it was a chair of authority. 1a A seat or chair for one person; esp a chair of authority, state, or office, as a royal or episcopal throne; fig. A place or position of authority, state, etc. OE-E19. b A seat, as a ducking stool, used to punish offenders. Obs. exc. Hist. ME. 2a A low short bench on which to rest the foot, to step, or to kneel; a footstool. ME. b A seat without arms or a back, usu. for one person and consisting of a piece of wood for a seat set on three or four legs or a single central pedestal. LME. 3a A seat enclosing a chamber-pot; a close-stool, a commode. Also, a privy, a lavatory. LME-L18. b The action or an act of evacuating the bowels or discharging faeces. M16. c Faeces; a discharge of faecal matter. Usu. in pi. L16.

In The Body Embarrassed, Paster notes Sir John Harington’s comparison, in the Metamorphoses of Ajax, of “the allure of the privy to that of the brothel and the erotic satisfactions of the stool to the “sweet sin of lecherie” with it “sowre sawce” of repentance and disease” (137).

to solving the *tailor* crux when she discusses its probable readings. She suggests three possible coarse interpretations for *tailor*: 1. the posterior, 2. the female pudendum, 3. the penis.\(^{115}\) All of these seem present, or possible, in this cryptic ejaculation. The embedded pun on “tail” in “tailor” has its weak French equivalent in “taille,” which also might seem to be circulating in this linguistic homophony. If the wise aunt is a woman gossip and perhaps a prostitute, her cry might be designed to disguise, in Rabelaisian style, a fart, and possibly the wind accompanying Puck’s ejection from her bum.\(^{116}\) More particularly, the “ejection” countering a bodily penetration is motivated by this alternately grotesque and erotic breach of the integrity of the proper body. Thinking with the body here, her speech reverses a breach that would cover it by naming her phantastic assailant. She is naming a “tailor,” perhaps because this punningly names a thief, “taillard,” in Old English, in the sense that her “stool” has been stolen, or her “tail” taken. “Taille” may also contribute to the ludic reading of phallic display, in which case it is also a cry of desire for the monstrous tailor’s piercing instrument.

Provoking some gender trouble here, the tailoring profession in English Renaissance culture carries with it connotations of effeminacy shading into a sort of code for the “homosexual” type, to use an anachronism.\(^{117}\) This typing is relevant here for the manner in which “tailor” (and “taillard”) contributes to the naming of an effeminate, homosexual type in a complex discourse where sartorial trespass is often linked to sexual transgression. A tailor is a man who can facilitate class transgression through his trade; and he is also eminently in the position to cuckold other men, to figuratively rob and sodomize them according to the prevailing code of proper masculinity, putting monstrous horns on their heads.\(^{118}\) This fear of effeminization might be a final, dominant resonance of the cry “tailor,” a projective appellation naming the choric audience’s fears. At the Puckish phantasy scene erected here, the ludic phallicism is dependent on

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\(^{115}\) Moren, ““Antique Fable’ Epitomized by Puck,” 28.


\(^{118}\) The reversible threat of sodomy is articulated in similar terms in 2 Henry IV, by Falstaff: *Shallow*. Shall I prick him, sir?

*Falstaff*: You may; but if he had been a man’s tailor he’d ha’ pricked you. (3.2.150-51).

The fact that a man’s tailor is imagined as sodomizing Shallow might be indicative of Falstaff’s erotic tendencies as well as attributing a disruptive position of activity to the tailor in this scenario. The bestial
what it would protect against, a “castrating” penetration whose direction is uncertain and potentially
preposterous. At the very least here, the unconscious in language - Puck’s language - registers an anxiety
inherent in spectatorship about the reversability of a masterful spectatorial position, an anxiety that might
feasibly contribute to that pleasure. Imaginary identification with a figure of abjection or powerlessness is
warded off with the laughter, working to counteract this demonized threat; the laughter and sneezing seem
symptomatic of a refused spectatorial identification with the abject figure of the aunt. Might the cry
“tailor!” thus suggest a phantom anal-erotic ravishment of the masculine.

Moren’s article articulates quite clearly the gendered violence of a carnival politics of festive mirth,
laughter, and the grotesque body. I would oppose this to a more genial radicalism in the playwright’s
staging of phantasy. The defensive displacements of lack in these phantasy scenes are available for a
critique of their gendered violence. Moren’s Bakhtinian analysis adopts the phantasizing spectator position
that Shakespeare is thematizing and at least in part critiquing. Critically, Moren seems to assume that the
drama is straightforwardly misogynistic. Indeed, the type of interpretation Moren offers is governed by a
phallic imaginary not unlike that of the spectator-subject that Shakespeare seduces and scolds. That is, the
lines will perforce bear or yield such interpretations, notably on the analogy of interpretation with
penetration. As already recounted, in the lines regarding the “breathless housewife” Puck’s semen is
putatively the source of “a real regeneration,” in a usurpation of feminine milk by beer and then male
semen. Similarly, another scene is definitively reconstructed by Moren as a fable recounting a prostitute’s
spiritual rebirth through being anally penetrated by Puck for the hearty “goodfellow” enjoyment of Oberon
and his company. Moren’s introduction of Bakhtin’s notion of an utopian laughter is clearly misplaced in

horns of the cuckold are discussed in the final section’s analysis of the spectator’s participation in the
production of “Pyramus and Thisby.” The passage from 2 Henry IV is cited in Moren, 32.

119 See Girard’s thesis in “A Perilous Balance: A Comic Hypothesis,” as cited above, that the spectator
identifies with the scene’s action and experiences a catharsis from an alien threat in laughter and crying. It
is important that the spectator-subject is divided by his contradictory attitude towards the victim. One type
of comic laughter simultaneously identifies with the powerless victim while also abjecting that victim. Might one compare the logic of laughter’s sneezing refusal at this scene to the logic of repudiation of a
premodern discourse of gender identification? Where masculinity is constituted by its differences from a
castrated “woman” and feminized “homosexual” type, such an identity is haunted by those refused
identifications.

120 Moren has the aunt’s rejuvenation occurring through her participation in a laughter that is more
obviously directed at her as part of the choric company’s enjoyment: “Puck’s treatment of the aunt was
really in the truly Rabelaisian vein: the entire company broke out in hearty laughter, witnessing that a
examining this passage, unless one adopts the view that utopian aspirations are indicated by spectacular abjections of the feminine between men. The imagined “ravished” object in each instance is feminine, even when Puck seductively neighs “in likeness of a filly foal” (2.1.46). The utopian character of such a “grotesque realism” and its imagined scene is from its “regeneration through transformation,” no doubt, but this regeneration is achieved through a staging of phallic sexuality that abjects a grotesque, punished feminine body.

Parker’s essay, “Preposterous Events,” sketches what she calls a “Shakespearean preposterous,” the playwright’s general “staging of structures of “following” and their “preposterous” inverse.” To repeat an important citation from the Introduction, Parker notes how masculine anxiety about becoming effeminized is belied by repeated protests that this prospect is unnatural: “what underlies so many such apparently straightforward iterations of the official sequence is precisely the fear of preposterous regress, the fear that instead of progression towards the telos of a “perfect” male, transformations of gender might proceed in reverse.” Might the performative, scripted nature of gender identity that the theater foregrounds inspire such anxiety about the threat of preposterous inversions of the sexual order, as conveyed by an epithet embedding both a “post” and “posterior”? Masculine anxieties regarding the possibility of a “preposterous regress” into the feminine often erotically gravitate to his own posterior, as

merrier hour was never wasted there = “a more sexually wanton whore was never seduced there.” The wise industrious ant leaning on a cricket, telling the sad tale/ fable about the cricket succumbing to the elements is reborn through a metamorphosis. From being anally penetrated by the lusty cricket she is brought to experience enjoyment and rejuvenating laughter via the “lower bodily stratum” (31).


In his Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin writes: “The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity” (19-20). Unfortunately, as a reading of Bakhtin’s Rabelais and His World bears out, carnival inversion often involves a degradation of the ideal through a gendered abjection of a feminine body as grotesque or even bestial. Moren cites a passage from Bakhtin’s work that emphasizes the reciprocity of the laugh-er/laughed at, where antagonism “dissolves into a hearty joke” (24). But an awareness of this reciprocity and “the special philosophical and utopian character of festive laughter” (Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 12) does not seem present in Oberon and his company. In “The World Turned Upsidedown: Inversion, Gender and the State,” Peter Stallybrass observes the process of “displaced abjection” in the inversions of carnival, where a low group’s “abuse is often directed against weaker, not stronger, social groups,” such as women, feminized animals, brothels, ethnic minorities, and foreigners. In The Matter of Difference: Material Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare, ed. Valerie Wayne (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 201-20 (211)

Parker, “Preposterous Events,” 187. Parker links preposterous reversal with “preposterous venery” or sodomy (192-93), and she suggests how this inversion is entangled in a range of other discourses rather than elaborating how a volatile homoerotic traverses puissance and impuissance.
argued above in relation to Puck's staging of "preposterous phantasy." The short paragraph that Parker devotes to this play is a *precis* of some of these dynamics in the text at large:

Comic structures of preposterous reversal in Shakespeare involve, then, not just a temporary overturning but reversals of sequence that expose what is invested in priority, order, and "righting" even as it is often forms of re-righting that enable a play to move toward an orderly end. This would be my reading, for example, of the ordered "chain" of discourse and the parodic scrambling of it by the "rude mechanicals" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where a middle in which things "befall prepost'rously" (3.2.121) - as women woo or rule over men and we witness the raising of "Bottom" the "ass" - is finally replaced by the "righting" of a patriarchal end, heterosexual joinings, and a movement to a "point" that parallels the echoes within it of the proper "mechanics" or construction of order in discourse.\(^{125}\)

The pleasure occasioned by Puck's staging of preposterous inversion in the drama is authorized by the drama's promise, secured through Oberon's patriarchal stage-directions and control of the discourses of sexuality as well as phantasy, of coming to "an orderly end." However, Puck seems to invite the spectators to participate in and enjoy the carnival inversions and "falls" while never quite promising an exemption from their threat.

As elaborated in the Introduction, Puck's formula for a comedic ending describes a masculinist sexual hierarchy, where the woman is described as a "mare," and the rights of sexual property in marriage are clear:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And the country proverb known,} \\
\text{That every man should take his own,} \\
\text{In your waking shall be shown.} \\
\text{Jack shall have Jill;} \\
\text{Nought shall go ill;} \\
\text{The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (3.2.458-463)}
\end{align*}
\]

In *Dream*, the challenged patriarchal order is "righted" from a general threat of gender insubordination. In this citation, the promised reassertion of order is to be effected through a (hetero)sexual coupling that shades into bestiality: "The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well" (3.2.463). If the preposterous reversals in the drama allow us to view the investments of this masculinist order voiced by Puck, these investments are largely in the pleasures of phallocratic phantasies that verge on bestiality.

\(^{124}\) Parker, "Preposterous Events," 194.  
\(^{125}\) Parker, 201. Parker has written more extensively on the play in her essay entitled, "'Rude Mechanicals'," see esp. 59-63.
through an anxious misogyny. Whether through his poetic language or bestial transformations, Puck's stagings of desire and phantasy produce anxiety regarding an ideal vision of love.

"Pyramus and Thisby" and the Staging of Desire: Censorship and the Interpretation of Thesean Theatrical Pleasure

The drama's final act showcases the stage's capacity to produce theatrical pleasure through the obscenely hilarious acting of the artisans. The staged performance and reception of the playlet "Pyramus and Thisby" overlooks the tragedy of desire, overwriting this tragedy with "mirth." The final section here addresses two related issues. First, the manner in which the theater's representations pose a threat to an ideal Thesean masculinity and how this threat is variously negotiated. The threat is addressed through an overt sort of state censorship, albeit in a weak and travestied form, and an interpretative misprision that is also a form of censorship, though less apparent because originating in ideology and the individual psyche. Further, from the other side of the question of censorship there are the production concerns of the "rude mechanicals" (3.2.9), their shows of self-censorship, and the playwright's use of them as puppets articulating his design. And in the drama is a dream metaphor, the play-within-the-play attains to a kind of dream status through its use of symbolism in its scenic representations, symbolism that is evidence of a calculated censorship on the part of the playwright, a "censorship" that appears designed to maximize theatrical pleasure in attempting to retrace the spectator-subject's repressions. This metaphoric action brings us to the second issue. The section proposes a hypothesis regarding the nature of Thesean theatrical pleasure, its intrication with anxiety from the spectacle's retracing of the subject's phantasmatic lack, a spectacle that gets the sacrificial play of a diacritically constituted self in sight. The privileged masculine spectator-subject is (de)constituted through his reliance on a specular, abjected other for his gender identity.

126 For a similar reading of this passage, see Boehrer's "Bestial Buggery in A Midsummer Night's Dream," 126-30.
127 In the new introduction to her republished Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England (1984; 2nd ed., Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, n.d.), Annabel Patterson gestures to the possible interplay of several domains in literary censorship, including the repression of sexuality that Freud first located in the dream, and the "unconscious" forces of ideology and discourse generally in the playwright and auditor, forces that complicate her basic narrative of political state censorship (28-29).
Is the end of the playwright's raising of the issue of censorship designed to obtain a premium of spectatorial pleasure in following the evasion of censorship, tracing the (de)constituting phantasy or dream in its tracing of the subject's ideological contradictions and lack? Theseus's interpretations maintain a censorship on "self-division," on ideological contradiction and psychic conflict: Theseus is drawn to finding the "concord of this discord" (5.1.60). He is interested in the transgressive formulations of the proposed playlet of "Pyramus and Thisby," formulations whose conflict he resolves in the overwriting of aesthetic form, as he would similarly resolve the conflicts and contradictions of a masculinist, misogynist ideology. The Thesean spectator traverses contradictory positions: the first position affirms a phantasmatic satyric sexuality, the other anxiously rejects or displaces this sexuality, as if taking up Puck's invitation to dismiss the drama as an idle dream. I move from a consideration of Theseus's attempt to censor the other spectacles and his motivations, to a consideration of how the performance of "Pyramus and Thisby" represents, in its heavy-handed symbolism, precisely those aspects of desire Theseus wishes to censor and enjoy in maintaining his sovereign self-possession.

The Thesean ideal of reason and an authoritative masculinity requires censorship of the poet's "shaping fantasies" (5.1.5) and dreams. Nonetheless, the drama gets the sacrificial play of gender identification in sight, suggesting the satisfactions that illicit phantasy and dream afford. Whatever else it is, the Thesean ideal is maintained by violence and requires this violence to be misrecognized for its dream of being. Theseus's refusal of the first two "sports" offered by Philostrate appears to censor the satyric in sexuality, to censor the threat of the human turning into the bestial such as the audience has witnessed in Bottom's "translation," the threat of the masculine turning into the feminine or being destroyed by it:

"The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."
We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."
That is an old device; and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary."
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth."
Merry and tragical? Tedious and brief?
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord? (5.1.44-60)

This passage is significant for considering Shakespeare’s depiction of sacrificial violence in the drama and how it is displaced. For instance, Theseus censors this violence in preference for the “very tragical mirth” (5.1.57) of the love story of “Pyramus and Thisby,” displacing the violence into romantic “mirth” and gender ideology. Girard argues that although there is no representation of the violent resolution of conflict in the play, the playwright indicates by indirection its structuring presence in the mythical, magical reality of the “dream” presented. Similarly, there are descriptions of violent death and victimage in the spectacles that are refused by Theseus for the evening’s entertainments. Girard’s comments on this passage should be directed to locating the “sacrificial resolution” in the anticipated consummation of desire and consolidation of masculinist hegemony in the marriage ritual:

Why does Shakespeare mention the three unacceptable spectacles before settling for a barely acceptable fourth? All three allude to something that vainly attempts to force its way into *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, something always rejected and expelled, because it is “not sorting with a nuptial ceremony,” the collective death of a victim. Victimage cannot be at the center of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but it is everywhere on the periphery, marginal, excluded, victimized but unmistakably present. It will be there in *Pyramus and Thisbe* once again, but not in such horribly graphic form as the “tipsy Bacchanals,/ Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.”

Girard states that before Theseus decides on “Pyramus and Thisby,” “he reads a brief description of three other offerings, all of them unsuitable, he feels, for a happy occasion.” However, it is far from clear that Theseus actually feels that they are all in an unsuitable key for his wedding, which is to be celebrated “With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling” (1.1.19). Indeed, with some ironic self-portraiture on the part of the playwright, Theseus only says this of the show he suspects of satire: “That is some satire, keen

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128 In his essay, “Sweet Puck! Sacrificial Resolution in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” Girard argues that Puck directs the violence of Demetrius and Lysander in the forest to himself, leading them away from each other towards himself in a process of sacrificial substitution (*A Theater of Envy*, 234-36). If the dramatic form and comic genre cannot quite entertain a scapegoat, Puck’s transformations might speak to this aspect of his “ritual” function. Puck’s character is translated from the prankster who initially allows “true love’s” course to go astray, to the agent of their happy pairings. On this basis, Girard argues that “Robin and Puck personify the mimetic cycle” (237) and through their shared trait of being ambivalent minor deity figures in different folkloric and mythological traditions, a common, veiled sacrificial function of Robin-Puck he claims the poet underlines. This argument implicitly claims that we as spectators are also granted Puck as a scapegoat to blame for our murderous desires, where his divinity would be a product of our own mystified projection of violence: “Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,/ You do their work, and they shall have good luck” (21.40-41).
and critical/ Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony” (5.1.54-55). Theseus singles out satire rather than the satyric as inappropriate, whereas I argue that “Pyramus and Thisby” delivers a satire on the satyric.

The representation of victimage, dismemberment, sexual violence and violation in the proffered ripe “sports” (5.1.42) may motivate his dismissal of these spectacles, but one could argue that Theseus’s selection also indicates a shift of sacrificial violence from a collective scene to a sexual scene of romantic “mirth.” The beginning of the drama frames its staging of theatrical mirth when Theseus addresses his “manager of mirth” (5.1.35), Philostrate:

Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments,
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth,
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.
[Exit Philostrate]

Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling. (1.1.11-19)

Of course, a hypothetical shift from a collective sacrifice and warfare’s conquests to sexual violence is by no means absolute since phantasies of castration, sparagmos, and rape already permeate the scenes on the menu. The poet is elliptically staging a masculinity sustained by sacrificial violence and dreams of phallic presence. While on one level Theseus may officially censor spectacles of sexual violence and castration, this suppression foregrounds the irony that he views the playwright’s satire of the satyric.

Regarding the “Battle of the Centaurs, to be sung/ By an Athenian eunuch to the harp” (5.1.44-45), Theseus refuses the show, reporting “that I have told my love” (5.1.46). Theseus rejects the story out of hand, stating, “We’ll none of that” (5.1.46). Theseus’s own telling of the story allies himself with the hero of his youth and the “glory of my kinsman Hercules” (5.1.47), in counterpoint to the singing castrated eunuch. When Theseus declines the show, it is not necessarily because he thinks the topic inappropriate, but because, quite appropriately, he has already told his love Hippolyta the story. This literal reading highlights Theseus’s divided sense of propriety according to competing discourses of masculinity. Where

129 Girard, A Theater of Envy, 240. Why does Girard find the Bacchanals’s frenzy “horribly graphic”? He does not seem to find much of sacrificial interest in the performance of “Pyramus and Thisby,” seeking
one discourse validates misogyny and pompously values women as sexual property between men, even as the spoils of war (in one story recounted by Plutarch, Theseus is given Antiope, his Amazonian bride, by Hercules), another emerging discourse on marriage and sexuality dictates that the woman be granted genuine devotional service and respect: “that have I told my love” (5.1.46). That is, a fraternalist praise of masculine rapacity seems to lurk within this address of love. Similarly, Theseus wishes to distance himself from the spectacle of “The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,/ Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage” (5.1.48-49). He notes that “it was played/ When I from Thebes last came a conqueror” (5.1.50-51).

In Philostrate’s capacity as Theseus’s “manager of mirth” (5.1.35), the ineffectual Master of the Revels, he attempts to exercise a first type of official state censorship in advising Theseus against the artisans’ play. (This is less political censorship in this case than a judgment regarding the quality of entertainment.) After Theseus’s own casual “censoring” of the the first three “sports” (5.1.42), he chooses to view the “nothing” (5.1.78) play Philostrate has warned against. When Theseus chooses to see “Pyramus and Thisby,” the artisans manage to present an unwitting satire on satyric sexuality with little apparent danger of suffering the composite poet-player figure’s fate of emasculation and death. Indeed, although there is a show of concern regarding censorship by the artisans, the playwright suggests a more subtle form of censorship in Dream, the censorship of the gendered violence supporting phallocratic phantasy: “Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or present, the person of Moonshine” (3.1.59-61). Again, the representation of the chaste moon appears linked to her phantasied disfigurement in a masculine erotics of self-presence through violence. I return below to the pricking “bush

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130 Regarding the variant story in which Theseus receives Antiope from Hercules at the battle with the Amazonians, see Plutarch’s The Life of Theseus. After Theseus has raped Helen in a contest with his friend Pirithous, he accompanies his companion to Hades to assist him in ravishing Prosperina’s daughter Cora (i.e., the archetypal “Kore” or chora figure). Pluto is informed of their designs and Pirithous is killed, and Theseus imprisoned until Hercules manages to get him released. Plutarch, The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, trans. John Dryden (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 17, 20-22.

131 Perhaps as interesting as this defensive stance of Theseus is the manner in which a victim poet figure is presented in each of the three performances, as castrated, torn, and ceremoniously mourned. This composite poet figure seems to position the playwright as living in fear of dying in “beggary,” perhaps echoing the fate of the learned, profligate Greene, and also the recent death of Marlowe at the Deptford docks. Regarding Marlowe’s death, see J. Leslie Hotson, The Death of Christopher Marlowe (London: Nonesuch, 1925).
of thorns" and the "man i'th'moon" (5.1.258) in relation to the Moon's role in the staging of hymeneal phantasy.  

The evasion of state and Thesean censorship is also accomplished through the aristocratic audience's signal acceptance of the artisans' "good will" (5.1.108) in what might be offensive, allowing their enjoyment of the spectacle: "All for you delight, We are not here" (5.1.113-14). In this vein, Shakespeare's drama appears to similarly legitimate itself by representing the stage's place as one of "festive mirth," a place for entertainment that is not political; the stage might be sophisticated but it is essentially powerless, to be as easily dismissed as a dream. When the artisans frame the drama thus, the spectator's own censorship goes to sleep, and the male auditors fail to recognize in the playlet a drama of hymeneal phantasy staged in this epithalamium's uncanny repetition of themes from the main action.

"Pyramus and Thisby" is certainly no satire by the "rude mechanicals" (3.2.9) on "the death/ Of Learning, late deceased in beggary" (5.1.52-53). The unwitting satire on satyric sexuality is launched through the bumbling artisans's production, under cover of their outrageously inept attempt to appropriate "Renaissance" literary culture, the artisans' show stages the story of "Pyramus and Thisby" from Ovid's Metamorphoses with "very tragical mirth" (5.1.57). As Anthony Brian Taylor argues, some of the comedy of the presentation derives from the manner in which Ovid's text is disfigured in Quince's erring adaptation from the Latin. I am arguing that the comedy also derives from the presentation of phantasied sexual unions. A final type of censorship is evident here in the "dream" symbolism of the "tedious brief scene of

132 Compare the language of self-presence and representation in Quince's prologue in act five: "This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn/ Presenteth Moonshine" (5.1.135-36). As argued in the section on the _chora_ figures in the drama's epithalamic discourse, at issue is the feminine moonlight or moonshine's function of reflecting masculine desire and self-presence in which her own identity is erased, a disfiguring of the moon in figuring masculine desire (the erotics of reflection-penetration I have been calling hymeneal phantasy).

133 See Yachnin, "Instituting Mirth in Renaissance Comedy," in _Stage-Wrights_.

134 In Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England (New York: Methuen, 1985), Michael Bristol proposes that the artisans' interlude is a burlesque parody of high literature and romantic love. However, I cannot find where its "rude and irreverant mimicry" (176) is persuasively connected to social critique on the part of the players themselves. I agree when Bristol concludes that the playlet is "social critique by inadvertency" (178), though he has just suggested the opposite: "The mechanics use the power of disguise and their own transgressive theory about performing theatrical roles to reveal the insubstantiality of social identity" (178).
young Pyramus/ And his love Thisby” (5.1.56-57). The symbolism relates to the representation of satyric sexuality in anthropomorphic translations, the personified stage props of the Wall and Moon, and Thisby’s stained “mantle slain” (5.1.145). The analysis here proceeds from the pervasive symbolism of the Wall, where I mime the male spectators’ hermeneutical engagement with the Wall, that “wittiest partition” (5.1.166), to questions of the (mis)recognized stained mantle, the Lion, and the Moon.

As the performance of a theatrical prop, the Wall in “Pyramus and Thisby” is the focus of much dramatic attention in the play-within-the-play. As the structuring hymeneal phantasy of the drama repeatedly makes itself felt, the wall is the focus of an anticipated, near ritualistic event of sexual defloration. In “Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition,” an essay to which I am much indebted in this chapter, Parker writes of the use of anagogic metaphor in Dream. Anagogic metaphor is the radical or copular form of metaphor “which in sexual symbolism takes the form of the ‘one flesh’ of marriage, the ‘metaphor of two bodies made into the same body by love,’ and which in the Glossary [of Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism] is identified with ‘apocalyptic’ (‘metaphor as pure and potentially total identification, without regard to plausibility or ordinary experience’).” The proliferation of the poetic language’s images of partition and unification in the drama contribute to the apocalyptic expectancy of this phantasy of a copulative being’s self-presence. However, as this chapter argues at various points, this copulative “being” that is the horizon of masculine desire also threatens to beggar him through an emasculating union. (Parker cites The Phoenix and the Turtle for an example of the manner in which poetic language’s metaphor and sexual coupling are similar, their “aberrant coupling or twain-made-one which outrages the boundaries of both Reason and Property.”) Parker observes how sexual consummation poses “the same outrage to property and place as the two-in-one copular metaphor, defined classically as a crossing of boundary lines.” Her essay further notes the drama’s rhetorical deferral of the literal breaking down of walls, of consummation or ending, which is enacted in the language of poetry. Regarding the play-within-the-play, Parker writes of the economy of structuring partitions:

137 Parker, “Anagogic Metaphor,” 39, 46. As in “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” the copular metaphor’s two-in-one crossing defines a Shakespearean erotic whose end is death.
The connection between ‘wall’ and ‘hymen’ is clear not only from Theseus’ impatience but also from the ‘obscene’ (I.i.100) exchange between ‘Pyramus’ and ‘Thisbe’ before a ‘Wall’ whose obliging gesture of parting (V.i.175) creates the ‘cranny’ which is itself both a means of communication and yet another wall (Pyramus. O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.../Thisbe. I kiss the wall’s hole, not your lips at all,’ 198-9).138

The potential for tragedy with the loss of partition is played out in the playlet, a tragedy of loss and death circling around hymeneal breach, a movement from the deferral of desire to the (postponed) apocalyptic tragedy of fulfilled desire. Dream dramatizes the phantasy of two people joining through the breakdown of a hymeneal wall, a copular joining whose sign is within the domain of phantasy and whose numinous, imaginary force is suggestively embedded in a Christian discourse of marriage, the law of Love, and a vision of fraternal amity.139

In Renaissance ideology, Christ is explicitly the center of being in the Incarnation’s joining of humanity with the divine, a mysterious joining of two into one in the definitive “Copula.”140 Thus the imitation of the Passion or the renunciation of fleshly desire is a mode of identifying with an ideal of Love:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.
(Ephesians 2:14-15)141

God’s gift of his son, His sacrificed flesh, demands the subject’s obedience to a rigorous law of Love: the law of sacrifice is translated into the self-sacrifice of one’s fleshly desires. The Christian subject’s peaceful unity is based on the renunciation of fleshly desire in an imitation of Christ, making himself “one new man, so making peace.” Dream stages the dissonances between the ideals of classical and Renaissance discourses of masculinity espousing dominance and sprezzatura, involving the celebration of one’s dominance in “sacrificing” the feminized other, and a Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice involving the renunciation of fleshly desire in Love’s ideal unions.142 As Bottom is the bestial or “asinine” aspect of

139 Of course, the hole and the Wall’s stones also suggest a razed homoerotic dimension to this ideal union.
140 Parker, “Anagogic Metaphor,” 38.
142 The conflict between these discourses is superficially resolved in MND in the slippery dialectics of Neoplatonist thought, dialectics of right vision and love which are themselves the topic of parody, as in Demetrius’s rhetoric (2.2.115-22). A “religion of love” might perform the same function in R&J of locating divinity in the flesh, granting passion its due for its powers of idealization.
desire that must be comically sacrificed in this latter exalted vision of Love, so he becomes the censored materiality that supports through negation a “most rare vision” (4.1.208).

The law of Love in Christ extends from an exalted identification of both Jew and gentile, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18), to an ideal vision of fraternal amity, “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity” (Ephesians 2:15). When Bottom assures the audience that the wall is down that parted their fathers in “Pyramus and Thisby,” the spectator or reader might also be reminded of the dramatic conflicts of *Romeo and Juliet* where a paternal feud is among the causes of the tragedy. In that tragedy, the paternal prohibition arguably fuels, as an obstacle, the desire of the star-crossed lovers, which motivation becomes a source of parody in the comedic playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby,” “the mirror in which the protagonists are too stupid to recognize themselves.” As rivalry and enmity between men becomes a source of eroticism, the paternal prohibition is a needful barrier to be transgressed by a desire reliant on this wall. In this vision, Juliet is the erotic bait contained in Capulet’s “orchard walls” (2.2.63) where Romeo’s presence would mean his death. The emphasis on the wall in the playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby” seems to partly derive from the theme of paternal prohibition and fratricidal strife in *Romeo and Juliet* and the drama of *Dream* which it frames, adding this erotic motive of transgression to the meaning of the wall.

The derivation from the textual precursor of *Romeo and Juliet* is evident, in particular, in the casting at the rehearsals of “the parts of the fathers, the counterparts of Capulet and Montague,” and their reference to the problems posed by bringing in a wall. “Nevertheless, Shakespeare retains the wall to divide Pyramus and Thisby as a symbol of the divisive feud between the Montagues and Capulets. Juliet specifically has layered the walls with a mortar of mortality and has linked them with the deaths that result from the feud of the two families.” Indeed, in the performance viewed by the aristocrats in act five, the symbolic wall

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143 This argument regarding the parody of desire’s reliance on prohibition is made by Girard in his early *Diacritics* article, “Levi-Strauss, Frye, Derrida and Shakespearean Criticism,” 37.

144 Amy J. Reiss and George Walton Williams, “‘Tragic Mirth’: From *Romeo* to *Dream*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43 (1992): 214-18 (214-15). The authors’ pun on the mortar of mortality in these walls is appropriate when one considers how these dramas both elliptically stage the performance of (sexual and general) epistemologies and their saturation with violence, sacrifice, and death.
seems to replace the presence of the originally cast fathers. Pyramus’s description of his approach to the
“sweet and lovely wall” (5.1.176) ends, unsurprisingly for my analysis, in terms of a (visual) penetration:

And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand’st between her father’s ground and mine!
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne! (5.1.174-177)

A contradiction is obliquely staged in this scene between the paternal prohibition as erotic motive and
the law of Love dictating fraternal amity, using the imagery of the Ephesian wall. Bottom interrupts the
audience’s banter with Romeo and Juliet’s and the Ephesian letter’s “moral” of the wall coming down:
“No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers” (5.1.353-54). In Shakespeare’s tragic drama,
when the wall is down between men or between lovers, the fear of lack of difference leads to its hegemonic
reassertion in re-establishing the sexual and social castes, or sacrificial epistemologies. This pattern is
repeated throughout the Shakespearean canon, where ideal or phantasied sexual unions and fraternal
reunions are in tension with the threat of nondifference, often through the biblical symbolism of the wall
from Ephesians and/or the dramatic action’s location in Ephesus.

Another critical ideological contradiction staged in the wall coming down is the masculine celebration of
his rapacious godwork in the lion’s comic “deflowering” of Thisby, at odds with Christian Love yet
presented within this frame, the punitive prescription of Thisby’s Christic identification and “passion”
(5.1.317) that ends the play. I argue that in this highly visible yet misrecognized staging of the truth of
desire’s violence, as condensed in the symbol of the “mantle slain” (5.1.145), Thisby functions as a
sacrificial bride who is the mediator of his illicit pleasure and “redemption.” The drama invites this type of
interpretation through its staging of religious mystery and Bottom’s dream-vision. Recall the end of

145 See Parker, “Anagogic Metaphor,” 48, for a reading of the “morall downe” of the Folio. There is in this
an odd sort of reverse moral to the story which hinges on the wall’s figurative hymeneal and Ephesian
significations. Is there perhaps an ironic note sounded to the Gospel of Love, ironic due to the difficulty of
achieving fraternal or romantic amity which the wall symbolism highlights?
146 For instance, the ending of A Comedy of Errors, with the brothers’s mirroring, pleasurable recognition
of sameness, manages the rare feat of (an Ephesian) fraternal amity. Compare how in Twelfth Night and
Pericles the themes of difficult fraternal and romantic reconciliation also draw upon “Ephesian” imagery.
147 For a psychoanalytic interpretation of classical myths of the virgin figure and the Eleusinian mysteries,
interpretations that document and (arguably) enjoy the “paradox” of the fecundity of veiled feminine rape
and sacrifice, see Carl Kerenyi, “Kore” and “Epilogomena,” and Carl Jung, “Psychological Aspects of the
Bottom’s cryptic gloss on that dream, where he promises to sing it “in the latter end of a play, before the Duke. Peradventure to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death” (4.1.220-22). When this “paramour for a sweet voice” (4.2.12) returns to his company he does not tell them of the vision granted him by the goddess, except to suggest “the Duke hath dined” (4.1.35). The goddess’s figurative sacrifice in sexual union appears again, not in the mown ear of corn-seed of an Eleusinian mystery signifying Demeter-Persephone’s rape, but elliptically in his anticipating concern that “Thisby have clean linen; and let him who plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion’s claws” (4.239-42).

Thisby’s stained “mantle slain” (5.1.145) might act as a phantasy rem(a)inder of an imaginary sexual union’s copular “being,” a token of love’s gift that is misrecognized as “monstrous” and is guiltily displaced: “O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?/ Since lion vile hath here deflow’red my dear” (5.1.292-93). The poetic action of a lion “deflowering” Thisby is absurd in a narrative sense, perhaps distracting from fallen man’s creaturely, libidinal being that is being staged; and it also shades into bestiality again. In the hilarious scene of Pyramus’s (mis)recognition of Thisby’s stained “mantle-good” (5.1.84), he immediately seems to reproach himself with her violation and death. As the Prologue puts it, “with bloody blameful blade,/ He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast” (5.1.146-47). When Pyramus metonymically equates Thisby’s person with her “mantle slain” (5.1.145), he misrecognizes the mantle’s gift of love as her literal death, as if he were caught in the dream symbolism or tricked by his “strong imagination” (5.1.18). The comfortable Thesean perspective dismisses such strong imagination.

In “Tragical Mirth,” Reiss and Williams compare Juliet’s death with Thisby’s, noting how where Juliet is described by Old Capulet as “deflowered by Death,” Thisby’s defloration by death translates this into “tragical mirth”: “The image of Death as lover, borrowed from Romeo and Juliet and here associated in “Pyramus and Thisby” with a lion, is absurd: a lion may quail, crush, conclude, or quell a maiden but not, one supposes, deflower her. This “reinterpretation” is the more striking because the word “deflower” itself is a revamping of Golding’s word [in his translation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses] “Devour.” That Shakespeare changed “devour” to “deflower” so that Pyramus could echo Capulet seems certain” (216-17). Might the absurdity of “deflower” in the context also contribute to the comic effect here of the (mis)recognition of violence, and the suspension of tragedy in the larger epithalamium? One can compare the general imagery of death, animals and the moon of Puck’s language in his final speech before the epilogue, his blessing, that seems intent on “[f]ollowing darkness like a dream” (5.1.388): “Now the hungry lion roars;/ And the wolf behowls the moon” (5.1.373-74). The entire passage might...
In *Dream*, the text’s biblical symbolism of the Wall and Lion suggests that the sacrifice of fleshly desire in marital Love is imagined as the gift of the woman’s love, as her “sacrifice” to the man’s variously staining, bestial, demonic desire. Of course, the lion is played by “Snug the joiner,” the artisan who joins. In a packed passage addressing biblical echoes in the figure of the roaring lion, Parker remarks on Bottom’s disappearance into the brake:

The space between the disappearance and the return of this Pyramus is the interim in which ‘the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour’ (I Peter 5) - a ‘lion’ which the familiar moralizing of Ovid had no difficulty assimilating to the roaring lion of Pyramus and Thisbe and which is echoed twice in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in the comically roaring Lion who frightens Thisbe away and in the roaring hungry lion (‘Now the hungry lion roars’) of Puck’s great ‘time of night’ speech (V.i.357-76) as the play itself looks forward to the ‘break of day’ (387).

The lion is a figure communicating the disavowed animality in sexuality, troped as a demonic threat in the biblical allusion. This misrecognition is in line with Bottom’s double asification in the two plots and the bestiary troubling this drama of desire.

Both the artisans and aristocrats seem preoccupied with presenting or commenting on Lion. On one level, the lion embodies a theatrical, comically inflated version of man’s violent sexuality, as suggested by the artisans’ concern that they not frighten the ladies: “That would hang us, every mother’s son” (1.2.78). This concern is enjoyed by Theseus (as it reflects his power) when he praises Snug’s special disarming Prologue addressed to the gentle ladies: “A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience” (5.1.229). Yet Theseus’s rejoinder is again caught in the structure of theatrical and ideological misprision, misrecognizing accomplish a final raising of anxiety that the arrival of Oberon and Titania and Puck’s final epilogue are supposed to allay.

In a supporting interpretation, the line in the Prologue, “This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name” (5.1.139), is the only line that does not fit the Elizabethan sonnet sequence rhyme scheme followed in the playlet’s Prologue, ie., the line draws attention to itself as not fitting the convention of a tradition of love poetry, with the implication being that the lion does not belong in this ideal vision. See the article by Reiss and Williams, “Tragic Mirth,” in which the authors note that the Prologue here matches the metrics of the Prologue in *Romeo and Juliet* (215-16).

Parker, “Anagogic Metaphor,” 49.

The other side to the masculine celebration of satyric violence is evident in the Christian subject’s phantasies of his destitution through sexual union, through the return of the disavowed satyric of sexuality, the attributed ass’s note on Bottom’s head, the rapacious lion on stage. The “animality” of desire is the means of asserting that also threatens to destitute him of his proper masculinity, an identity pinned on the sexual possession and control of an ideologically debased feminine he threatens to turn into. In a Shakespearean poetics of the subject, the wall coming down joins the subject to an other in the “present” of a literal copula opposed to phantasy’s ideal, projected unity, ie., in the playwright’s translation of the Copula into sexual copulation, the subject is joined not to Christ but to a sexual other.
bestial violence in himself and locating bestial desire in feminized others that need to be subdued to masculine rule, ie., the “very gentle beast” is conscientious where Theseus might not be. My identification of Theseus with the lion of the playlet’s action is suggested by another literary source for Shakespeare’s drawing of Theseus, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Knight’s Tale.*

The devouring, roaring lion of I Peter certainly contributes to the picture of the lion in the final play, as does the “playwright” Quince’s more obvious source of Golding’s Ovid for his “Pyramus and Thisby.” This lion has another important literary ancestor in the portrait of the “noble duc” Theseus in *The Knight’s Tale,* the portrait of a chivalrous, noble, and merciful knight that is not without its ironic psychological touches, especially in relation to his characterization as leonine. Henry J. Webb argues that Chaucer works from his source, Boccaccio’s *Teseide,* while emphasizing his hero’s traits of ignobility and cruelty to the effect of adding psychological complexity. This is particularly evident in his harsh and self-interested treatment of Arcite and Palamon, and in his granting them mercy from death when he discovers them fighting in the forest. This scene, with the context of male rivalry and combat, and Theseus out hunting with “his Ypolita, the faire queene” (line 1685) who discover the rivals, is an obvious source for Shakespeare’s similar scene in *Dream* where he finds the sleeping lovers and wakes them. Chaucer’s Theseus threatens them with death and then turns merciful, rather as the harsh patriarch Egeus demands the law upon his daughter (1.1.38-45) and Lysander (4.1.157-62), which demand Theseus has upheld but then overturns in a calculated surrogation.

The crucial passage in Chaucer for my analysis is Theseus’s subsequent act of mercy, when in meditating on his action he compares himself to the lion who “forgives” those who dutifully dread his wrath. The women all beg for his mercy, “Til at the laste aslakes was his mood,/ For pitee renneth scone his gentil herte” (lines 1760-61) and he reasonably reconsiders his self-praising course:

And eek his herte hadde compassioun
Of woman, for they wepen evere in oon;

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And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,  
And softe unto hymself he seyde, “Fy  
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,  
But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,  
To hem that been in repentance and drede,  
As wel as to a proud despitous man  
That wol mayntene that he first bigan.  
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,  
That in swich cas kan no divisoun,  
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon.” (lines 1770-81)\(^{155}\)

Critically, Theseus finds compassion through considering his own faults of loving unwisely and angering quickly, which links him with the feuding friends and their metamorphoses into beasts through their savage jealousy and “the courtly love ideal of raising earthly love to the highest good. Chaucer counterpoints this ideal by having each lover compare himself with the beasts in the course of elevating love.”\(^{156}\) If Shakespeare’s Theseus appears leonine in his mercy to Lysander and goodwill to the lovers, Theseus might also see himself in the lion whom he calls a “very gentle beast, and of a good conscience” (5.1.229), though I have suggested the irony of such a misrecognition.

The issues of masculine perogative, property, and pleasure in relation to the marriage ritual all inform the epithalamium that is *Dream.* If the satyric in masculine sexuality is censored to maintain the Thesean ideal, it is also essential to that ideal and Thesean theatrical pleasure. Sexual consummation between man and bride (asymmetry intended) is the horizon of the desire and eschatological meaning staged in the drama, with woman conceived of as property, to reflect her husband’s desire, and to be subdued to his right rule. I argue that the playwright obliquely calls into question this “gift of love” of the bride essential to the integrity of proper masculine identity in Renaissance ideology. He does this by putting the “gift” in communication with a masculine phantasy of a murderous copular being. Beyond the loss of boundaries, the “nondifference” that threatens masculine identity in this copula is (in part) due to an ideology in which his satyric sexuality turns him into a beast. Another threat of this preposterous regression staged in the playlet stems from the threat of cuckoldry. The thematic of cuckoldry again employs the imagery and stage

\(^{155}\) This passage is cited in Webb, “A Reinterpretation,” 296.

\(^{156}\) Jeffrey Helterman, “The Dehumanizing Metamorphoses of the Knight’s Tale,” *English Literary History* 38 (1971): 493-511 (494). Helterman also comments on the mercy of Theseus: “Theseus’s gesture of mercy towards the ladies of Thebes, which is preceded as usual by an intial outburst of wrath, follows the example of the lion, who grants mercy to those who beg it of him”(507). Helterman cites John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* for another illustration of how this leonine mercy and grace was understood (507-08).
personifications of the Wall and the Moon essential to this epithalamium. From the visible “truth” of the dropped mantle marking the liminal passage into marriage and confirming the bride’s status as masculine property, woman’s “truth,” that is, her sexual chastity and love, is thereafter an invisible one, an impressionable truth that the playlet and its auditors are concerned with.

The anxiety about feminine chastity is allied with a misogynistic ideology’s fear of (feminine) sexuality’s power to “burn” or castrate. Once the wall is down, the “man i’ th’ moon” (5.1.245) as husband is thereafter a potentially unknowing cuckold, or “horned” by the light of his wife’s lack of chastity:

*Moonshine.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present -
*Demetrius.* He should have worn the horns on his head.
*Theseus.* He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.
*Moonshine.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;
Myself the man i’ th’ moon do seem to be.
*Theseus.* This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i’ th’ moon?
*Demetrius.* He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.
*Hippolyta.* I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change!
*Theseus.* It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.
*Lysander.* Proceed, Moon.
*Moon.* All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man i’ th’ moon; this thorn bush, my thorn bush; and this dog, my dog.
*Demetrius.* Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon. But, silence! Here comes Thisby. (5.1.239-63)

Hippolyta’s commentary, “I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change!” (5.1.51-52) might be seen as her weariness with the misogynistic banter of the men, as tiresome as the personified Moon’s acting. She appears to make a veiled taunt confirming the male fear of cuckoldry with her wish that the “feminine” moon change. At any rate, for the exchange’s dramatic effect, Hippolyta appears to identify with this changeable moon, so that this comment is not solely one of royal condescension to the artisans.

I have followed how, as an epithalamium, the drama and the playlet stage hymeneal phantasies of presence, tracking the displacement of this masterful (spectatorial) position. In this passage where the person of Moonshine is disfigured, or presented, masculine puissance in hymeneal breach is not celebrated. Rather, as if in anxious counterpoint, the opposing threat of a “castration” through cuckoldry appears in the interpreting auditors. On the eve of their marriages, the men are aware of the threat of emasculation posed by the possibility of feminine “indiscretion.” Theseus’s response to Hippolyta’s comment is perhaps telling.
His condescension to the artisans is mixed with an anxious uncertainty regarding the moon’s procession, where his vaunted courtesy and reason would now “stay the time” of discretion (with the meaning of “discrete,” or separateness) that is nearly over. The masculine anxiety about a feminine sexual truth staged here seems allied with a literalizing phantasy that requests that the man be visibly in the moon. The absence of the perpetual proof of a “mantle slain” (5.1.145) provokes anxiety, as in Demetrius’s interrupting quibble, “He should have worn horns on his head” (5.1.239-40), as if the joke’s figuration of the threat of cuckoldry could thereby dismiss it as nothing. The talk of the moon’s horns and its figuration as a lanthorn with a “thorn bush” might emphasize this reversible career of defloration’s pricking “castration.”

Of course, Oberon and Titania’s relationship in the fairy realm also provides a representation of the possibility of feminine subversion of masculinist authority within marriage. It is another ironic counterpoint or inverse mirror image of the proposed marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.157 Fighting over the changeling child, Oberon and Titania indeed accuse each other of loving devotion to their mortal counterparts:

_Hippolyta._ Why art thou here, Come from the farthest steep of India? But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, Your buskined mistress and your warrior love, To Theseus must be wedded, and you come To give their bed joy and prosperity. _Oberon._ How canst thou thus for shame, Titania, Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, Knowing that I know thy love to Theseus? (2.1.68-76)158

The comic quibbling about cuckoldry by the aristocratic audience is justified when these past indiscretions are recalled. The anxious banter also reminds us of the way Oberon regains his sovereignty over Titania through staging his own cuckolding. As Theseus and the others wish to literally see and perhaps

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157 David P. Young, *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 95-97. Young indicates the inverse mirroring relations between plots and between the audience’s “festive mirth” at the play-within-the-play, the rest of the erotic action, and the larger audience (97-106). He stresses the potential for speculative insight through these reflections in the staging of the play-within-the-play, without providing any particular substance to that insight except a parody of love. Young writes: “It is appropriate that Theseus, as representative of daylight and right reason, should have subdued his bride-to-be to the rule of his masculine will. That is the natural order of things [Young here footnotes Olson’s influential article]. It is equally appropriate that Oberon, as king of darkness and fantasy, should have lost control of his wife, and that the corresponding natural disorder described by Titania should ensue” (99-100).
protectively stage, in their jokes, anxieties about cuckoldry, in Oberon’s world of dream and phantasy the “wish” is realized.\textsuperscript{159}

*Dream* stages its appeal as a dream-drama through a Thesean economy of theatrical pleasure in which lack is displaced and transgressive desire is censored. From this Thesean perspective, the “shaping phantasies” (5.1.5) of gender are enjoyed in the epithalamium’s staging of hymeneal phantasy’s specular-speculative appropriation of the feminine other’s being in a violent dream of masculine self-presence. Through examining Oberon’s surrogation of Bottom and Theseus’s interpretative censoring of the playlet, I have suggested the manner in which this position of mastery is displaced in *Dream*. If the economy of desire follows the structure of the fetish, as in Oberon’s allegory of desire revolving around an imaginary castration, the fetishistic articulation of desire also reflects lack back to the masculine.

Insofar as an older critical orthodoxy promotes Theseus as embodying the ideal of paternalistic authority, or Oberon as taming Titania’s allegedly voluptuous sensuality with his *magical* power of “misprision” (3.2.90), this tradition of criticism participates in the drama from the position of a Thesean mastery that censors illicit phantasy, lack, violence, and ideological contradiction. Bloom describes Oberon’s taming of Titania’s sensuality - filling her with “hateful fantasies” (2.2.258), in what appears a projection and ruse of power - as the *magical* attributes of Oberon’s legitimate power, naturalizing a punitive gender ideology and phantasy: “Power in *Dream* is magical rather than political; Theseus is ignorant when he assigns power to the paternal, or to masculine sexuality.”\textsuperscript{160} In taking sides with Oberon over Theseus, Bloom would evade Theseus’s straightforward assertion of paternal power and “masculine sexuality.” But his reading does not escape the seduction of such punitive phantasies, enjoying them through Oberon, while negating the illicit sexuality suggested in Oberon’s begging for the changeling boy: “Rather than the unbounded prurience that

\begin{itemize}
  \item Oberon proceeds to blame Titania for abetting Theseus’s rapacious erotic adventures, as she will similarly be punished with her desire for Bottom.  
  \item The joke can attempt to displace a disturbing lack through its representations. Notable here is Hall’s theoretical reformulation of jokes in relation to Barber’s Freudian model of psychic release and clarification, where jokes are miniature moments of rebellion in a libidinal economy destined to integration: “if the joke is a narrative enabling a liberation, however fleeting, it can only achieve its aim by revealing, or threatening to reveal, the contradictions and divisions where the subject normally perceives seamless unity. The consequent division of the subject by bringing his/her contradictory ideological commitments to the threshold of awareness is a moment of psychological derailment” (Hall, *Anxious Pleasures*, 21).
\end{itemize}
many critics insist upon, I see nothing but an innocent assertion of sovereignty in Oberon’s whim.” I cite above Bloom’s enjoyment of the “exquisite passages” describing Titania’s flowery ensnarement and erotic degradation for the “wrong done to Oberon,” a wrong that the Fairy King reverses with some “aesthetic frisson.”

Retreating from a previous interest in phantasy, when writing his book on the inventor of the human, Bloom enjoys phantasy from a Thesean vantage of censoring the illicit where others fail to. He censors Kott and others for their readings of Bottom’s “orgiastic bestiality,” insisting that what happens in Titania’s flowery bower simply does not matter. Bloom univocally insists on Bottom’s innocence: “He falls asleep, entwined with the rapt Titania, in a charmingly innocent embrace.” Bloom observes that Puck has wrought “for Titania, a considerable indignity no doubt, but for Bottom a friendship with four elves.” In his enthusiasm for Bottom, Bloom enjoys Titania’s discomfort as comic as well as enjoying Bottom’s chastity when seduced by Titania: “Bottom, as the play’s text comically makes clear, has considerably less sexual interest in Titania than she does in him, or than many recent critics and directors have in her.”

In this Bloomian vision, Bottom’s chastity punishes Titania with “mortal grossness” (3.1.161) while allowing the spectator an enjoyment of what Bloom would have to recognize as an ecstatic hieros gamos, conserving the pleasure of illicit phantasy in this erotic union and punishment. In Bloom’s transcendental view of Dream, power conflicts and sacrificial gender ideology are made the matter of an aesthetic resolution and frisson through a Thesean overwriting that finds the “concord of this discord” (5.1.60). If Bloom were to take Bottom’s advice, “let the audience look to their eyes” (1.2.27-28), he might recognize the sublime Bottom in himself and the ideological misprision sustaining his vision.

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160 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 156.
162 Bloom says he cannot accept the vision of “the dull Duke of Athens” (170), yet his vision is Thesean in censoring the illicit and “strong imagination” (5.1.18). He seems to be framing himself and his contradictory investments when he comments on the ideal version of Theseus presented by MND: “The Theseus of *Dream* appears to have retired from his womanizings into rational respectability, with its attendant moral obtuseness” (154).
164 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 161, 148. Bloom particularly enjoys how “her proud assertion of rank is hilarious in its absurd confidence that she can purge Bottom’s “mortal grossness” and transform him into another “airy spirit,” as though he could be another changeling like the Indian boy” (161). Though he might call this irony, Bloom would not see his enjoyment as derived from Titania’s punishment with “sensuality.”
Chapter Two
_Romeo and Juliet: A Sublime Theater of Masochism_

In this chapter, I take the subject’s subversion by the other of desire and phantasy as the drama’s theme or “argument.” I initially track how desire destabilizes the poetic subject in its relations to alterity via the repetitions of the “name of the rose,” how Shakespeare stages desire through the “name of the rose” as a letter in the unconscious that dictates an erotic self-shattering. I also observe the reversal of gender norms and the eroticization attendant on other “crossings” of specular and literary chiasmus. As in _Dream_, where the instability of masculine difference is due in part to specular desire and to phantasy’s incorporation of the prohibited-lost other, the subject stages its difference in union with the other in repeating phantasies that structure the dramatic action. Briefly, the chapter follows the two movements of specular, unconscious desire: the attempted assumption of the other’s being as ideal “Rose,” and the alternating phantasy of the fragmented body and the self’s dissolution in sexual union on the other side of the mirror. The reflective and penetrative erotics of hymeneal phantasy elaborated in _Dream_ through the flower imagery, the “[flower of this purple dye” (3.2.102) of specular desire’s castration, and the magic flower “now purple with love’s wound” (2.1.167) from Cupid’s bolt, these find a Shakespearean precursor in _Romeo and Juliet_ and its play with the “name of the rose” and “rosemary.”

As a meditation on imagining desire in a literary tradition, the romantic tragedy engages the sonneteering tradition of an idealized, unattainable feminine Rose, as in the disembodied woman of the first part of the _Roman de la Rose_, briefly alluded to in the Rosaline who will “not be hit/ With Cupid’s arrow” (1.1.211-12), translating this into the _drama_ of the maidenly Juliet’s “prettiest sententious” (2.4.217) or verse on “rosemary” and her rose, Romeo, and their fatal consummation of romantic passion. I investigate how the masochistic subjectivity of the lovers aims to repeat through the “name of the rose” the “violence of desire that confirms the experience of self,”¹ aims at an erotic excitation or unbinding in the self’s dissolution. While the letter, in theory, encrypts the memory of a failed specular union and its dissonance, this is repeated in the amorous joining and separation of the lovers and the self-loss these movements entail. In a later part of the chapter, I demonstrate how the “violence of desire” that characterizes the romantic passion

¹ Fineman, “Fratricide and Cuckoldry,” 104.
also characterizes the drama’s fratricidal conflict in which the masculine self is in rivalry with his mirror double; for instance, the phantoms “brother Valentine” (1.2.69) and “Signior Valentio” (1.2.72) are variations on the “name of the rose” that (do not occasion desire but) are revenants of the masculine subject’s “being” or imaginary puissance.

The second part of the chapter investigates the text’s presentation of Romeo and Juliet’s masochistic subjectivity as derived from the literary theme of the “love-death embrace.” I examine the Petrarchan genealogy of Romeo’s love-sickness and the various tropes by which the drama’s subjectivity effects are produced. The sado-masochistic subjectivity of the lovers is taken as a model for the audience’s enjoyment of their “love-death embrace” in a critical displacement of masochism’s alliance with the death drive, a pleasurable displacement afforded by the spectatorial position. I suggest how the audience participates in the transgressive phantasies of jouissance and a vicarious suffering and redemption of lost love in the lovers’ final transcendence. This is explored more fully in the fourth part of the chapter where I look at how Romeo’s final dream (5.1.1-11) contributes to such a framing of the drama’s staging of desire. If the lovers “[d]oth with their death bury their parents’ strife” (1st Prologue, 8), the sacrificial deaths are sublime because they turn around the aggression or hate in their passion (“My only love, sprung from my only hate!” [1.5.140]), a transcendence of ambivalence and catharsis from desire’s “excess” thus made available for the “engrossed” audience: this is a crucial transcendence offered by the drama, mediated through the self-sacrificing lovers, a purification of the ambivalence of desire, that pharmakon. The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet orchestrates for the audience the enjoyment of their illicit desire, staged through the “name of the rose,” and their deaths, while “separating out” the excessive aspect of that passion to be discarded with their deaths in the trajectory of a sublime transcendence. In essence, I argue that the process of Romeo and Juliet’s idealization works through the spectator-subject’s participation in their drama, a participation that makes shared loss and renunciation the sources of a sublime masochistic pleasure.

As elaborated in the third part of the chapter where I look at the fratricidal conflict in the drama, this process of purification also works through Mercutio’s function as a katharmos for transgressive, sodomitical desire, the “low” other to romantic love: his articulation of desire cannot be separated from, but is rather the shadowy double to that sublime vision of Love.
In the Name of the Rose: Staging Desire

Starting from Jonathan Goldberg's analysis in "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," the first part of the chapter pursues how the letter (of desire and castration) is imagined as penetrating the subject in a figurative sodomy that thereby traces desire. I begin by resuming my analysis in the introductory "Shakespearean Cupid" of how the poetic subject's sodomitical wounding by Cupid is part of an allegory of desire and love in Romeo and Juliet. Mercutio's vision of Cupid or Love ravishing his friend Romeo is integral to this vision of desire:

Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead: stabbed with a white wench's black eye; run through the ear with a love song; the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind-boy's butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt? (2.4.13-17)

The emasculating "love song" (2.4.15) might be identified with Petrarch's verse, as Mercutio will do later in the scene, with tales of a "Cupid's paradise" in a religion of love, as discussed in later parts of the chapter, or with the account of the narrator's vision of the fountain of Love in Le Roman de la Rose, relating the narcissistic fount of Cupid's snares: "For it is here that Cupid, son of Venus, sowed the seed of love that has dyed the whole fountain, here that he stretched his nets and placed his snares to trap young men and women; for Love wants no other birds."

Mercutio's concern for Romeo's love-sick condition describes a phantasy of Love penetrating his friend in a number of ways which the poetic language of self in Romeo and Juliet playfully elaborates. Romeo is indeed enamoured by Juliet's reciprocating gaze - "She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that? Her eye discourses, I will answer it" (2.2.12-13) - in the balcony scene, even before Juliet cries "Ay me!" (2.2.25) in a crucial pun denoting, in one reading, the self's specular constitution (by the other). Their

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3 While my chapter is in dialogue with Goldberg's essay, I develop the psychoanalytic import of his work - particularly regarding the masochistic foundations of subjectivity and desire - in the context of a literary history of the poetic subject, ie., in a less political reading. In the chapter's final part, I follow this authorial meditation on masochistic subjectivity into the drama's rhetorical staging of desire for the audience.

4 Guillaume de Lorris, The Romance of the Rose, 52 (lines 1594-98). See Fineman on this "tradition of visual desire" in Shakespeare's Perjured Eye, 74. Shakespeare may have been familiar with this common story from Chaucer's partial translation of the romance, The Romaunt of the Rose.

5 See Fineman, "Shakespeare's Perjur'd Eye," in The Subjectivity Effect, n.13, 116. He argues that the poet makes a "thematic disjunction between vision and language" (111) in order to create the subjectivity effect of his characters, where language repeatedly records the loss, as here, of visionary ideality in the fall into language and (hetero)sexual desire. Juliet's "nothing" speech provides a speculum for Romeo's divided self, as he sees a reflection of himself in her discoursing eye/I.
"death-marked love" (1\textsuperscript{st} Prologue, 9) appears to anticipate the dissolution of the specular, epideictic "I" through that desire’s submerged aggression and its enthusiasm for imagining self-loss through the other’s reflection of her identity:

\begin{verbatim}
Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but "Ay,"
And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice.
I am not I, if there be such an "Ay,"
Or those eyes shot that makes thee answer "Ay." (3.2.45-49)
\end{verbatim}

The lovers struggle to make a “self” out of each other (the “other”): Romeo finds his specular “I” of imaginary plenitude in praising Juliet, Juliet whose J is printed as an J in Elizabethan typography, and as here, Juliet finds her assumption of a specular “I” subject to negation in language (“I am not I, if there be such an “Ay”).

According to Mercutio, Romeo has had “the very pin of his his heart cleft with the blind-boy’s butt-shaft” (2.4.15-16). In the Introduction, I attached this figurative sodomizing of Romeo to the text’s development of an allegory of desire where desire follows a phantom castration-sodomy. Reviewing that argument, Mercutio’s speech here is part of a psychoanalytic elaboration of desire and phantasy in \textit{Romeo and Juliet}, where Cupid’s wounding (“love’s wound” [MND, 2.1.167]) is represented as producing the subject’s “castration” in an advent of desire that is repeatedly restaged, particularly through the “name of the rose.” The subject’s split or cleavage is troped as due to a phantom sodomy, a “castration” that is renegotiated in phantasy’s restagings of the scene of desire repeating lack (“I am too sore enpierced with his shaft/ To soar with his light feathers” [1.4.19-20]) or displacing it, in one conceit of Love, by sodomizing Cupid (“Prick love for pricking and you beat love down” [1.4.28]). I now elaborate how the castration attendant on specular desire and its dissonance is encrypted in the poetic letters of “rose” and “rosemary,” and how this “castration” is troped in \textit{Romeo and Juliet} as visiting a phantom sodomy on the poetic subject; that is, sodomy is a trope for the erotic destabilization of the subject. If the subject’s.

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\footnote{If the primary meaning of “butt-shaft” in this passage is an “unbarbed arrow for shooting at butts or marks in archery” (see Levenson’s Oxford edition), I have noted how this is a blunted, unbarbed reading that makes little sense here. After all, Mercutio is lamenting that Romeo has been wounded by Cupid. A reading in agreement with Mercutio’s character would make “butt” contribute to a sodomitical quibble referring to the base, “buttock,” or by transportation, a sexual “bottom.” Several \textit{OED} entries record this meaning of the supporting base, which are historically available for combining with a sense of being the “butt” of Cupid’s archery.}
castration is disavowed and is the cause of his splitting, this split is repeatedly cleaved to in the poetic subject’s desire, as in his naming of the “rose.” The “letter in the unconscious” grants the poetic subject access, in a fetishistic economy, to an interdicted enjoyment where the “name of the rose” or “rosemary” acts as a rem(a)inder of castration and a lost puissance in desire.

Jonathan Goldberg’s essay, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” provides an argument about how the letter R, what he calls the “name of the rose,” seems to determine an economy of transgressive desire. The “trespass sweetly urged” (1.5.111) by the letter R repeatedly transgresses normative gender identities in the drama, particularly through the embodiment of the Rs as a homophonic arse at the origin of desire and as its target or “butt.” I agree with Goldberg that the eroticism of this staging of desire cannot be easily separated from, and actually appears to contribute to, the idealism of what is commonly referred to as a transcendent, absolute “passion” and an “authentic romantic love.” The psychoanalytic aspect of Goldberg’s argument is couched in somewhat Lacanian terms, as in this formula summing up his analysis: “The circuit of desire moves through the letter R, linking Romeo, the rose, Rosaline, rosemary, and Juliet, whose name begins with some other letter but is not misspelled in this sequence.”

To develop this notion of the letter’s jouissance, the “name of the rose” here is like a letter in the unconscious dictating the desire of the dramatis personae, a letter translated into the poetic language which the lovers speak. As I have suggested, the circulation of this rather hackneyed letter in a poetic tradition in part determines its position on the ob-scene stage of the unconscious, as it makes its way through poetic discourse and mimetic desire into “unconscious” phantasy and daydreaming.

7 Goldberg gives different examples from Shakespearean critics in his essay. For an example among legion, see Bloom’s chapter on R&J (Shakespeare, 102, 97). In his reading of this drama, Bloom is merely an antithetical critic, playing Mercutio’s bawdiness and obscenity off the unmitigated, transcendent purity of the lovers’ passion: “I think I speak for more than myself when I assert that the love shared by Romeo and Juliet is as healthy and as normative a passion as Western literature affords us. It concludes in mutual suicide, but not because either of the lovers lusts for death, or mingleth hatred with desire” (93).
8 Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” 229.
9 Goldberg’s argument neglects to spell out its own use of psychoanalytic theory. One wishes to know how he might respond to the observation that the romance of the rose was a poetic commonplace that the playwright is wittily elaborating in a dialectic of desire’s idealization through transgression and death. The “name of the rose” travails in a complex position in R&J. As well as commenting on a poetic tradition and language whose “unconscious” investments the playwright will anatomize through the dramatis personae, the “name of the rose” also functions to stage phantasy (“rosemary” is the example here) for the audience, an imaginary participation in a momentary lifting of repression or a phantasied puissance.
The passage from the drama that this citation from Goldberg glosses is a good place to renew an exploration of the “name of the rose” in Romeo and Juliet. The Nurse speaks somewhat cryptically to Romeo about his name and rosemary beginning with an R, the open Rs of Goldberg’s title, in what sounds like a variation on the theme of Juliet’s balcony speech where Romeo is also likened to a rose:

\[ \text{Nurse.} \quad \text{Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin with a letter.} \]
\[ \text{Romeo.} \quad \text{Ay, nurse; what of that? Both with an R.} \]
\[ \text{Nurse.} \quad \text{Ah, mocker! That’s the dog’s name. R is for the – No; I know it begins with some other letter; and she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you, and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it.} \ (2.4.212-218) \]

What the Nurse declines to name here through her ironic negatio, while allowing the auditor to hear it, is evidently the “arse,” a word whose beginning sounds like the first letter of Romeo’s name. Although the Nurse’s speech is somewhat confused here, this might be precisely to enable the poet to make this elliptic statement about the “circuit of desire” moving through the letter R, a phantasmatic desire originating and ending in such an imaginary sodomitical trespass. In Romeo and Juliet, I propose that the ob-scene scene of the letter of desire is that of the unconscious, not only in the notion that the “circuit of desire moves through the letter R” and is frequently headed towards the “open arse” (2.1.38). The off-stage (or ob-scene) scene of the poetic letter R describes the subject’s subversion by the letter in the unconscious, a subversion which begins with the self’s precipitation out of the specular other or “Rose.” The scene of the letter R is literally obscene in relation to the body (3.3.102-08) and ob-scene to designate a pre-Freudian unconscious. As in Lacanian theory, the letter R in this text is fundamentally a letter of castration directing the subject towards his annulment in desire.

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10 In Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary (1947; 3rd ed, London: Routledge, 1968), Eric Partridge ingeniously makes R stand for “roger,” a Renaissance slang for penis (176), which he appears to derive from “Roger” or R being “a dog’s name” (176). Is this an effort to defeat the implication of an unsounded arse here? Along these lines, “arse” agrees with Nurse’s suspicion that it does not start with an R but sounds like the dog’s growl. “Arse” further fits in with the present case for the letter of desire’s imaginary beginning and end in another rose, the “open arse” (2.1.38). If the drama’s pattern of phantom crossings were followed, might the R indicate both a “roger” and an “arse”?

11 This is not a critical claim that Goldberg makes, so that the status of the playwright’s representation remains ambiguous and implicitly at some level of authorial compulsion. Goldberg declines to read Cupid’s wounding in an allegory of desire (see 231), perhaps because this means the playwright himself stages the “subversive” phantom sodomy Goldberg wishes to appropriate as a counter-discourse.

12 As indicated in the Introduction, the present discussion draws on Serge Leclaire’s lucid presentation of Lacanian principles in Psychoanalyzing. In my understanding of the “rose” as a letter of castration in R&J,
Juliet has evidently been waxing poetical about Romeo in private, in her own poetic discourse concerned with variations on the “name of the rose” including Romeo’s R, the arse or “some other name/ Belonging to a man” (2.2.41-42), and a “rosemary” that might indicate that this desire is subtended by the memory of loss and death. I recur to the discussion of rosemary below in light of Juliet’s unconventional epithalamium, pursuing how “rosemary” functions to present the sacrificial paradoxes of Love’s unions. In the playwright’s adaptation of Renaissance tradition, where rosemary is ceremoniously used at weddings and funerals, rosemary signifies an immortality in death, especially in memory. In the above passage and the drama generally, rosemary’s signification of transcendence in death is extended from funeral mourning to another sort of loss, the phantasied “death” of the bride in her defloration. On a first level, this “death” describes her figurative murder in defloration. Her orgasmic pleasure is also troped as a “death” in the text, which accords with the sublime masochism of Juliet’s final self-murder. Death as Juliet’s bridegroom is an often-cited image that reaches its fulfilment in her suicide after the counterfeit death arranged by the Friar. The immortality appropriated by the bridegroom is his godhead taken in the flower of her maidenhood, her figurative murder and “death.” So that Juliet’s talk of “rosemary” and Romeo indicates her wish to give her virginity to Romeo, as well as the inverse or mirroring proposition of taking his and “killing” him. Defloration’s traditional association with a feminine death is transmuted into the lovers’ mirroring phantasy of an erotic “death” in sexual union.

Juliet’s reported witty discourse of desire bears some resemblances, in its maidenly speaker and object of desire, the “rose” of “rosemary” and Romeo, to Mercutio’s wish that Romeo “hit” the mark in love:

If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
Now will he sit under a medlar tree
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
As maids calls medlars when they laugh alone.
O, Romeo, that she were, O that she were
An open arse, thou a pop’rin pear! (2.1.33-38)

As Brian Gibbons says in his introduction to his Arden edition of the text, the “open arse” here improves on other textual variants, a recovery of an archaic form “unwarranted by his copytext” but which makes poetic

the mode of imaginary castration ranges from specular meconnaissance to hymeneal and sodomitical variations on the “rose” suggested by the text.
Goldberg records that the medlar is an apple, and the "open arse" slang for this apple of the rose family according to Webster's dictionary. If the lover Romeo is blind like Cupid, his blindness entails the displacement of desire's aim, a deflection joined to a phantom sodomy and its ambivalent trajectory.

Mercutio translates down the ideal "Rose" of an ideal, unattainable epideictic other, as in Romeo's tribute to Rosaline who will "not be hit/ With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit/ And in strong proof of chastity well armed/ From Love's weak childish bow she lives uncharmed" (1.1.212-14), to a Rosaline who is the rose of an "open arse" (2.1.38) for Romeo. I argue that Romeo and Juliet stages in this manner a dialectic between the ideal object of an identificatory passion, Rosaline as "Rose," and desire's "scattering" of the poetic subject mediated by the "name of the rose," where the transgression troped as sodomy contributes to the former object's ideality. Mercutio's poetic address to Romeo is made to conjure his friend through the poetic evocation of Rosaline:

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,
And the demenses that there adjacent lie,
That in thy likeness thou appear to us! (2.1.17-21)

When Mercutio blazons Rosaline without "likenesses" here, he forthrightly states it is to conjure his friend's (phallic) desire. The poetic speech is made in the name of Rosaline, "in his mistress' name" (2.1.28), the name of the rose:

This cannot anger him. "Twould anger him
To raise some spirit in his mistress' circle
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had laid it and conjured it down.
That were some spite; my invocation
Is fair and honest: in his mistress' name,
I conjure only but to raise up him. (2.1.23-29)

13 See the article by Philip Williams, "The Rosemary Theme in Romeo and Juliet," Modern Language Notes 68 (1953): 400-03, for a somewhat different account of rosemary's importance to the drama as a paradoxical symbol.
14 Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," 229; see also n. 10, 233. Goldberg's assertion that sodomy was unspeakable at the time (230-31) would seem to somewhat contradict its phantom presence in the text. I am arguing that sodomy was more like an "open secret" in Shakespeare's England, one which the playwright was adept at evoking for its power to engage an audience.
15 Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," 229.
Like Nurse, Mercutio playfully denies the bawdy meanings his speech delights in displaying. The talk here of the spirit of a "strange nature" (2.1.24) and Rosaline's "circle" points to the phantom sodomy that Mercutio would "raise up" (2.1.29).

"Rose" and "rosemary" in the text are veritable crossroad words or a knottenpunkt supporting the poetic subject's potency, preserving his or her jouissance in the circuit of the letter. By jouissance here I mean the barred enjoyment of an imaginary bliss that threatens the self's dissolution, a barring by social prohibition or the specular object in which the subject's desire is alienated. I am arguing that the split poetic subject cleaves to the jouissance encrypted in the letter in the unconscious as a rem(a)inder of that fulfillment. In an analysis of the poetic language of Romeo and Juliet focussing on the "name of the rose," "rose" and "rosemary" are comparable to Freud's "botanical chain" in his Traumdeutung. As Leclaire notes in Psychoanalyzing, the word botanical, "a part of the most manifest content, is at the same time the most sensitive central core of the dream. As a veritable crossroad word or keyword, a term of particular intensity, it figures, according to Freud, the direct fulfillment of the desire." This can be observed in a variety of situations in Romeo and Juliet. For instance, Mercutio attempts to conjure Romeo with his "poetic" evocation of Rosaline the rose as an "open arse" to Romeo's "pop'rin pear" (2.1.38), an enunciation that sends him directly home to sleep. In Romeo and Juliet, the "name of the rose" attaches to objects that might sustain the poetic subject's desire, as in Juliet's balcony speech when she invokes a "rose." But the letter "rose" also aims at repeating itself enigmatically for the dramatis personae and for the audience: are we not left repeating what Nurse does not say? For Juliet rehearsing her epithalamium or Nurse repeating it, the letter stages a scene of desire.

16 Compare Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," where he reads Mercutio as wishing to occupy the position of Rosaline in his evocation of Rosaline's "open arse" (2.1.38), the conjured "magic circle" (231).
17 The following argument is somewhat modelled on John Fletcher's brief analysis of the chain of letters and switchword (or knottenpunkt) supporting the Wolf Man's potency in "The Letter in the Unconscious," Jean Laplanche, 117-18.
18 Anthony Wilden writes a note on jouissance for his early translation of Lacan's "Rome Discourse": "Jouissance has no simple English equivalent. In a less significant context, it might be translated "enjoyment," "possession," "appropriation," "right," "pleasure." Since in Lacan's view the enjoyment of possession of an object is dependent for its pleasure on others, the ambiguity of the French jouissance nicely serves his purpose." This is a footnote to an early passage in Lacan's essay describing how the subject is barred from jouissance due to the self's specular constitution, ie., how the "other" retains this jouissance. In The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis, trans. with notes and commentary by Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1968), 11-12, n.29, 101.
In theory, the formula of desire in the “rose-mary” *knotenpunkt* communicates or effects a translation between the unconscious and conscious systems, thus lifting the bar of repression negating desire:

“Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed” ("Negation," *11*, 438). In the letter’s translation from the unconscious the letter participates in a satisfying transgression renewing desire. Similarly, in the fiction of the drama, the poetic subject is granted access to his *jouissance* through the letter’s memory of the forbidden body (threatening death or self-loss) in the fetishistic economy of poetic language.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the poetic language of the “name of the rose” seems to traverse the polarities of abject repressed and idealized sublime, following the “structure of the fetish” in simulating an unveiled-veiled lack that repairs, in phantasy, the subject’s division. As such an originary rem(a)inder of castration, the “name of the rose” is the means by which the playwright stages the poetic subject’s fleeting sense of fulfillment and wholeness in his relation to the other of desire and phantasy. (The repeating scene is called a “phantasmatic” due to its structuring effect on the poetic subject’s desire and the ordering of his perception.) I have argued that the the disavowed castration attendant on specular desire and its “misprision” (*MND*, 3.2.91) - a desire thematized in the language of “I’s” and roses - is troped as a phantom sodomy destabilizing the subject.

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19 Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing*, 32.
20 See Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing*, 36-37, for a similar articulation of the “phantasmatic composition” of unconscious desire (37).
21 As in *MND*, the negation of the demonized, putatively castrated other in *R&J* seems intimately linked to the idealization of what has been repressed and hence splits the subject, splits the subject along the diverging lines of the repressed “name of the rose” and the precipitation of an ideal Rose: “Indeed, as we found in tracing the origin of the fetish, it is possible for the original instinctual representative to be split in two, one part undergoing repression, while the remainder, precisely on account of this intimate connection, undergoes idealization” (“Repression,” *11*, 150).
22 If the subject’s castration is disavowed and causes his (and the erotic object’s) splitting, this split is repeatedly cleaved to in the poetic subject’s desire. I use the terminology of the split subject here in the sense of the subject’s *spaltung* or splitting into the conscious and unconscious by the work of repression. However, I refer more specifically to Freud’s essay “Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence” (*11*, 461-64) and its elaboration of the ego’s splitting due to a psychical trauma, to the disavowal of the reality of castration that results in a fetishistic economy of desire. The ego thus split on the one hand disavows the reality of castration, forming the fetish (for instance, where the letter “rose” is encrypted in the unconscious), while on the other hand recognizes and enjoys the “knowledge” of the other’s castration. I call this duplicitous attitude to castration in desire the “structure of the fetish,” as above (in the Introduction), showing how Shakespeare dramatizes the poetic subject’s split.
Briefly situating this elaboration of the “name of the rose” in *Romeo and Juliet* in a poetic tradition, I suggest how it becomes an authorial meditation on representing (a proto-psychoanalytic) desire in the literary text. The “name of the rose” is a paradigm of sorts for desire in the text, a structuring presence beyond its local instances in the language of characters. The letter repeats poetic tradition but also points to the off-stage location of a pre-Freudian unconscious and the lifting of repression in the staging of illicit desire and *jouissance* in the letter. The argument here about the “name of the rose” as a letter in the unconscious and crossroad word of desire does not attempt to decide the question of authorial desire. However, I would suggest that the playwright is manipulating the staging of these erotic crossings through the “name of the rose,” as the symbolic coherences in this grouping of letters appear highly worked out in relation to specular, hymeneal, and sodomitical imaginings of “castration.” This account of the staging of desire through the “name of the rose” poses itself first as a psycho-analysis of *dramatis personae* as if they were real people. I have been suggesting that the identificatory phantasies and transgressions encoded in the poetic language might also act as a model for the spectator-subject’s imaginary participation in the drama. The argument is directed then to the manner in which the text presents characters with strong “subjectivity effects” from our witnessing the evident lifting of repression in their poetic language, and the manner in which this dovetails with the staging of desire through a similar lifting of repression for the audience or reader of the text.

The Freudian theory of negation and the structure of the fetish can help present how the “name of the rose” is maintained in the mediating position of a “negation” at different levels in the text. First, at the level of the *dramatis personae*, the “name of the rose” is a letter in the unconscious or a *knotenpunkt* directing the poetic subject’s desire. The “rose” figures in the poetic language of the characters, where its enigmatic repetition can appear as the end of desire in its translations. The letter in the unconscious or crossroad word occasioning desire and its formal, momentary lifting of repression, the “rose” in this text also translates into subject, object, and erotogenic zone. As a variation on the “name of the rose,” “rosemary” functions in a similar manner, though with a particular inflection of immortality through memory (of loss) in Renaissance tradition. At the level of audience or reader, the “name of the rose” describes a poetic symbolism and
language that similarly makes a negated content available to the “seduced” spectator-subject or reader through participation in the drama’s staging of illicit desire.

In the last chapter’s discussion of the parodic element in the artisans’ production of “Pyramus and Thisby,” I suggested that the lovers’ desire in Romeo and Juliet takes its cue from prohibition, cleaving to a broadly defined transgression. Goldberg’s reading of Romeo and Juliet suggests how the erotic “crossings” of desire tend to condense onto the trope of sodomy, how this transgressive “sodomy” describes a desire that “moves through the letter R.” Especially due to the cultural interdiction on such transgressive sexual acts, and the death penalty that could be meted out, sodomy is certainly an apt trope for describing the subject’s discoherence in desire as well as desire’s cleaving to prohibition. Goldberg’s analysis seeks to replicate the subject’s destabilization by a phantom sodomy. “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs” reads like an attempt to panic any idealizing heterosexual desire and love through its implication in homoerotic male-male rivalry, transgressive desire, and sodomy. But Goldberg’s often illuminating analysis is made possible because the text of Romeo and Juliet consistently points up these dialectical sources of idealization in abjection, prohibition, loss and death. In any case, the widespread early modern cultural abjection of sodomy makes the tracing of desire with sodomy a return of the repressed, remarking an important cultural contradiction and phantasy.

Goldberg’s essay begins by noting the implication of Romeo and Juliet’s transcendent passion in an illicit economy of desire and death that shores up the homosocial. He consistently effects the ideological slippage, articulated in the text, between the transgression of “the boundaries of gender difference” to a phantom sodomy in desire and love. As we will see below, his argument works by mobilizing the stigmatizing slippages from a wide range of transgressive actions considered anti-social, acts of counterfeiting and perjury, to desire’s usury, sterility, erotic punishment and death, attaching these actions

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23 This schematic model applying the Freudian concept of negation to the production of a dramatic text staging forbidden or perverse desire is indebted to the first sections of Francesco Orlando’s Toward a Freudian Theory of Literature: With an Analysis of Racine’s Phedre, trans. Charmaine Lee (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978). Orlando’s use of the concept of “negation” suggests how the logic of the unconscious can govern poetic language and the dramatic text’s reception.

24 Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” 232. I refer specifically to the essay’s concluding sentence.

25 Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” 222.
and attributes to a phantom sodomy between men that provokes the proper masculine subject’s
discoherence. Repeatedly linking sodomy with the “death-marked love” (1st Prologue, 9) of Romeo and
Juliet, Goldberg’s reading aims to eclipse the vision of a “stellar” love with a solar anus.26

Critically, when Goldberg locates a phantom sodomy in the “name of the rose,” he claims that this
sodomy challenges the patriarchy, is distinct from the homosocial, and is “the space of less containable and
less socially approved desires.”27 However, it might be remarked that the sodomy Goldberg presents is not
clearly distinct from the oppression of the patriarchy, or from the homoerotic rivalry and bonding we
witness between the young men. Indeed, it could be argued that a certain homoeroticism precipitates the
tragedy as much as patriarchal ideology, and I demonstrate below how the text tropes fratricide as a
phantom sodomy. Further, Goldberg’s supposed counter-discourse of an anti-social sodomy cannot be
extricated from the misogynist spirit of Mercutio’s phallic gaiety in this drama. And while the social
transgression of male-male sodomy is Goldberg’s vaunted point of affirmation, its affirmation imparts a
violence to this sodomy that wishes to reverse heterosexuality hegemony in phantasy; that is, sodomy
remains a masculinist phantasy whose aggressive trajectory attempts to “reclaim” for itself a position of
mastery: “If love be rough with you, be rough with love; Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down”
(1.4.27-28). Though I diverge from Goldberg’s rhetorical abjection of heterosexual desire and love, I
follow his reading of how transgressive desire in the text is troped as sodomitical. I follow this troping
towards joining the narratives of a romantic “death-marked love” (1st Prologue, 9) and fratricidal violence’s
unconscious motives, which is how I read the drama’s design. I position sodomy as an important trope for
the subject’s beggaring in desire, an apt trope attached to the lovers’ transgressive desire and its idealization
in a poetics of the desiring subject’s “sacrifice” of the other in its “purblind” (2.1.12) misprision. This is an
attempt to develop the text’s vision of desire in the direction of a perverse allegory of Love’s sacrifices and
the internalization of aggression in the lovers’ sublime masochism.

26 Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” see esp. the readings of 224-28.
Goldberg's essay emphasizes the social aspect of desire in the drama and its constant triangulation in terms of male rivalry. By defining desire as sodomitical in this drama one is reminded of the fact of desire's relation to the social and fraternal ambivalence (enmity-amity). Goldberg rightly insists on the sociality of desire, remarking how the lovers' desire takes its cue from a transgression of the social, particularly the patriarchal form of domination and property perpetuated in the institution of marriage. The transgressive aspect of the lovers' secret amour is in part due to its violation of the proper exchange of women between men, so that the heterosexual liaison of Romeo and Juliet harbours "sodomy" through its refusal to grant patriarchal power the pleasure "between men" of exchanging women; this phantom sodomy is now between man and woman. The sociality of the exchange of women in marriage is perhaps, as Goldberg suggests, "the bedrock of the social order"; Capulet's angry refusal to be forsworn to Paris, after pledging his daughter to him, is one of the final tragedy's many causes. Similarly, Romeo's actions bespeak an ambivalent attitude towards the fathers when he secretly pursues Rosaline and then Juliet. Doubtless with the purpose of engaging sympathy for the lovers, the drama only allows the gentle suggestion of irony concerning Romeo's perverse love of the forbidden, first in his love for Rosaline and then for Juliet:

Thus if, from one vantage point, it might appear that in moving from Rosaline to Juliet, Romeo moves from an unproblematic love to a disruptive one, the plot of replacement would seem rather in either case to recognize the sociality of desire. The difference between Romeo's two loves ... is crossed from the start, and both loves work to secure and to disrupt the social; both loves are "transgressive." Both loves are forbidden, a fact made clear when we recall the moment when Rosaline is first named in the play; her name appears on the list that Romeo reads of those invited to the Capulets' ball; she is Capulet's "fair niece" (1.2.70). "My only love sprung from my only hate" (1.5.137): Romeo may be, for Juliet, her first transgressive desire, but she is, for Romeo, the second in his pursuit of forbidden loves. When Juliet delivers her speech about Romeo and the name of the rose, she inserts him into the series in which she already participates as Romeo's substitute love, a new Rosaline with a different name (it is worth noting that the Rosaline figure in Shakespeare's source has no name).29

In the course of the drama, Juliet's name serves to comment on her reification and draw attention to the "transgressions" that she amorously responds to. Juliet is called "Jule" (1.3.43) by the Nurse's deceased husband, as she is explicitly a jewel to an admiring Romeo upon first seeing her:

27 Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," 225.
28 Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," 219.
O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiope’s ear -
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear. (1.5.46-49)

The language of opposition (bright: night) and objectification (jewel) is as erotic as it is poetic, condensing this contrast and crossing of kinds in the image of the “rich jewel in an Ethiope’s ear” (1.5.48).30 Juliet’s name also describes the gens Julia, as object of a perverse pilgrim’s journey, as in the dramatic sonnet of the lovers’ meeting. Donald Cheney writes of the poet’s vision of the individual modelled on the city of Rome, “whereby the individual is seen as besieged city or household, darkly sharing or conspiring with the enemy forces that seek to ravish or enthrall it.” He says of Romeo and Juliet: “Rome figures not only in the first syllable of Romeo’s name but also in an implicit association of Juliet with the gens Julia, and in the metaphor of pilgrimage as a fatal entry into a holy but forbidden city.”31 The present chapter attempts to track the unconscious complicity of Romeo and Juliet in their own mutual erotic overthrow, their Roman suicides that would triumph over death.

Desire’s transgression and “sin” is emphasized in the lovers’ first joint or joining sonnet where they meet. In one reading of Juliet’s place in the drama’s sequence of roses, she is a flower within the hortus conclusus of her orchard walls, a garden that is now an orchard as Juliet is the “medlar” (this is a rotten

30 See Traub, “Jewels, Statues, and Corpses: Containment of Female Erotic Power in Shakespeare’s Plays,” in Shakespeare and Gender: A History, ed. Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps (New York: Verso, 1995), for an analysis of the manner in which male psychic conflict and anxiety is played out in the “dramatic strategies” of containing feminine erotic power. The present chapter’s argument is not inclined to adopt the critical position of a playwright dominated by cultural phantasies and ideology, although a degree of this is indisputable. By emphasizing the drama’s staging of these phantasies of containment for the audience, the catharsis (Traub writes “exorcism”) of anxiety is shifted from author to audience.

The contention of the last chapter and the present one is that the playwright is aware of the “sacrificial” function of his drama in staging such erotic phantasies. Consider, for instance, Juliet’s dramatic function as such a “Jule,” (1.3.43). Juliet is the woman whose “maidenhead” (1.3.2) is the subject of discussion, who repeatedly says “ay” as the means to her “I,” that is told “[t]hou wilt fall backwards when thou comest to age” (1.3.56). Juliet’s remembered fall into sexuality (weaning with the wormwood) and its earthquake tremors - “Shake, quoth the dovehouse!” (1.3.33) - seems to anticipates her role as a sacrificial “lamb” or “ladybird” (1.3.3) on an approaching “Lammastide” or “Lammas Eve” (1.3.17). This holiday’s “sacrifice” coincides with her fourteenth birthday (the limit of the sonnet form): “To see now how a jest may come about!” (1.3.45). Of course, this is reading within a masculinist, psychoanalytic paradigm in which the drama, like the joke, allows for a release of dissonance in the subject through representation (“To see now how a jest may come about!”), particularly of the censored aggression and phantasies of death bound up in amorous passion.

apple and a rose)\(^{32}\) or forbidden fruit of the fall into sexuality. Goldberg’s reading aligns Juliet with the “name of the rose” through Mercutio’s original blazoning of Rosaline’s “open arse” (2.1.38) earlier, a reading that aligns her with an imaginary sodomy closely allied with death:

If the rose is most literally Rosaline’s name respelled, it is, with only the slightest metaphorical force, Juliet’s as well, for she is not only Romeo’s newest rose, but is herself locked within “orchard walls ... high and hard to climb; And the place death” (2.2.63-64), a dangerous flower to be plucked, dangerous, as I’ve been suggesting, and as this description does too, because the desires she represents are closely allied to forbidden sexual acts more usually thought of as taking place between men. Juliet is most explicitly a flower when she has apparently been taken by death. “The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade” (4.1.99), Friar Laurence tells her, and this is what her father sees; “the sweetest flower of the field” (4.5.29), he tells her husband-to-be, has been taken already, not, as is the case, by Romeo, but by death: Death has “lain with thy wife. There she lies / Flower as she was, deflowered by him” (36-37). Such imaginings of the sexual act as taking place in the wrong place (“the place death”) and the wrong partner only further the sense that the sexual field in which desire operates in the play is the forbidden desire named sodomy. The ungenerative locus of death allies the sexual act to the supposedly sterile and reproductive usury associated with the young man and with Rosaline’s self-hoarding and waste, themselves as suggestive as sodomy as they are of masturbatory activities as well.\(^{33}\)

Goldberg’s rather tenuously works here by mobilizing the ideological slippage between forbidden desire or dangerous transgression generally to the naming of a phantom sodomy between men: “the desires she represents are closely allied to forbidden sexual acts more usually thought of as taking place between men ... the sexual field in which desire operates in the play is the forbidden desire named sodomy.” In Goldberg’s reading, the drama’s linking of death with desire remarks a spectral presence of sodomy in the text, though this is largely effected by a cultural typing of male-male sodomy as ungenerative.

If Juliet is imagined as a flower in death, this is also because as such a flower she participates in the drama’s general economy of desire and its intrication with death, transgression, and the memory of loss. In Goldberg’s reading, Juliet is a flower that remarks the pharmaconic, formally crossed aspect of a desire that “moves through the letter R” naming a phantom sodomy:

If the living-dead Juliet is the flower deflowered, the usual deformations of the signifier that works to make these connections in the play - the name of the rose - find a further point of transformation (of nominal difference and identification) at her funeral. Friar Laurence orders rosemary to be strewn on her supposed corpse (4.5.79) and the stage direction at line 96 suggests that it is done: “Exuent all but the Nurse and musicians, casting rosemary on Juliet.” Juliet’s living-dead status could be taken to prevaricate in bodily terms between the generative and ungenerative desires whose paths cross each other in the play; much as she has and has not

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\(^{32}\) The *OED* notes the medlar (tree) is “of the rose family, grown for its fruit,” and that its fruit is “like a small brown-skinned apple with a large cup-shaped ‘eye’ between the persistent calyx-lobes, which is eaten when half rotten. LME.”

been deflowered by death, her union with Romeo is, from the end of the second act of the play, legitimated by marriage and continues to summon its allure from the unspeakable terrain of sodomy. 34

Might Juliet’s corpse and the casting of rosemary mark the displacement, for the spectator-subject, of a crossed, ambivalent desire onto the living-dead, flower-deflowered erotic object? Through his reading for a sodomy eclipsing loss, Goldberg’s analysis leaves out any consideration of rosemary’s significations of memory and immortality and their contribution to the elaboration of a sacrificial vision of desire, a vision affirming the life-in-death paradox of desire and eroticism’s intrication with loss and transgression.

As an evergreen, rosemary signified immortality in an English Renaissance tradition. However, the source of Juliet’s immortality in the scene of her supposed death is shifted, via the “name of the rose,” from a doctrine of the Christian soul’s immortality, to her being the object of desire and sacred mediator of transcendence for the male *dramatis personae* and spectator-subject. In a sacrificial vein, Juliet’s first counterfeit death, and her later self-murder, secure her speculative purity and beauty for the onlookers’ consumption, where beauty and death meet: “Death lies on her like an untimely frost/ Upon the sweetest flower of all the field” (4.5.28-29); Romeo’s amorous appreciation of a “dead” Juliet’s beauty and radiant light in the Capulet monument is a sort of model for the audience. The masculine (spectator-)subject’s phantasy of Death sexually taking Juliet - a phantasy which Juliet herself articulates - is common to the speech of her father, of Romeo, and of Paris. This appears as the staging of a barely displaced phantasy of the bridegroom’s role as *murderer*; an elliptical perspective on such anxiety might be marked in Romeo’s, “Doth not she think me an old murderer?” (3.3.94) Similarly, one might note the phallic symbolism of Juliet’s use of Romeo’s “happy dagger” (5.3.169) for her self-murder. Old Capulet unwittingly articulates for the audience his phantasy of phallic violence, a (self-)murder within love:

O heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!  
This dagger hath mista’en, for, lo, his house  
Is empty on the back of Montague,  
And it misheathed in my daughter’s bosom! (5.3.202-05)

34 Goldberg, “Romeo and Juliet’s Open Rs,” 228. Juliet’s body and the rosemary symbolism linked to her indicates a previration between life and death as well between Eros and Thanatos that is not capable of resolution except in the phantasied transcendence of Love at the drama’s end. The fusing of death (loss) with desire is the source of desire’s ambivalence as well as its approach to death and the sacred.
As argued above in relation to Nurse’s report of Juliet’s “prettiest sententious” (2.4.217), phantasies of death and murder are submerged in the amorous language of flowers.

In its first rehearsal, the spectacular staging brings out a sacrificial dimension to Juliet’s death. The sacrificial vein continues in the conjunction of marriage and death, and later by her sexualized self-murder that is marshalled to redeem the social order. In the first scene of Juliet’s simulated death, “rosemary” remarks a sacrificial dimension to desire, where Juliet’s imagined defloration by Death takes on a sacred quality between men. The sacrificial aspect of the “rosemary” symbolism is present in the phantasied sexual murders, the scattered flowers of defloration that the drama stages in the action describing a scattered and pinned “rosemary” that is poetically isomorphic with Juliet. In the first staging of her death, Juliet simulates death to maintain her purity for Romeo, a death which prompts more phantasies of her sullying by Death:

O son, the night before thy wedding day,  
Hath Death lain with thy wife. There she lies,  
Flower as she was, deflowered by him.  
Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir;  
My daughter he hath wedded. I will die  
And leave him all. Life, living, all is Death’s. (4.5.35-40)

Capulet comments on the supposed reversal effected by the event of Juliet’s death where the poetic language has insisted on an identification of sexuality and death: “Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse;/ And all things change them to the contrary” (4.5.89-90).

In the event of her death in the monument, Juliet’s death becomes a sacrifice for the audience as well as for a fratricidal Veronese society: the spectacle of death and her phantasied union with the beloved is highly sexualized. Juliet’s deliberate loss of self approaches the ecstasy of the mystic or hysterical, or male phantasies of these, a staging that might broach a perception of the position of woman’s jouissance as man’s new God in the religion of love. Nurse’s enigmatic account of Juliet’s talk of Romeo and rosemary in the “prettiest sententious” (2.4.217) serves as an index of her desire to lose her virginity to Romeo, and of her sexual “death” perhaps. However, this ironic negatio of wanton desire is also given a mirroring and

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inverse form, the taking of his maidenhood and "killing" him in a phantasy of sparagmos and "death" again: "Give me my Romeo; and, when I shall die,/ Take him and cut him out in little stars" (3.2.21-22). If Juliet is a flower to be deflowered, so is Romeo a rose to Juliet (2.2.43-47): the poetic letters "rose" and "rosemary" link Romeo and Juliet in their mirroring penchant for desire's self-shattering. Of course, the "rosemary" and flowers also act in a more traditional poetic symbolism that joins Romeo and Juliet, flowers marking their life-in-death passion, anticipating the final embrace of Eros and death whose fusion leads to the tableau vivant of a flower-strewn "bridal bed" (5.3.12) of death.

The friar instructs the mourners at Juliet's wedding to "[d]ry up your tears and stick your rosemary/ On this fair corse" (4.5.79-80). Might it be, at least in part, the occluded memory of death and loss within desire that provides the impetus to the lamenting mourners' speculation on Juliet's "being" in her death, and by extension, the spectator-subject or reader's? The question of the association of "rosemary" with memory and dreams of transcendence in death is taken up in the fourth part of the chapter on Romeo's prophetic dreams and the wish-fulfillment offered by this tragedy of desire.

In the next section, the "rose" names the forbidden object of desire when Juliet translates Romeo into the "rose," thus pursuing her jouissance. In this scene, in the drama's incorrigible play with language, the "name of the rose" might just translate down into another bottom, into the encrypted name of "but love" (2.2.50) with which Romeo is baptized.

The Name of the Rose and the Letter's Trespass Sweetly Urged

If, as Goldberg suggests, the "name of the rose" determines an economy of desire that transgresses normative gender proprieties, a compelling example of this transgression of gender marked by the "name of the rose" is the balcony scene where Juliet compares Romeo to a rose whose sweetness she desires. Her desire for Romeo, like Romeo's for her ("O trespass sweetly urged!" [1.4.111]) is sweet because it is transgressive of paternal prohibition, but also of cultural gender norms. When Romeo exclaims to Benevolio "such is love's transgression" (1.1.188), the imaginative sphere of reference points to his own figurative penetration and perhaps his pleasure therein. Much as Juliet wishes Romeo's "other name/ Belonging to a
man” (2.2.41-42), Romeo is “too sore enpierced with his [Cupid’s butt-] shaft” (1.4.20) to take the active, “masculine” role in love. Apart from masochistic phantasy, might part of the bonus of pleasure here for Romeo be the crossing of gender propriety in his penetration by Love? In an extension of the Cupid conceit to Romeo’s baptism in love, Romeo anticipates being figuratively sodomized by Juliet’s name of “love” (2.2.50). The argument here contends that the text discloses a scandalous castration-sodomy by Love in this scene to describe the loss of the proper name and the reception of the name of love, the “name of the rose.”

The play on “rose” as Romeo’s substitute name becomes erotically charged as it takes it cue from “some other name/ Belonging to a man” (2.2.41-42), promising an exchange of body for word:

\[
\text{Tis but your name that is my enemy.} \\
\text{Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.} \\
\text{What’s Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,} \\
\text{Nor arm, nor face, O, be some other name} \\
\text{Belonging to a man.} \\
\text{What’s in a name? That which we call a rose} \\
\text{By any other name would smell as sweet.} \\
\text{So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,} \\
\text{Retain that dear perfection which he owes} \\
\text{Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name;} \\
\text{And for thy name, which is no part of thee,} \\
\text{Take all myself.} \\
\text{Romeo.} \\
\text{I take thee at thy word.} \\
\text{Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptized;} \\
\text{Henceforth I never will be Romeo. (2.2.38-51)\textsuperscript{36}}
\]

Juliet’s speech begins by naming what the paternal name Montague is not, where the negative force of that name of prohibition seems to focus her desire on “some other name/ Belonging to a man” (2.2.41-42). If one follows the First Quarto and substitutes “part” for “name,” the emphasis of the passage shifts from name to body, the same exchange desired in Juliet’s speech. Juliet here wishes to give her body to Romeo in exchange for his name, a name that is also to be understood as Romeo’s substitute name of “rose” and his “roger.”

\textsuperscript{36}The passage is important for its challenge to nominalism, positing a lack of identity between word and thing, amounting to a refutation of that order. The passage is also an editorial crux between Q1 and Q2, where it is the “name” and “word” that might translate or carry over to the referent. For an analysis of the rose’s referentiality in light of Genesis, an elaborate allegorical analysis of the power of godlike naming, see the essay by Barabara L. Estrin, “Romeo, Juliet, and the Art of Naming,” Ariel 12:2 (1981): 31-49 (esp. 37-41). Regarding the textual debates surrounding the rose, see Goldberg’s
This imaginary trajectory of exchange goes in the other direction also. Romeo embraces the castration-sodomy of love in a sort of synecdochal “quick conceit” playing on the earlier implied exchange between a giving a name and receiving a body (part):

Romeo, doff thy name;
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

Romeo. I take thee at thy word.
Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo. (2.2.38-51)

If Romeo is taking Juliet at her word, taking her as a Rose, he also wishes to give his name and receive the word of “love” (2.2.50) from Juliet. His conceit figures himself in a “feminine” position of receiving, asking her to “[c]all me but love,” in an abandonment of his proper identity, “and I’ll be new baptized; Henceforth I never will be Romeo” (2.2.50-51). If the first figurative slide of the passage is towards Juliet’s desire for “some other name/ Belonging to a man” (2.2.41-42), perhaps the second figurative slide of signification and the reverse movement in this highly chiastic play of formal crossings is Juliet’s imaginary penetration of Romeo, as indicated by the homophonic “pun” on “but love” (2.2.50) marking yet another phantom sodomy. The presence of this pun is made more audible from its repetition of Mercutio’s requested (from Romeo) rhyming of “But “love” and “dove”” (2.1.10) in the previous scene, and Rosaline’s imagined playing the “open arse” (2.1.38) to Romeo.

When Romeo offers to give up his name for Juliet, taking her word, “Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptized” (2.2.50), the poet seems also to be gesturing to the dilectics of the ideal Name of Love in Christian theology. In the Christic imitatio of conventional theology, the subject’s gift-sacrifice of the body is made in exchange for an identification with the ideal Name, a killing of the body made in exchange for a baptism in “the Name of the Other who loves me”37 - with the promise of the body’s resurrection. In Romeo and Juliet, this participation in the Other’s Name (of the “Rose”) through self-sacrifice or castration is the apparent model for Love, less the renunciation of desire, which the poet’s wordplay gives a sodomitical twist here. Asking Juliet to call him “but love” (2.2.50), might Romeo also name a phantasied means of receiving his new name in a baptism of Love, an ideal penetration mirroring his of Juliet?

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*essay, “‘What? in a names that which we call a Rose,’ The Desired Texts of Romeo and Juliet,” as already cited.*
Supposing the erotic, spectatorial draw of the balcony scene here in part derives from the staging of “love’s transgression” (1.1.188) and the imaginary exchanges destabilizing gender identities, a cursory examination of Romeo’s desire in relation to his name should help clarify the basis of this claim.

Examining Romeo’s masochistic, putatively “feminine” subjectivity might advance the examination of the “name of the rose” as a sort of *knottenpunkt* directing the poetic subject’s desire.

Romeo’s name is repeatedly the subject of commentary within the drama. Might Romeo’s oddly masochistic relation to his name be taken to illustrate the manner in which language figuratively penetrates the subject in phantasy? Romeo’s desire seems inclined to the “O” that ends his name, an “O” that perhaps marks the sameness of sexual pleasure and death, that is, the subject’s tendency towards “nothing” through desire’s self-shatterings, and an imaginary sodomitical locus of the name “Romeo”:

*Nurse.* O, she says nothing, sir, but weeps and weeps;  
And then she falls on her bed, and then starts up,  
And Tybalt cries; and then on Romeo calls,  
And then falls down again.  
*Romeo.* As if that name,  
Shot from the deadly level of a gun,  
Did murder her; as that name’s cursed hand  
Murdered her kinsman. O, tell me, friar, tell me  
In what vile part of this anatomy  
Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack  
The hateful mansion.

*[He offers to stab himself, and Nurse snatches the dagger away.]* (3.3.99-108)

Romeo’s gesture of self-murder here is a guilty, sympathetic reaction to Juliet’s plight, rather as he has forsworn his name earlier: “By a name/ I know not how to tell thee who I am./ My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself/ Because it is an enemy to thee./ Had I it written, I would tear the word” (2.2.54-58). In the throes of desire, Juliet is Romeo’s model for an identificatory phantasm and the “object” of a murderous phantasy and its turn inwards. Given what we have seen of the drama’s presentation of the “name of the rose” and its erotic substitution of low for high, the “vile part of this anatomy” (3.3.106) in which the name lodges suggests the arse. Romeo imagines his name penetrating her, in a manner

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simulating how “that name’s cursed hand/ Murdered her kinsman” (3.3.104-05). And conversely, he phantasies he can (r)out the “name of the rose” in an erotic self-violation.

When Romeo learns that the Duke has banished him, he restages this not only as his punishment but as his death (for example, 3.3.1-22). As Mercutio has earlier mocked Romeo’s melancholic O’s (“Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh” [2.1.7]), his suicidal despair and masochistic pleasure in being “banished” (a word which he repeats with apparent satisfaction in this scene) is rebuked by the nurse who names his excessive passion with the letter “O,” an imaginary space that stands for a castration and point of penetration, as well as the “nothing” of a phantasied erotic joining and dissolution. (When Nurse gives Romeo a ring from Juliet at 3.3.163, a promissory token, this points up their mutual passion for this “O.”) The friar also admonishes Romeo, who has fallen on the ground, “with his own tears made drunk” (3.3.83). His later checking of Romeo’s apparent propensity to suicide draws a line between this self-murder, an ideologically abjected femininity, and a “beastly” crisis of gender indifference:

    Hold thy desperate hand,
    Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art;
    Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote
    The unreasonable fury of a beast.
    Unseemly woman in a seeming man!
    And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both! (3.3.108-13)

Juliet’s nurse similarly admonishes Romeo in gendered terms: “For Juliet’s sake, for her sake, rise and stand! Why should you fall into so deep an O?” (3.3.89-90). A proper, erect phallicism is advised to replace the “fall” into witless, unreasonable “feminine” despair and masochism, countering the erotic allure of an imaginary penetration-as-castration.38

Victimage and the Poetic Subjectivity of the Lovers

The second part of the chapter locates some of the literary forms, tropes and conventions that are precedents for the subjectivity effect of Shakespeare’s characters in Romeo and Juliet. I argue that the subjectivity effects achieved by the drama are due to the manner in which various formal literary tropes

38 The friar likens Romeo to a woman again when he says, “Thy noble shape is but a form in wax,/ Digressing from the valour of a man;/ Thy dear love sworn but hollow perjury;/ Killing that love which you
such as oxymoron or chiasmus and reversal are dramatized, and literary sonnet conventions like the "love-death embrace" and Petrarchan blazoning are enacted or embodied. I attempt to follow the playwright in mapping these formal elements onto the poetic subject's desire, the subject's radical tendency towards "nothing" and phantasies of dissolution. These mappings indicate a certain debt and derivation then, based on what might be conceived of as the playwright's psycho-analysis of his literary precedents, contributing to a picture of a poetic subject that is presented in terms of its split, its ambivalence or unconscious hatred in the amorous passion, and a fundamental erotogenic masochism glimpsed in the "name of the rose" in the last part.\(^3^9\) I contend that *Romeo and Juliet* is a working out in psychoanalytic terms of the paradoxical sonneteering theme of a love-death embrace, so that the first prologue's description of a "death-marked love" (1st Prologue, 9) not only functions to proleptically mark out the lovers for their fated death, but also indicates their unconscious desire's inflection from loss and its aim of death.

Victimage and Enjoying the Love-Death Embrace:
"Poor sacrifices of our enmity!" (5.3.304)

For the most part, my reading here emphasizes the unconscious complicity of the lovers in their self-sacrifices and the compelling representation of "character" that results. However, beginning with the dramatic concept of victimage provides an additional, critical frame for the deaths of the lovers, allowing for the compelling interpretations of the drama that cite the feud's violent patriarchy and masculinity as the causes of the lovers' tragedy, a masculinist order to which they are "[p]oor sacrifices" (5.3.304).\(^4^0\)

\(\text{have vowed to cherish" (3.3.126-29). The friar contends with Romeo, asking him to do less "damned hate upon thyself" (3.3.118) and Juliet, pointing by indirection to the fusion of love and hate in such passion. \(^3^9\) By erotogenic masochism I refer to Freud's inexact notion (by his own admission) of a fundamental masochism from which both "moral" and "feminine" masochism are theoretically derived. In this primary form of masochism (sexual) pleasure is derived from the experience of pain. See "The Economic Problem of Masochism," where he develops the dualism begun in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a coalescence "between the death instinct and Eros" in the psyche. This form of masochism is speculatively linked to the failure of entirely transposing the aggression of a "primary sadism" outwards toward objects, so that a residuum remains within and becomes a part of the libido that "still has the self as its object" (11, 419).\(^4^0\) For standard feminist approaches to the drama, see Coppelia Kahn, "Coming of Age in Verona," in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenx, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), and Marianne Novy, "Violence, Love, and Gender in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida," in *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).}
In *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, M.M. Mahood writes about the multiplying ambiguity of the prologue’s language, particularly “the fearful passage of their death-marked love,” and the play of meaning that significantly marks the drama’s engagement of the audience:

Shakespeare’s sonnet-prologue offers us a tale of star-crossed lovers and ‘The fearfull passage of their death-markt love’. *Death-marked* can mean ‘marked out for (or by) death; foredoomed’. If, however, we take *passage* in the sense of a voyage (and this sub-meaning prompts *trafficque* in the twelfth line) as well as a course of events, *death-marked* recalls the ‘euer fixed marke’ of Sonnet 116 and the sea-mark of Othello’s utmost sail, and suggests the meaning ‘With death as their objective’. The two meanings of *fearful* increase the line’s oscillation; the meaning ‘frightened’ makes the lovers helpless, but they are not necessarily so if the word means ‘fearsome’ and so suggests that we, as the audience, are awe-struck by their undertaking. These ambiguities pose the play’s fundamental question at the outset: is its ending frustration or fulfilment? Does death choose the lovers or do they elect to die? This question emerges from the language of the play itself and thus differs from the conventional, superimposed problem: is *Romeo and Juliet* a tragedy of Character or Fate? which can be answered only by a neglect or distortion of the play as a dramatic experience.41

Indeed, an either-or approach to the tragedy as deriving from character or fate is absurd. For the drama’s impact as tragic experience, the duplicity of “death-marked love” allows the lovers to be in love with an amorous death and helplessly foredoomed. Mahood declares the fundamental problem of the play is the status of its ending as frustration or fulfilment. Rather, this question too is irresolvable even when put into terms appropriate to the experience of the drama, because the ending is *both* for the lovers and the audience. We might be certain that the fulfilment experienced in the drama is apprehended in terms of phantasy. From the perspective of viewing the young couple separated by the feud, for them and for the tragic onlookers, the ending is certainly one of the frustration of love and desire. But in an economy of phantasy that supports the quasi-religious vision of Love or transcendental perspective, this separation is plausibly translated into a fulfilment of love and satisfaction of desire, both for the lovers and the audience. This is the subject of the fourth, final part of the chapter which examines Romeo’s dreams of death as wish-fulfilment and as a model for the audience’s participation in the drama’s phantasies of sexual *jouissance* and the redemption of lost love.

Many critics might lament such a theoretical perspective. Such a critic might enjoy the theater of masochism while lamenting those “[p]oor sacrifices of our enmity!” (5.3.304) This position can provide trenchant cultural or ideological criticism in excoriating the violence of the patriarchy and fraternal rivalry, 41

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the drama's explicit or self-designated "scapegoat" in its undeniable romantic appeal. But the focus here is somewhat different. By looking at the classical sacrificial contract of the drama, one is reminded of the audience's imaginary participation in this sacrifice, that is, the spectatorial engagement with the drama and the "separating out" for the spectator-subject of what is to be discarded with the death of the victims, for example, a catharsis and purification from a low or "excessive" passion. In particular, the audience might refuse to even recognize the ambivalence of the lovers' desire, a spectatorial misprision extending to how masochistic sexuality functions to support the "sublime" at the point of the lovers' transcendence. This is indeed the traditional reading of the tragedy in which the lovers are innocent and somehow fated to die. In such an engagement with the drama, the lovers also function as "[p]oor sacrifices of our enmity!" (5.3.304) for the spectator, reader, or critic precisely insofar as their choric sympathy might mirror that of the bereaved fathers who plan to make statues of their killing love, turning hate to love, elevating themselves and their pharmaconic passion with crypts above ground.

When the playwright stages the unconscious erotic complicity of the lovers in their deaths, this does not only have the effect of making the spectator-subject more ready to release them to their fates. Letting them go in their fated sacrifice also produces a catharsis from excessive desire that transfigures loss and aggression for the audience. The staging of desire can certainly function to engage the audience in protected participation in their phantasies of pleasure and erotic dissolution. But the vicarious participation of the spectator-subject in the drama's staging of phantasy provides not only enjoyment, it also orchestrates a vicarious redemption of lost love in their phantasied transcendence. I speculate that the idealization of the

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42 Girard makes this point in his early article in *Diacritics* in which he discusses *R&J*, "Levi-Strauss, Frye, Derrida and Shakespearean Criticism," 37. In *A Theater of Envy*, Girard does not include a "too long" (7) essay on mimetic dynamics in *R&J*, nor have I found any notice of its publication. This is perhaps due to what I see as the drama's intractably psychoanalytic contours.

43 See Burke on the function of the fourth act of a Shakespearean tragedy of sacrifice, in "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," as already cited. Burke writes: "There is presumably to be some kind of splitting, a "separating out." Something is to be dropped away, something retained, the whole history thereby becoming a purification of a sort ... But from the standpoint of the "initiation," the pity may be viewed as one aspect of the "separating out," preparing us, in one way or another, to relinquish those figures who are to die for our edification" (178).
lovers is at least in part based on the spectator-subject’s disowning of such destructive masochistic trends in himself, precisely as this position acts as the conduit of his or her involvement in the drama.\footnote{Might the scapegoating of the feud helps maintain the amorous purity of the lovers so the audience can participate unconsciously in their drama of desire and their redemptive sacrifices. Regarding the manner in which the drama offers the feud as a respectable hate that one can decry, rather than looking at the hate within love, see Kristeva, “Romeo and Juliet: Love-Hatred in the Couple,” 221.}

In a Girardian conception of tragedy, the conflicts of a culture and the tragic protagonists reach a point of sacrificial crisis represented in the drama, a conflict characterized by violent reciprocity and nondifference that is displaced or resolved through misrecognitions and sacrificial substitutions,\footnote{In Girard’s thinking, there is often little difference between the sacrificial violence recorded in myth or ritual and that presented in tragedy, the question for him being a matter of their obscuration or revelation of the function of the victimage mechanism.} for instance, through the erotically charged death of Mercutio and double catastrophe of the lovers. Through his or her own corresponding dissonances, the spectator-subject or reader is encouraged to participate in the drama and a sacrificial displacement of lack and conflict, optimally, in a participation by which he imaginatively identifies with the victim and also participates in his judging from outside the drama. Kenneth Burke writes of this dynamic in “Coriolanus - and the Delights of Faction”:\footnote{Burke, “Coriolanus - and the Delights of Faction,” Language as Symbolic Action, 81.}

We begin with these assumptions: Since the work is a tragedy, it will require some kind of symbolic action in which some notable form of victimage is imitated, for the purgation, or edification of an audience. The character that is to be sacrificed must be fit for his role as victim; and everything must so fit together that the audience will find the sacrifice plausible and acceptable (thereby furtively participating in the judgment against the victim, and thus even willing the victimage). The expectations and desires of the audience will be shaped by conditions within the play. But the topics exploited for persuasive purposes within the play will also have strategic relevance to kinds of “values” and “tensions” that prevail outside the play.\footnote{When the rest of the dramatis personae are not blamed for the young lovers’ demise, the stars are invoked to account for the tragedy, surely the most sublime alternative. For a seminal account of the play as an Elizabethan astral tragedy, see J.W. Draper, “Shakespeare’s ‘Star-Crossed Lovers’,” Review of English Studies 15 (1959): 16-34.}

Burke’s dramatic theory lucidly combines the Aristotelean principles of pity (or sympathy) and catharsis (or “purgation”) with the central role of victimage. He shows how drama can facilitate an imaginary...
identification with the victim and a distancing from him in the participatory punishment and judgment, a punishment that has its own uncanny erotic draw in *Romeo and Juliet.*

Burke’s casting of the career of the pharmakos is helpful for also drawing out the social dimension to the drama’s engagement through scapegoating. This principle of victimage could be applied to the role of Mercutio as well as the function of Romeo and Juliet in this drama, with the difference that Mercutio’s death appears to contribute to the idealization of the pure lovers by a counterpoint I suggest the drama also undoes through the “name of the rose.” In the third part of the chapter, I briefly consider the notion of Mercutio as katharmos for transgressive desire and how he facilitates the idealization of the lovers and their passion. With Mercutio’s tragic death, his witty opposition to the vision of ideal love in *Romeo and Juliet* vanishes. The audience’s potential resistance to the “high” system of values promulgated by Romeo and Juliet are articulated by Mercutio, but his dramatic death then allows the audience’s “excessive engrossment” by the tragic plot, encouraging them to take the noble, high path of the lovers.

Recuring to Burke’s formulation, while our expectations and desires are “shaped by conditions in the play,” the topic of Romeo’s Petrarchism and the “love-death embrace” developed within the play has strategic relevance to courtly romance literary discourses and Petrarchism that promote the idealization of secular love as a religious value, a religion of love supported by the enjoyment of a masochistic position espousing self-sacrifice in love. This discourse and mode of ideal masculinity officially pursued by Romeo in the drama is in conflict or “tension” with other discourses of sprezzatura represented by Mercutio who espouses homoerotic male bonding and rivalry as among the means to pursuing masculinity. I submit that in *Romeo and Juliet* the playwright engages the audience through the dialogue between these positions.

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47 Can one forget the scene of Coriolanus’s death here, what is staged as a homoerotic betrayal, a barely displaced cultural phantasy of sodomy in his collective murder, a punishment he has conspired in? See Bruce Smith’s comments on the ideological contradictions involved in “homosexual” scapegoating where “male-male bonds are valued above all other bonds” in early modern England (as in classical Greece and Rome), and the erotic charge of Coriolanus’s death. “Making a difference: Male/male ‘desire’ in tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy,” in *Erotic Politics,* 136. Coriolanus appears to comment on the erotic nature of his own overthrow for his antagonists, a death approaching *sparagmos* again, in such lines as, “Cut me to pieces, Volsces, men and lads/ Stain all your edges on me” (5.6.112-13).


which simulates a "tension" in the male spectator-subject, a tension in his attitude to desire and love which psychoanalysis might reduce to the admixture of sado-masochism; the drama then grants a sublime resolution to this dissonance through the deaths of the lovers, "[p]oor sacrifices of our enmity!" (5.3.304).

In the event of Mercutio's death, Romeo's divided investments in these discourses of masculinity and libidinal positions are exhibited as he adopts the proper code of honour and revenge. Romeo speaks of his "reputation stained/ With Tybalt's slander" (3.1.113-14), and exclaims, "O sweet Juliet,/ Thy beauty hath made me effeminate/ And in my temper soft'ned valor's steel!" (3.1.115-17). In short, Romeo's pursuit of a sanctioned yet outlawed violent masculinity precipitates the tragic action in which the audience participates. This scene is examined in the chapter's third part in some detail, but for now it serves as an example of the conflict of the masculine subject's pursuit of an ideal masculinity in aggression and love, in a "death-marked love" (1st Prologue, 9) whose purification from aggression and "transcendence" of ambivalence occurs in the lovers' final self-murders.

One compelling focal point for the dialogue's specatorial engagement is the manner in which Mercutio's banter airs the danger of emasculation in desire. From Mercutio's standpoint, the lovesick posturing of Romeo with which the first scene begins is an emasculating worship of the other sex. Trying to win Romeo back into the circle of homoerotic bonding, a bonding involving the conflicted abjection of sexuality, Mercutio puns on Romeo being "done" with the game of love, giving him an improper name: "If thou art Dun, we'll draw you from the mire/ Of this sir-reverence love, wherein thou stickest/ Up to the ears" (1.4.41-43). Mercutio's description of "sir reverence love" (1.4.42) invites an irreverence towards love and women, providing a comically abject lining to the sublime vision of love that is promulgated through Romeo. Mercutio also deflates Romeo's melancholic airs with an abject picture of his romantic aims:

> Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature. For this drivelling love is like a great natural that runs up and down to hide his bauble in a hole. (2.4.92-97)

Fleshing out Romeo's desire for the feminine in his name, Mercutio's raillery is meant to check Romeo's poetic idealization of Rosaline:

*Benvolio.* Here comes Romeo! Here comes Romeo!
Mercutio. Without his roe, like a dried herring. O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura, to his lady, was a kitchen wench (marry, she had a better love to berhyme), Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gypsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a gray eye or so, but not to the purpose. (2.4.38-46)

Mercutio wryly notes that Laura “had a better love to berhyme her” (2.4.42-43), saying that Romeo is a poor poet compared to Petrarch. In Mercutio’s view, the masculine subject is castrated by such literary models of romantic love: Romeo is “run through the ear with a love song” (2.4.14-15). More specifically, it is the great humanist creator Petrarch who castrates Romeo in the romantic lover’s incarnation of his Word, where Romeo is adopted son to Petrarch, the son of an ideal literary father. Romeo’s quest for poetic autonomy and transcendence might even be viewed as a Bloomian “dialectic of literary creation” entailing a struggle with the literary precursor, Petrarch. But Romeo is more the playwright’s surrogate here, and in a different sense ours, as it is the playwright who wins immortality through Romeo’s engagement of us in his embodiment of the Petrarchan tropes he loves and dies by, and by which we are elevated.

From the “Love-Death Embrace” Oxymoron and the Erotic “Cross-Coupler,” to Ambivalence and Masochistic Subjectivity

In the remainder of the chapter’s second part, I focus on how the drama’s compelling “subjectivity effects” figuratively rise out of literary forms such as the sonnet and epithalamium and rhetorical tropes such as oxymoron or chiasmus articulating a “death-marked love” (1st Prologue, 9). The dramatization of the formal conventions of Petrarchism such as the “dear enemy” topos and oxymorai produce strong characterization through evincing psychic ambivalence. The drama begins with a prologue in an English

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50 In Shakespeare’s text and some psychoanalytic theory, the ear is the displaced locus of an erotic penetration that is often castrating in signification and given a sodomitical inflection. One location of this view is Ernest Jones’ essay, “The Death of Hamlet’s Father,” in *Psycho-Myth, Psycho-History: Essays in Applied Psychology, Volume One* (New York: Hillstone, 1974), 323-28 (326).

The imaginary castration sodomy of the literary precursor’s text is central to Chapter Three, its construction of Shakespeare’s scene of writing with Marlowe, and Harold Bloom’s theorizing of the travails of cryptic literary influence.

51 John Freccero ends a brief article on Petrarch by speculating on the poet’s negotiations with his precursor, Dante. He suggests that in the poet’s spiritual struggle vis-à-vis the cruel and beautiful lady, “the illicit or even adulterous nature of the passion has its counterpart in the ‘anxiety of influence’: communication demands that our signs be appropriated; poetic creation often requires that they be stolen.” “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics,” *Diacritics* 5:1 (1975): 34-40 (40; 40).

52 See Jill L. Levenson’s essay, “The Definition of Love: Shakespeare’s Phrasing in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare Studies* 15 (1982): 21-36 (23), in which she provides an overview of some of the standard topoi and devices of Petrarchan poetry employed in *R&J*. This chapter is in agreement with Levenson’s
sonnet form proleptically marking out the tragedy of desire. In “The Sonnet’s Body and the Body of the Sonnet in Romeo and Juliet,” Gayle Whittier writes of the manner in which the opening sonnet is less lyrically inclined than designed to describe a public tragedy, and is made to sustain “a narrative burden more fitting for an entire [sonnet] sequence. No longer a poetic end in itself, the sonnet serves as a means to a dramatic issue.” The drama recounts figurative poetic scenarios and tropes as well as the erotic crossing of normative gender roles accompanying this enactment, as especially in Juliet’s epithalamium. As Whittier’s essay suggests, the tragic dramatic issue seems due to the embodiment of poetic forms in the play, to the consummation of the Petrarchan passion that is ideal, transcendental, and poetic by virtue of its intrication with absence and death. I begin with the drama’s exploration of the “love-death embrace in the sonneteering tradition,” remembering that the subject’s tendency towards the destruction of life is not an original insight of Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and that such a theory of erotic desire can be derived from rhetorical forms in literature.

Perhaps the locus classicus of the oxymoronic “love-death embrace” is Juliet’s speech at the Capulet feast where she has just met Romeo. Locating the origin of love in hate describes a violent union of contraries, a “cross-coupler” in Puttenham’s rhetoric, an union and dissonance translated into the psychic ambivalence of desire in Romeo and Juliet. The figurative miscegenation is decidedly erotic: “prodigious birth of love it is to me/ That I must love a loathed enemy” (1.5.142-43). Asking for Romeo’s name, Juliet seems to anticipate her fate, “Go ask his name. - If he is married,/ My grave is like to be my wedding bed” (1.5.36-37). Upon learning from her nurse Romeo’s identity, she exclaims:

My only love, sprung from my only hate!  
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!  
Prodigious birth of love it is to me

suggestion that R&J is an analytical play, “an anatomy of love poetry” exploring “its vocabulary, rhetorical devices, and concept of love” (22).

54 Nicholas Brooke, Shakespeare’s Early Tragedies (London: Methuen, 1968), 106.
55 Compare Juliet’s “[p]rodigious birth of love it is to me” to Puttenham’s illustration in The Arte of English Poesie of the trope of syneciosis: “Ye have another figure which me thinkes may well be called (not much swerving from his originall in cence) the Cross-couple, because it takes me two contrary words, and tieth them as it were in a pair of couples, and so makes them agree like good fellowes, as I saw once in Fraunce a wolfe couple with a mastiffe, and a fox with a hounde” (206). Cited in Fineman, Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 37. Puttenham’s swerving from the original sense figures a sexual union of different kinds, figuring a scene of “unkind” desire.
That I must love a loathed enemy. (1.5.140-43)

The presence of opposing tendencies in the subject is replicated in the linguistic tension between the meaning of words in *oxymorai*. Critically, the “literary” oxymoronic frisson here has to do with the opposition of love and hate and their coalescence. Specifically, Juliet’s oxymoronic expression describes the birth of love from hate. Does the union of opposites characteristic of *oxymorai* or the “cross-coupler” also motivate a desire laden with aggression, a desire whose volatile phantasies of murder and death are realized in the dramatic action? Juliet’s desire for Romeo oscillates between hate and love, between phantasies of her lover’s death (“Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,/ As one dead in the bottom of a tomb” [3.5.55-56]) and her own death (“My grave is like to be my wedding bed” [1.5.137], etc.).

In her essay on *Romeo and Juliet*, Julia Kristeva writes of Juliet’s famous chiastic line:

> It is Juliet... who finds the most intense expressions to show that this love is supported by hatred. One could possibly see in the words of this noble maiden a simple rhetorical device at once heralding a final death, or an ambiguous language clause, blending opposites, something that is operative at other moments of the play and in Shakespeare’s esthetics in general. But more deeply, what is involved is hatred at the very origin of the amorous surge.

Granting Kristeva’s assertion, the rhyme of “me” with “enemy” also contributes to the drama’s overall representation of Romeo and Juliet as romantic subjects compelled to “turn around” aggression in phantasy. This phantasy of self-murder is realized in a theater of masochism celebrating Love’s self-sacrifices.

The birth of love in hate would seem to describe an ambivalence that is the legacy of an original loss of the object of love and self-presence. In theory, the loss of the object initiates an internalization of aggression in a “turning around” that Laplanche identifies as a movement of “phantasmatization.” It is in

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56 In “Tradition and Subversion in *Romeo and Juliet*,” Francois Laroque suggests that oxymoron is strategy of fusion, and relates the “ontology of the oxymoron ... to the neoplatonic concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* as illustrated by Marsiglio Ficino in his commentary on Plato’s *Symposium*” (22-23). In *Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*, ed. Jay L. Halio (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995).

57 Note that Romeo’s response mirrors Juliet’s unconscious murderous desire: “And trust me, love, in my eye so do you. Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu, adieu!” (3.5.58-59). Juliet’s vision here reverses the sonnet convention of the sonneteer’s vision of his beloved in death. Whittier writes: “Juliet has seen this [Romeo’s] death before, in a waking vision that inverts courtly custom (3.5.55-56). (The male lover usually imagines the female beloved’s death, and that in a dream.) Romeo, too, in an inversion of Petrarchan convention, has envisioned himself dead (5.1.6-9).” The inversions that Whittier writes of are of gender. Might the dream of the beloved’s death give appropriate form to a submerged aggression in love, where the beloved’s idealization occurs through a “sublimated” murderous aggression?
this “turning around” of aggression towards the lost object that “the fantasy, the unconscious, and sexuality in the form of the masochistic excitation together emerge in a single movement.” The masochistic excitation describes a phantasied crossing integral to eroticism. From a somewhat different perspective, I argued earlier that the “name of the rose” is a letter in the unconscious that attaches to such a masochistic excitation and consequently dictates the poetic subject’s desire. The erotic satisfaction in the turning around of aggression is something the playwright appears to dramatize, where aggression is brushed back by a process of reversal and internalization.

The first speech in which Juliet declares her ambivalent passion for Romeo is remarkable for its poetic compression, especially when compared with Romeo’s speech on a similar theme at the scene of the first fight. Desire cannot perceive the blind violence of its will, nor hate its love, in Romeo’s dialectic of the “thing” created by its opposite, a negation of “nothing” susceptible to collapse:

Alas that love, whose view is muffled still,
Should without eyes see pathways to his will!
Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.
Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love.
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything, of nothing first created!
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
Dost thou not laugh? (1.1.174-186)

Romeo’s passion here rehearses a stilted Petrarchism, copiously employing the trope of oxymoron as the index of the tension he feels in love. If Benvolio is laughing here, it may be at Romeo’s intent on being in love, as in a dream created solely by words, a whimsical phantasy supported by the figurative crossings of oxymoron. These oxymorai are progressively emptied of emotional charge before ending in, “[t]his love feel I, that feel no love in this” (1.1.185). Romeo is perhaps momentarily overwhelmed by Petrarch’s

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59 Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, 100.
60 Robert O. Evans, *The Osier Cage: Rhetorical Devices in Romeo & Juliet* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966). See esp. his chapter two, “Oxymoron As Key To Structure.” Evans observes the manner in which oxymoron seems to embody [if not motivate] desire’s contradictory character, an opposition that he recognizes as sexual in the astrological conjunction of Venus and Mars (30). Other
legacy or the "other" of poetic language as much as by love: "Tut! I have lost myself; I am not here;/ This is not Romeo, he's some other where" (1.1.200-201). The tropic figuration of Romeo’s description of desire eventually collapses in "[m]isshapen chaos of well-seeming forms" (1.1.82), but Romeo manages three more lines of rather tepid oxymorai before being consoled by Benvolio for his "good heart's oppression" (1.1.187).

If Romeo is giving poetic form to the ambivalence he feels in desire, this ambivalence can also be located in the fraternal enmity-amity of the drama. That is, ambivalence is common to the romantic subject’s attitude to the object of desire and the representation of an enmity-amity split in the drama’s "fraternal" relations. The ease with which Romeo translates his own preoccupation with an unattainable love to the psycho-dynamics of the brawl is remarkable. Romeo’s description of these passions is oxymoronic, pointing to ambivalence, a division into an ideal conscious representation and an "unconscious" hatred and its inverse, a displayed hatred and an "unconscious" love. The effect of such oxymoronic speeches is to convey the subject’s ambivalence in desire.

relevant speeches for an analysis of the importance of oxymorai in the poet’s elaboration of the love-death embrace also include Romeo’s at 1.1.188-98.

61 The conflict between homosocial fraternity and heterosexual romance, both riddled with violence and ambivalence, is considered in the third part of the chapter, "Mercutio Revenant." I am arguing that the ambivalence of both the romantic passion and the fratricidal conflict are both structurally motivated by a lost self-presence or puissance, or this is how the playwright presents it.

62 An apparent intensification of Juliet’s passion occurs when Romeo slays Tybalt. The heroine’s self-dividing familial allegiance seems to inflame her desire when Romeo murders Tybalt. Male rivalry, violence and murder, provide her death-inflected desire with a “phallic,” fiery flowering:

O serpent heart, hid with a flow'ring face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! Fiend angelical!
Dove-feathered raven! Wolvish-ravening lamb!
Depised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st -
A damned saint, an honorable villain! (3.2.73-79)

Goldberg asserts that such triangulation from male rivalry is repeatedly the cue for the isolated, private and sublime passion of Romeo and Juliet, i.e., the passion such as it is described in traditional readings; see "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," 219-20, 232. Notably, from this direction, the young couple’s love is "marked" by Mercutio’s death. Brooke also writes about this inflection of their “death-marked love,” in Shakespeare’s Early Tragedies, 82-88.
Epithalamium and Phantasies of “Death”

In *Dream* the playlet of “Pyramus and Thisby” is an unwitting epithalamium presented to the “gentle” audience who also appear in the dark regarding its heavy-handed symbolism. The penultimate speech of Puck followed by Oberon and Titania’s blessings of the marriages can also be considered to follow epithalamic form, rather as the entire drama can be conceived as an allegorical elaboration of the contest between Cupidinous sensuality and married love, a sort of “diffuse HymenaeV” (as Kermode says of Olsen’s interpretation). The saturation of *Dream* with phantasies of sparagmos, death, defloration and sodomy is also evident in its predecessor *Romeo and Juliet*. The parapraxis or malapropism of “lion vile hath here deflower’d my dear” (5.1.293) in *Dream* has its counterpart in the persistent erotic cluster of associations in *Romeo and Juliet* between deflowering and death, as in Capulet’s complaint about Death deflowering his flower Juliet, Juliet’s imagined escape from her marriage with County Paris by hiding “nightly in a charnel house” (4.1.81), or the image of a necrophiliac Death in the Capulet tomb: “Shall I believe/ That unsubstantial Death is amorous,/ And that the lean abhorred monster keeps/ Thee here in the dark to be his paramour” (5.1.102-05).

The thematic conjunction of death and defloration is addressed differently in the poetic epithalamium which Juliet speaks, the famous “Gallop apace” soliloquy. In the Renaissance quibble on death and orgasm (“Give me my Romeo; and, when I shall die” [3.2.21]), she ardently desires sexual pleasure (“come” is the most often repeated imperative). Juliet wishes for a *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle, a transgressive enjoyment of her lover that is directed to a mutual surrender, dissolution and “death.” The excessive nature of this desire is suggested by the initial allusion to the ill-fated Phaeton’s lack of restraint and control of Phoebus’s horses:

*Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,*  
*Towards Phoebus’ lodging! Such a wagoner*  
*As Phaeton would whip you to the west*

64 Juliet’s *jouissance* disregards the law of homeostasis, the law “whereby, through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. ‘Jouissance’ transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is *beyond* the pleasure principle.” This citation is taken from the glossary of Alan Sheridan’s “Translator’s note” to *Ecrits*, x. Juliet’s *jouissance* is directed towards a sexual pleasure (and death) that takes the form of a *masochistic excitation*, the opposing tendency to pleasure defined as the unbinding of tension.
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtains, love-performing night,
That runaways eyes may wink, and Romeo
Leap to these arms untalked of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites,
And by their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle till strange love grow bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than the new snow upon a raven's back.
Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night. (3.2.1.-20)

As Gary M. McCown argues, this unconventional epithalamium raises the question of Cupid’s anticipated presence at the lovers’ union, and whether this nicknamed runaway’s eyes will wink (recall Mercutio’s request that Romeo nickname Cupid at 2.1.10-14). Cupid’s wink is desired by Juliet because the deity would be turning a blind, blessing eye towards their nuptials, preserving their secrecy; of course, the God of Love’s winking also communicates with Cupid’s traditional blindness in Renaissance iconography ("Cupid hoodwinked with a scarf" [1.4.4]), the mark of illicit sensual passion.65

Juliet’s soliloquy is a dramatized epithalamium that might not be recognized as such because it fails to conform to several Renaissance literary norms. For instance, the wedding song normally has a public forum for its address, it is performed by a male speaker, and the modest bride usually expresses fear or anxiety about the coming night. McCown calls the deviation from a tradition in which epithalamia “were traditionally presented by a poet acting as a priest or choragus,” an “ironic reversal of epithalamic convention.”66

Juliet has a voice here that claims an active desire as if she were the conventional male groom, a reversal of convention. The traditional “poetics” that dictate the misogynist slippage from desire to (the fear of)

65 See Gary M. McCown, “Runnawayes Eyes’ and Juliet’s Epithalamium,” Shakespeare Quarterly 27 (1976): 150-70, for the identification of the runaway as Cupid and a close analysis of Juliet’s address to the God of Love; my description here relies on his, esp. 162-65.
Impuissance and death can be viewed as attempting to displace this anxiety in the poetic cliché of the bride’s figurative death in defloration. Notably, in the “reasonable” masculine auditor’s appreciation of Juliet’s ardour, the anxiety normally assigned to the bride at this scene might be relocated (or also located) in the spectator’s anxious pleasure. Another source of the appeal of this passage is the manner in which it conveys Juliet’s wish to get “lost” in harnessing the “fiery-footed steeds” (3.2.1) of her desire, a desire directed towards the destructive “lightning” which repeatedly characterizes their mutual desire.

The Sparagmos of Blazoning and Scattered Verse

Juliet’s poetic evocation of sexual union gains in “imaginary” force through its (con)fusion between self and other in the tropes that describe her anticipated sexual bliss. Juliet’s desire is related to the phantasy of her “death” which is (con)fused with Romeo’s, a death by which he becomes a stellar sparagmos (as the night sky’s stars). Where the “name of the rose” has mangled these lovers, desire repeats the shattering of the self in an erotic “death,” as in Juliet’s image of a sort of scattering of her beloved in the night:

Give me my Romeo; and, when I shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night  
And pay no worship to the garish sun. (3.2.21-25)

The phantasied sexual union is given fully sublime status in Juliet’s stellar sparagmos of Romeo. Although the drama still retains this transcendental vision, the move from traditional sonnet form to epithalamium means the “sublime” is no longer about the sonneteer’s conventional spiritual struggle and identification with the praised, unattainable beloved.

McCown, “Runnawayes Eyes’ and Juliet’s Epithalamium,” 165. McCown does cites two “ominous precedents” from classical drama for Juliet’s epithalamium, but these are different in context if somewhat similar in tragic import.

McCown writes: “More shocking than Juliet’s banishment of light is her apostrophe to night. In both classical and Renaissance literature, night was regarded as malign, “the nurse and mother of death,” according to Hesiod. The virgins in Catullus 62 fear the coming of night and label Hesperus noctifer because, as Robinson Ellis points out, night was ‘the Devirginator, the foe of sun and daylight, that nips all things with frost, that brings harm (nocet) and is rightly called the harmer (Nox)”’ (168). The faintly absurd eroticization of phallic violence and its phantasied “power” in the literature is redressed in Shakespeare’s “ironic reversal of epithalamic convention” here. It is Juliet who ardently desires “night,” Romeo, sexual pleasure, and a “death” that will scatter her beloved.

Romeo makes the last reference to lightning in the text, describing his exultation in anticipation of death with Juliet (5.3.88-91). The allusion to the fate of Phaeton, his willful self-destruction in claiming kinship
It is commonly remarked that the sublime trajectory of a traditional sonnet poetry of praise aims at a projected union, an ideal union that often works by negating or transmuting the body and projecting the lyric persona into an ideal union with the Name (the “stelled” and “stellar” Stella, the “beatitude” of Beatrice, the “laud” and “laurels” of Laura). As in a Christian participation in the Name, this identificatory rhetoric remarks the poetic lover’s participation in an ideal “being.” However, the repressions subtending that ideal can harbour a violence evinced by the tropes of blazoning, tropes that separate woman’s body parts in an erotic reification effected by the poet’s similes, a blazoning that is supposed to praise the beautiful woman. That is, the lyric’s fragmentation of the woman’s body acts a figurative sparagmos, or such is the reflection on the violence of form enabled by Romeo and Juliet. The playwright dramatizes this formal fragmentation of blazoning and scattered verse, locating its motivation in a phantasy shared by Romeo and Juliet of self-loss and a jouissant death. The blazoning of Romeo in which he becomes the stellar night sky is imagined as the effect of a figurative, sexual “death.” The other source of Romeo’s scattering seems to be Juliet’s erotic aggression, her phantasy of his literal death represented in her bridal song, what one might also glimpse in the “rosemary” (2.4.218) of her “prettiest sententious” (2.4.217). Juliet’s unconscious aggression is made sublime, stellar, in this rose-light vision reversing gender roles. Here, Juliet’s “retaliation” against her violation projects this “scattering” onto her lover, but like Actaeon rather than his “double” Diana, she is also engaged in the hunt. Juliet’s figurative, stellar sparagmos of

with the divine sun, is appropriate to the imagery of the drama’s representation of a transcendental desire and the lovers’ death by “lightning” (Phaeton’s fate).

69 See Fineman’s Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye for an account of the “epi-deictic subject, of a subject, that is to say, whose subjectivity is bound up in, implicated by, its panegyrical indication” (7).


In the first essay, Vickers describes the importance to Petrarch’s “scattered verse” of the myth of Diana figuratively violated by Actaeon’s gaze. In her analysis, the poetic technique of “scattered verse” is a figurative scattering of the women’s body that can be understood as a defence against the poet’s imminent sparagmos by the hounds of the hunt, i.e., a relation of reversal and a formal chiasmus obtains. Another way of saying this is that the poet’s verse displaces in phantasy his own lack through a fetishistic economy of representation that simulates his “fragmentation” in re-presenting it otherwise, that is, in his lady’s blazoning.
Romeo might be considered as a “return of the repressed” of the libidinal economy of a masculine poetic practise of blazoning, a publishing of Diana’s beauty that Actaeon is not permitted.71

If Juliet’s words, “Ay me!” (2.2.25), invite Romeo to view his ideal beloved, his “I/eye,” he is already engaged in a rapturous speculation when he thinks, “[h]er eye discourses” (2.2.13). Romeo then proceeds to blazon her eyes as “[t]wo of the fairest stars in all the heaven” (2.2.15), a troping of her beauty that continues by casting her eyes and cheeks as eclipsing both heavenly and day light. In her role of exalted, chaste beloved, Juliet, like Diana at the pool, guarantees the placid mirroring of self-presence: this chaste speculum is upset by Romeo or Actaeon’s physical intrusion and desire. In this tragedy of desire, Juliet’s return of Romeo’s gaze and desire is fatal, repeating the sonnet cliché of the beloved’s deadly regard, “[a]lack, there lies more peril in thine eye/ Than twenty of their swords! Look thou but sweet,/ And I am proof against their enmity” (2.2.71-73).

Vickers writes how Petrarch’s Rime sparse prolifically employs the verb spargere, “to scatter,” in a verbal constellation that tends to imaginatively join the poetic “I” and his “eyed” Laura:

> The uses of spargere thus markedly gravitate toward “I” and Laura. The etymological roots of the term, moreover, virtually generate Laura’s metaphoric codes: “I” knows that the outcome of seeing her body is the scattering of his; hence he projects scattering onto her through a process of fetishistic overdetermination, figuring those part-objects in terms of the connotations of “scattering”: spargere, from the Latin spargere, with cognates in the English “sprinkle” and “sparkle.”

In this theoretical narrative of the Canzoniere’s poetic “I”’s negotiations of Diana’s “vengeful baptism,” the water Diana sprinkles Actaeon and disrupts the pool’s reflective surface. The baptism’s “sprinkling” thus simulates the transgression of her placid self-identity, though it might also indicate a baptism in love that disrupts the self’s calm. Of course, the anticipated price for Actaeon’s transgressive or forbidden sighting of her “castration” is his death by dismemberment, a fate suspended in Petrarch’s verse.73

The comparison of Juliet’s erotic aggression to that of the Petrarchan poet’s phantasy of (self-)violation is less farfetched than one might imagine. The technique of blazoning and Petrarch’s “scattered verse” were very recently or still in vogue. Historically, the Petrarchan poetic ideal of feminine beauty was enormously influential in artistic circles in Europe after his death and more recently in England at the time of Shakespeare’s writing the drama. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the playwright appears indebted to the Petrarchan technique of blazoning in this style of verse when he takes that blazoning’s figurative “scattering” of the woman’s body and relocates it within Juliet’s erotic phantasy. In this model of masochistic phantasy, the poetic subject seeks to supplant him or herself in the destructive, erotic “scattering” of desire. Critically for the text’s erotic appeal, both lovers are also subject to the other’s phantasy of their fragmented body (as in the example of Juliet’s erotic aggression in blazoning Romeo) consequent to epideictic idealization. The playwright thus translates the Petrarchan practice of blazoning into an economy of mirroring, masochistic *self-shatterings* describing the alliance of *jouissance* with the death drive in the subject. *Romeo and Juliet*’s “versal world” (2.4.212) would breathe new life into the Petrarchan dialectic of the body’s imaginary unification from its dispersal in “scattered verse,” suggesting the pleasure of psychic fragmentation in desire’s repetitions of lack that lead to the lovers’ deaths.

Juliet represents her phantasy of sexual bliss and union as a stellar *sparagmos* of her rose, Romeo, in a mutual *spargere* which joins these “star-crossed lovers” (1* Prologue, 6). Similarly, the scattering and pinning of rosemary on Juliet at her funeral, her “defloration” by Death, and the strewing of flowers on Juliet’s “bridal bed” (5.3.12) by Paris, these all gain in erotic frisson through their symmetry with her “prettiest sententious” (2.4.217) on Romeo and rosemary.

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75 I owe my vocabulary here to Leo Bersani’s analysis of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Bersani argues that Freud neglects to develop the idea of sexuality as a “productive masochism” due to his preference for the principle of sexuality’s tendency to homeostasis, a principle of constancy which he sees the subject as seeking in its pleasurable discharge of tension. See *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 55-66 (63); see esp. 63-64, from which my terminology of the “destabilizing intensities of desiring phantasy” is taken (63).

76 When Capulet praises his daughter’s beauty in death, where “[d]eath lies on her like an untimely frost,/ Upon the sweetest flower of all the field” (4.5.28-29), the playwright might again repeat and embody the Petrarchan trope of flesh as scattered roses on snow. See *Rime Sparse*, 146.5-6, in *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*: 
Mercutio Revenant: Mercutio's Death and Fratricidal Violence

Signior Placentio and his lovely nieces;
Mercutio and his brother Valentine;
Mine uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters;
My fair neice Rosaline; Livia;
Signior Valentio and his cousin Tybalt. (1.2.68-72)

Where the chapter’s first part elaborates a phantom sodomy tracing desire through the “name of the rose,” a sodomy by Love as articulated by Mercutio, the third part examines this playful articulation and negation of sodomy in its more tragic import. If the proper masculine subject defines himself in opposition to an emasculation by love and to his sodomitical other, these negations haunt the subject, as evident in the “name of the rose” but also in the ghostly names read by Romeo from the masque invitation, “brother Valentine” (1.2.69) and “Signior Valentio” (1.2.72). Building on Joseph Porter’s argument in Shakespeare’s Mercutio, I argue that these sibling signifiers are revenants that are supposed to represent a lost “fraternal” puissance, a loss motivating the duels leading to Mercutio’s death.

Porter is Goldberg’s rival for writing a “Mercutio Revenant,” where the revenant is a reminder of the figurative sacrifice of the sodomite often supporting heteronormative readings of the play. Porter engages the question of the representation of Romeo as Mercutio’s amorous friend, a liaison that needs to be accounted for in the idealization of heterosexual love in the play. I adopt both Goldberg’s deconstructive focus on the phantom sodomy tracing a desire following the “name of the rose,” and Porter’s focus on the


77 “Mercutio Revenant” is a promising section heading in a recent collection of essays on Romeo and Juliet edited by Joseph A. Porter, Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (New York: G.K. Hall, 1997). Porter’s book, Shakespeare’s Mercutio, and his article, “Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Canonization of Heterosexuality,” The South Atlantic Quarterly 88:1 (1989): 127-47, are both important for their criticism of the manner in which Mercutio’s transgressive desire has been variously censored in productions of Romeo and Juliet and Shakespeare criticism. Porter includes an important early essay by Clifford Leech in his “Mercutio Revenant,” “The Moral Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet.” Leech argues that the emphatic “moral” of the play distracts from or contradicts the tragedy of the lovers, a tragedy that is troubling because it is more sacrificial than tragic, Romeo and Juliet being exempt from blame and their deaths made to signify a restoration of order (15-20). Leech ends his essay with an effective contrast in the “daemonic” character of Mercutio, “a small achieved tragedy embodied within this play” (20), whose accidental death we can draw no lessons from, yet reaches tragic stature. The present section similarly does not find the playwright drawing a moral with Mercutio’s death, but does put it in relation to the vicissitudes of gender identification, suggesting his role as a revenant of lost love embedded in the tragedy of the Veronese lovers.
dramatic conflict between male friendship and heterosexual love.\textsuperscript{78} As Goldberg and Porter both appreciate, the death of Mercutio stands in a significant if tenuous relationship to the sacrifice of the sodomite and his mercurial sexuality in what we might call a psychoanalytic dialectics of the consolidation of proper masculine, heterosexual identity. From different vantages, both Porter and Goldberg examine the censorship, repression, and stigmatization of Mercutio's sexuality in the critical reception and reproduction of the drama.\textsuperscript{79} The work of Porter and Goldberg returns one to the question of Mercutio's character and his subversive place in the drama. Their texts involve a projected recovery of sorts of his homoerotic character and his desire. This is one important sense of "Mercutio Revenant" then, the specter in the drama of a repressed or sacrificed homophilic desire in consolidating proper gender identity, perhaps especially where the spectator-subject's desire floats on the passion of Romeo and Juliet.

I argue that Mercutio functions as a dramatic \textit{katharmos} for sodomitical desire, as in his brief articulation of an allegory of Love's sodomy, thus engaging and siphoning off spectatorial or readerly appreciation of transgressive desire with his display of wit and his tragic end. The resolution for the spectator-subject that might be expected with his death, the eschatological return to the proper self, is an illusory phantasm of presence that his death actually troubles. In another "poetics of sodomy," he is the medium for the display of sodomitical desire that undergoes a series of ironic negations in speech and person. These negations serve to stage this desire and engross the spectator-subject or reader in Mercutio's tragedy. Mercutio's

\textsuperscript{78} The present chapter uses psychoanalytic theory more extensively than these authors do, drawing out the shared imaginary legacies of the heterosexual romance and fratricidal conflict. Porter does adopt a generally Freudian terminology in his chapter, "The Thief and Marlowe," in which he speculates on Shakespeare's irrational guilt regarding Marlowe's death. This guilt supposedly finds expression in the drama's representation of Mercutio. However, psychoanalytic methodology, when not used to make the author's writing akin to a "symptom," is for the most part eschewed by these authors, presumably because of its normativizing discipline.

\textsuperscript{79} Implicit in my earlier remarks, Goldberg's interpretation of the drama is principally animated by the text's contemporary critical reception that "polices" or occludes sodomitical and homophilic desire. He understands this figurative sacrifice of a disruptive sodomitical desire to maintain a heterosexual, patriarchal hegemony; taking issue with how this hegemony contributes to the idealization of the young lovers' passion, Goldberg does not examine how this passion is also shown to be destructive. If it is true that this transcendent passion often takes its cue from male-male rivalry and conflict, the homoeroticism Goldberg praises in counterpoint is also represented as destructive.

It is here to the questioning of the "canonization" of a Shakespearean heterosexuality ratifying the critic's own sexual orientation that much recent critical energy has been directed. Simon Shepherd writes provocatively on the topic of Shakespeare's censored sexuality in "Shakespeare's private drawer: Shakespeare and homosexuality," \textit{The Shakespeare Myth}, ed. Graham Holderness (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).
dramatic function is contradictory. He first engrosses the spectator-subject with his ribald, irrepressible banter, deflating the idealistic bent of his friend Romeo in love. After his death, the resistance offered by Mercutio to the "high" rhetoric of a religion of love and its sacrificial passion is removed.\textsuperscript{80} In the traditional view of the drama, Mercutio embodies the "low" where the tragedy is "high," and his death signifies differently from the deaths of the lovers, those "[p]oor sacrifices of our enmity" (5.3.304) that are marshalled to restore social and sexual orders.\textsuperscript{81} Mercutio's death does not explicitly signify in these ways, yet his death seems to disturb as a revenant of sacrificial gender identities. This is particularly evident in reading the play's criticism that regularly occludes Mercutio's desire, demonizes it and/or blames him for the tragedy, or places his death in a highly normativizing narrative of the young lovers' contrasting journey to an "achieved" identity (even in death). As Goldberg and Porter have both covered much of this critical ground, the present analysis takes this aspect of the argument for granted.\textsuperscript{82}

The idealization of young lovers' passion occurs, at least in part, through the presence and then the death of that passion's foil and double, Mercutio. Mercutio serves to deflect attention from the transgressive, violent aspect of the lovers' own passion, thus plotting the transcendent value of their love-death embrace. However, the letter of desire, the "name of the rose," tends to destabilize rigid gender identities and subvert

\textsuperscript{80} In "Romeo and Juliet: The Sonnet-World of Verona," Berry argues that Mercutio's function in the drama is to challenge the Petrarchan world of the lovers, to keep the drama in some sort of balance between the often violently disturbing realist Mercutio and the often slightly absurd Petrarchans and their rhyming. Berry puts the "ultimate poise" achieved by the lovers in dialectic with the death of Mercutio, a Mercutio who still refutes rather than confirms the lovers with his death (138). As katharmos, Mercutio does both.

\textsuperscript{81} These comments draw again on Burke's reflections on the function of Emilia in Othello, in "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method." Burke argues that Emilia's expressed willingness to cuckold her husband acts to draw off the spectator's resistance to being engrossed by Desdemona's "high" fate of being sacrificed for the masculinist order where woman is ennobling property (185).

\textsuperscript{82} Representative of the drama's reception and reproduction is Jill Levenson's fine new Oxford edition of the play, Romeo and Juliet (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). She reasonably discusses the lovers in terms of autonomy, mature object choice, and developing adolescence. "Introduction," 25-29. A brief citation from an essay by Philip J. Traci might serve as an index for many such policing accounts: "Romeo and Juliet, early in the play, often confuse their male and female roles imagistically in a kind of trial and error pattern before they assume more definite roles in their "deaths." Part of this confusion, especially in Romeo, is seen in \textit{what the play views as} an immature homosexual emphasis reflected not only in the imagery but also in his relationship with Mercutio. The boyish phase serves as a kind of preparation for Romeo as he matures to manhood ... Mercutio's death, thus, rather than signaling Romeo's incorporation and awareness of Mercutio's view of the physical (as it has been interpreted), instead signals the death of Romeo's boyishness and the beginning of a more mature life through his union with Juliet." "Suggestions About the Bawdry in Romeo and Juliet," \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly} 71 (1972): 573-86 (573-74, my emphasis; 579). In a counterstatement, I take "the play" to be much more sympathetic to
the difference between a sublime heterosexual love and its sodomitical "other." Indeed, Juliet's poetic language is as transgressive if not quite as sexually explicit as Mercutio's. Juliet's erotic aggression is at least as exuberantly murderous, if finally turned inwards in the sublime self-sacrifice of love. Though Mercutio functions like Bottom in Dream as an erotic mediator for phantasy, as the sacrificed polymorphous sodomite, Mercutio is less of a phantom and more of a literal sodomite than Bottom is through his dream-vision and the translations of his name. In Romeo and Juliet, the issue is more the manner in which Mercutio's literal death precipitates the tragedy's double catastrophe, and if a phantom sodomy traces desire through the "name of the rose," how Mercutio's polymorphous sexual being is definitively sacrificed to the drama's ideal vision of Love.

I turn now to a psychoanalytic pattern of alienating identification indicated by the names of the ghost characters "brother Valentine" (1.2.69) and "Signior Valentio" (1.2.72), names that suggest how the fratricidal conflict arises as a legacy of imaginary relationships where the self is in rivalry with the specular other for his "being." I consider Mercutio's death in the light of these revenants of a lost puissance, where the proper masculine subject is troubled by the vicissitudes of lost love. I submit that the doubling of Tybalt and Mercutio with their amorous, phantom siblings and with each other through this symmetry anticipates their projective displacements of sodomitical desire in act three, scene one. I consider these projections as the legacy of the repressed amorous in fraternal relations of rivalry and enmity, repressions directed to the attempted consolidation of a proper gender identification. The masculine subject's subversion is staged through the self's insecure difference from an effeminate sodomite, a phantom "other," a figure with whom he has always already made a phantom identification in consolidating proper gender identification. The tragedy of Mercutio upstages the prohibition on an "effeminizing" love between men, the same prohibition that precipitates a melancholic strategy of identification with that lost object, recuperating the loss in phantasy. The playwright represents this phantom identification as a relationship of lost love, where the

Mercutio's view of bawdry. The "name of the rose," of which Mercutio and Nurse are the "low" advocates, works by precisely such negations in the drama's staging of desire and identity. 83 Again, this approach to a phantom "repressed homosexuality" in Shakespeare's text relies on Butler's rereading of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholy" in Gender Trouble, esp. 57-65. Gender's melancholic structure is witnessed in its incorporation of the homosexual aim and object, establishing a crypt "through an abiding denial," where "the disavowed homosexual love is preserved through the cultivation of an oppositionally defined gender identity" (69).
signifiers "brother Valentine" (1.2.69) or "Signior Valentio" (1.2.72) mimic in their very status as signifiers the lost plenitude of a mirroring self-presence. My argument also proposes that the text discloses a further symmetrical relationship between the imaginary structuring of relations of fraternal "enmity" and those of romantic "amity" in the drama, suggesting the imaginary derivation of the former and the violence submerged in the latter's identificatory passion; in effect, I argue that both passions are formally ambivalent, with the subject of both formally barred or crossed.\(^4\)

As the introduction to his book *Shakespeare's Mercutio*, Porter launches a wayward argument about a ghost character in *Romeo and Juliet*, one Valentine. Assisting the illiterate Capulet servant, Romeo reads the guest list for Old Capulet's feast, which includes "Mercutio and his brother Valentine" (1.2.69), a fraternity whose homoerotic resonances Porter goes on to suggest by transposing this phantom brother role onto Mercutio's relation to Romeo. Looking at Shakespeare's possible sources and his original use of the name in previous plays, Porter argues that the name Valentine has resonances with St. Valentine, with a true lover, and with brothers. Although Porter's argument can be somewhat confusing, the general line is that Valentine's *raison d'être* is to help define Mercutio's fraternal character, as turned away from the romantic love occupying Romeo, and finally, to act as a "double of the play's lover-hero, Romeo," where Mercutio is Romeo's "very friend" (3.1.112). In Porter's interpretation he separates connotations of "Italianate amorousness" in Valentine's name from the role of the brotherly friend to Mercutio; Porter concludes by making Valentine's mention on the scrip serve to characterize Mercutio as brotherly rather than amorous, thereby "creating the role that Romeo is to fill, that of Mercutio's amorous brother."\(^5\)

\(^4\) As suggested above, one can view this crossing as: fraternal enmity: *hate*, and, romantic amity: *love*, love _hate_

\(^5\) Porter, *Shakespeare's Mercutio*, 1-10 (8; 5; 9). Porter's book consistently hedges on the matter of authorial intentions and the status of writing as an unconscious symptom or conscious representation of such symptoms. This is true of his analysis of Shakespeare's deployment of the name Valentine as a "subliminal double" for Romeo (8-9) and his later analysis of his literary rivalry with Marlowe refracted through the character of Mercutio (135-44, especially 140-43). In the case of the name Valentine, for example, as with his employment of the name Mercutio with its resonances with Mercury (and Marlowe), the author appears to be using the resources of language available to him and deliberately crafting the perception of a dissonance within the character. One might disagree here with Porter's assumption that one needs to psychoanalyze the author to pursue psychoanalytic insights in his work.
However, if the ghostly mention of Valentine is to characterize Mercutio as "brotherly" to Romeo's "amorous," it more obviously serves to indicate Mercutio's amorous nature, amorous despite his protestations against what he perceives as the effeminate business of love songs, falsely idealizing sonneteering, melancholic sighs, and the general alienation from homosocial fraternizing evident in Romeo's romantic love. Or, at any rate, the name serves to indicate his "character" as a lover of brothers and Romeo? In constructing this list of banquet guests, might the playwright be self-consciously gesturing towards an absence that will inform and even motivate this tragedy, the phantom siblings Valentine-Valentio? There is finally the question of the amorous quality of fraternal rivalry and fratricide in the drama, which is heralded by the pair of Valentines on the list, "Signior Valentio and his cousin Tybalt" (1.2.72) symmetrically matches that of Mercutio and his brother Valentine. By backing up in our approach to the fatal duel scene we can see the place of these revenants in the drama's representation of desire, as markers of an encrypted loss and a legacy of ambivalence, projection, and violence. When Romeo becomes Tybalt's cousin an hour before slaying him, the text suggests that his professed love might be true enough but is cued for violence as he assumes the place of a revenant of lost love for Tybalt: "Signior Valentio and his cousin Tybalt" (1.2.72). This sense of an inescapable violence is exacerbated by the force of a dominant cultural code of masculinity propelled by lack and entrenched in violence.86

Diverging from Porter's style of reading, I submit that the pairing of Mercutio with his brother Valentine and Tybalt with his cousin Signior Valentio on the Capulet guest list is not necessarily a matter of the author's subliminal working out of the love versus friendship theme that he has already engaged in The Two Gentlemen of Verona.87 Rather, the poet is representing the presence of desire in fraternal relations in a manner fundamental to his poetics of the subject, a poetics in which the subject is split by his memory of an originary loss, a loss repeated in the "violence of desire," "Signior Valentio" (1.2.72) and "brother Valentine" (1.2.69) are presented as revenants of that lost presence. It is helpful here to review Fineman

86 The phantasies of exuberant phallicism and sodomy that "stray" into the representations of desire in the romance plot have their counterpart in the duelling scene with its "affecting fantasticoes" (2.4.29-30) and, as Levenson has it, the generally "titillating air of prohibition." See Levenson, "'Alla Stoccado carries it away': Codes of Violence in Romeo and Juliet," in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation, ed. Jay L. Halio (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 89.
again on Shakespeare's representation of fraternal enmity in his corpus, an ambivalence arising from the poetic subject's formative imaginary relations with a maternal figure; in theory, these relations are transposed onto the mirroring male-male relations of emulation and rivalry where the self is in rivalry with the specular other for his "being":

The duality of brothers that generates singularity, along with the mirroring complexities of dual reflexiveness and defused images of the discrete self, is the masculine rephrasing of the original relationship of son and mother, of son and his discovery of an outside world from which he is separated and to which he is attached. The violence between brothers is for Shakespeare the projection in dramatic terms of the infantile experience of cleavage. For, as Shakespeare understands it, fratricide is the road to and away from the mother: a violence of desire that confirms the experience of self; a violence that separates equals and joins ... opposites who have no difference between them.88

Conceived in these terms, the pairings of the phantom brother Valentine and Signior Valentio with their sanguine siblings fleetingly re-presents the characters' lost imaginary presence in the mirror. If cleavage precipitates the self-division of the subject, his experience of "dissonance" or a "disturbance in identity" as Fineman calls it,89 the poetic subject then tends to repeat this "letter" and its "disturbance" as "a violence of desire that confirms the experience of self." Although these proper names do not occasion desire in the manner that the "name of the rose" does in this text, the memory of an imaginary puissance and its loss appears encrypted in the "letter" of invitation Romeo reads, where "Signior Valentio" (1.2.72) and "brother Valentine" (1.2.69) are variations on the "name of the rose" as signifiers of lost fraternal amity.

The remainder of the third part of the chapter examines the fratricidal dynamics of the drama as they appear to arise out of enduring legacies of imaginary relationships. In these rivalrous dynamics, characters seek to violently appropriate the enemy's ontological being in projects that repeat or turn around a loss in phantasy, or in actions that transgress prohibition. In short, the drama upstages a "regime of masculinity"

87 Porter, Shakespeare's Mercutio, 5-9. Rather, it seems a deliberate retelling of that story in tragic terms, where the slightly miraculous reconciliation of Proteus and Valentine through their respective matches does not occur as a deus ex machina preserving homosocial amity.

88 Fineman, "Fratricide and Cuckoldry," 104. Fineman here appears to view this splitting as the playwright's repeated, defensive "projection" of an ambivalence or displacement of lack into dramatic terms or a scene. In this he follows a long, prestigious line of Shakespearean psychoanalytic theorizing which views the dramas as working out the author's ambivalences. The present chapters attempt to argue that the author stages these for his audience's participation, representing the dissonances they might not choose to own, both allowing and critiquing the displacement of contradiction, for example in the murder of Mercutio and idealization of Romeo and Juliet's passion. For an example of the "ambivalence" thesis, see Norman N. Holland's Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 331-34.

89 Fineman, "Fratricide and Cuckoldry," 104.
supported by fraternal enmity, propelled by its lack towards contradictory and ever elusive goals, a masculinity irredeemably supported by violence. In tracing the conflict up to Mercutio's death, the following analysis wishes to suggest the impurity of Romeo's amorous motives in terms of his cleaving to fratricidal conflict, a transgressive impetus that seems a paradoxical source, along with his suicide, to his engaging character and the idealization he often enjoys.

Critics rarely ask about Romeo's questionable motivations for going to the Capulet masque. His patently ambivalent desire is to spite and make love to his "dear enemy." Regarding his spite, the servant explicitly says, "My master is the great rich Capulet; and if you be not of the house of Montagues, I pray come and crush a cup of wine" (1.2.81-84). On the making love side, Romeo certainly anticipates his forbidden love Rosaline being there, as Rosaline's name is on the guest list and Benvolio insists on going there to cure Romeo of his overvaluation of the object (1.2.85-104). Romeo has the plausible audacity to attempt to fool himself (and the drama's auditors) when he speaks of the fair "game" (1.4.39) that he is not interested in: "And we mean well in going to this masque,/ But 'tis no wit to go" (1.4.48-49).

In "Standing to the Wall": The Pressures of Masculinity in Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare Quarterly 48:3 (1997): 251-72, Robert Applebaum makes an argument for the drama as a tragedy of gender identification, of a perpetually unstable, failed masculinity and its impossible goal of self-presence; his essay has affinities with my own work, but is much more "outside" the text. Applebaum's admirable essay is preoccupied with finding an acceptable approach to the tragedies and tragic masculinity, dramas that represent, in his opinion, an irredeemably violent, hegemonic code of masculinity. He finds "Shakespeare's tragic subjects" to be predominantly male, and "predominantly invested in perpetuating structures of masculinist hegemony" (257). Applebaum's essay struggles to redeem reflection on tragic masculinity through the use of gender theory and feminist psychoanalysis, attempting to gain a purchase on the tragic Shakespearean subject in a critical climate adverse to extending sympathy to the tragic male protagonist. This perhaps effects a seduction to the re-legitimization of the definitively tragic figure, for instance through the always already dead symbolic Father (263). Applebaum's essay tends to make of masculine failure, inadequacy and lack a sort of melancholic mantra (for example, of an "unimpaired masculinity").

In The Icy Fire, Forster writes on "The Petrarchan Manner": "The drama and the novel can enact situations which in the lyric are conventional stereotypes. The enmity of Montague and Capulet makes the cliché of the 'dear enemy' into a concrete predicament; the whole drama is devoted to bringing this cliché to life, and others are similarly enacted" (51); as cited in Levenson, "Alia stoccado carries it away": Codes of Violence in Romeo and Juliet," 84. One encounters the "dear enemy" cliché, for example, in Petrarch's Canzoniere, in the lyric beginning, "I have a thousand times, dear enemy,/ in order to have peace with your bright eyes,/ offered my heart to you, which you refuse." Canzoniere, trans. J.G. Nichols (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), verse 21. The present chapter links this enacted cliché to the playwright's invention of "primal ambivalence" and self-ambivalence through the rhetorical forms of oxymoron and a reversal against the self (in the passion of love-melancholy). Compare Bloom on Shakespeare's scandalous instruction of Freud regarding ambivalence, in Shakespeare, 11.

Romeo's generally transgressive "being" can easily be ignored, particularly through the distractions of the phallic gaiety of Mercutio's wit, Tybalt's presence as a fighter, and the narrative background prepared by the first prologue that insists the feud is overcome with Romeo and Juliet's love and death: "Whose..."
There is an evident premonition of death in Romeo's first dream that perhaps gives its dramatic irony some supplemental force, an indication of the death-wish in his desire, as Romeo appears to anticipate ending his own despised life:

... my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life, closed in my breast,
By some vile forfeit of untimely death. (1.4.106-111)

This proleptic passage frames Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech, acting through its reference to fate ("the stars") to exculpate Romeo from responsibility for his desire for conflict or death. The "Queen Mab" speech also works to darken Romeo's dreamy forebodings and highlight their nature as wish-fulfillment, an aspect of his desire that he refuses to see, as when he interrupts Mercutio with a negation:

Romeo. Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace!
Thou talk'st of nothing.
Mercutio. True, I talk of dreams;
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy. (1.4.95-98)

The dream or "nothing" that Mercutio affirms is born of "vain fantasy" (1.4.98) staging the fulfillment of a wish. In dramatic terms, the staging of desire here involves the negation, with Romeo, of Mercutio's speech and phantasy as "nothing," a "nothing" rooted in the experience of self-loss that is being negated here.

Nonetheless, the "nothing" is staged in a sort of lifting of repression, a lifting that might cause a mixture of pleasure and discomfiture in its auditors. In terms familiar to us from Freud, Mercutio's vision of dream and phantasy bespeaks a desire that "blows us from ourselves" (1.4.104).

misadventured piteous overthrowes/ Doth with their death bury their parents' strife" (1st Prologue, 7-8). The auditor is usually inclined to overlook the offence that Romeo delivers to the Capulets by his presence precisely because Tybalt takes such violent offence to it while he is making love to Juliet.

When Romeo acknowledges misgivings about going to the banquet, he says, "I dreamt a dream tonight" (1.2.50), from which Mercutio's speech takes its cue, developing the notion of dreams being a lying truth. See an article by Sidney Thomas, "The Queen Mab Speech in 'Romeo and Juliet'," for an interesting speculation, based on puzzling quarto discrepancies, on the genesis of the Queen Mab speech as an addition to the play resulting from Mercutio's popularity in rehearsal or early performance. In Shakespeare Survey 25 (1972): 73-80 (79-80).

In "Shakespeare's Nothing," Willbern considers this speech as an example of "the potential positive generativity of Shakespeare's Nothing - although what is generated is not always benign" (247).
When Romeo agrees to go to the banquet with Benvolio and Mercutio in disguise, perhaps he goes as
Mercutio’s “brother,” but the text indicates that fraternal conflict is also being pursued as an erotic lure, as
“love’s sweet bait” (2nd Prologue, 8) when he kisses Tybalt’s cousin. This is despite Romeo’s leaving it to
fortune, “[b]ut he that hath the steerage of my course/ Direct my sail! On lusty gentleman!” (1.4.112-13),
wittily protesting he means well “going to this masque” (1.4.48). In the more direct terms Romeo uses later,
he relates his passion for Juliet to the Friar:

> I have been feasting with mine enemy,
> Where on a sudden one hath wounded me
> That’s by me wounded. (2.3.49-51)

Romeo’s presence at the feast is properly construed as an insult to the Capulet household, much as Tybalt
will take it, a playing with hate upon which his “lusty” motives appear to be grafted.

In the tragic framework of fraternal enmity, the Capulet masque can be viewed as a rare event, a feast
celebrating community, amity and fraternal comraderie (for example, 1.5.31-42). The gathering is a potent
symbolic setting for the meeting of Romeo and Juliet, and their auditor Tybalt. As Romeo is wounded by
the sight of Juliet’s beauty and holds poetic discourse over her, Tybalt recognizes Romeo “by his voice”
(1.5.56), as if he has been overhearing his amorous talk and is roused to action:

> This, by his voice, should be a Montague.
> Fetch me my rapier, boy. What! Dares the slave
> Come hither, covered with an antic face,
> To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?
> Now, by the stock and honor of our kin,
> To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.
> *Capulet.* Why, how now, kinsman? Wherefore storm you so?
> *Tybalt.* Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,
> A villain, that is hither come in spite
> To scorn at our solemnity this night.
> *Capulet.* Young Romeo is it?
> *Tybalt.* ‘Tis he, that villain Romeo. (1.5.56-66)

Tybalt repeats twice the phrase of Romeo’s scorning at their banquet’s solemnity, as if underlining the
injury taken. Old Capulet here only exacerbates Tybalt’s sense of violation by his participation in what
seems to be a general applause of Romeo: “Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone./ ‘A bears him like a
portly gentleman/ And, to say the truth, Verona brags of him/ To be a virtuous and well-governed youth”
(1.5.67-70). Capulet’s pointed deference further visits upon an envious, ungentele Tybalt what he calls “a
shame” (1.5.84). Tybalt’s virile, masculine show of rage, “You will set cock-a-hoop. You’ll be the man!”
is figured as his sense of impotent violation demanding a sexualized ("cock-a-hoop") revenge: "I will withdraw; but this intrusion shall,/ Now seeming sweet, convert to bitt’rest gall" (1.5.93-94).

As a recent critical defender of Tybalt’s proper “character” notes, Tybalt’s complaint against Romeo is perfectly legitimate according to the prevailing code of masculinity and family honor. When Mercutio hears that Tybalt has sent Romeo a letter the next day, he assumes this is a challenge because Romeo has brazenly offended Tybalt, given him occasion. Mercutio fears that Romeo will fall victim to Tybalt’s fighting skills; he fears for Romeo because he is already ravished by love, making him unfit to fight. He has had “the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind-boy’s butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt?” (2.4.15-17) In Mercutio’s view, the undoing of proper masculinity effected by romantic love is imagined as a sodomitical trespass, the same trespass that is the imaginary sticking point in the fight with Tybalt, that “very butcher of a silk button” (2.4.23-24). When Benvolio inquires, “Why, what is Tybalt?” (2.4.18), Mercutio delivers a mock tribute to Tybalt in which he seems to charge him with an effeminacy (typed as foreign) from the scripted, citational aspect of his masculinity:

**Mercutio.** More than the Prince of Cats. O, he’s the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing pricksong - keeps time, distance, and proportion; he rests his minim rests, one, two, and the third in your bosom! The very butcher of a silk button, a duelist, a duelist! A gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause. Ah, the immortal passado! The punto reverso! The hay!

**Benvolio.** The what?

**Mercutio.** The pox on such antic, lisping, affecting fantasticoes - these new tuners of accent! “By Jesu, a very good blade! A very tall man! A very good whore!” Why, is this not a lamentable thing, grandsir, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashionmongers, these pardon-me’s, who stand so much on the new form that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? O, their bones, their bones! (2.4.20-37)

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95 Jerry Limon, “Rehabilitating Tybalt: A New Interpretation of the Duel Scene,” Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, 97-106 (esp. 98-99). However Limon’s essay might mitigate one’s sense of Tybalt’s villainy, it still remains that he is prepared to strike an unarmed Romeo dead at the banquet, and that, as Levenson observes in an essay in the same volume, neither he nor any of the young men actually observe the proper gentlemanly etiquette of fighting. "*Alia Stoccado carries it away*,” 88, 91-92.

96 Elaborating a scene of writing between Shakespeare and Marlowe, the third chapter examines this scene for the characterization of Tybalt as a sort of boisterous tiger and upstart, his mortal scratching of Mercutio as “More than the Prince of Cats” (2.4.19), and the rivalrous *imitatio* of literary “pricksong” (2.4.21). Nashe’s text probably influences and is a model for Shakespeare’s use of the name “Tibault” and the “Prince of Cates,” encountered in Nashe’s polemical reply to the attacks of Gabriel Harvey in his own *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*; as cited in Joan O’zark Holmer, “No ‘Vain Fantasy’: Shakespeare’s Refashioning of Nashe for Dreams and Queen Mab,” in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, 70. Holmer has also written about the possible influence of Nashe on Shakespeare’s tragedy in another essay, “Nashe as ‘Monarch of Witt’ and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” Texas Studies in Literature and Language 37:3 (1995): 314-43.
The "silk button" (2.4.23-24) that Mercutio alludes to aptly anatomizes the phantasied point of his rival which the duelist wounds when he pierces his opponent's bosom, appropriating his being. Mercutio's speech here aims to emasculate Tybalt who "cannot sit at ease on the old bench" (2.4.36), to jest that Tybalt's foreign, Italian fashions in fence are an index to his being sodomized, a sodomy "known" in England as an Italian vice. Like the banter of the Capulet servants in the opening scene and the more benign if similarly phallic wit between Romeo and Mercutio later in the scene, Mercutio's poetic language describes scenes of sodomy and "rape" informed by an aggressive masculinity's phantasies of "turning around" lack in pursuit of power.

Romeo and Juliet is one of many dramas in which the playwright reflects on the absence of fraternal amity before precariously restoring this amity at the drama's close. The presence-absence of fraternal love is the paradoxical hinge on which the romance turns from comedy to tragedy. In sending a challenge to Romeo, Tybalt is following a course of revenge from rivalry and lack, from envy of his enemy's "being" that he might appropriate. At any rate, Romeo's ideal "being" is in part derived from homosocial esteem ("And, to say truth, Verona brags of him" [1.5.69]), a distinction Tybalt would appear envious of. In Tybalt's attempt to appropriate Romeo's being, he projects onto Mercutio the component of desire in his questing for identity:

We have already noted the drama's characteristic poetic inversion between heart and arse in Romeo's question to the Friar, "In what vile part of this anatomy/ Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack/ The hateful mansion" (3.3.105-08), and earlier in the description of love's trespass. Mercutio's mention of Tybalt's skill in beating his opponent plausibly derives from a "story told of Rocco Bonetti, the Italian fencing master both popular and fashionable before Vincentio Saviolo .... He was famous enough so that the story of his boast that he could hit any English fencer on any button had by the 1590's become an allusion to pride of skill in fence rather than to any specific fencing technique." Cited in "Tybalt's Spanish Fencing in Romeo and Juliet," Adolph L. Soens, Shakespeare Quarterly 20 (1969): 121-27 (123). Soens argues convincingly that a contemporary audience would have perceived Mercutio's xenophobic sneers at Tybalt's un-English style of fighting.

For a good analysis of the opening scene's banter, see Applebaum's "Standing to the Wall": The Pressures of Masculinity in Romeo and Juliet," 251-52. Although he briefly reviews Goldberg's essay, Applebaum's analysis stays clear of the homoerotic as putting contradictory pressures on masculinity. He chooses to concentrate on the formal impossibility of self-presence in gender theory. Applebaum writes of the "dilemma of masculinity" rehearsed in the opening scene of the drama, a rehearsal of self-completion through aggression that has no possibility of satisfaction or resolution (251-52). The terms of his analysis can be applied to the later scene of "masculine aggression" while emphasizing the additional dynamic of the homoeroticism of these displays of phallic aggression supposed to consolidate masculinity. The homoeroticism is in part due to the erotic mirroring of the scenes, as above, and the charged exchange of power between men.
Mercutio. And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something; make it a word and a blow.

Tybalt. You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, and you will give me occasion.

Mercutio. Could you not take some occasion without giving?

Tybalt. Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo.

Mercutio. Consort? What, dost thou make us minstrels? And thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. Zounds, consort!

Benvolio. We talk here in the public haunt of men.

Either withdraw unto some private place,
Or reason coldly of your grievances,
Or else depart. Here all eyes gaze on us.

Mercutio. Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze.

I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I. (3.1.40-56)

The Mercutio that previously feared for Romeo's life at Tybalt's hand seems to have little fear of the "[m]ore than Prince of Cats" (2.4.19) himself. If Mercutio is eager to provoke Tybalt to a fight, it may be out of a desire to shield his friend from harm. Where his recklessness in this scene might stem from love, this love is precisely what Tybalt attempts to abject him with by naming him an effeminate "consort" (3.1.47). The word strikes Mercutio as the blow he requested, an emasculation in which Tybalt "gives" and Mercutio "takes." The exchange occurs "in the public haunt of men" (3.1.51), where a threat to proper masculinity in private friendship is posed by this allegation of a phantom, emasculating intimacy, a threat arising from the sameness of the public signs of friendship and sodomy.

The contradictory imperatives of masculinity are aptly embodied in the language of giving and taking, also evident in Mercutio's line, "I will not move for no man's pleasure, I" (3.1.56). His being is derived from not moving (he is thus "passive" in a paradoxical manner of assertion), yet is reliant on those "[m]en's eyes" for his defiant, assertive "I." A phantom sodomy is perhaps returned again to Tybalt in his taunt: "Marry, go before to field, he'll be your follower!/ Your worship in that sense may call him a man" (3.1.59-60), where Romeo's position behind Tybalt would make him the man ("in that sense you may call him a man"). This would be an example of hysteron proteron or "the preposterous," a trope describing the reversals of proper order, here in the field of proper gender identification.

Mercutio repeats Tybalt's charge and indicates his wish to turn it around, figuratively visiting this phantom sodomy on Tybalt, but despite his violence he does not, cannot, or will not explicitly refute it.
These sodomitical resonances in a language of homoerotic aggression follow from Tybalt's accusation of "improper" relations in Mercutio's friendship to Romeo. Tybalt and Mercutio are truly doubles at this point, especially if we recall their pairing with phantom amorous siblings at the fraternizing feast, "Signior Valentio" (1.2.72) and "brother Valentine" (1.2.69) respectively. Recasting that argument, might these amorous names mark the place of a disavowed, encrypted lost love, motivating the projective career of desire, attesting to a troubling crypt in the proper masculine subject? If the signifiers "Signior Valentio" and "brother Valentine" can be taken to re-present the poetic subject's lost love, to be uncanny revenants of the amorous in fraternal relations of rivalry and enmity, their return seems to be figured in Tybalt's projective accusations. If the subject's constitution by a mirror image dictates the subject's cojoining of desire and (self-)aggression in relation to his ideal, the poetic subject's aggressivity is similarly evident in the wish to master loss by naming it, and naming it otherwise: "thou consortest with Romeo" (3.1.46), and, "[t]hou wretched boy, that did consort him here, Shalt with him hence" (3.1.132-33). Tybalt thus names his desire in its displacement onto the double supporting his "being," ie., "consort" is also involved in a fiction of the ego's phantasied "being," integrity, harmony, jubilation, etc. While this is a partial reading, it is one narrative that the text seems to offer, a reading, moreover, that accords with the ideal status of the "friend" in the playwright's culture which we also see, in a different note, in the Sonnets and their idealizing erotics of similitude.

By the dominant code of masculinity sustained by violence, the brotherly, Christian love that Romeo extends to Tybalt threatens both with effeminization and, in the event, a fatal betrayal of his "very friend" (3.1.112) Mercutio. The exchange between Tybalt and Romeo leading up to the fight involves a wavering avowal and disavowal of love:

100 Of course, Tybalt's accusation could be taken as an example of what Freud considers as projective disavowal, and the text certainly seems to suggest this. The claim is that the playwright understands the dynamic of projection as grounded in imaginary identifications.
101 Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," Ecrits, for example, 22.
102 The OED supplies a number of meanings for "consort" that chime with Mercutio's response to this charge of Romeo and himself being minstrels. The meanings that are of interest here and in the scene of writing analysis to follow in the third chapter are: n. LME. 3. A ship sailing in company with another. E17. n. L16. 1. A number consorting together; a fellowship, a partnership; a company. L16-18. 2. Accord; agreement. L16. v.L16. 3 v.i. & refl. Habitually associate (with), esp. as a companion or lover. L16. 4 v.i. Accord, harmonize. (Foll. by to, with.) L16. 5 v.t. & i. Musically play, sing, or sound together. Arch. L16.
Tybalt. Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford
No better term than this: thou art a villain.
Romeo. Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting. Villain am I none.
Therefore farewell. I seest thou knowest me not.
Tybalt. Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw.
Romeo. I do protest I never injured thee,
But love thee better than thou canst devise
Till thou shalt know the reason of my love;
And so, good Capulet, which name I tender
As dearly as my own, be satisfied. (3.1.61-73)

I observed earlier how dearly Romeo tender his name, and in this context Romeo’s declaration of love only infuriates his aggressor. If Tybalt misrecognizes Romeo, “Villain am I none./ Therefore farewell. I see thou knowest me not” (3.1.65-66), he is perhaps protecting himself from the recognition of an emasculating, phantom identification he has already made. Tybalt’s defences make him see only his hatred in Romeo, who returns Tybalt’s love as his new cousin, the sibling relation of Tybalt to the phantom “Signior Valentio” (1.2.72).

If Romeo betrays Mercutio, this betrayal derives from our sense of Mercutio’s lack of knowledge of Romeo’s secret marriage. Romeo’s new bond with Juliet and the ethos of heterosexual love and family allegiance conflict at this scene with a code of masculine honour that Mercutio expects Romeo to uphold. His failure to do so is fatal for Mercutio, who fights on his friend’s behalf. “Why the devil came you between us?” asks Mercutio, “I was hurt under your arm” (3.1.104-05). Romeo can only respond, in a line hopelessly inadequate to the occasion, “I though all for the best” (3.1.106). Given Romeo’s secret marriage to Juliet, Mercutio’s question cannot be answered properly, and Romeo does not speak of his marriage. If Mercutio’s question haunts the spectator as much as it conceivably troubles Romeo, this might be because one can sympathize with Mercutio’s fate and a sense that Romeo has in some way betrayed his “very friend” (3.1.112). The contradictions between competing codes of masculinity, for instance, between a code of honour and a religion of love, are evident in Romeo’s exclamation:

This gentleman, the Prince’s near ally,
My very friend, hath got this mortal hurt
In my behalf - my reputation stained

A musical metaphor is picked up by Mercutio in his talk of “pricksong” (earlier) and fighting and “fiddlesticks” (here) and fighting.
Through putting the pursuit of heterosexual love and allegiance before the erotic frisson of male bonding and male rivalry, Romeo betrays his “very friend” (3.1.112) in a manner that resonates with the sacrifice of polymorphous sexuality in the consolidation of a proper gender identity (unstained by sodomitical slander or effeminacy). If Romeo is supposed to be Mercutio’s amorous brother, as Porter suggests, Mercutio’s tragic death also acts as an uncanny revenant of the “homosexual sacrifice” in consolidating one historically predominating version of proper masculine identity.

As a figure embodying the contradictions of a masculinity riven by the love of men and male rivalry, Mercutio is a vehicle for the dramatic message of blaming fraternal hate for the tragedy of desire, a tragedy he obviously participates in. Cursing the feud in his dying lines, Mercutio’s repeated line “A plague a both your houses” (3.1.92) contributes to the myth of blaming the hate of enemy brothers for the tragedy rather than looking at one’s own personal motivations in precipitating the tragedy, motivations that are indistinguishable from those of the enemy brothers, even or especially with the admixture of “love.” As articulated through the presence of phantom Valentine characters, the drama’s “myth” of freres ennemis on another level facilitates - while allowing for a critique of - the displacement of ideological and internal psychic conflicts onto a manageable figure for disorder, the “other” figured in Mercutio.

The drama’s closing moments provides a narrative making the deaths of Romeo and Juliet another “sacrifice” to fraternal hate: “Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague, / See what a scourge is laid upon your hate, / That heaven finds mean to kill your joys with love” (5.3.291-93). Unlike Mercutio’s death, the lovers’ sacrifice is forced into alignment to redeem the fraternal social order. Their “sacrifice” is


\[104\] The Girardian moment of threatened mimetic rivalry and conflict within this reconciliation should be noted. When Capulet offers his hand to Montague as his daughter’s jointure, i.e., the gesture of bonding and allegiance usually effected through marriage or the “traffic in women,” Montague replies, “But I can give thee more; / For I will raise her statue in pure gold, / That whiles Verona by that name is known, / There shall
made the source of a formal *joining* in mirroring amity - "O brother Montague, give me thy hand. This is my daughter's jointure, for no more/ Can I demand" (5.3.296-98). Fraternal enmity, the "curse," is formally resolved at the drama's end, though the "jointure" or joining of equals here also threatens a renewal of rivalrous conflict. For the moment, the playgoers or readers are offered the precarious fraternal reconciliation that contributes to the idealization of the heterosexual lovers through the substitution of love for hate, peace for unrest. If the lovers are represented as "[p]oor sacrifices of our enmity" (5.3.304), sacrifices to fraternal enmity, their nearly religious idealization is also due to the manner in which their passion internalizes "fraternal" enmity in their self-sacrifices, assuming a phantasied "being" in that turn.

As Raymond Utterback and others observe, Mercutio's death is the important turning point to the drama, essential to its structure, and a motivating force in the string of contingencies that lead to the final catastrophe, in effect marking the passage into tragedy. A common type of analysis makes Mercutio's death the pivot to the tragedy; for instance, making Tybalt's murder of Mercutio a formal reversal of Romeo's declaration of love to Tybalt, and implicitly, the fraternal amity that prevails at the end.

The trope of reversal in *Romeo and Juliet* is essential to the many dramatic scenes of death, beginning with the Aristotelean *peripeteia* of the scene of Mercutio's death. Mercutio's death precipitates the tragic action, but the scene also stages the characters' phantasies of reversal attempting to appropriate the other's being. Mercutio's defensive, engaging, witty articulation of a phallic masculinity and sodomitical phantasy stages such wishful reversals. In the staging of Mercutio's wish to emasculate Tybalt, and his murder by that "very butcher of a silk button" (2.4.23-24), we witness the failure in reality of the reversals of phantasy. The trope of reversal dominates the the drama's representation of a death-marked desire, of phantasy's "joining" with the other. While the fight's bringing together of fraternal doubles is troped as a phantasied sodomy, the terms of the meeting are suggestively those of the romantic lovers' own desire: "An

no figure at such a rate be set/ As that of true and faithful Juliet" (5.3.298-302). To which Capulet responds, "As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie-/Poor sacrifices of our enmity" (303-304).

to’t they go like lightning” (3.1.174). Tybalt’s death mirrors the desire of Romeo and Juliet in its sudden lightning action, a destructive erotic passion that the Friar warns Romeo against:

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which, as they kiss, consume. (2.6.9-11)

The violence of desire is common to the destruction of Tybalt and Mercutio defending their masculinity and the suicides of the lovers. Romeo describes his approaching death as a lightning, communicating with his sense of feasting on the “dead” Juliet’s lightening presence in the dark, and further punning on his spirit’s lightness before a sudden death, or death’s lightening the burden of a despised life: “O, how may I/ Call this a lightning” (5.3.90-91). The drama’s violent consummations of desire in death are represented as the phantasied imaginary plenitude of the joining of equals or opposites. That is, fratricide and love share a common language in the text. Romeo and Juliet’s representation of the subject’s phantom identification with an alienating double in fraternal enmity is mirrored by its representation of the subject’s failed projective unity in romantic amity: each desire appears implicated in the other.

There remains an important level upon which the lovers’ deaths are “set apart” from the deaths of Mercutio, Tybalt, and Paris. The mutual suicides in the crypt appear to mark a shift from the murderous erotic phantasies entertained by the lovers earlier. The self-murders mark the turning around upon the self of these murderous phantasies, a reversal of direction of the aggressive drive, an internalization of murder that is literalized in the mutual suicides. Examining the drama’s transcendental movement, the fourth part considers Romeo’s final dream of his death and the dream’s wishful reversals as a model for the audience’s imaginary participation in the scene of love’s self-sacrifice. The drama aims to stage the loss of love and the separation of death as the perfect fulfilment of love, a blissful union of jouissance in phantasy.

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107 The choric prologue to the second act describes “old desire in his deathbed lies” (2nd Prologue, 1), ironizing the young lovers’ eagerness in rushing to this deathbed and the erotic allure of transgressive love (“[a]nd she steal love’s sweet bait from fearful hooks” [8]), describing their passion as “[t]emp’ring extremeties with extreme sweet” (14).
If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep,  
My dreams presage some joyful news at hand.  
My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne,  
And all this day an unaccustomed spirit  
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.  
I dreamt my lady came and found me dead  
(Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think!)  
And breathed such life with kisses in my lips  
That I revived and was an emperor.  
Ah me! How sweet is love itself possessed,  
When but love's shadows are so rich in joy! (5.1.1-11)

The vision of immortality glimpsed in Romeo's final dream at the beginning of the fifth act is a phantasy of sensual gratification as well as a dream of death. The vision is a bottomless dream of union with the goddess, a phantasy of union with the Venus or Queen of a Cupid's paradise. The "dream" conveys a jouissance negating loss and death, thereby reaching quasi-religious stature in the drama.\(^\text{108}\) This negation of death and reversal of loss in the dream contributes to the drama's staging of the lovers' sublime transcendence in death, one critical reason for the play's enduring popularity. I propose to investigate the commonplace of the transcendence of Romeo and Juliet's love in death in the context of dream and phantasy and specifically the repetition of loss "beyond the pleasure principle" by the young lovers, an experience also available vicariously for the spectator-subject of the drama, i.e., the principle of reversal by which Romeo's dream works is also available for the spectator-subject's participation in the drama. The analysis moves between examining the dream of love as subject to analysis within the terms of Romeo's "character" and desire for death, an "exposition of sleep" (MND, 4.1.43) as if the literary dream were real,\(^\text{109}\) to the dream's staging of illicit and sublime desire for the audience where the dream is an enigmatic paradigm for this like "Bottom's Dream" (4.1.219) in Dream, as in the drama's final love-death embrace.

\(^{108}\) The following analysis of Romeo's final dream draws on several articles and essays, some of which have already been cited. In the extension of the analysis from Romeo's wish-fulfillment in the dream to that of the audience-reader whose desire floats on his, the analysis takes up a line of inquiry indicated by Holland, but not pursued convincingly. See the end of Holland's "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," Literature & Psychology 13:3 (1963): 97-104 (104).

Another claim made here, and elaborated below, is that Romeo's dream of death coordinates with a courtly tradition and medieval religion of love in which "joining the loved one in death [...] qualifies the lover as one of Cupid's saints and ensures that the two meet in the Paradise" of Love; this line of argument draws on the fine essay by Paul N. Siegel, "Christianity and the Religion of Love in Romeo and Juliet," 372; see esp., 383-92.

\(^{109}\) This approach was initiated by Holland in his article, "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism." As Holland notes there, Freud several times makes the claim that literary, invented dreams can
In the stock metaphor of Shakespeare's theater touched on in the last chapter, the drama is a dream or phantasy staged for the audience. The love of Romeo and Juliet is consistently given the quality of a dream or phantasy, an impression often given dark import,\(^{110}\) as when Romeo addresses the night as blessed:

\begin{quote}
O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard,
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial. (2.2.139-41)
\end{quote}

In the balcony scene the night's "dream" is real, though that reality is dreamlike. At the beginning of the fifth act, Romeo embraces the "flattering truth of sleep" (5.1.1), the representation of his revival from death and the revival of his desire. Romeo's dream of death, "I dreamt my lady came and found me dead" (5.1.6), also suggests his desire for death, a wish that will be fulfilled in the tragedy's catastrophe. The "flattering truth of sleep" (5.1.1) appears to be a dream of sexual bliss that represents his death as the condition for this jouissance. The entire nocturnal, transgressive romance of Romeo and Juliet encourages the audience to speculate on this dream, to engage in phantasy, to be, like Oberon, "king of shadows" (MND, 3.2.347), or to be with "but love's shadows ... rich in joy" (R&J, 5.1.11).

As discussed above, in act one, scene four, from his framing comments to Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech, one infers that Romeo has dreamed of death: he pursues his "lusty" course with Benvolio and Mercutio to the masque. Similarly, where the poetic phantasy or daydream operates roughly like the dream, Juliet's final prophetic aubade to Romeo, her vision of him "[a]s one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.56), is perfectly reciprocated by Romeo and resonates with Romeo's final dream beginning Act five where he sees himself dead.\(^ {111}\) In this dream, Romeo occupies the position of a spectator of the drama of his

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be interpreted by the same sort of criteria as real dreams. Freud put this theory into practise in his Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's "Gradiva" (Holland, 97). The present inquiry is not such an application of Freudian dream theory. Rather, it tailors the theory's terms of censorship and wish-fulfillment to an appreciation of the dramatic staging of desire.

\(^{110}\) One can compare the function of Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech. If it begins benignly, it gives itself over to dark erotic reveries, acting as "midwife to our erotic dreams, aiding us give birth to our deep fantasies" that turn nightmare (Bloom, Shakespeare, 95).

\(^{111}\) Compare the death-wish saturated language of the aubade. The sado-masochistic phantasies of death occur at scenes of parting, as if conjured by the prospect of loss. In dramatizing the sonneteer's traditional posture of willing bondage, Romeo's wish to be killed if his beloved should wish it adds psychological depth to the cliché: "Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death./ I am content, so thou wilt have it so. (....) Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so./ How is't, my soul? Let's talk; it is not day" (3.5.17-18, 24-
own death: “I dreamt my lady came and found me dead/ (Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think!)” (5.1.6-7). As spectators of his “real” death, those in the audience are granted an ironic “fore-pleasure” from knowing, since the first lines of the first prologue, that Romeo is going to die (5.1.1-11). The enjoyment and elevation of the tragic experience is conditioned by a sense of immunity from the fate of the characters, a privilege that optimally allows for participation and sympathy.

Although the dream text is only four lines long, many of the drama’s principal themes discussed so far are condensed in this highly literary dream. Three centuries before Freud’s laborious exegesis in The Interpretation of Dreams, we know from Mercutio in his “Queen Mab” speech that dreams tend to represent and perhaps even be the fulfillment of a wish. The dramatic function of Romeo’s final dream is prophetic and ironic, contributing to the engrossment of the spectator-subject or reader through offering him a powerful, “sadistic” position of knowledge, one that enjoys the pains of the dramatis personae through a displaced masochistic identification. This function of prophecy in the dream might even outweigh its merit as a realistic dream specimen. The dream does, however, display some similarity to real dreams in terms of its nature as a wish-fulfillment.

Reversal is the dream’s means of defence against loss and its means of representing a desire for death. There is a deep duplicity about the “wish” of Romeo’s dream, or it has at least two levels that Freudian dream-analysis vocabulary might not designate persuasively. It is convenient for the purpose of this analysis to oppose these levels as that of a sexual wish and a desire for death within that wish, roughly corresponding to the manifest and latent content of the dream. Freud also contrasts these as the different

25). Romeo’s willingness to die is not without its sado-masochistic allure, a relationship that Juliet has implanted in the previous balcony scene where she would have Romeo as “a wanton’s bird” (2.2.177).

112 One can compare here Freud’s view of the dynamics of masochism and what I am terming (following Laplanche and Bersani) the masochistic excitation, how sensations of pain trench upon sexual excitation and produce a pleasurable condition; for example, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” II, esp. 124-26. Freud writes: “When once feeling pains has become a masochistic aim, the sadistic aim of causing pains can arise also, retrogressively; for while these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through his identification of himself with the suffering object. In both cases, of course, it is not the pain itself which is enjoyed, but the accompanying sexual excitation - so that this can be done especially conveniently from the sadistic position” (126). I return to this displaced masochism below.
texts of the "dream-content" and the repressed "dream-thoughts" (for example, 4, 417). In Romeo's dream, these levels correspond more precisely to the wish for sexual bliss and the pleasure principle's serving the death drive, with the Elizabethan quibble on "dying" in the background. Romeo's dream at first appears as one of those dreams that Freud supposes children are capable of dreaming, where there is little or no censorship of the wish. In these dreams the manifest narrative of the dream-content corresponds to the dream-thoughts with hardly any distortion.

Following Holland's analysis in "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," it appears that the dream's wish-fulfilling occurs through reversal. However, in following Freud's basic dictum of the dream as a wish-fulfilment and its suitable application to literary dreams, Holland does not suggest the final possible reversal of the dream, its proleptic representation of a desire for death that is fulfilled in Romeo's final erotic self-murder. Of course, on the level of "dream-content," the most general narrative of reversal and wish-fulfillment in the dream is the substitution of the beloved's presence for her absence. Banished in Mantua, Romeo is separated from his beloved. The dream reverses the edict of "banishment" and transgresses the Prince and fathers' law of prohibition separating Romeo and Juliet. Romeo's dream easily yields to this interpretation of the wishful substitution of life and sexual potency for the dreamer's pictured death, a substitution that perhaps re-presents his separation from Juliet as "death" and reverses this death into his awakening and sexual "fore-pleasure." Juliet's reviving kisses can be taken as signs of sexual potency and a "regressive" or "infantile" oral satisfaction. However, the other meaning of Romeo's "death" in the dream may be termed the latent content or "dream thoughts." This is Romeo's desire for death as an erotic satisfaction, where his revival is a distortion; in effect, this substitution or reversal of life for death is the disguised means of representing the bliss of death.

As Bersani suggests of Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud never really decides whether sexual pleasure is derived from a principle of the unbinding of tension and homeostasis or from a self-shattering (masochistic) excitation that might harm the ego (The Freudian Body, 55-64).

113 In "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," Holland writes: "In short, at every level, the dream operates by the process of reversal. It is a dream, we could say, about the power of dreams to reverse" (103). He also links the theme of reversal to the notion of love's origination in hate and overall "plot" of the children's love reversing the parents' hate.

114 Holland, "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," 100, 103.
The principle of the dream’s wish-fulfillment often coordinates with the dramatic device of prophecy in Shakespeare’s drama. As such a case, Romeo’s final dream combines with prophecy in the trajectory of an anticipated fulfillment. Romeo is joyful from his dream of death and love, anticipating “some joyful news at hand” (5.1.2) from his dream. He anticipates a potency and pleasure in physical love: “Ah me! How sweet is love itself possessed,/ When but love’s shadows are so rich in joy” (5.1.10-11). When Romeo dreams of death, we already know that his fate is death and that he is amorous for death. In a rather gruesome irony, the dream points forward to the union in the monument where Juliet kisses him and he does not revive. The playwright’s use of prophecy and irony in the dream is instrumental in orchestrating a sense of fulfilment in the drama, a trajectory encouraging the spectator-subject’s imaginary participation in the drama and its joys in the shadow of death. Do Romeo’s “fore-pleasures” in the dream of reviving from death resemble the spectator-subject’s “fore-pleasure” in anticipating Romeo’s death and a vicarious experience of this sexualized self-shattering? By being a spectator to the drama of his own death, Romeo’s own dream gestures to the place of spectatorship, joining the roles of spectator and spectacle: “I dreamt my lady came and found me dead/ (Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think!”) (5.1.6-7). Taken as a model for spectatorial engagement in the drama’s phantasies, the “fore-pleasures” afforded by participation in Romeo’s dream of sexual bliss and death might be due to an enjoyable anticipation of the “release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources” (“Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,” 14, 141).

The playwright’s ars poetica seems to lie in presenting the unconcealed phantasy of death in Romeo’s dream, a dream that represents the wish for erotic death by the means of reversal, allowing the daydream of Juliet’s kisses and a possible erotic union to lead to the “still greater pleasure” of a phantasied dissolution in death. A drama of the pleasure principle in the service of death? of the embrace of Eros and death drive? Lightening this vision is the phantasy of the lovers living beyond death, awaking to jouissance in death; Romeo and Juliet stages this phantasy of jouissance and transcendence for the audience.

Recurring to the discussions of “rosemary” earlier in the chapter might indicate how an Elizabethan audience would hear this particular flower symbolism in the drama, what is elaborated above as the “name

115 Compare this dream to the prophetic visions of Romeo and Juliet at the end of their aubade (3.5.54-59). One might legitimately object that in these instances proleptic structure is being confused with a death wish
of the rose” dictating the economy of desire and phantasy; this return suggests how the love-death embrace of the final scene might be interpreted. The excursion into “rosemary” symbolism strays from the analysis of Romeo and Juliet’s desire into the staging of their spectacular deaths for the audience, but these issues are inseparable. In “Romeo’s Final Dream,” Warren D. Smith argues that Romeo’s reported dream at the beginning of Act five should be regarded as prophetic of the lovers union and immortal ascension, a transcendence prepared for by the drama’s wordplay with “rosemary.” Connecting the “rosemary” imagery with a series of paradoxical pairing of opposites, Smith argues that the “rosemary” imagery indicates the final transcendence of life and love over death. He observes, following the Variorum’s annotation of the second rosemary passage, that rosemary was used at funerals as an emblem of immortality in death: this emblematic meaning becomes the pivot of his argument. The present analysis wishes to shift the emphasis of argument from a claim for the lovers’ transcendence based on “the symbolic force of rosemary” to that of the implicit phantasy of their immortality and the transgressive jouissance in the love-death embrace staged for the audience through this poetic language. When he examines the Nurse’s speech, Smith suggests that Nurse’s linking of rosemary and Romeo “would appear to form a pattern” of Romeo’s immortality in death. He also notes the “womb-tomb” conjunction in the play generally, and Romeo’s “paradoxical epithet” for the Capulet tomb as “thou womb of death” (5.3.45). Smith locates the “dramatic excuse” for this phrasing as “the implanting in the consciousness the Christian ideal of the resurrection of the souls of the lovers after death.” The “womb of death” (5.3.45) is the place of the culmination of Romeo and Juliet’s love, where womb does suggest a rebirth in death - and perhaps a rebirth of desire.

through the perspective of fulfilment, but this is precisely my claim regarding how the pleasure of dramatic irony works, i.e., where the fulfilment of desire in time points to the spectator-subject’s final transcendence.  

116 Warren D. Smith, “Romeo’s Final Dream,” Modern Language Review 62:3 (1967): 579-83. Smith does not take account of either Siegel or Holland’s helpful essays that precede his own article. The article fails to perceive that Romeo’s dream is a phantasy of sexual bliss and immortality on his part that is made available to the drama’s audience - or critic in this case.

117 Smith, “Romeo’s Final Dream,” 580. The linking of Romeo and “rosemary” is more ambivalent than this transcendence in death. The linking points to a Shakespearean dialectic in which the sublime is edged with the abject and death.

118 Smith, “Romeo’s Final Dream,” 580. This reading is at variance from Siegel’s historically nuanced thesis about the lover’s paradise in a literary tradition. Smith does not appear to have read either Siegel or Holland’s earlier articles. Smith’s “impression that the plot establishes the immortality of the lovers, their remarriage in heaven with consummation in the grave” (581) disregards the orthodox Christian stance towards suicide and its presence within the drama. This need not be a grave error. For examples of the view
As argued in the first and second parts of the chapter, “rosemary” is connected with the staging of Juliet’s death in act four, where “rosemary” might indicate the presence of death within a memory-laden desire. “Rosemary” also serves as an indicator of phantasies of the bride’s defloration (her own, those of the *dramatis personae*, and those of the audience), as well as signifying the immortal fate of the lovers. The “deaths” of the bridal bed is a theme that is transposed onto the final scene of highly sexualized self-murders in the drama. Romeo and Juliet are themselves linked by “rosemary” in an economy of desire that places death and loss within desire, decisively marrying desire to death. Juliet’s association of Romeo with rosemary thereby anticipates this climactic scene where death and Eros embrace, and Juliet’s own association with this flower used at weddings and funerals remarks the poetic metaphor of the bridal bed as a “bed of death” (5.2.28). In sum here, “rosemary” is a poetic symbol and letter in the unconscious joining dreams of sexual “transgression” with those of immortality.

As in Romeo’s prophetic dream, death pervades the dream of an erotic bliss in the lover’s final “immortal” union. The lovers enact a paradox of Freud’s mythical vision in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: death is realized as the aim of life, death as the end of the subject’s daemonic repetition of a sexual self-shattering. Quite in keeping with the obvious obstacles the lovers encounter to their desire, the drama presents what Freud might call the death drive in terms of the lovers’ vacillation in the direction of their erotic aggression. The lovers are crossed by a love supported by hatred, and by its masochistic turn that relentlessly dreams of death. Between a murderous love and self-murder the difference is obviously one of the direction of this phantasy of murder and death: towards the object of desire or the self.

that the lovers are not headed to this damnation through “desperation,” see Siegel, “Christianity and the Religion of Love,” 372-73; 388-89, and Leech, “The Moral Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet,” 15.

119 In the concluding pages of “Desire is Death,” Dollimore suggests that we can historicise Freud’s dualism by reading his myth of Eros and Thanatos in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* through Renaissance representations of a desire for death (382-84). See Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, 85-124, for an account of the Freudian texts that affirm “the fundamental economic principle in psychoanalysis, and then in its most radical form: the tendency to zero” (85). Dollimore’s own final detour through Laplanche’s text concludes that the originality of psychoanalysis would lie in the theory’s positing of a phantasied introjection of murder and destruction (384), but this is already discursively present in the Christic *imitatio* which Shakespeare translates into character for his theater of a masochistic sublime.
The drama’s troubling equation between sexuality and death is sustained by much of the poetic language submerging aggression in desire. In the second phantasy, the erotic desire supported by hate is turned inward. Romeo and Juliet’s final deaths appear to be occasioned by a “turning around upon the self” of murderous aggression. The self-murder is a formal reversal of direction that is represented as erotic, the much anticipated, sublime climax of the double catastrophe. If we have seen how one sort of defensive phantasy stages the “turning around” towards the object of the wounding “castration” subtending desire (“Prick love for pricking and you beat love down” [1.4.28]), in the scene of their deaths the direction of erotic aggression is reversed again. Further, in this masochistic excitation, the aggression that is “turned around” is explicitly sexualized in the subject’s wish to be “punished.” Might this notion of a sexualization helps explain the erotic charge of the deaths in the monument, the psychologically convincing presentation of “character,” and the audience’s protected participation in their drama? The relevance of this movement and its eroticism for the climactic catastrophe of Romeo and Juliet is that the suicides seem to simulate such a fundamental “turning around upon the self” in an attempt to repair or revenge lost love in an economy of phantasy. Do the imaginary identifications of the lovers with the lost beloved precipitate the murderous aggression against themselves? One critical principle of audience engagement might be sparing the spectator-subject this self-aggression while affording a vicarious “pleasure” in the spectacle.

Psychoanalytic and Shakespearean texts are in agreement on the principle of the subject’s radical “tendency to zero” in pursuing a masochistically inflected pleasure.

120 In his chapter on “Psychoanalysis and the Problem of Masochism,” Gilles Deleuze notes how Freud’s model of “masochism cannot simply be defined as a form of sadism turned around against the self,” demonstrating how masochistic pleasure is resexualized in this turning around in an erotogenicity that appears to be primary, ie, the aggression was not sexual before its turning back on the self. In Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989), esp. 104-106 (104).

121 In another line of argument suggesting aggression’s preservation in an erotic turn, there is an odd sense of simulating the other’s aggression when Romeo drinks off the Apothecary’s poison, a “repetition” of Juliet’s drinking of the Friar’s pharmakon. More to the point may be the manner in which, immediately after the aubade, a murderous death wish seems concealed under dramatic irony in Juliet’s conversation with Lady Capulet. Juliet concurs in her mother’s hatred of Romeo who has killed Tybalt, and describes her murderous, amorous passion in terms of poisoning him (3.5.94-103). The simulation of phantasied erotic violence is also present when Juliet stabs herself with Romeo’s dagger, “empty on the back of Montague, And it misheathed in my daughter’s bosom!” (5.3.204-05) To revisit Laplanche’s account of Freud’s “A Child Is Being Beaten,” the inward turn and internalization of a murderous aggression towards the lost object is called phantasmatization: it is in this turning around that “the fantasy, the unconscious, and sexuality in the form of masochistic excitation together emerge in a single movement.” Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, 97-102 (100).

122 See Freud’s apt comments on the ego’s overwhelming in love and suicide, in “Mourning and Melancholia,” II, 261.
By reviewing one of Freud's proposed exceptions to the pleasure principle, the child's repetitive staging of a scene of unpleasure in the second section of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, we might reach a better understanding of the nature of the spectator-subject's pleasure in the tragic scene. Like the child's satisfactions in the often-cited *fort-da* scene recounted by Freud, in theory, the spectator-subject's pleasure is due to the staging of loss and a substitutive, phantom revenge on a substitute for loss, the lovers that are thereby idealized. The spectator-subject's secure position of detachment in relation to the drama has been observed, a position further consolidated by his provisionally "sadistic" position of power-knowledge, a position that allows him to participate safely in the drama, to enjoy the pains of the *dramatis personae* through a displaced masochistic identification. The child is in no such detached position but nonetheless attempts to turn around his passivity at the traumatic scene of maternal abandonment (or "banishment") into an active mastery through its repetition in play: "Throwing the object away so that it was 'gone' might satisfy an impulse of the child's, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him" (77, 285). The game's "revenge" here is a simulation of the mother's absence that plays at "gone" to control it, to become master of the situation. The repeated staging and mastery of loss, however, is only pleasurable on the Pyrrhic principle of displacing pain onto the surrogate or phantom mother, a separation causing him pain also. Hence the child's "mastery is simultaneous with self-punishment; a fantasy of omnipotence and autonomy (...) is inseparable from a repetition of pain." 

Freud himself links this scene of play to that of artistic imitation and tragic drama. The playwright's imitations "do not spare the spectators (for instance, in tragedy) the most painful experiences and can yet be felt by them as highly enjoyable. This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are means and ways enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind" (287). Participation in the spectacle is enjoyable through an imaginary identification and punitive attitude; perhaps some enjoyment lies in the suspense between these positions, as in the displaced masochism of the sadistic position.

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124 However, Freud refutes the necessity of assuming "the existence of a special imitative instinct in order to provide a motive for play" (77, 287). The present discussion is also indebted to an interesting commentary on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in Girard's *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of*
The spectator-subject or reader's complex engagement in the "sweet sorrow" (2.2.184) of phantom parting proceeds from the narcissistic scar from which love springs ("He jests at scars that never felt a wound" [2.2.1]), the painful revisitation of loss in the imaginary bliss and final catastrophe of the lovers. This revisitation is directed to the ennoblement of the spectator's lack as sublime.\(^{125}\) Of course, the spectator-subject survives the catastrophe, a reversal of the fate "of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.310). As in Romeo's dream, the deadly word of "banished" or "banishment" to the lovers (3.2.12-13, 3.2.122, 3.2.124, 3.3.14, and so on) is reversed by dreaming of the couple's jouissance and the fulfillment of desire in death.

Love's Sacrifices: the Staging of Erotic Joy and ... Transcendence

As Holland notes, the fraternal amity at the drama's close reverses the families' hate, so that the overall action of the tragedy, at least on one narrative level, is a reversal from hate to love,\(^{126}\) from death to life, through sacrifice. The "through sacrifice" seems crucial to the drama's representation of a murderous drive that is turned around or interiorized, a sublime movement that is not quite a transcendence, as witnessed in the final sacrificial social order and its incipient rivalry. The sacrificial contract of God's Love is present in the discourse of desire and love, as in the trope of the shafts of "Young Abraham Cupid" (2.1.13) with which Romeo finds himself "sore enpierced" (1.4.19) in his castration-sodomy by Love. In Mercutio's witty poetic discourse, the nickname "Young Abraham Cupid" (2.1.13) might name the sacrificial force of desire as well as point to the erotic satisfactions of Romeo's Petrarchan passion as a self-sacrificing "Lover!" (2.1.7) At any rate, the drama's reversal of the feud and the Veronese lovers' destructive passion into a final vision of social harmony is effected through their self-sacrifice for love, what is made a


\(^{125}\) I would agree with Dollimore in "Desire is Death," that the drama is a phantasy representation of desire for the adult audience or reader, where "adolescent desire is something idealized from the position of loss." In Dollimore's reading death is summoned by the spectator to banish loss from desire, "to pre-empt the failure and loss which haunt adult desire" (380). His convincing thesis is that the drama functions for the nostalgic redemption of love through its phantasy representation of desire. Dollimore's reading dispenses with the psycho-analysis of the author that Kristeva pursues: "Nostalgia for amorous happiness? Nostalgia: nostos-return; algos-pain." In "Romeo and Juliet: Love-Hatred in the Couple," esp. 216-20 (219). My emphasis directs Dollimore's thesis regarding the phantasy representation of desire to a more deliberate staging of this transfiguration of desire's losses in a sublime theater of masochism.

\(^{126}\) Holland, "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," 103.
“sacrifice” to remedy fraternal hate. As argued above, the love-death embrace of the double catastrophe discloses an erotic quality to this self-aggression, where the display of masochistic self-murder for love precedes the scene of social reconciliation. The plenitude of God’s Love and projective identifications with Him are notably moved into a secular passion in *Romeo and Juliet*, but this “being” can only be supported through the lovers’ self-sacrifices, a “Passion!” (2.1.7) in which only one’s own death can satisfy desire.127

To recapitulate, the sacrificial action of the drama is directed to the phantasied reversal of life for death, while also restaging loss and its pain, redeeming it in a phantasy offered to the audience. The drama stages a transcendence in the phantasy of the lovers’ immortality in death, a transcendence supported by the sublime internalization of violence. As suggested in the Introduction, *Romeo and Juliet* presents a poetics of the desiring subject’s “sacrifice” of the other (both romantic and sodomitical others) in its “purblind” (2.1.12) misprision, where the converse movement of internalizing erotic aggression supports the sublime vision of Love. If the common courtly tradition’s “praise of sexual love as a manifestation of God’s creative capacity” is present in the drama, this creative capacity of God in sexual love is partly due to the reconciliation effected through the self-sacrifices of the lovers. Sexual love’s self-sacrifices to the ideal other become the model for a cosmic love, where this redemptive love is “the bond holding together human society as well as the universe itself.”128 The drama’s reconciliation between discourses of Christian Love and secular *passion* serves to promote another religion of love in a theater of masochism.

The romantic tragedy draws on a medieval literary tradition of a religion of love still influential in the Renaissance. In “Christianity and the Religion of Love in *Romeo and Juliet*,” Paul N. Siegel argues that “it is the lovers’ paradise of the religion of love, not the after-life of Christian religion, which is adumbrated at the end of the tragedy,” i.e., a Cupid’s heaven.129 Although Siegel’s actual textual analysis of the drama is quite limited, his argument is convincing.130 He argues that in Romeo’s commitment to love, he chooses

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127 Compare Dollimore, “Desire is Death,” 379.
129 Siegel, “Christianity and the Religion of Love,” 373.
130 Apart from the critic’s own wishful phantasies of vicarious transcendence, Siegel’s argument is persuasive because a “religion of love” was a historical and literary ground of opposition to the type of Christian morality found in Brooke’s narrative: “We shall see how the tenets of the religion of love - that Love is an all-powerful god, that he exercises his dominion particularly over the young, that his rule is a
death, attaining to tragic heroism in his line, "Is it e'en so? Then I defy you, stars!" (5.1.24). Siegel suggests that Romeo evades the punishment of perdition for suicide in the Christian religion by his devotion to the religion of love. Siegel argues that the audience's knowledge of the religion of love would encourage them to view Romeo and Juliet's love as transcendent in death, as a triumph over death in which their reunion in the tomb signals their ascension into a lovers' paradise. The wish for immortality in the lovers' deaths is also, critically, a matter of spectatorial engagement and participation in the drama's phantasies, an affirmation of (the contradiction of) Romeo's dream. Siegel's comments on Romeo's dream anticipate his argument for "the coming triumph of the lovers over death":

The act begins with Romeo's telling of the happy dream he has had, in which Juliet, finding him dead, "breathed such life with kisses in my lips" that he "revived, and was an emperor" (V.i.8-9). This dream is ironically false in accordance with the folk belief that dreams go by contraries. In another sense, however, it is profoundly true, for, as we shall see, it signifies the coming triumph of the lovers over death.

However, as Holland remarks, the reversal that Siegel finds of life for death can be viewed as another wish-fulfilment germane to the "highly poetic convention" he explores. Siegel is correct when he says "[t]his dream is ironically false in accordance with the folk belief that dreams go by contraries," as the dream obviously does go by a series of contraries from the ironic perspective afforded the spectator in retrospect: Romeo does not revive from Juliet's kiss, nor Juliet from Romeo's, though the revivals of phantasy are present in Romeo's dream or when Juliet kisses Romeo's poisoned lips hoping to "die with a restorative" (5.3.166).

The truth of the dream includes Romeo's phantasy of transgression in the tomb as a "bed of death" (5.2.28). This bridal bed of pleasure for the immortal lovers is another bottomless dream of sexual bliss and death translated into spiritual rebirth. The dream is instrumental in staging both the lovers' jouissance and in effecting the trajectory of the lovers' projected immortality and transcendence. I have argued that Romeo's dream is a matter of the dramatist's staging such phantasy for the spectator's participation. The drama-as-dream manages to offer vicarious phantasies of transgressive enjoyment and a redemption by

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131 Siegel, "Christianity and the Religion of Love," 388.
132 Siegel, "Christianity and the Religion of Love," 388.
vicarious atonement. This double-business is achieved through the playwright’s adaptation of the ob-scene jouissance supporting the Passion to the staged tragedy of an excessive, death-bound passion. *Romeo and Juliet* offers a reconciliation between Christian Love and its rival religion of love in a translation of the former doctrine into an erotic experience of the sacred, thus promoting itself as a rival religion and theater of Love’s sacrifices.
Chapter Three
A Shakespearean “Scene of Writing” with Marlowe: A Reading of Bloom and a Bloomian Reading

The third chapter shifts the objects of psychoanalytic scrutiny to that of the author “Shakespeare” and to some current critical investments in his authority. The present chapter takes the previous foci on gender instability and the subject’s subversion and locates them at an authorial “scene of writing” via Bloom’s theory of influence. The inquiry into the scenes of desire investigated in the first two chapters is renewed; in particular, the scenes of homoerotic desire and fratricidal rivalry are grafted onto the “scene of writing” of the dissertation’s title. Varying an emphasis of the first two chapters, how phantasy subtends and regulates ideal gender identification, the third chapter speculates on authorial subjectivity and the question of gender at a scene of writing; that is, the argument shifts from examining Shakespeare’s investigation of desire, phantasy and gendered subjectivity, to the author Shakespeare’s negotiation of literary influence at a scene of writing.

I take as axiomatic that our idea of “Shakespeare,” his person and sexuality, guides our critical readings, even when this is not apparent. This becomes especially evident when discussing literary influence and a scene of writing. As a cultural text, Shakespeare has played and continues to play a historical role in “authorizing” disciplining notions of subjectivity: if the Freudian and Lacanian discourses are as “Shakespearean” as I have been arguing, it is unsurprising that Shakespeare can be found backprojected at a scene of writing negotiating lack or loss in economies of misrecognition and a libido dominandi.

I begin by asking if the critical blindspot of Harold Bloom’s theory of literary influence might be the strong poet’s proper gender identification in anxiously disavowing the castrating influence of the precursor. I essentially argue that the poet’s anxiety and melancholia in Bloom’s psychopoetics of influence appears as a displaced version of the agonistic consolidation of proper Oedipal (heterosexual) masculinity, a poetic self assumed under the negated threat of a phantom castration-sodomy by the precursor. The strong poet’s repression of influence-as-castration apparently follows the route of a primal repression of castration in gender identification, a “repudiation of femininity” that refuses a passive relation to the father, dreaming of his own originary plenitude and puissance. With grandly desperate wit, Bloom’s family romance narrative
collapses the refusal of influence onto a refusal of passive homosexual desire in mere imitation, a
tendentious grafting in Bloom’s account from which it draws rhetorical force via the cultural interdiction on
homosexuality. Perversely following the implications of his theory, I suggest that Bloom tracks
Shakespeare’s absolute incarnation of the poetic character as a process of phantasmatic identification with
the precursor which repudiates mimetic desire - repudiates imitation as a castrating, homosexual desire - in
the revisionary ratios, i.e., Bloom’s strong poet disavows his castration by the precursor, where castration is
an effect of a poetic covenant and emulation. I anatomize the rhetorical appeal of Bloom’s pronouncement,
in Shakespeare, about Shakespeare’s gaining artistic freedom from Christopher Marlowe with the creation
of Falstaff.

Why not view Bloom’s assertion about Falstaff’s creation as grounded in the assumptions of his own
theory about the catastrophic sources of literary creation? Bloom’s book on Shakespeare offers an ongoing
psycho-biography of a “fictional” author where these originary losses are homophilic in nature. Bloom’s
highly speculative “spiritual biography” is largely derived from the works and a few historical anecdotes,
drawing especially on the two Antonios and the first person speaker of the Sonnets. I propose that through
Bloom’s own tacit Falstaffian identification as a Socratic tutor, his own vaunted misprision, he participates
in Shakespeare’s melancholic authority and promotes his vision of the playwright’s puissant, proper
authority through an agon with Marlowe that the playwright, Bloom insists, simply transcends. That is, I
submit that Bloom’s account of Shakespeare’s literary negotiations with Christopher Marlowe ought to be
read for its investments in promoting Shakespeare’s unimpaired masculinity and melancholic authority via
his emblematic renunciation-sacrifice of homosexual desire at a scene of fratricidal rivalry. I show how
Bloom is seduced by the “author” and Shakespeare’s ideal authority in a critical trajectory of assuming
Falstaffian authority, identifying with the murdered surrogate father.

The chapter then turns to look at other critics who examine the Marlowe-Shakespeare relation of
influence at a scene of writing, querying the investments made in or through the construction of this scene,
investments in Marlowe and the Shakespeare who is not Marlowe. I subsequently pursue my own

1 Bloom, Shakespeare, 296.
Bloomian variation on Shakespeare’s psychomachia in his negotiation of influence, where the playwright grafts an authorial scene of writing onto scenes of homoerotic conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* and other plays, wittily staging his *Tyger’s hart* in the turning around of his previous “castration” by the precursor(s).

An epilogue returns to the question of the “author function” and the critic’s imaginary participation in the author’s psychomachia or spiritual autobiography. I turn to the previously guiding present-absent text to Bloom’s analyses of Shakespeare’s catastrophic creation of Falstaff, suggesting that Bloom’s recourse to the Sonnets for describing Shakespeare’s scene of writing is paradoxically orthodox in terms of gender ideology: this style of criticism is ideologically and psychically invested in reproducing Shakespeare’s ideal authority, particularly where the sonneteer’s “illicit” (ie., sodomitical) desire is maintained in the structure of the fetish. I suggest how Oscar Wilde’s novella, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” another text concerned with the Sonnets, puts into fiction the “Shakespearean” problematic of stable identity and the erotic draw of sexual and textual indeterminacy. I point to how Wilde’s novella theorizes through its titular portrait the type of interpretative misprision elaborated by Bloom in his theory of influence, oddly anticipating and “framing” Bloom’s quasi-religious participation in Shakespeare’s melancholic authority.

A Reading of Bloom’s Theory of Poetic Influence: Rhetoric and Gender Matters

In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom offers a theory of literary influence where the precursor’s influence on the ephebe poet is described in terms of (a repetition of) family romance, a troping of Freud. At the beginning of this story, Bloom posits the ephebe poet’s necessary early imitation of the precursor in terms of an impossible battle for priority and an Oedipal phantasy of power-pleasure, an appropriative rivalry for “being” in which the poet heroically fails, like Milton’s Satan. However, the repeated encounter and failure is the source of the strong poet’s creativity in a model of the poetic will that is truly catastrophic. In Bloom’s model, the author-son is the object of an election-love: he is both flooded and fixated by the precursor’s text and is doomed to ceaseless, heroic textual rivalry.

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passion must protect him against desire, against his unconscious fear of castration by the prime precursor or father-poet with tropes and psychic defences resulting in new revisionary ratios (describing the successive relations between the poets and their poems). The strong poet's defence against influence's castration is effected, in Bloom's trope, through interpretative misprision or strong misreadings of the precursor which involve mitigating or reversing (in phantasy) the castrating influence. Much of the above brief description of Bloom's theory of poetic influence will be unpacked for its crucial assumptions, including how his terminology promotes a hyperbolic and rather limited view of poetic influence as a parricidal, mythic battle between son and father in a repeating psychomachia scene. This chapter locates Bloom's hyperbolic formulations of the poet's defenses against the anxiety of influence in relation to his own assumption of critical authority via his seductive rhetoric of mourning lost love, together with mourning a lost presence and authority to be repaired with this sublime literary agon.

Before reviewing Bloom's slightly cryptic pronouncements regarding Marlowe's literary influence on Shakespeare, I isolate several interdependent components in his theory of influence, beginning with the troping of influence as a castration endangering the poet's gender identity. I look at the figurations of lack

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Bloom’s theorizing, esp. 69-86 in chapter four, “Scenes of instruction: the limits of Bloom’s psychopoetics.” Allen notes the merging of several vocabularies (Kierkegaardian, Kabbalistic, Gnostic, Freudian) to construct this nebulous scene: “This merging of vocabularies produces Bloom’s account of the primal scene of instruction as a primal scene of instruction as an initial fixation and repression, an account that dominates Poetry and Repression and the texts that succeed it” (79).

Bloom’s vision is polemical and claims to be corrective. One of the results is a failure to adequately address the conscious mediation of influence and the possibilities of generosity in influence. For instance: “If the [catastrophic] imagination's gift comes necessarily from the perversity of the spirit, then the living labyrinth of literature is built upon the ruin of every impulse most generous in us” (The Anxiety of Influence, 85; see also 26-27, 30). Also problematic is Bloom’s offering a prelapsarian vision of influence in “a great age before the Flood, when influence was generous (or poets in their innermost natures thought it so), an age that goes all the way from Homer to Shakespeare” (122), though this vision of “love and emulation” without anxiety is effectively displaced as always already lost.


in Bloom’s catastrophe theory of literary creation, the strong poet’s phantom identification with the major precursor, the insistent trope of the poet’s melancholia in relation to his lack of priority (with its possible relation to proper gender identification from a reading of Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia,” suggesting alternative genealogies for the poet’s melancholia and anxiety), the seductive force of the scene of the father’s murder in terms of providing an illusory anchor to poetic meaning, and how the plenum of the father’s text and authority are guaranteed by this figurative murder which the theory of influence focuses on, that is, how the poet’s murderous “misprision” ensures the father’s retrospective, elegiac, encrypted authority.

Bloom’s theory tropes poetic influence as a castration of the ephebe poet, where the poet’s threatened loss of identity as a poet can be understood in terms of a continual defence against this castration undoing proper gender identity. That is, poetic identity has its analogue in a defensive, combative masculine gender identity, an identity supported by lack and misprision and phantasmatically pursued through rivalry and aggression (in the register of the imaginary). In short, I would like to suggest that the impossibility of achieving an ideal gender identification is a crucial analogue that appears to support Bloom’s narrative of the doomed failure of the poet’s achievement of identity as a poet, except perhaps in the “achieved anxiety” of the poem.  

The poet’s being as a poet is a plenum offered and threatened by the precursor: his poetic “being” is sustained by the particular primal repression of his castration vis-à-vis the precursor, and this castration is understood as an emasculation by the precursor: “We can say that anxiety and desire are the antinomies of the ephebe or beginning poet. The anxiety of influence is an anxiety in anticipation of being flooded.”  

(Anxiety is thus like desire, an anticipatory affect the poet cleaves to through the memorialization of trauma.) The strong poet’s repression of influence-as-castration apparently follows the path of the primal

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5 Regarding the poem as an “achieved anxiety,” see, for one example among many, The Anxiety of Influence, 96.
6 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 57.
repression of castration in proper gender identification, the "repudiation of femininity" and its supposed castration; but these repressions nevertheless dominate the poet’s psychic/phantasy life. Bloom takes on Freud’s assumption regarding proper gender identification, where an untheorized "masculinity" sustains itself by refusing a passive relation to the father, dreaming of its own originary plenitude and puissance. This family romance narrative collapses the refusal of influence onto a refusal of a passive homosexual desire in mere imitation, a tendentious grafting in Bloom’s account from which it draws rhetorical force via the cultural interdiction on homosexuality. In the inevitable, inescapable mimesis of literary influence and tradition, Bloom’s deployment of the ideological slippage from the “castration” of imitation to a stigmatized homosexuality tropes the propelling misprision underwriting the poet’s failed subjectivity as other, as a matter of homosexual fault, displacing castration onto this abject figure who thereby becomes available for a concurrent idealization and sentimental reappropriation.

When Bloom states that influence is a victimization, we understand this as figurative language describing the psychic battles effected in the ephebe’s strategic misinterpretations in reading and rewriting the precursor, language describing the murderous intra-poetic relations between poet and precursor. There is a crucial sense, however, in which the "scene of writing" in Bloom’s theory shifts from the psychic warfare of troping between poems to the naïve literalism of poets engaged in agonistic struggle at a scene, a scene imagined as both an authorial psychomachia and a primal scene of castration. At this primal scene, the ephebe’s flooding castration by the parent poem (i.e., the castration of influence) has its castration counterpart in a phantom sodomy, marking the poet’s generative castration and his anxiety therein. Bloom’s trope of a castration that has always already occurred and yet still threatens (repeated) self-loss should be familiar from the second chapter’s study of Romeo and Juliet, a text I return to.

8 Bloom, “Freud and the Sublime,” 116. Also see Bloom, commenting in The Anxiety of Influence on Freud’s tactful contemplation of his revisionists (29).
9 For example: “Poetic Influence is not a separation but a victimization - it is a destruction of desire” (The Anxiety of Influence, 38). In effect, influence is a mystical union in which violent misprision and figurative sacrifice substitute for an otherwise emasculating desire (for example, that of a loving imitation).
10 See Bloom’s prologue to The Anxiety of Influence, “It Was A Great Marvel That They Were In The Father Without Knowing Him,” 3. Does the “Prologue” act as a retrospective summation of the theory’s guiding “unthought,” wittily suggesting that the lost plenum of being (“the Fullness”) is a censored
A Catastrophe Theory of Creation

I offer the special case of the anxiety of influence as a variety of the uncanny. A man’s unconscious fear of castration manifests itself as an apparently physical trouble in his eyes; a poet’s fear of ceasing to be a poet frequently manifests itself also as a trouble of his vision. Either he sees too clearly, with a tyranny of sharp fixation, as though his eyes asserted themselves against the rest of him as well as against the world, or else his vision becomes veiled, and he sees all things through an estranging mist.11

In “Freud and the Sublime,” Bloom reads Freud’s text for a catastrophe theory of creativity, attributing creativity to the subject’s attempt to master lack or the “narcissistic scar.”12 In the vein of Beyond the Pleasure Principle, poetic re-presentation is supposed to retroactively master the trauma of lack or castration, with “art as an achieved anxiety in the agonistic struggle both to repeat and to defer the repetition of the catastrophe of creative origins.”13 Castration in this view is evidently a trope describing a catastrophic loss that is creative and uncannily repeats, a trope for the “misprision” of misinterpreting the precursor poem in writing poetry, and a trope for the misrecognition of the poetic self in the other.14

In Bloom’s theory, the romance of literary influence is sustained by the ephebe’s wilful refusal of this castration by the precursor. As noted above, the castration by the precursor is likened to an “election-love” proximity with the father before the fall into a passion, a casting necessary to establish the agonistic spacing of the poet’s proper identity?

11 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 77-78.
12 Bloom, 97. Also see Bloom’s formulations in “Freud’s Concepts of Defence and the Poetic Will,” in Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism.
13 Bloom, “Freud and the Sublime,” 97. Also see Bloom’s earliest comments on the fort-da game in The Anxiety of Influence, 81-82, 87.
14 In a rather abrupt appropriation of Lacan’s authority, Bloom claims that he formulated his theory of “misprision” in poetic influence “before I had read Lacan, but which I was delighted to find supported in him.” In “Freud and the Sublime,” 109.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has written provocatively of the possibility that “homosexual panic” might be the motive force producing many cultural texts, especially those with potent “images of agonistic male self-constitution.” In Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 147. Sedgwick elucidates how the modern reader might be seduced by the rhetorical repudiation of desire within the representation of an originary “scene of instruction.” Following Nietzsche, she suggests “that the philosophic and erotic potential lodged in this modern pedagogic-pederastic speech situation comes not from some untainted mine of “Hellenic” potency that could be directly tapped but, rather, from the shocking magnetism exerted by such a fantasy across (i.e., because of) the not-to-be-undone bar of Christian prohibitive categorization. Modern homosexual panic represents, it seems, not a temporally imprisoning obstacle to philosophy and culture but, rather, the latent energy that can hurtle them far beyond their own present place of knowledge” (139). This homosexual panic can also be understood as the poet’s anxious fear of a castration that has already occurred, a fear in part mobilized by an ideological assignment of castration to homosexuality.
by Bloom, a “speculative” identification with the precursor and his text that suffers repression and fixation. The poet maintains the disavowal of castration in the structure of the fetish, that is, a structure containing both the disavowal and affirmation of castration. Indeed, the structure of the fetish might describe the poet’s contradictory stance towards the speculative debts of poetic identification and influence as well as influence’s phantom sodomy. Both the poet’s identification with the precursor and his literary imitation then undergo a repression with a subsequent return of the repressed in writing.

Bloom fits the poet’s agonistic creation of the poetic text into Freud’s famous fort-da paradigm of symbolic activity with its murderous, playful will to mastery. Bloom uses the fort-da paradigm as suggestive for the poet’s quest for self-begetting autonomy: “Conceptually the central problem for the latecomer necessarily is repetition, for repetition dialectically raised to re-creation is the ephebe’s road of excess, leading him away from the horror of finding himself to be only a copy or replica.”15 The strong poet’s creative repetition participates in a phantasy of power, autonomy and priority, though this phantasy evidently coincides with a masochistic self-punishment, repeating the traumata of influence. In his appropriative mimesis, the ephebe is saved by misprision (or “mistaking”) in his repetition of the precursor. Of course, the castration of separation and the painful, “playful” repetition of the fort-da is not a perfect analogue for the castration of poetic influence and a swerving artistic creation, but it signals how the subject has been cut off from a mythical plenitude, to which he unconsciously, anxiously seeks to return.

In Bloom’s theory of catastrophic creation, the creative will is sustained by a heroic refusal to mourn loss. As a leitmotif in his book, Bloom likens his strong poet to Milton’s Satan, “calling his minions to emulate his refusal to mourn,” becoming heroic and adequate to his task of creation in the refusal to mourn or acknowledge loss.16 Bloom asserts that the poet’s heroic refusal of a lack of priority is the source of his melancholia.17 I now wish to reconsider how this repeated grounding principle for his text, of the questing strong poet’s refusal of a lack of priority, might be related to other refusals that are grafted onto it in this

family romance. These other phantom refusals include that of a sodomitical castration and a prohibited homophilic attachment, refusals aligned with those arch rebuttals of literary imitation or emulation.  

The Poet’s Perverse Refusal of Loss: Melancholic Identity, Melancholic Authority

Granting the often refreshing insights gained by Bloom’s approach to intertextual rivalry, I wish to investigate the manner in which the theory stages mystical identificatory phantasms, phantasms that reiterate the agonistic logic of proper heterosexual gender identification as the hidden route to the incarnation of poetic character. In this brief reading of Bloom, I use Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” to observe the parallel trajectories of the strong poet’s refusal to mourn his lack of priority and his refusal to mourn lost love, how the former is grafted onto the latter in Bloom’s text, showing how the poet’s melancholic identity is supported by such refusals of gender. In other words, in Bloom’s theory of influence, the poet’s antithetical questing after the immortality of priority (“priority in divination”) is bolstered by the narrative in which his identity as a poet is coextensive with an agonistic gender identity that figuratively murders the homosexual object and aim.

Bloom’s statement of the principle of priority in poetic divination is central to his theory: “Everything that makes up this book - parables, definitions, the working through of the revisionary ratios as mechanisms of defence - intends to be part of a unified meditation on the melancholy of the creative mind’s desperate insistence upon priority.” Bloom is fond of repeating this point in his other books on literary influence. In “Freud’s Concept of Defence and the Poetic Will,” Bloom records his debt to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra for his insight into the poetic will’s melancholic bondage to a consciousness of the past achievement of history, a bondage that can be redeemed in his will to recreate the past. Deferring to Nietzsche’s authority, Bloom asks us to subscribe to the belief that the poet’s melancholia derives from a consciousness of his lack of

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18 In Bloom’s own theory, all of these refusals reach their uncanny moment of return and apotheosis in the poet’s phantom identification with the precursor, in the apophrades in which the castrating identification and imitation are affirmed in the strong poet’s final revisionary ratio. See Bloom in The Anxiety of Influence, 15-16, 139-155.


priority vis-à-vis the precursor. I would suggest that the poet's wounding lack of priority is perhaps too ideal as the sole motivation for agonistic self-creation.

Rather, the poet's melancholia might be understood in terms of a Freudian genealogy of melancholia in the subject's refusal to mourn loss. Specifically, might the source of the poet's melancholic being be traced to the poet's lost love and subsequent phantasmatic identification with the precursor? In Bloom's apparently inverted narrative of the poet's progress, it is through an excess of self-love that the ephebe sustains an election-love in which he unconsciously identifies with a major precursor. But this excess always begins with the self as other. Of course, the strong poet disavows his emulation of the precursor's work and person, the heroic lie supposedly necessary to his survival as a poet, a negation that figuratively murders the precursor. If the poet's murderous misprision includes his swerving misinterpretation and rewriting of the precursor in a clinamen, the poet's misprision also describes his phantom identification with the precursor at a primal scene of "seduction" and castration. What Bloom himself calls "castration" might be understood less as a lack of priority that in terms of the narcissistic scar of lack and the overcoming of this impairment in phantasies involving the "turning around" of castration at a scene.

Bloom's theory of poetic misprision makes the lure of a speculative identification, of méconnaissance, into an agonistic, anticipatory assumption of the precursor's being as one's own, elaborating the poet's restaging of the precursor's text and person as a primordial "lost object" and the tropic defences guarding against and preserving that loss. Indeed, the poet's lack is the starting point of his quest in Bloom's allegorical desire for origins or "originology." The ephebe's murderous "revisionary ratios" are the source of his vitality, the means by which he pursues his mystical identification with the daemonic other. Bloom eschews other sorts of poetic influence (such as "the transmission of ideas and images") as "fair materials for source-hunters and biographers," describing poetic identification in terms of a poetic incarnation:

Yet a poet's stance, his Word, his imaginative identity, his whole being, must be unique to him, and remain unique, or he will perish, as a poet, if ever even he has managed his re-birth into

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22 The phrase "originology" to describe Bloom's theory is Fineman's, in "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," The Subjectivity Effect, 5.
poetic incarnation. But this fundamental stance is as much also his precursor’s as any man’s fundamental nature is also his father’s, however transformed, however turned about.23

Might we understand the strong poet’s unconscious identification with the influential precursor to follow the path of the ego’s establishment and building up as due to the incorporation of disavowed lost love? In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud postulates the process of a phantom identification with the lost object replacing an object cathexis, a melancholic strategy in which the subject refuses to acknowledge loss, where the lost love or loss of an ideal is withdrawn from consciousness. Rather than acknowledge this loss, the ego identifies with the figuratively murdered object (“the forsaken object”) in order to “magically” preserve the attachment:

The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up. This substitution of identification for object-love is an important mechanism in the narcissistic affections (11, 258).

In The Ego and the Id, Freud gives a similar account of the genesis of the ego as an entity through the narcissistic defence of incorporating loss, speculating that the ego’s incorporation of the lost object is a strategy to make the id love it as the lost love-object (11, 367-69).24 Freud suggests this defence of identification might be the universal road to sexual sublimation:

The transformation of object-libido into narcissistic libido which thus takes place obviously implies an abandonment of sexual aims, a desexualization - a kind of sublimation, therefore. Indeed, the question arises, and deserves careful consideration, whether this is not the universal road to sublimation, whether all sublimation does not take place through the mediation of the ego, which begins by changing object libido into narcissistic libido and then, perhaps, goes on to give it another aim. (11, 369)

The sublimation that is poetry, in Bloom’s reading of Freud’s text,25 achieves immortality and authority by the figurative murder or sacrifice of desire for the precursor, what nonetheless results in an incorporation of his text and person. The sublimation that is poetry is also a narcissistic self-elaboration at the price of this

23 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 71.
24 Freud might be correct in assuming that the child’s first identifications with lost objects will be influential. This is certainly the model for a Bloomian poetic influence and identification: “But, whatever the character’s later capacity for resisting the influences of abandoned object-cathexes may turn out to be, the effects of the first identifications made in earliest childhood will be general and lasting. This leads us back to the origin of the ego-ideal; for behind it there lies hidden an individual’s first and most important identification, his identification with the father of his own personal prehistory” (The Ego and the Id, 11, 370, my italics). However, diverging from Freud, Bloom maintains that the precursor is absorbed not as part of the ego-ideal or super-ego, but as part of the id. See The Anxiety of Influence, 71, and A Map of Misreading, 49-50.
repeated murder of the forsaken love-object, though crucially with all the pathos of the poet’s masochistic self-punishment and interminable melancholia. The poet’s strength is due to his perverse or wilful misprision, his “disciplined perversity” in murdering (desire for) the precursor with its homology to the sacrifice of the homosexual object in pursuing an agonistic, melancholic gender identity. Significantly, through a return to Freud’s text, my revisionist account of Bloom’s theory departs from his own fiercely sexless genealogy of the poet’s melancholia.

If the poet’s melancholia is at least in part due to his phantom identification with the disavowed, figuratively murdered love, might his anxiety also be due to a phantom identification with the encrypted homosexual aim and object that constitute his proper, agonistic gender identity? Or rather, by the curious homology noted earlier between poetic and gender identity, constitute his “being” as a poet? Where Bloom constantly links these two phenomena of melancholia and anxiety, attributing them to the ephebe’s lack of priority and fear of losing his identity as a poet, his account seems a displaced account of a Freudian narrative of melancholic gender identity and the anxiety attendant on a phantom identification with homosexuality constituting that heterosexual gender identity.26

If identification with the father paves the way for the normal Oedipal complex, its precedent and shadow is an ideal “resolution” of the so-called negative Oedipal complex. In Gender Trouble, Butler writes of how gender formation is coextensive with the Oedipal complex’s resolution that dictates gendered substitutions along the lines of identification (with the father) and desire (for the mother):

As a set of sanctions and taboos, the ego ideal regulates and determines masculine and feminine identification. Because identifications substitute for object relations, and identifications are a consequence of loss, gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited subject is internalized as prohibition. This prohibition sanctions and regulates discrete gendered identity and the law of heterosexual desire. The resolution of the Oedipal complex affects gender identification through not only the incest taboo, but, prior to that, the taboo

25 For Bloom’s view on Freudian sublimation and his own revision of Freud’s view of substitution, see The Anxiety of Influence, 8-10, 118-20.
26 Even where he substitutes guilt for anxiety, Bloom’s description of the poet’s guilt in eating the “portion” of the precursor is instructive (The Anxiety of Influence, 115). The poet’s guilt is perhaps the result of the “turning back into the ego of homosexual attachment,” a turning back that is the consequence of ungrievable loss and results in its internalization as melancholic identification. Bloom’s theory of influence stages the heterosexual logic by which the poet’s refusal to desire, the “sacrifice of desire under the force of prohibition, will incorporate homosexuality as an identification with masculinity” (Butler, The Psychic Life of Power, esp. 137-43 [141; 138]).
against homosexuality. The result is that one identifies with the same-sexed object of love, thereby internalizing both the aim and the object of homosexual cathexis. The identifications consequent to melancholia are modes of preserving unresolved object relations, and in the case of same-sexed identification, the object relations are invariably homosexual. Indeed, the stricter and more stable the gender affinity, the less resolved the original loss, so that rigid gender boundaries inevitably work to conceal the loss of an original love that, unacknowledged, fails to be resolved.27

The melancholic preservation of homosexual cathexes is effected through a disavowal that is extended in the repeated refusals of that love. Butler describes how this refusal

results in a melancholic structure which effectively encloses that aim and object within the corporeal space or ‘crypt’ established through an abiding denial. If the heterosexual denial of homosexuality results in melancholia and if melancholia operates through incorporation, then the disavowed homosexual love is preserved through the cultivation of an oppositionally defined gender identity.28

Such an account of melancholia suggests that what Bloom repeatedly calls the perverse strength of the poet’s misprision, the route of his mystical poetic incarnation, follows the melancholic strategy of encryptment preserving disavowed love in “an oppositionally defined gender identity.” Another subject here is the question of an anxious pleasure in the passion of influence, an anxious pleasure derived from the logically anterior and “internalized” danger of the precursor’s “astral” influence.29

Following this line of thinking, the “anxiety of influence” is due to the proton pseudos of a castrating influence, a memory of a primal seduction and castration that attacks the ephebe from within. If the anxiety is due to the traumatic memory of his lack of “priority” in receiving from the precursor, this memory of lack that results in his aggressive drive to turn this relationship around is being troped as such a sodomitical scene by the poet in Bloom’s discourse.30 Despite Bloom’s odd protest that the sublimation of sexual instincts play “no part in the dialectic of misprision,”31 might the ephebe’s disavowal of love of the

27 Butler, Gender Trouble, 63.
28 Butler, Gender Trouble, 69.
29 This is Bloom’s own trope of poetic influence as an astral influx, “an ethereal fluid flowing in upon one from the stars, a fluid that affected one’s character and destiny,” or more epigrammatically, as “an astral disease” (The Anxiety of Influence, 26; 95). The sodomitical valence of the poet’s castration or “curtailment” is a barely submerged trope throughout Bloom’s text, also evident in his naming the poet an ephebe. The trope of a sodomitical reversal in influence is determined by the agonistic, imaginary staging of gender identity qua poetic identity, or vice versa.
30 In his review article “War in Heaven,” Geoffrey Hartman makes the similar observation that Bloom’s account of influence condenses notions of priority and authority so that “they merge and become a single, overwhelming proton pseudos,” in Diacritics 3:1 (1973): 26-32 (29). I am reading for the poet’s authority via a proper, puissant gender that must negotiate “castration.”
31 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 115.
precursor's text and person support the dialectic of misprision in which ephebe and precursor contend in his psychic battleground? If we grant Bloom's literalizing terms for describing the imagination, a scene of influence always precedes the murderous dialectic of misprision. This first scene is of the precursor's "writing" of the ephebe, what Bloom calls a "scene of instruction," an "election-love" that is essentially a primal seduction. The result of the first scene of a loving castration is to lock the ephebe into an endless embrace with his precursor. Paradoxically, the melancholic poet's (self-)punishing, phantom identification with his precursor is perhaps his prime defense against the love that would consign him to passivity, weak imitation, and failure as a poet.

The second scene in this model of influence is the one of the sublimated aggression of poetry, an aggression directed towards the reversal of priority. (Incidentally, the revisionary ratios all follow this basic pattern of the poet's passive contraction followed by the active reversal of an expansion.) The successful quest for a reversal ("metalepsis") of priority in poetic divination, impossible in temporal terms, is given the name of apophrades as a sixth and final revisionary ratio. Priority in poetic divination is sought by a tropic "turning around" of the previous castration of influence, so that the ephebe now stands behind the precursor and even seems to have "written the precursor's characteristic work" rather than vice versa.

32 In another review of The Anxiety of Influence, Paul de Man objects to Bloom's "naturalistic language of desire, possession, and power," what he considers a "relapse into a psychological realism" and its narratives. Review article in Comparative Literature 26:3 (1974): 269-75 (272).

33 Bloom, "The Scene of Instruction," in A Map of Misreading. As part of his engagement with Derrida, Bloom writes that this second birth of the poet as poet, this election-love is "love unconditioned in its giving, but wholly conditioned to passivity in receiving. Behind any Scene of Writing, at the start of every intertextual encounter, there is this unequal love, where necessarily the giving famishes the receiver. The receiver is set on fire, and yet the fire belongs only to the giver" (51). Bloom seems to be describing a pederastic-pedagogical configuration often attributed to a potent tradition of "Hellenic" philosophy.

34 In the opening pages of The Anxiety of Influence, Bloom frames his argument with a portrait of Wilde's failure as a poet and deploys the connotative truth of his (homosexual) intelligence as the source of his dark knowledge concerning influence: "Oscar Wilde, who knew he had failed as a poet because he lacked strength to overcome his anxiety of influence, knew also the darker truths concerning influence" (5-6). Bloom's implicit contention is that Wilde makes an inadequate sacrifice of "homosexual," essentially imitation desire in his poetry. In effect, a castrating mimetic desire is joined to a phantom "homosexuality." In Bloom's rhetoric, Wilde's "customary intelligence" (6) is characterized by a trace of repetition and derivation, a putatively homosexual "fault." Bloom locates Wilde's "dark knowledge concerning influence" in Lord Henry Wotton's famous denunciation of influence, what is, to my mind, a knowledge of the anticipatory and scripted nature of an alienated identity: but Bloom does not recognize this as an aspect of his own decidedly Wildean theory, insisting rather on the immorality of this influence (6). For a perspicuous reading of Dorian's self-recognition in this exchange with Lord Henry, see Edelman's essay "Homographesis," in Homographesis, 15-18.

35 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 16.
Might the submerged trope of a sodomitical reversal here be overdetermined by the agonistic staging of a puissant gender identification *qua* poetic identity? In Bloom’s theory, the potentially sodomitical valence of the metaleptic reversal is corrected by an emphasis on the ephebe’s unembarrassed *identification* with the precursor through projection/introjection.36

The Seductive Pathos of the Murdered Father as Authoritative Origin

The function of Bloom’s theory of influence, certainly the function of the Freudian analogies which structure it, is to keep everything in the family. Intertextuality is the family archive; when one explores it one stays entirely within the traditional canon of major poets. The text is an intertextual construct, comprehensible only in terms of other texts which it prolongs, completes, transforms, and sublimes; but when we ask what these other texts are they turn out to be the central poems of a single great precursor. And if we ask why this should be so, why the intertextual should be compressed to a relationship between two individuals, the answer seems to be that a man can have only one father: the scenario of the family romance gives the poet but one progenitor. It is from this family romance, this cozy and murderous intertextuality, that Bloom’s intertextuality derives. There are origins after all; the precursor is the great original, the intertextual authority.37

Bloom’s narrative of murderous textual rivalry possesses an appeal that extends well beyond his claims to developing a practical criticism or an adequately severe pedagogy. One aspect of his theory’s appeal is its pathos, its mournful call for the saving of poetry itself and its motivating phantasms.38 I have recounted how these motivating phantasms stem from an agonistic poetic sublime, from the ephebe’s parricidal drive in a writing that repeats and turns around his “castration.” The figurative murder of the precursor - in the revisionary ratios - is coextensive with the disavowal of influence securing proper poetic identity; this disavowal is shadowed by a refusal of homophilic desire and its (ideological) castration (a desire often collapsed with imitation, as discussed above), refusals securing proper gender identity. The staging of the poet’s sacrificial (gender) identity in Bloom’s theory rhetorically upholds the authority of a melancholic, agonistic masculinity at the price of a stigmatized homosexuality-as-imitation. The account of poetic influence thus posits a double origin for the poet as *poet*: the murder of both the parricidal misprision and the victimization of homophilic desire within influence. That is, the Bloomian narratives of a successful poetic incarnation and the “achieved anxiety” of the poem seem subtended by another “psychoanalytic”

36 See Bloom’s schematic map of the dialectic of revisionism in “A Map of Misreading,” *A Map of Misreading*, 84.
narrative of the staging, punishment, and encryptment of homoerotic desire. The murder of the precursor-father in this manner repeats and becomes available (to the critic or reader also) for a narcissistic reappropriation as the “homosexual sacrifice” subtending a melancholic masculinity: this double murder at the speculative origin repeats and redeems loss, securing and sustaining a melancholic authority.  

As Hartman notes in his review article of *The Anxiety of Influence*, “War in Heaven,” the dead father, as in *Totem and Taboo*, is more powerful than when he was alive. The dead father functions as a guarantor of authority precisely through his murder, a powerful figure of considerable pathos that acts as a plenum of “being” and the (impossibly totalized) ground and source of poetic meaning. The son is bound to the murdered father through the certainty or necessity of the son’s attempted mimetic appropriations of his “being” and text, through his melancholic incorporation of the precursor’s “being” and text. The dead father is a figure for the poet’s ideal projection of imaginary presence and a figure for introjection as an enjoyable source of guilt.

By always finding the powerful father behind or “encrypted” in the greatly curtailed text of the son, Bloom’s hermeneutic offers an obscure grounding for poetic meaning in psychoanalytic narrative and the tropes of the revisionary ratios. The Bloomian narrative of the ephebe’s heroic struggle to wrest discontinuity from a tradition ends up confirming the continuity of that tradition. The father is encrypted in the son, the son is a version of the father. Obviously, the theory also effects a strategic elimination of extra-poetic influences whose effect is to enforce the memorialization, and shore up the prestige, of “the traditional canon of major poets,” the great poetry Bloom views as being in a heroic struggle with its crippling legacy and in a decline unto death. The result of narrowing poetic influence to a father-son/

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39 The Bloomian hermeneutic often appears fetishistic. The interpretation’s recovered knowledge of the precursor text as parricidal origin routinely veils another narrative, that of the homoerotic covenant between poetic father and son that is eclipsed by the parricidal dialectics. Might the binding covenant of “election-love” be thought of as the abiding crypt of Bloom’s theory of influence?
41 This is Hartman’s evaluation in his review article: “With an audacity and pathos hard to parallel in modern scholarship, Bloom apprehends English literary history from Milton to the present as a single movement, calls it Romanticism, and, even while making it exemplary of the burdens of Freudian or Psychological Man, dooms it to a precession which looks towards the death of poetry more firmly than Hegel does” (27).
precursor-ephebe dialectic is to arrest the endless possibilities of intertextual play: this appears to be a rhetorical strategy to recover origins and literary meaning in the telescoping of literary influence to a familial narrative of murderous misprision. 42 “The meaning of a poem can only be another poem” is only the most reductive of Bloom’s formulations of his theory. 43

Again, the rhetorical effect of narrowing poetic influence is to stage a narrative of familial agonistic struggle, providing, through the figure of the murdered father, a certain melancholic draw to the study of poetic influence. The figure of the murdered father can also seduce Bloom’s reader as a nostalgic figure, a properly mythic figure embodying a lost plenum available for an imaginary, ideal identification, or in another scheme of “misprision,” as a figure for melancholic, guilty encryptment. 44 Bloom’s positioning of the ideal father at this speculative origin is maintained through the repeated stagings of the author-son’s parricidal misprision, a murderous passion that might communicate with the reader’s own sublimations and the (narcissistic) satisfaction derived from the renunciations maintaining that ideal.

Opposing Bloom’s reduction of intertextuality to a family romance of sublime poets, Culler observes of Bloom’s theory that “[t]here are origins after all; the precursor is the great original, the intertextual authority.” But Culler does not specify how the psychoanalytic search for a primal scene of influence stages a seductive, occult recovery of meaning. In this recovery the “great original” is a phantasm of ideal power and authority, a projected ideal to which the poetic subject is bound by lack and guilt.

When Bloom comes to consider Shakespeare’s influence by Marlowe, the poetic precursor never attains to the status of the murdered father. This role of the betrayed tutor and surrogate father is conferred on Shakespeare’s own literary creation that grants him freedom from Marlowe, Sir John Falstaff.

42 See Culler, “Presupposition and Intertextuality,” 1388.
43 In his “Interchapter” to The Anxiety of Influence, 94.
44 See Freud’s essay, “On Narcissism,” regarding the role of what he calls homosexual libido in the formation of the ego-ideal and the satisfaction of maintaining the ideal (11, 88-91, 96-97). On a similar topic, regarding the endurance of the so-called negative Oedipal complex in identifications with an ideal and other sublimations, see the third section of The Ego and the Id (11, esp. 376-79). For a difficult, Foucauldian account of the melancholic draw of the murdered father in psychoanalytic theory, see Trevor Hope, “Melancholic Modernity: The Hom(m)osexual Symptom and the Homosocial Corpse,” ed. Elizabeth
The Rejection of Falstaff: Bloom’s Authoritative Misprision

The present section investigates Bloom’s recent thesis regarding Shakespeare’s negotiations with the literary influence of Marlowe, drawing on the previous section’s presentation of the general Bloomian theory of influence. I particularly examine the strong poet’s refusal of influence’s castration and the melancholic draw of the murdered “father.” In Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human, Bloom makes the authoritative assertion that Falstaff is the literary creation that gives Shakespeare “freedom from Christopher Marlowe” and his own original signature. The theoretical basis or sustained argument for this repeated assertion is never granted a significant showing, though the assertion appears to follow from the model of influence proposed in his earlier books on poetic influence.

I wish to unpack some of the unstated, governing assumptions guiding Bloom’s theory and pronouncement, elaborating his thesis while reconstructing the Bloomian genealogy of Shakespeare’s absolute incarnation of the unimpaired poetic character. This project entails reviewing Bloom’s argument and providing the psychoanalytic grounding to his often-repeated, nebulous theory about Falstaffian freedom, spirit, vitality, and authentic being, a supplement describing an authorial “scene of writing” and the author’s possible imaginary relations to his creation, Sir John Falstaff. Whereas literary influence is experienced in a psychic agon or psychomachia in Bloom’s theory, in the creation of Falstaff such a private psychomachic scene seems to be displaced into literal representation, into a richly allegorical drama of ascending sovereign Oedipal subjectivity and the rejection of the slightly obscene, “profane” tutor of Prince Hal’s youth. As I understand Bloom’s implicit view of Falstaff’s “sublime” creation, Shakespeare’s writing displaces in phantasy a threatened victimization (and phantom sodomy) from Marlowe’s influence, a writing in which Falstaff is the fictional example of the author’s narcissistic self-elaboration; on the other hand, Falstaff’s rejection also represents the dialectical source of the poet’s writing in the “sublimation” of


45 Bloom, Shakespeare, 278; see also 296. Also see Bloom’s chapter on Shakespeare in Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), esp. the chapter’s final section on Falstaff (79-87).
the homophilic attachment. The author “Shakespeare” then is also in the position of Hal, refusing a castrating influence, though he owes his spirit and melancholic appeal to the staging of the rejection and death of the surrogate father figure. In this reading of Bloom’s pronouncement, the dramatic representation of Falstaff’s rejection and death seems to become the mysterious shadow play of the author’s literary and psychic travails with Marlowe in an occulted narrative of fratricidal struggle and the assumption of proper sovereign masculinity, uncannily re-presenting the rejection in the drama’s apotropaic writing. Of course, although Bloom does not explicitly make these claims about an “astral” Marlovian influence, as they might smack of the slightly disreputable and farfetched, there is in his account a sort of displacement of the psychomachia of influence into the “life of the author.” The author rejected in love, in the Bloomian scenography examined below, restages or writes out of his homosexual loss, a loss that confers on him his melancholic authority.

The Bloomian argument can be considered a plausible if speculative product of his phantom hermeneutics and psycho-biography, a reading apparently influenced by the Falstaffian critic’s own imaginary identification with Shakespeare’s literary creation and his perverse, melancholic authority (in the sequence Falstaff - Shakespeare - Bloom). Indeed, I argue that the critical point of Bloom’s misprision and seduction revolves around the question of this authority, in Bloom’s seduction by Falstaff, in Bloom’s seduction by “Shakespeare,” and finally, in Bloom’s possible rhetorical seduction of his reader through attachment to such authority.

Consequent to attempting the perverse completion of Bloom’s theory, this section investigates the dramatic and reported scenes of Falstaff’s rejection and death, what Bloom tends to mostly ignore though they arguably direct his reading. I suggest that these scenes corroborate Bloom’s guiding theoretical assumptions about Shakespeare’s anxiety regarding a castrating threat from a spectral Marlowe, a threat Bloom silently conflates with Falstaff’s transgressive sexuality. While the latter part of the section entertains the the complex sacrificial function of Falstaff in the drama, this is not independent of the
questions of an authorial subjectivity and phantasmatic.46 Rather, that sacrificial function and retrospective status appear to subtend Bloom’s phantasy and backprojection of the puissant authority of Shakespeare. In a concluding parody of the Bloomian “spirit,” I construe a highly phantastic, metadramatic “scene of writing” with Falstaff as authorial alter ego in a punitive misprision with his daemonic double, another “famous rebel” (2 Henry IV, 4.3.62), Sir John Colevile, where Falstaff wittily turns around the threat of death through his brave eloquence.

In his early The Anxiety of Influence, Bloom appears to consider that Shakespeare’s poetic divinity is simply beyond the reach of anxiety. The murderous overcoming of the precursor is recorded as Shakespeare’s “absolute absorption” of Marlowe:

Shakespeare is the largest instance in the language of a phenomenon that stands outside the concern of this book: the absolute absorption of the precursor. Battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads; only this is my subject here .... That even the strongest poets are subject to influences not poetical is obvious even to me, but again my concern is only with the poet in a poet, or the aboriginal poetic self.47

Bloom asserts as a historical factor that “Shakespeare belongs to the giant age before the flood, before the anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness.” This is a prelapsarian vision of plenitude and a lack of anxiety that undergoes some minor revision in Bloom’s more recent book on Shakespeare. “The main cause, though,” Bloom says of Shakespeare’s lack of anxiety, “is that Shakespeare’s prime precursor is Marlowe, a poet very much smaller than his inheritor.”48 “Marlowe was swallowed up by Shakespeare, as a minnow by a whale,” says Bloom in Ruin the Sacred Truths, “though Marlowe had a strong enough aftertaste to compel Shakespeare to some wry innuendos.”49 With an absolute absence of anxiety, Shakespeare’s unnamable wry innuendos testify not to any agon but to his incorporation of the precursor, his mastery and avoidance of Marlowe’s fate: “We can surmise that Marlowe became for Shakespeare a

46 Regarding the theorization of authorial subjectivity and a phantasmatic governing the “scene of writing,” see Kaja Silverman, “Too Early! Too Late: Male Subjectivity and the Primal Scene,” in Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York: Routledge, 1992), 157-81. Silverman’s chapter suggests ways of theorizing authorial subjectivity in fiction through investigating the masochistic basis of imaginary participation with characters at a scene, and through the notional circulation of lack (or a “moveable castration”) at a structuring phantasmatic.
47 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 11.
48 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 11.
49 Bloom, Ruin the Sacred Truths, 53.
warning: not the way to go.\textsuperscript{50} I return below to this critical vision of the Shakespeare who is \textit{not} Marlowe, with all that negation conveys about Marlowe's "fundamental stance" and how Shakespeare uses it.

Bloom's most substantial revision and expansion of his thesis comes in \textit{Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human}, where he claims that the poet's creation of Falstaff gives him an original signature and creative freedom from Christopher Marlowe. Bloom's new thesis acknowledges that the work of Marlowe, as well as his threatening sexuality and death, are indeed the subject of some anxiety in the poet Shakespeare. Bloom very nearly concedes that Marlowe was a significant literary rival to his contemporary Shakespeare, even after his death and before the latter gained ascendancy on the English stage and his supposed position at the center of the Western literary canon today. This genealogy of the Shakespeare who is \textit{not} Marlowe contributes to his exemplary (hetero)sexuality and thus secures, in the turn, his position of authority.

As a first question to Bloom's theory, why is it \textit{Falstaff} that gives Shakespeare his decisive authorial ascendancy over Marlowe? Is Falstaff somehow a surrogate Marlovian figure, the product of a revisionary ratio or a shadowy authorial sublimation, or is Falstaff's engrossing vitality simply supposed to exceed some limited Marlovian range? Does Falstaff represent a version of Shakespeare himself for Bloom, a Shakespeare in love and "rejected where he most loved?" Is the poet masochistically re-presenting in Falstaff his own "sense of betrayal by the young man of the Sonnets"?\textsuperscript{51} While this aspect of catastrophic creation seems evident straight away in Bloom's account, so the queer connection to Marlowe seems dictated by this circulating phantom homosexual betrayal. What is Bloom's own investment in his critical enthusiasm for and odd redemption of Falstaff, if not a participation in this drama? What are we to make of Bloom's fresh embrace of character analysis and the life of the author in the wake of the subject's near eclipse and the "death of the author" in the contemporary critical climate?\textsuperscript{52} If literary influence follows and acts as a repetition of family romance, is Falstaff perhaps the surrogate father as engrossing Socratic tutor,

\textsuperscript{50} Bloom, \textit{Ruin the Sacred Truths}, 53.

\textsuperscript{51} Bloom, \textit{Shakespeare}, 296, 295.

\textsuperscript{52} Bloom's theory of poetic influence might be formulated as a contradiction of his precursor(s). Bloom develops a theory of intertextuality, a theory first developed by Barthes whose immediate implication or end was the "death of the author." But Bloom's limitation of intertextuality to specific literary texts within an agon helps effect a recovery of the notional author. One might concede that a theory of intertextuality does not require a theory of the psyche, but it is helpful in considerations of influence and creativity.
positioning the poet as an ascendent Prince Hal rather than as a rejected Falstaff? Or might a better reconfiguration here position the author precisely between these figures in the “scene of writing’s” phantasied displacement of lack into a scene of victimization? Although there is no need to read literary influence in this manner, casting what is effectively the dramatic representation of Hal’s rejection of Falstaff into murderous intra-poetic relations, might this and other scenes contribute to Bloom’s theory where he remains mute? As an ideological narrative of melancholic authority in which he is invested, does Bloom’s phantom hermeneutic end up covertly fetishizing the sacrifice of “homosexual” desire precisely where he denounces Falstaff’s betrayal? As a sacrifice integral to the sublime, seductive genius of Shakespeare? I attempt to answer these questions by piecing together Bloom’s theory, the scene of writing and its ideological content, enlarging upon his elliptic discourse on Marlowe’s poetic influence.

As anyone familiar with his theory of poetic influence can guess, when Bloom asserts that Shakespeare owes Falstaff a debt “for finally emancipating him from Marlowe, and for making him the most successful of Elizabethan dramatists,” he is not speaking of Falstaff’s enormous popularity on the Renaissance stage, a financial success that would rival the success of, say, Marlowe’s earlier Tamburlaine. Rather, Bloom is speaking about the considerable dramatic power of Marlowe’s text that his rival Shakespeare had to negotiate. If Shakespeare has “absolutely absorbed” the major literary precursor Marlowe, what is that precursor’s “fundamental stance” and how does Shakespeare negotiate with his precursor’s work so as to vanquish it? If Bloom appears to assume (with many) that a phantasied sodomy is essential to Marlowe’s dramatic vision of power and pleasure, this phantom sodomy aligned with his protagonists’ overreaching and punishment becomes, in a narrative submerged in Bloom’s text, Shakespeare’s imaginary mode of deposing his rival Marlowe, hoisting him on his own petard.

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53 Bloom, Shakespeare, 296.
54 Historical considerations of the competitive aspect of the theater are given some scope a book by James Shapiro, Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). Shapiro tends to focus on how citation of a rival’s work attempts an authorial parodic containment, a strategy that might further attempt to limit its contemporary popularity in the theater. The latter strategy follows somewhat weakly from the former parodic attempt and might seem as relevant to a consideration of canon formation (see, for example, 11-14).
In *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages*, Bloom abjures his earlier proposition that Marlowe is Shakespeare's "prime precursor." He considers Chaucer as the *enabling* tutor in presenting the negative and positive poles of an "exuberance of being" in his characters, an authentic nihilism and vitalism or a will to live respectively (a somewhat fuzzy thesis). In his chapter devoted to Chaucer's legacy to Shakespeare for the development of character, Bloom states: "No writer, neither Ovid nor "the English Ovid," Christopher Marlowe, influenced Shakespeare as crucially as Chaucer did." Bloom conceives of Falstaff as child of the Wife of Bath, the product of Shakespeare's reading of Chaucer. This shuffling of Shakespeare's "prime precursor" is not necessarily crucial to Bloom's thesis about Falstaff's importance to Shakespeare's ascendency over Marlowe, though it attempts to account for Falstaff's creation outside the poet's murderous misprision with Marlowe while still maintaining that shadowy relation ("for finally emancipating him from Marlowe"). The revision also contributes to Shakespeare's "imaginary puissance" (*Henry V*, Prologue, 25) by making his influences more diffuse, firmly positioning him as the one who fashions himself by drawing at will on others for his projects, *using* them: "Shakespeare knows precisely how to use Chaucer and Marlowe." 

Marlowe's sodomitical influence appears to be the threat at an erotically paranoid "scene of writing" that Bloom declines to develop. In "Milton's Satan and Shakespeare," Bloom again limits Marlowe's

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56 Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 112. Also see the chapter on Shakespeare in *Ruin the Sacred Truths* where he makes Chaucer the playwright's "principal resource" as an influence: "The most vital single element in Shakespeare bring us back to Chaucer. The scholarly discussions of Chaucer's influence upon Shakespeare can be said to have culminated in the late E. Talbot Donaldson's accomplished *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer*, with its coda comparing the Wife of Bath and Falstaff as two great comic vitalists. My own interests concerns influence of a more repressed sort. Chaucer, rather than Marlowe or even the English Bible, was Shakespeare's central precursor in giving him the crucial hint that lead to the greatest of his originalities: the representation of change by showing people pondering their own speeches and being altered through that consideration" (54). Also see *Falstaff*, ed. and intro. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1992), where he credits the invention "of literary character as we know it" to Shakespeare, and signals the playwright's debt to "the *Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer" rather than the work of Christopher Marlowe or Ben Jonson ("The Analysis of Character," ix, x). And lastly, *Shakespeare*, 278.
57 Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 182. I am indebted here to Dr. Sirluck's comments which have helped clarify my argument regarding the manner in which this diversification of influence works.
58 Bloom describes Shakespeare's ascension over Marlowe as a matter of his hero-villains' "inwardness," a surpassing of Marlowe in learning from Chaucer (*The Western Canon*, 182). Bloom's suggestion that Shakespeare invents inward characters seems implicated in his portrait of Shakespeare's melancholically established interiority and psychic life, a portrait that is evidently bound up in his own phantasies of self.
influence on Shakespeare, this time to his early representation of Marlovian hero-villains before he reaches his full artistic powers:

The hero-villain was invented largely by Christopher Marlowe in Tamburlaine, a Scythian shepherd become world conqueror, and even more in Barabas, the self-delighting Jew of Malta, a humorist of evil. It is a direct path from Marlowe's grand nihilists to the early Shakespearean monsters, Aaron the Moor in the tragic slaughterhouse Titus Andronicus, and the hunchbacked Richard III.\(^{59}\)

The "fundamental stance" of Marlowe might be his drama's presentation of the over-reaching hero-villain, which the early Shakespeare absorbs with some difficulty and some success. However, the somewhat plausible method of detecting direct paths between literary creations becomes too simplistic when applied to Falstaff's literary descent from the Wife of Bath, as Falstaff's descent is rather more complex than this eccentric derivation from Chaucerian literary character.

In The Fortunes of Falstaff, Dover Wilson traces some of the complex genealogies of Falstaff's character, a "litany" a chagrined Bloom finds degrading to him who is "the greatest wit in all literature".\(^{60}\)

Hal associates Falstaff in turn with the Devil of the miracle play, the Vice of the morality, and the Riot of the interlude, when he calls him 'that villainous abominable misleader of Youth, that white-bearded old Satan', 'that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in years', and 'the tutor and feeder of my riots'. 'Riot', again, is the word that comes most readily to King Henry's lips when he speaks of his prodigal son's misconduct. And, as heir to the Vice, Falstaff inherits by reversion the functions and attributes of the Lord of Misrule, the Fool, the Buffoon, and the Jester, antic figures the origins of which are lost in the dark backward and abyss of folk-custom. We shall find that Falstaff possesses a strain, and more than a strain, of the classical miles gloriosus as well. In short, the Falstaff-Hal plot embodies a composite myth which had been centuries amaking, and was for the Elizabethan full of meaning that has largely disappeared since then.\(^{61}\)

Appreciating this rich tapestry of Falstaff's lost archaic heritage ("dark backward and abyss of folk-custom"), just what is Falstaff's position in the playwright's overcoming of an anxiety of influence in relation to Marlowe?

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\(^{59}\) Bloom, The Western Canon, 170.

\(^{60}\) Bloom, Ruin the Sacred Truths, 79. If Falstaff is truly the soul of other men's wit, might this wit be derived from his pharmaconic role as other, conferring on others their (un)reflective soul?

Again, Bloom’s analysis seems oddly directed by both the dramatic rejection and death of Falstaff and the historical death of Marlowe, implicitly linking them (“not the way to go”). Bloom apparently takes Falstaff’s creation as a sort of catastrophic creation, where his rejection and death are a belated, mysterious shadow play of the author Shakespeare’s literary and psychic struggles with his “sodomitical” contemporary and rival Marlowe. This psychomachia repeats “family romance” (closer to fratricide here) in an agonistic dialectic whose “sublation” results in the poet’s work, a drama that re-presents such scenes of the assumption of sovereign masculinity. In this phantom hermeneutic, Falstaff is both the creation from an agonistic psychic struggle with the precursor in literary influence (the trope of reversal is crucial here) and a player in a shadowing dramatic representation of this pederastic-pedagogical position of ephebe (Hal) and betrayed Socratic master (Falstaff).

My own assertions regarding the occluded narrative subtending Bloom’s pronouncements (regarding Shakespeare’s freedom from Marlowe) will require some patient elaboration with reference to Bloom’s text and then Shakespeare’s. Briefly again, the occluded theoretical narrative is the trajectory of the playwright’s agonistic absorption of the precursor leading to a castration anxiety and its defensive phantasies against the castration-sodomy of influence, defences that masochistically re-present that trauma, displacing it at the scene of writing into the dramatic scene. Bloom’s selection of Falstaff as providing a freedom from Marlowe appears to fasten upon several facts and coincidences of literary history and influence at once: that Marlowe’s work was indeed the early model for Shakespearean hero-villains, that this influence might be troped as Shakespeare’s literary ravishment by a sodomitical Marlowe, that Marlowe’s death coincides with Shakespeare’s rise as an immortal playwright. The selection of Falstaff as providing a freedom from Marlowe might appear to assume some sort of correspondence between Marlowe and Falstaff as betrayed, homophilic tutors. Of course, this is never claimed, as it is a slightly ridiculous idea, but it appears in the margins of Bloom’s writing.

62 Ruin the Sacred Truths, 53. In “Shakespeare, Center of the Canon,” Bloom provides an account of Shakespeare’s approach to canonical centrality, a narrative in which Marlowe’s actual death might appear to contribute to the poet’s freedom to create the artistically liberating Falstaff (The Western Canon, 46-47).
Falstaff's pivotal dramatic function in the *Henriad*, of embodying the threatening seduction of Riot and Vice to Prince Hal, entails his "curtailment" in the narrative of Hal's ascension to sovereign authority. In Bloom's analysis, Falstaff's banishment and death of a broken heart is somehow dramatically necessary but also a symptom of authorial involvement. If the *Henriad* describes an Oedipal narrative of the consolidation of sovereign subjectivity, might one also expect, following Bloom, to find traces of the poet's psychomachia of influence in this drama? While Bloom never examines Falstaff's rejection as part of Shakespeare's authorial psychomachia, this rejection appears to subtend his argument, dovetailing with the poet's "absolute absorption" of Marlowe in the remarkably interiorized agon, making the contest over into a matter of Shakespeare's spiritual travails reflected in Falstaff. In the dramatic representation of this psychomachia, the author would be positioned with Hal, writing out of his rejection of Falstaff, an abjection that supports his writing and defines his authentic self. But antithetical as usual, Bloom identifies the author's authentic self or spirit with Falstaff, the Falstaff whose negation is the soul of other men's wit and the source of authorial being.63

In Bloom's account of "Shakespeare the man," behind Falstaff is Shakespeare himself, rejected in love. It is here that Bloom's theory can be supplemented by positing a Shakespearean "scene of writing" that restages or repeats a homosexual loss, displacing that loss into a dramatic scene at which the author is dispersed in phantasy. According to Bloom, the authorial phantasmatic is imbricated in homophilic loss:

> The rejection of Falstaff possibly is a deep echo of Shakespeare's own sense of betrayal by the young nobleman of the Sonnets, except that Shakespeare manifests extraordinary ambivalence towards himself in the Sonnets, while Falstaff's almost innocent self-love is part of the secret of the fat knight's genius.64

Bloom does not confine himself, as in his earlier theory of poetic influence, to a repetition of Freudian family romance, but here locates the motivating legacy of ambivalence in the author's actual life.65 If the

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63 See *Shakespeare*, 318, a passage I return to below.
64 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 295.
65 Of course, Bloom does not know any more about the psycho-biography contributing to the sonnets than countless speculative commentaries that attempt to reconstruct their "story." Bloom's fictional assertions about Shakespeare's psychic life, his fears, ambivalences and general character, and his playing certain parts in the plays, participates in the Romantic tradition of speculating on "the unfathomable depths of his oceanic mind" (Coleridge).

Adopting this perspective of the work reflecting the author's spiritual travails deflects from the specific anxiety of influence in relation to Marlowe: the drama of Falstaff's rejection seems a displaced version of this question ("not the way to go"), while serving the same end of securing Shakespeare's puissance.
author displaces lack into a scene that repeats a homophilic loss and possible trauma, the other aspect of this restaging is that it acts as a revenge of that loss with Falstaff as surrogate, ie., from the position of Prince Hal’s dramatic rejection of Falstaff.

A similar notion of the playwright’s “complex cross-identification[s]” is presented by Goldberg in “Desiring Hal.” Goldberg recounts Empson’s observation in Some Versions of Pastoral that Prince Hal appears to be “cast in the part of the fair young man of the sonnets,” while Falstaff’s desire is “not to be distinguished from the desire of the sonneteer, always ready to take upon him the faults of the faultless young man.” 66 According to Empson again, Hal’s dumping of his own faults onto those who love him replicates the scenario from the sonnets where the sonneteer takes on the youth’s faults, with the crucial difference that in the drama Hal rehearses and stages this dumping as a means of consolidating his ideal authority. Goldberg then elaborates Empson’s suggestion that this places Shakespeare not in the position of the sonneteer or Falstaff, but Hal: “For if Shakespeare plays out his abjection with the young man through Falstaff, he plays out too the success that is so achieved: identification with the prince.” 67 In this account, the poet’s trajectory of imaginary identification is with a prince and sovereign who constitutes his power through the punishment of others in his place, inviting love and betrayal as the means of enjoying and displaying his power. Goldberg further explains the drama’s powerful engagement of the audience and critics in terms of a similar cross-identification with the mirror of the ideal prince and the abjected Falstaff, though he fails to draw the line between the masochistic desire motivating engagement in the scene of self-punishment (ie., Falstaff’s repeated casting off) and the homoerotic phantasy with which it appears synonymous in the rest of his chapter. At any rate, the interest here is with theorizing the author’s masochistic writing position and its restaging of loss and displacement of lack in Falstaff’s rejection and death, a phantom repetition of a “homophilic sacrifice.” In the reading below, the “sacrifice” of Falstaff receives its discreet authorial rebuke and possible ironic redemption in his reported death in Henry V.

Predictably, as when Bloom identifies Shakespeare’s psychic involvement in the staging of Falstaff’s rejection, he also locates Shakespeare quite literally in the persons of the melancholic lover Antonio in The

66 Goldberg, Sodometries, 152-53.
Merchant of Venice, and this Antonio’s parodic “self-revision” in Twelfth Night: “Shakespeare, I suspect, himself acted the part of Antonio both in The Merchant of Venice and in Twelfth Night, where the homoerotic second Antonio travesties the first.” Bloom’s seductive portrait of Shakespeare-in-Antonio makes the playwright a self-punishing revisionist of his own earlier fictional self, where the first melancholic “Antonio” perhaps gains self-knowledge and parodies himself as a rejected homoerotic lover. Writing about Henry IV, Bloom draws Falstaff and the persona of the sonnets into this speculation about the Shakespeare in his characters and suggests that he not only probably played the Antonio of The Merchant of Venice, but further discloses that the author was “well aware of all its implications.” These implications are presumably the aspects of self-punishment and self-exposure that go along with the representation of Antonio’s masochistic nature and homophilic desire:

Falstaff, like Rosalind, gazes in all directions, and beholds himself with a seriocomic acceptance that Hamlet is not allowed. Honigmann warns us that the Falstaff-Hal relationship does not yield to psychological analysis. Not completely perhaps, but well enough. Its paradigm for Shakespeare, by general consent, is his relationship to the young nobleman in the Sonnets, whether Southhampton or Pembroke. To say that Shakespeare is Falstaff plainly is absurd; it was not a part he could play, even on the stage. You can brood upon Shakespeare-as-Antonio in The Merchant of Venice, should you want to; he probably acted the role, well aware of all its implications. Yet both Falstaff’s vivacity and his darkening relation to Hal’s ambivalences have some connections to the Sonnets. And it cannot be affirmed too often that Falstaff’s most salient qualities are his astonishing intellect and his exuberant vitality, the second probably not so outward a personal endowment of the man William Shakespeare.

Bloom’s disarming “should you want to” would put the responsibility for his suggestion regarding “Shakespeare-as-Antonio” onto the reader’s wishes. Bloom is well aware of all the implications of his theory, one of which is to put him in such a position, and he appears to stage this role-playing as part of another authorial seduction and confession.

Falstaff’s gazing in all directions in Bloom’s description draws on the notion of the knight’s polymorphous, transgressive sexuality. Heather Findlay writes of Falstaff’s sodomitical sexuality, looking at Mistress Quickly’s denunciations of Falstaff that pun

67 Goldberg, Sodometries, 153.
68 Bloom, Shakespeare, 226.
69 Of course, I am alluding to the opening lines of The Merchant of Venice where Antonio presents his melancholia as a wearisome enigma to himself and friends (1.1.1-7).
70 Bloom, Shakespeare, 287. For Bloom’s diagnosis of Antonio’s “homoeroticism,” “sadomasochism,” and “the notorious pound of flesh near his heart,” see 179-80. Although Bloom declines to spell it out, the
on the double meaning of the Early Modern English term *fain* as “stab” and “fuck”: “He will fain like any devil. He will spare neither man, woman, or child” (*2 Henry IV*, II, i.16-17). Again, in an effort to accuse Falstaff of violence, Quickly accuses him of sexual perversity - including homosexuality - when she denounces her supposedly homicidal guest as “a honeysuckle villain ... a honeysuckle, a man queller, a woman queller” (*2 Henry IV*, II.1.52-53). Trying to accuse her troublesome patron of being a mankiller, the hostess consistently slips, and accuses him of being a seducer and a “manhandler.”

Rereading Bloom’s highly speculative passage on Falstaff for its dialectical logic, the vivacious Falstaff appears to be a mystical creation from the author’s sacrifice of his own “exuberant vitality,” a sacrifice resulting in astonishingly intellectual creations. Perhaps testifying to Bloom’s imaginary identification with Falstaff as the (murdered) father, the above citation also exemplifies Bloom’s interest in unveiling a phantom homophilic loss and self-wounding supporting Shakespeare’s scene of writing, a loss that is forcefully dramatized in Falstaff’s rejection and death.

Despite Bloom’s tremendous self-sympathy for Falstaff, I am suggesting that the ideological content of his theory of influence dictates the victimization of a surrogative Falstaff as a castrating influence, a negation staged by the drama and contributing to a phantasy of Shakespeare’s own melancholic authority and “imaginary puissance” (*Henry V*, Prologue, 25). Notwithstanding Bloom’s protestations against any part of “the sublimation of sexual instincts” in poetic creativity, the creation-negation of Falstaff in his account is influenced by the poet’s anxiety regarding his own homophilic attachments. Bloom does not hesitate to bring in the fictional psychic “life of the poet” and “history” to bolster his narrative, as when he speculates on the motivation of Falstaff’s ignoble scapegoating in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

There remains the puzzle of why Shakespeare subjected the pseudo-Falstaff to so mindless a laceration, really a bear baiting, with “Sir John-in-love” as the bear. As a lifelong playwright, always quick to yield to subtle patrons, statist censors, and royal performances, Shakespeare in his deepest inwardness harbored anxieties and resentments that he rarely allowed expression. He knew that Walsingham’s shadowy Secret Service had murdered Christopher Marlowe, and tortured Thomas Kyd into an early death. Hamlet dies upward, as it were, in a transcendence not available to Shakespeare, certainly not as a man, and the true Falstaff dies in bed, playing with flowers, smiling upon his fingertips, and evidently singing of a table prepared for him in the midst of his enemies. We do not know the mode or manner of Shakespeare’s own death. Yet something in him, which he perhaps identified with the authentic Falstaff, rejected where he most loved, and solitary, like the poet of the Sonnets, may have feared further humiliations. I

mortgaged pound of flesh near his heart can be viewed as a willing castration and substitute for his passion for Bassanio, a covenant that recuperates a phantom (substitute) sodomitical satisfaction.


72 For example, Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 115.
have to conclude that Shakespeare himself is warding off personal horror by scapegoating the false Falstaff in this weak play.\textsuperscript{73}

Is the false Falstaff’s scapegoating in \textit{The Merry Wives of Windsor} such a “rarely allowed expression” of the disciplined poet’s anxieties and resentments “in his deepest inwardsness”? By Bloom’s own guiding standards of agonistic conflict, is Falstaff not “false” in this drama precisely because he does not appear sufficiently involved in the playwright’s irresolvable psychomachia of influence? i.e., Falstaff’s scapegoating is too pat in this drama, without the signs of an authentic, “deep” conflict Bloom is seeking.

Taking Bloom’s assertion about Marlowe’s assassination as a fitting fiction,\textsuperscript{74} and leaving the anxiety of influence to one side, he assumes the shadowy sources of the poet’s anxiety and resentment are the threat of a social emasculation and possible death, and his fear of social shame and scapegoating. Is this the anxiety of influence again now in the guise of (a literary) history? Speaking at the level of Bloomian history and speculative psycho-biography, the author’s apotropaic writing follows the path of the threat of a castration that has already taken place (“always quick to yield to subtle patrons, statist censors, and royal performances”), displacing the threat of further humiliation into scenes of Falstaff’s surrogative scapegoating.

According to Bloom’s theory of influence, Falstaff is created in the poet’s “transcendence” of Marlovian influence. In Bloom’s narrative, Falstaff is the mediator of the playwright’s overcoming of Marlowe, with a slippage between Falstaff’s death and Marlowe’s in an allegory of the poet’s transcendence in what he describes as a \textit{reluctant} victimization:

Shakespeare gave Sir John such abundant life that even Shakespeare had a very hard (and reluctant) time in ending Falstaff, who never owed Shakespeare a death. The debt (as Shakespeare knew), was to Falstaff, both for finally emancipating him from Marlowe, and for

\textsuperscript{73} Bloom, \textit{Shakespeare}, 318. Bloom repeats his \textit{assertion} that the state assassinated Marlowe: “When Shakespeare thought of the state, he remembered first that it had murdered Christopher Marlowe, tortured and broke Thomas Kyd, and branded the unbreakable Ben Jonson” (321). These citations from Bloom are meant to draw out the way Bloom creates a rather personal fiction wherein Shakespeare protects his anxious masculinity through scapegoating Falstaff. In Bloom’s reading, Shakespeare’s authorial psychomachia is strategically divorced from Marlowe’s text, but not his life and death.

\textsuperscript{74} The notion of Marlowe’s possible political assassination is not, of course, original to Bloom. Lisa Hopkins provides a balanced review of the archival research on and speculation surrounding Marlowe’s death in the final chapter of \textit{Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life} (New York: Palgrave, 2000).
making him the most successful of Elizabethan dramatists, thus dwarfing Marlowe, Kyd, and all other rivals, Ben Jonson included.\(^{75}\)

Might Falstaff allow the author to reject a castrating influence while appropriating its energies, including the homoerotic? If Falstaff never owed "Shakespeare" a death-debt, might Shakespeare incur a debt with Falstaff’s death, especially in his authorial speculation on the power of staging homophilic desire’s betrayal or negation? i.e., a staging that first engages or "seduces" the spectator-subject or reader with such a scene, which is then read retrospectively by Bloom as the author’s own reluctant involvement in the scene and thus becomes a point of his imaginary identification with Shakespeare, inventor of the human. Such a conjecture places Shakespeare in Hal’s position, reminding Falstaff of his debt to God.

The *Henriad* is structured by Hal’s dramatic Oedipal and fratricidal negotiations in his ascendency to power. In this narrative, Falstaff plays the role of a surrogative, obscene father whose rejection simulates a parricide and confers authority on the Prince. When we further project the godlike author “Shakespeare” into his drama, does he derive his sovereign authorial spirit from Falstaff’s rejection and death, as a part of himself renounced, a phantom source of his authentic, sublime being, now an ideal representing the spirit of Shakespeare? “To reject Falstaff is to reject Shakespeare. And to speak merely historically, the freedom Falstaff represents is the freedom from Christopher Marlowe, which means that Falstaff is the signature of Shakespeare’s originality.”\(^{76}\) This dialectic of Falstaffian being is Bloom’s *authoritative* misprision, testimony to the melancholic draw of a murdered Falstaff. This misprision is Bloom’s way of drawing authority from Falstaff’s murder in which he reluctantly participates, a murder of desire supporting his cryptic identification with Shakespeare, and Falstaff as his authentic spirit.\(^{77}\)

\(^{75}\) Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 296.

\(^{76}\) Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 278.

\(^{77}\) Briefly, Bloom’s critical misprision (in the sense of an imaginary identification with an ideal other) appears to follow a Freudian scheme of the formation of the ego-ideal. In this genealogy, the figurative murder or renunciation of the homosexual object and aim leads to their melancholic preservation in identification and a substitute satisfaction in the exercise of the narcissistic ego-ideal (for an example of the latter, see “On Narcissism,” 11, 88-91, 96-97). In another sense, Bloom’s critical misprision may be the effect of this type of reading of Freud, dynamics that he then recognizes in “Shakespeare” and uses in his own narcissistic writing, his rhetoric of authority, and their simulation or restaging of this murder.
In order to elaborate this Falstaffian psychomachia that informs Bloom’s authoritative misprision, I now turn to a review of Falstaff’s banishment and death. Looking at Falstaff’s pharmaconic function in the *Henriad* should allow one to see why Bloom is fascinated by the notion of Falstaff giving Shakespeare freedom from Marlowe in the repression-conservation of his influence. Directed to his own participation in authorial being, Bloom’s interpretation seems guided by an identificatory trajectory with Falstaff as Shakespeare’s authorial alter ego, by his assumption of the “double” position of profane tutor and murdered father, a position of puissance and melancholic authority. In a powerful Bloomian rhetoric that has it both ways, Falstaff is double. For Bloom, Falstaff stages a phantasy of pleasure in his role as Lord of Misrule, a subversive power, while also assuming the role of victim, the position of the murdered or betrayed father, claiming the melancholic authority that goes with the encryptment of guilt; in the latter role, he perhaps occupies the position of the loving master in the transference via the subject’s “erotic attachment to authority.” Bloom’s reading of Falstaff as the engrossing, rejected tutor to Hal appears as a less “displaced” reading of his usual focus on the Oedipal family romance and the anxiety of influence. I have suggested how Bloom’s sympathy for Falstaff is a case of authorial misprision, where proper gender is a critical force guiding Bloom’s sympathetic reading of Falstaff’s victimization.

Reviewing the dramatic function of the fat knight’s banishment and death, I will mainly look at the patterns of the emblematic murder of the profane tutor and surrogate father. Falstaff’s rejection has been the subject of much critical discussion in the past century. In an article published in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, “A Note on Falstaff,” Franz Alexander likens the banishment of Falstaff to a sovereign Oedipal repression: “The banishment of Falstaff to ten miles from the king’s body in order to eliminate temptation is nothing else than a dramatic presentation of what in psychoanalysis we call repression.” Alexander

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78 See Bernard Spivack for a fine scholarly account of “Falstaff and the Psychomachia,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 8 (1957): 449-59.

79 In his chapter on Freud in *Ruin the Sacred Truths*, Bloom several times asserts that religion can be reduced, in Freud’s curious scheme (Bloom’s language), to unconscious longing for the father (147; 153). By this I assume Bloom means that religion is formed and sustained by displacements of this love and the subject’s “erotic attachment to authority” (154). Bloom is deploying the rhetoric of paternalist authority he gets from Freud to position himself as the murdered father of religious sentiment, while (seductively) giving more back than Freud does: “in Freud authority has no love for us” (154).


reasonably reproduces the drama’s anticipatory narrative of the Prince’s achieved sovereign identity, a narrative that involves overcoming “the Falstaff in himself.” The distinguishing traits of Falstaff’s character in such an account are his reckless hedonism and his feckless narcissism, leaving out the Bloomian antithetical emphasis on his wit and capacious intellect.

If Falstaff’s banishment is an engaging representation of Hal’s “repression” of the troubling aspects of his personality, another reason for its theatrical power lies in the drama’s casting of Falstaff in the role of rejected tutor and companion. Perhaps especially if one has identified with Hal’s ascension to power, Falstaff’s approach to his friend inspires some anxiety in the spectator or reader:

_Falstaff._ Stand here by me, Master Shallow; I will make the King do you grace. I will leer upon him as 'a comes by; and do but mark the countenance that he will give me.
_Pistol._ God bless thy lungs, good knight!
_Falstaff._ Come here, Pistol; stand behind me. (_To Shallow_) O, if I had had time to have made new liveries, I would have bestowed the thousand pound I borrowed of you. But 'tis no matter; this poor show doth better; this doth infer the zeal I had to see him.
_Shallow._ It doth so.
_Falstaff._ As it were, to ride day and night, and not to deliberate, not to remember, not to have patience to shift me -
_Shallow._ It is best, certain.
_Falstaff._ But to stand stained with travel, and sweating with desire to see him, thinking of nothing else, putting all affairs else in oblivion, as if there were nothing else to be done but to see him. (5.5.5-27)

As William Empson notes in another connection, Falstaff seems ridiculously blind to the notion that young men could resist his charms, evident at least to himself. To use Hal’s language, this failing of vanity is a recurrent source of painful entertainment that approaches pathos in this scene:

_Enter the King and his train, the Lord Chief Justice among them._

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82 Alexander, “A Note on Falstaff,” 599. His account of Hal’s ascension to maturity and power (“to become a fully balanced adult”) gives the prince a double task, overcoming Hotspur as an exponent of parricidal destruction, and overcoming Falstaff as the personification of the infantile attitude of narcissistic pleasure-seeking. One should note that the banishment of Falstaff may indeed be viewed as effecting both these “sublimations,” i.e., as also effecting a displaced parricide on this surrogate. Alexander is seduced by Hal’s self-authorizing rhetoric of responsibility that views the self-coronation as “no longer a simple oedipal act, but a real sacrifice,” that is, involving Hal’s renunciation of Falstaffian freedom (601). Regarding Hal’s ambivalent relations to his usurping father, the classic psychoanalytic essay is Ernest Kris’s “Prince Hal’s Conflicts,” also published in the _Psychoanalytic Quarterly_, in 1948.

83 These charms are also evident to the spectator-subject or reader, but more as an “imaginary reflection” of a usually repressed narcissistic self-admiration than as an object of desire. See Empson, “Falstaff and Mr. Dover Wilson,” _The Kenyon Review_ (1953): 213-63 (esp. 253-56). Bloom takes something like Empson’s position on this point, in _Shakespeare_, when he asserts, “Despite his current “materialist” critics, Falstaff declines to harvest his affections, but he certainly teaches Hal to harvest everyone: Hotspur, the King his father, and Falstaff himself” (277). The notion that Falstaff is ultimately desirable but “declines to harvest his affection” is perhaps an index of Bloom’s particular identificatory misprision.
Falstaff. God save thy grace, King Hal, my royal Hal!
Pistol. The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp of fame!
King Henry V. My Lord Chief Justice, speak to that vain man.
Lord Chief Justice. Have you wits? Know you what 'tis you speak?
Falstaff. My King! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!
King Henry V. I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.
How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester.
I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane,
But being awaked I do despise my dream. (5.5.41-54)

Hal’s response to Falstaff here reads as more of a negation than a sort of catchall “repression” (Alexander), a refusal to acknowledge him, consigning him to the status of a despised dream he knows too well. While I am not saying that a previous sexual relationship between Falstaff and Hal is being betrayed here, though some critics might suggest this relationship,84 according to Hal’s rhetorical abjection, Falstaff does figure as an embarrassingly “profane” tutor. Calling Falstaff “[t]he tutor and the feeder of my riots” (5.5.65), Hal casts him as his emphatically past tutor whose transgressive, engrossing character he repeatedly suggests.

Falstaff fatefully positions himself as Saturn and/or Ganymede in his address to Hal as “My Jove!”, and Hal’s parricidal reply casts Falstaff in the role of the mythical Saturn whom he deposes as Jove.85

Regarding Falstaff’s identification with a Ganymede figure, in “Renaissance Pederasty and Pedagogy: The “Case” of Shakespeare’s Falstaff,” Heather Findlay argues that Hal’s rejection (and tutoring) of Falstaff here is a reversal of their previous power relations in which Falstaff had been Hal’s tutor.86 Findlay remarks that in Hal’s “I know thee not old man” speech, “Hal terminates one of Shakespeare’s most intense and tragic

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84 Goldberg’s attempts to figure this relationship in “Desiring Hal” are so-so persuasive. I would direct this analysis to demonstrate that the drama is certainly intent on arousing some spectatorial anxiety through its staging of this affective relationship. Empson’s portrait of a loving Falstaff disappointed in his affections for “young men” also seems on the mark. “Falstaff and Mr. Dover Wilson,” 255-56 (256).
85 In “The Birth and Death of Falstaff Reconsidered,” Philip Williams argues that “Hal is Falstaff’s Jove, the son who deposes his king-father, old Saturn. It is only at this appropriate moment that Falstaff calls Hal Jove. He has never done so before, but Hal has made the identification. “It was Jove’s case”, he says as he dons the leather jerkin disguise to spy on Falstaff and Doll - Saturn and Venus as he calls them.” Shakespeare Quarterly 8 (1957): 359-65 (365). Williams goes as far as to consider Falstaff’s address to Hal as his Jove to “present the essence of [Shakespeare’s] play,” with the author’s drawing here on “the rich storehouse of classic myth” (364).
86 Of course, Falstaff also protests that Hal has taught him, which suggests that in his own ascension to knowledge through Hal’s companionship it is himself who has been corrupted: “Before I knew thee Hal, I knew nothing, and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked” (1 Henry IV, 1.2.92-94). Does Falstaff cast himself as the melancholic lover in this scene, put to rout by Hal’s rhetorical deflation (1.2.73-81)? The symmetry of their mutual accusations should not obscure the crucial fact that Hal always retains the power in this relationship.
male friendships by constituting himself as the new schoolmaster,” granting the scene a pathos focused on the figure of Falstaff:

On top of all this [a series of reversals of power in the pederastic-pedagogic model], as if to add more classical flourish to his relationship with Henry, Falstaff casts himself as Henry’s Ganymede in the lines immediately preceding this speech (“I know thee not old man”). Ganymede, the effete shepherd boy carried off by Jove, had become a catch-all figure for male homoeroticism in Renaissance England, to the extent that boys who were objects of male desire were often called “ganymedes,” or, in its corrupted form “catamites.” The fallen knight’s final address to his “sweet boy” (V.v.43) included the following words: “My King! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!” (V.v.46). In these lines, the beloved, divine king has become Jove, much like the Jove in Renaissance iconography that enjoyed intense popularity in the Renaissance.  

Findlay’s suggestion that Falstaff addresses his “heart” as a Ganymede figure is persuasive and fits in with the functional duplicity of Falstaff as murdered father (Saturn) and rejected tutor-lover (Ganymede). Findlay does fail to account for the physical absurdity of the reversal of positions that would make Falstaff into Ganymede, but then Falstaff was never really on top anyways, so he was already in the position of a “ganymede” in terms of power. This supposed reversal is merely Hal’s rhetorical recasting of the relation. As Empson finely argues, “Falstaff from his first conception was not intended to arrive at Agincourt, because the Prince was supposed to reach that triumph over his broken heart.” Incidentally, Bloom makes a point of denying Falstaff the type of pathos Findlay and Empson invest him with. “Falstaff is anything but an elegaic figure,” Bloom asserts of his wished for “real presence of Falstaff.” I can only surmise the disavowal of pathos is made to preserve his melancholic draw the more effectively, protecting it from the stigma of sentimentality and self-pity. In Ruin the Sacred Truths, Bloom similarly prefers to affirm Falstaff’s Nietzschean vitality while he allows a concurrent sentimental idealization of Falstaff

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87 Findlay, “Renaissance Pederasty and Pedagogy,” 231.
88 The possible puns on “heart” and its proliferating significations are too numerous to enumerate exhaustively, but they include notions of love, ardour, valour, inspiration, center, companion, and the less certain derivatives of drink and arse.
89 Empson, “Falstaff and Mr. Dover Wilson,” 256. As the Aristotelean approaches of Burke and Girard would suggest, Shakespearean drama is designed with the role of victimage especially in mind. For example, see Girard’s brief appreciation of Burke’s work in A Theater of Envy, 280
90 Shakespeare, 278, 279. In a similar anti-sentimental vein, Fleissner cites Bradley in reviewing the notion of Falstaff as a comic butt. Bradley says “it is difficult to believe that Shakespeare really intended to invest this fat knight with any element of pathos. The Elizabethans were not sentimental about fat men, and a tragic Falstaff would have been a violation of stage tradition.” Bradley in Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1929), 67, cited in Fleissner, “Falstaff’s Green Sickness Unto Death,” Shakespeare Quarterly 12 (1961): 47-55 (n.41, 54). However, there is no trace of this comic view of Falstaff’s death in Bloom. When Bloom writes of Falstaff’s internal threat to Hal in the “cruel speech of rejection,” he appears to figure Henrican interiority (and conscience) as continuous with such disavowed attachment (277).
("mourning" might be the less erotically paranoid and more appropriate language) against his avowed intentions of trying to avoid this latter route:

The fortunes of Falstaff in scholarship and criticism have been almost endlessly dismal, and I will not resume them here. I prefer Harold Goddard on Falstaff to any other commentator, yet I am aware that Goddard appears to have sentimentalized and even idealized Falstaff. Better than the endless litany absurdly patronizing Falstaff as Vice, Parasite, Fool. ....

Like his banishment, the subject of the possible causes of Falstaff's death has been the focus of a deal of critical attention. The explanations range from his dramatic function in a Frazerian scenario of ritual scapegoating or a Freudian scenario of displaced or surrogate parricide, to the plague, chlorosis, syphilis, venery, excess of drink, a melancholic love-sickness, and an outright broken heart. In Henry V, one hears, "according to the testimony of persons not very sentimental," that Falstaff has died of a broken heart, as a result of the Prince's catastrophic public and affective rejection. Hearing of Falstaff's sickness from his page, the Hostess rejoins "By my troth, he'll yield the crow a pudding one of these days; the King has killed his heart. Good husband, come home presently" (2.1.83-85). She returns to appeal to their sympathy:

Hostess. As ever you came of women, come in quickly to Sir John. Ah, poor heart! he is so shaked of a burning quotidian tertian that it is most lamentable to behold. Sweet men, come to him.

Nym. The King hath run some bad humours on the knight, that's the even of it.

Pistol. Nym, thou hast spoke the right;
His heart is fracted and corroborate.

Nym. The King is a good king, but it must be as it may: he passes some humours and careers.

Pistol. Let us condole the knight; for, lambkins, we will live. (2.1.112-122)

Some of the most painstaking of the "old historical" work concerned itself with Falstaff's death (as a real individual) and the proper diagnosis of this hearty's condition by consulting contemporary and ancient medical treatises. For example, in "Falstaff's Death of a Sweat," A.A. Mendilow indicates that the Hostess's apparently nonsensical remark about Falstaff's "burning quotidian tertian" (2.1.113-14) is "an exact medical description" of his illness drawn from a contemporary medical manual, A Dial for all Agues

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91 Bloom, Ruin the Sacred Truths, 79.
92 This summary is drawn from articles cited below, but see also the final chapter of J.I.M. Stewart's Character and Motive in Shakespeare (London: Longmans, 1949), "The Birth and Death of Falstaff." He suggests that Falstaff functions in the theater like a sacrificial victim in a fertility ritual, something comparable to a Frazerian scenario. Bloom prefers not to give a definite reason for Falstaff's death.
93 The phrasing of this sentence is indebted to Bradley, "The Rejection of Falstaff," 251-53 (251).
94 Robert F. Fleissner's article, "Falstaff's Green Sickness Unto Death," is typical of this historical approach to Falstaff's death, with an appreciation of the manner in which Renaissance medical diagnosis was not severed from psychic ailments such as melancholia, humour, and love-sickness. He also
by John Jones (1568). In this account, the fatal illness is the plague, or a relative of the plague known as "the sweating sickness," such as the audience was led to expect from the warning in the epilogue to 2

Henry IV that, "for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already 'a be killed of your hard opinions" (Epilogue, 28-30). The epilogue here appears to figure an authorial voice, a dramatist at play with his puppets (a notion that might appall Bloom), highlighting the unsavory sacrificial contract of the playwright with his audience in his choreographing of Falstaff's victimage.

Looking at the function of Falstaff's death in the drama's scapegoating dynamics, his sacrificial profile helps explain Bloom's overdetermined reading of the victimization of Falstaff (as Oedipal father and profane tutor) in Shakespeare's psychomachia of influence. Falstaff's odd authority and transcendence in death also helps explain the authoritative misprision guiding Bloom's reading. I turn to Mistress Quickly's famous report of Falstaff's death in Henry V in order to draw out how Bloom participates in Shakespeare's authority through Falstaff's death.

The Hostess responds warmly to Bardolph's doubts as to whether Falstaff might have made it to heaven:

Nay, sure, he's not in hell: he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. 'A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child; 'a parted e'en just between twelve and one, e'en at the turning o' th' tide; for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way. (2.3.9-15)

We have seen how Bloom links Falstaff's victimization to Shakespeare's rejection in love. As the flipside to this, Bloom grants Falstaff a transcendence in death and Shakespeare a freedom from the anxiety of influence, but he cannot quite banish the idea of Falstaff's spectral threat to the poet. Again:

Yet something in him [Shakespeare], which he perhaps identified with the authentic Falstaff, rejected where he most loved, and solitary, like the poet of the Sonnets, may have feared further humiliations. I have to conclude that Shakespeare is warding off personal horror by scapegoating the false Falstaff in this weak play.97

demonstrates a similar appreciation of the complex dramatic effect of Falstaff's death appropriate to his engaging character and possible "comic" function.

96 Mendilow, "Falstaff's Death of a Sweat," 479.
97 Bloom, Shakespeare, 318.
Castigating Shakespeare for his bad conscience in scapegoating the false Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Bloom takes the side of the rejected victim who travels to Arthur’s bosom, while his sympathy participates in Shakespeare’s *authentic* Falstaffian authority via his own encryption of passion.  

A recognition of the plurality of causes, spiritual and physical, is essential to appreciating the dramatist’s design of Falstaff’s death, how he makes it function as a “sacrifice” on several levels, including the social and intrapsychic. Many of the more traditional critical accounts of Falstaff’s death simulate the ethical attitudes of the illuminating Renaissance authorities that attributed the first cause of the plague to sin. That is, in maintaining that “[t]he first cause of the Plague is sinne,” Falstaff’s alleged spiritual and ethical (not to mention the sexual) “degeneration” would make him prone to the plague. These moralistic commentators follow the playwright’s cue in the epilogue of killing Falstaff with their “hard opinions” (line 30) even because they are aware that Falstaff functions in the drama as a type of surrogate for Hal’s purging of his former self. Those present at the scenes anticipating and reporting Falstaff’s death are sympathetic in a self-absorbed manner, interested in their own relations to Falstaff or death (“Let us condole the knight; for, lambkins, we will live” [2.1.122]) as well as in ethically judging Falstaff or Hal, making these “hard opinions” available for the audience (“The King hath run bad humours on the knight, that’s the even of it” [2.116-17]).

Examining the representation of Falstaff’s death, a certain ambiguity reigns that allows for a range of attribution of fault. This means that Falstaff can function as a scapegoat on several levels. He might be received as an abominable over-reacher who gets his just dessert, dying of heart-break and a consuming melancholia (though more sceptical commentators find this hard to believe), plague, or the “sweating sickness.” This would be in some conformity with his mythic role as Vice or Devil. Roughly aligned with this reception of his death is the notion that Falstaff dies of his miring self-indulgence, of “sack” (2.3.26)

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98 See Bloom on the Arthur-Abraham translation of Mistress Quickly, where he grants, with Quickly, a transcendence and redemption to Falstaff (*Ruin the Sacred Truths*, 84-85).
100 Of course, the *locus classicus* for this reading of Hal’s reformation is his speech ending scene two, act one, *1 Henry IV*, reiterated in relation to his wiping away shame with Hotspur’s death at 3.2.129-52. Our
and “of women” (2.3.28). The final exchange between the Hostess and boy merges Falstaff’s death from venery with his damnation for commerce with women, tracing a colorful displacement of guilt from Falstaff and Hal to a grotesque female body that Falstaff himself incarnates, the fallen body (“and he said they were devils incarnate” [2.3.30]), the apocalyptic “Whore of Babylon” (2.3.35-36) from which he (and we) would be delivered (“A could never abide carnation” [2.3.31]). Or alternatively, though coincident with his transcendence, he might be received as the victim of Hal’s “hard opinion” resulting in his heartbreak, with the phantasy of a vicarious redemption made available in the Hostess’s sublime suggestion that Falstaff went to “Arthur’s bosom” (2.3.10). In this properly religious, sacrificial register, the phantasied transcendence of the engrossing, corrupt knight signals the purging of the sovereign and social body. This purge is allied with the sacrificial narrative of the body and desire’s excesses and the purification of the proper body: “for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already ‘a be killed with your hard opinions” (Epilogue, 28-30). In the terms adopted above, Hal effects a psychic repression or negation of the emblematic grotesque, errant body, and this conflict is also played out for the social body with Falstaff’s death. Falstaff’s dramatic negation is simulated for the social body and the audience as a catharsis in which psychic, medical, ethical, religious, and dramatic usages combine in the errant knight’s death.

The range of possible receptions of Falstaff’s death suggest the staging of, in Empson’s phrase, an intentional “dramatic ambiguity.” This ambiguity can be translated into terms of engagement with the drama, where one’s imaginary participation in Falstaff’s rejection and death would offer an anxious pleasure on the basis of vicarious participation in his abjection, from Hal’s position and/or on a masochistic consensus in Hal’s staging his payment of “the debt I never promised” (1.2.207) is further directed by Warwick’s speech in 2 Henry IV, a speech ratifying the Prince’s design (4.4.67-78).

101 Valerie Traub’s essay that focuses on Falstaff as a grotesque reproductive female body in the Henriad, an approach to the text that blends carnival and feminist methodology to query the punitive psychoanalytic narratives embedded in these dramas. See “Prince Hal’s Falstaff: Positioning Psychoanalysis and the Female Reproductive Body,” Shakespeare Quarterly 40:4 (1989): 456-74, reprinted as a chapter in her Desire and Anxiety. Her critique of gender ideology overwrites Falstaff as a demonized, excluded maternal body where my focus is on the threat posed to proper masculinity by homophilic desire (what is also cast in terms of an excessive materiality and repudiated sexuality).

102 In the scene of Hal’s rejection of Falstaff, the terms of the rebuke demand a purge of the body and appetite:

Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace;
Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape
basis identifying with Falstaff. In what is a similar terminology, the dramatist stages a sympathetic response to his drama that disperses the spectator-subject between sovereign subject and abjected, constitutive other, an opposition that can also be translated into the spectator's divided attitude towards the drama's victimization of Falstaff. Rene Girard's account of dramatic scapegoating largely disregards this staging's possible affect on the spectator-subject, the possible cleaving to the trauma of rejection that might occasion an anxious pleasure. His theory examines the playwright's representation of victimage that splits the audience in their reception of it, a split of the audience into those who participate in the sacrifice and those for whom its representation is a privileged revelation of these mimetic, sacrificial dynamics. If the drama stages a response that is at least two-tiered in this Girardian sense of imaginary participation in the victimage, it also stages the spectator-subject's imaginary participation in scapegoating through its self-divisions.

This brief argument for the playwright's staging of a vicarious participation in Falstaff's "being," his sacrifice and its redemptive trajectory, is supposed to implicate Bloomian (self-)sympathy for this profane tutor, a misprision in part based on Bloom's encryption of homophilic attachment that is his means to melancholic authority. I have specified how the drama characterizes Falstaff's vicarious sacrifice as that of the sovereign subject's betrayal of the obscene, surrogate father, a sacrifice repeating that of the subject's homophilic attachment, the debt-death he never promised that is a source of his authority. Speaking of Hal's debt to Falstaff, Bloom might be talking of his own seductive rhetoric in making this scene repeat:

Yet another part of him is (or becomes) Falstaffian, in the deepest sense of the Falstaffian: a genius for language and its rhetorical control of others through psychological insight.

I now elaborate how the Henriad represents Falstaff's homophilic character in an archaic, classical register, particularly in his death. Falstaff's death is elliptically presented as a sacrifice of the homophilic

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103 Goldberg's account of this dynamic usually dispenses with the psychoanalytic terminology he uses here: "Hal's imaginary self-control mirrors a desire for self-punishment rooted in that specular structure of turning around (an autoerotics) that Jean Laplanche identifies as the origin of sexuality and of the ego. This is a masochism which, in the political register, signals an abjection coincident with the fantasy of empowerment. Imaginary identification. If Shakespeare is one both sides of the exchange between Hal and his companion, so 'we' are too" (Sodometries, "Desiring Hal," 154).

104 In A Theater of Envy, Girard gives a fairly sparse critical account of this split perspective in relation to sacrificial catharsis (253-54; 271-72).
and a plenitude of “being,” what I contend is Bloom’s highly rhetorical point of misprision through this betrayed tutor’s approach to the status of murdered father. This discussion of the scapegoating of an archaic, classical Falstaff will return us to the question of his finally speculative place in Shakespeare’s authorial scene of writing.

I turn first to the echo of Plato’s *Phaedo* in Mistress Quickly’s report of Falstaff’s death, then to Fluellen’s brilliantly offhand denunciation of King Henry V’s “killing” of his companion Falstaff. The Hostess administers to Falstaff in his final moments:

> So ’a bade me lay more clothes on his feet; I put my hands into the bed, and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone; then I felt to his knees, and so up’ard and up’ard, and all was as cold as any stone. (2.3.21-25)

Mistress Quickly reports the manner of Falstaff’s death in something of the role of the attendant who adminsters the hemlock to Socrates in the *Phaedo*. In both texts, death is described as moving upwards through the body of the forsaken tutor. It is just possible that Shakespeare was not purposely echoing the Platonic passage describing the final moments of Socrates, a scene in which Socrates rebukes the men for weeping after he has drunk the *pharmakon*:

> Then we were ashamed and controlled our tears. He walked about and, when he said his legs were heavy, lay down on his back, for such was the advice of the attendant. The man who had administered the poison laid his hands on him and after a while examined his feet and legs, then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. He said “No”; then after that, his thighs; and passing upwards in this way he showed us that he was growing cold and rigid. And again he touched him and said that when it reached his heart, he would be gone.106

The textual parallel seems evident, though we cannot be sure of its status as conscious allusion or what its motivation might be. As an allusion it would seem to suggest that Falstaff is to be cast in the role of Socrates, “the best and wisest and most righteous man” who is condemned to die, apparently for seducing the Athenian youth with his philosophy. However, such a position should also acknowledge the discrepancy between Falstaff and the tutor who espouses the philosopher’s self-restraint, superiority to the passions, and his certain hope of dwelling with the gods through philosophy’s purification of his soul.107

Both these attitudes towards Falstaff, as an unjustly victimized tutor and as embodying rather less than the

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107 Plato, *Phaedo*, for example, 69C, 82C.
Socratic ideal, can be maintained at once, though most critics tend to take a stand. The sacrificial ambiguity regarding Falstaff's innocence and the possibility of adopting an ironic attitude persists in the conceit of Falstaff going to "Arthur's bosom" (2.3.10), as the Phaedo concerns itself with the immortality of the soul, redemption, the reward of the just philosopher (which becomes the just knight in the Hostess's English "malapropism"), and the loving memory of the tutor.  

The textual suggestion of a Socratic death appears to mount a resistance to the movement towards "sacrificial closure" or unanimity in the Henriad, a movement wherein Falstaff is a victim who projectively embodies the origin of the shameful past of the sovereign, and by extension, a purifying catharsis for the social body and the audience. The nature of the purification ritual aiming at this imaginary restoration is given the configuration of a sovereign betrayal in the Welshman Fluellen's unsavoury simile, his comparative estimation of the new king as another Alexander the Great, making of Henry another such "pig" (see 4.7.11-18):

Fluellen. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it. As Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups, so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgements, turned away the fat knight with the great-belly doublet - he was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks: I have forgot his name.

Gower. Sir John Falstaff. (4.7.40-49)

Rather than perpetuating an important dramatic ambiguity in staging the character of Falstaff's death, one might alternatively view the textual echo, as Empson appears to, not necessarily as an allusion, but as a symptom of the author's attachment to Falstaff: "But whatever can he have intended of this parallel? Surely it has to imply that Falstaff like Socrates was a wise teacher killed by a false accusation of corrupting young men; his patient heroism under injustice, and how right the young men were to love him, are what we have to reflect on. I hope that someone did point out the parallel to Shakespeare; he did, I believe, feel enough magic about Falstaff for it to have given him a mixed but keen pleasure; but that seems as far as speculation can reasonably go .... And yet, though it seems natural to talk like this, I am not certain; the idea that Falstaff was a good tutor somehow was a quite public part of the play, and might conceivably have been fitted out with a learned reference" ("Falstaff and Mr. Dover Wilson," 240). Empson's strained defence of Falstaff here, like Bloom's own "antithetical" stance, might be attributed to the wish for a nearly mystical redemption of Falstaffian desire. In Empson's reading of the pathos of Falstaff's death, the playwright's representation of the Socratic death appears to substitute, from some repression of homosexual desire, the justly loved philosopher for the less justifiably loved Falstaff, to accede to a "mixed but keen pleasure."

Regarding the sovereign constitution of authority by the spectacle of its betrayal, a sovereignty seeking out this occasion, see Pye, as cited in the first chapter. Another instance of sovereignty's betrayal in Henry V to put in relation to Falstaff's rejection is the scene staging the treason of Scroop, Cambridge and Grey, wherein the king makes himself a mirror for his false "seeming" subjects. (The report of Falstaff's death comes in the next scene). The organizing principle of Hal's remonstrating speech is to display the seeming of these preposterously treasonous subjects who have hid their fault in "glistening semblances of piety" (2.2.117), mere semblances that need eradication.
Fluellen’s allegation is clear here, that King Henry’s betrayal of Falstaff was murderous. Certainly many Falstaffian critics such as Harold Bloom have found their voice echoing that of Fluellen’s, as “the figures and comparisons of” his death appeal to the sense of a lost plenitude to be restored.110

A classical, archaic register is present in Falstaff’s casting Hal as his Jove, as discussed above, in both the textual echo of the death of Socrates and in Fluellen’s arch indictment of King Henry, and in Falstaff’s mythical final resting place. In “Renaissance Pederasty and Pedagogy: The “Case” of Shakespeare’s Falstaff,” Findlay likewise observes that the archaic register is used for representing Falstaff’s engrossing relations with Hal, marking this phenomenon as a historical, “authorless” symptom and cultural contradiction.111 I would add that the displacement into the classical, archaic register appears to be a specific authorial strategy for representing homoerotic desire and its lost puissance (the “classical” can also function as a mode of legitimation and a sign of cultural renewal).112 One can argue that much of the affective power of the drama is due to the engaging psychomachia elaborated through Falstaff, including the specific drama of the constitution of puissant gender staged in Falstaff’s rejection by Prince Hal. This staging of Falstaff’s rejection and death also provides a platform for a critique of the scapegoating or betrayal of homophilic desire. If the death of this fat Jack, who “sweats to death/ And lards the lean earth as he walks along” (1 Henry IV, 2.2.106-07), if the death of Falstaff is staged as a sacrificial catharsis and renewal, his rejection and reported death also afford an upstaging of the importance of his victimization to cultural and psychic orders. It is this sacrificial legacy that seems to govern Bloom’s own analysis of Shakespeare’s victimization of Falstaff, an analysis in which he identifies with Falstaff as the murdered father, what I have been calling his authoritative misprision.

When Hal rejects the profane tutor Falstaff, he says “I do despise my dream” (2 Henry IV, 5.5.54), casting Falstaff as a dream of the base drives that must be rejected in order to accede to power, obedient to

110 It is worth noting that in his chapters on the Henriad, Bloom identifies (with) Falstaff as a Socratic tutor (290-91), cites Fluellen’s “ironic analogue for the rejection of Falstaff” (322), and gives a Falstaffian reading of the “parable of the purple-clad glutton, Dives, and poor Lazarus the beggar” from Luke (309-313 [309]), an antithetical reading that would redeem Falstaff, putting him in Arthur-Abraham’s bosom. 111 Findlay, “Renaissance Pederasty and Pedagogy,” 229, 235.
the law of castration that Falstaff punitively embodies for him, whose “being” he thereby appropriates. But Falstaff survives, as Bloom’s reading attests, as a dream of a “profane” father whose puissance and desire are exempt from the law of prohibition. Falstaff still survives as a memory of this dream of plenitude before and beyond the law. He is a reminder of the excessive body destined for sacrifice (for example, a “martlemas” [2 Henry IV, 2.2.96]), of sexual mobility and imaginary bliss. Falstaff’s polymorphous perversity and his embodiment of a narcissistic self-sufficiency spectacularly fail to mark prohibition. In his rejection and death Falstaff acts as an ob-scene dialectical support of the law of prohibition and gender. Falstaff asks Hal, “I prithee sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art King? And resolution thus fubbed as it is with the rusty curb of Old Father Antic the law?” (1 Henry IV, 1.2.57-60), anticipating his reign of misrule that never comes.

As a resolutely “antithetical” critic, the fiercely Falstaffian Bloom is drawn to precisely such imaginary transgressions of paternal inderdiction as the heart of authority’s dialectic and the idealization of the murdered father. Does Bloom’s authoritative misprision not position himself as the symbolic father, by the necessity of his reflection on his own renunciations, seeing (the) Falstaff in himself as the perverse author of the law with his “death,” positing the authorial subject’s fruitful, binding moment of debt as the death or murder of this imaginary, encrypted father?

Reviewing Bloom’s argument and its often occluded theoretical grounding, rhetoric, and explanation of authorial motivations, if Falstaff is Shakespeare’s authorial alter ego, this can be theorized as occuring on a “sublime” masochistic basis, where Falstaff is a displaced representation of the author’s rejection or

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112 Compare Bruce Smith in Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England. Smith looks at the diverse literary strategies of representing homoerotic desire, negotiating with prohibitive cultural discourses, exploring six archetypal myths or “fictions” of homosexual desire derived from classical sources.

113 Regarding the staging of Falstaff’s death and our losses therein, this appears to appeal to our narcissistic, self-regarding desire that floats on Falstaff’s desire in the course of the Henriad. Alexander observes Falstaff’s various forms of revival in “A Note on Falstaff,” 603.

114 This is Bloom’s own portrait of himself, for example, in Shakespeare, 323.

115 This sentence is modelled on a sentence in Lacan’s “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis,” in Écrits, 199, where he suggests that Freud’s purported linking of the signifier to the dead father is effected on a narcissistic basis: “How, indeed, could Freud fail to recognize such an affinity [between “the themes of the father and death”], when the necessity of his reflection led him to link the appearance of the signifier of the Father, as the author of the Law, with death, even to the murder of the Father” (199, my emphasis).
victimization in love and also, via his murder and introjection, a source of his melancholic authority. In this scene of writing as psychic agon the author occupies the positions of both Hal and Falstaff in phantasy, perhaps traversing these positions as he participates in this repeating scene of loss. When Bloom places Shakespeare in this relation of displaced identification with Falstaff, he effectively contributes to Shakespeare’s appeal as a dead and mourned father, also granting him autonomy as the self-traumatizing, self-originating author with a melancholic draw to his sovereign authority.

Going further into this labyrinth of influence’s psychomachia that I have conjured with Bloom, if Falstaff is in part an alter ego for Shakespeare himself, might he bear traces of the poet’s election-love and/or initial covenant of poetic visions with Marlowe? Might Shakespeare’s initial tutoring by Marlowe and struggle with his threatening ideal of heroic, transgressive aspiration produce in his swerving creation a brilliantly innocent Vice, Falstaff, who daemonically embodies transgressive sexuality in an authorial negotiation (“though Marlowe had a strong enough aftertaste to compel Shakespeare to some wry innuendos”)? In such a cryptonomy of literary desire, might one detect traces of occluded dungeons of influence’s sodomitical victimization, perhaps a playfully self-reflexive or apotropaic representation of such murderous misprision? The sovereign’s “end” in the dungeon is a thematic common to Marlowe’s Edward II—“This dungeon where they keep me is the sink/ Wherein the filth of all the castle falls” (5.5.55-56) —and Shakespeare’s Richard II. Might Colevile’s anticipated punishment be coded as sodomitical via the correspondance between dungeon and rectum, as suggested in Marlowe’s play? When Falstaff sends his daemonic double, Colevile, to the “dungeon” (2 Henry IV, 4.3.7) (spelled “dungion” in the Folio) to be executed, does Falstaff not display a Marlovian bravery of speech in punishing Colevile? Why trope the

116 Compare Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 726.
117 This account of self-origination is in keeping with Bloom making Shakespeare nearly free from the anxiety of influence, making him his own father. That is, Marlowe does not really enter the picture as the source of the anxiety of influence, for his murder would then confer on him the status of murdered, symbolic father, whereas that role is reserved for that putatively original invention of Shakespeare granting him freedom from Marlowe, Sir John Falstaff.
118 See Nicholas Brooke, “Marlowe as Provocative Agent in Shakespeare’s Early Plays,” *Shakespeare Survey* 14 (1961): 34-44, where he describes Shakespeare’s negotiations with Marlowe’s drama as an encounter with something alien that could only be assimilated and overcome with difficulty and moral rejection (36).
119 Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truths*, 53.
120 Shortly after this scene, a Marlovian Pistol points to an obscene dialectic of writing and its substitutive economy in what appears a cryptic, rhetorical parody of this “muse”: “Shall dunghill curs confront the
author’s writing as participating in Falstaff’s embrace and display of a Marlovian influence in his brave speech threatening Colevile’s life,\textsuperscript{121} a speech displacing the threat of death or castration onto his double, the “famous rebel” (4.3.62)? Because in what might be a fortuitous manner, this trope of misprision punningly points to the borrowing of literary themes (of imprisonment and sodomitical murder), suggesting the author’s debt to Marlowe here, while also describing a murderous dialectic of influence in this phantasied scene of misrecognition and projection. As we see in retrospect, Falstaff will follow Colevile in his journey to the Fleet when he becomes Hal’s surrogate and Colevile’s double, so that the misprision of Falstaff-Colevile might be both literal and, in a secondary sense, a matter of doubling and the murderous dialectic of literary influence and its phantom identifications with the precursor.

In his obscure speech after Colevile’s capture, Falstaff speaks enigmatically of a “whole school of tongues in this belly of mine” (2 Henry IV, 4.3.18-19), tongues that all speak his name, a “false staff,” but a speech that functions to displace the threat of death or castration onto a daemonic double:

I have a whole school of tongues in this belly of mine, and not a tongue of them all speaks any name but my name. An I had a belly of any indifferency, I were simply the most active fellow in Europe; my womb, my womb, my womb undoes me. (4.3.18-22)

Falstaff’s brave speech to Colevile is inspired by a displacement of castration-death, but it is more particularly imagined as originating in his belly of tongues and his womb-tomb, a description erasing sexual difference (“An I had a belly of any indifferency”), describing a narcissistic economy of writing the body that speaks only his name; does this womb-tomb accrue meaning in relation to the “dungion” Falstaff is sending Colevile to? When Falstaff speaks his name, his proper name speaks to his improper body, its support, which together appear to constitute an important imaginary signifier of desire. Might the poet

\textit{Helicons?? And shall good news be baffled?? Then, Pistol, lay thy head in Furies’ lap” (2 Henry IV, 5.3.104-06). Are we returned to an obscene poetic meaning generated by this “dungeon” or “dungion,” to the bowels of man from a manmade bowl, or womb, of the earth (Falstaff will say, “my womb, my womb, my womb undoes me” [4.3.22])? With an erotic abjection and paranoia appropriate to phantasied Marlovian debts, might Pistol’s complaint against base dogs (“dunghill curs”) confronting the source of poetic inspiration (“the Helicons”) gesture to this embrace and disavowal of sodomitical ravishment in literary influence?\textsuperscript{121} In the English Renaissance, rhetorical tropes and figures of speech such as Falstaff employs were commonly thought of as “bravery” of speech. See the first chapter of the first book of Abraham Fraunce’s \textit{The Arcadian Rhetoric} (London, 1588. Reprint, Menston: Scolar, 1969), A2. Of course, in other terms, Colevile may also think Falstaff is a most valiant, furious knight if the report of his killing Hotspur is in circulation. One might also note that Falstaff threatens to publish his taking of Colevile in a “particular ballad” (4.3.47).
represent here the origins of his poetic discourse, where "Falstaff" is a signifier for his generative castration, the story of an apotropaic speech or writing’s phantastic displacement of lack?

A “Scene of Writing” between Shakespeare and Marlowe

Thus Freud performs for us the scene of writing. Like all those who write. And like all who know how to write, he let the scene duplicate, repeat, and betray itself within the scene. Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing”

Despite his Falstaffian misprision, Bloom’s own evaluation of Shakespeare’s literary negotiations with Marlowe is a fairly orthodox, overstated account of a fratricidal contest. It is a story of Shakespeare’s eclipse of his literary rival and “precursor” through a struggle with Marlowe’s fundamental posture, of Shakespeare’s appropriation of the seductive power of Marlowe’s over-reaching hero-villains, though Bloom is careful to minimize the debt, neatly transforming it into Shakespeare’s self-sending autonomy. Does Bloom’s critical reductionism not resemble the poet’s own strategic misprision, the “history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism,” the misprision Bloom suggests the poet must adopt in relation to his precursor? The previous section isolated a motivating phantasm and ideological narrative of this obscure struggle in the authorial consolidation of proper masculinity in opposition to the emblematic sodomitical precursor, Marlowe, remarking how Bloom’s thesis follows the narrative of Hal’s ascension to sovereign authority with Falstaff’s rejection and death as a displaced version of this agon. Albeit without Bloom’s odd Falstaffian emphasis, much work had been written along these lines of critical revisionism before Bloom’s belated effort in Shakespeare, work documenting Shakespeare’s complex negotiations with Marlowe’s early influence. This critical work is

123 Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 30. That is, does Bloom merely follow the cues that the playwright provides him with? In Rival Playwrights, Shapiro observes regarding literary critical history’s miming of such authorial misprision: “Insofar as literary critical history, when concerned with canon formation, proceeds by reducing a poet’s art to a set of readily definable features that will fit within a neat preexisting scheme of self-confirming and self-contained values, that criticism could be seen as simply a vastly expanded (and authorized) version of parody” (168). Of course, Bloom knows this and, in a Wildean manner, sees his criticism as an expression of his own personality as an artist: “As literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry” (A Map of Misreading, 3).
124 The story of surpassing influence that follows relies primarily on the work of Marjorie Garber, Joseph Porter, James Shapiro, Joan Ozark Holmer, though also on a previous generation of critics on Marlowe and
also often directed by occluded issues of gender and participation in Shakespeare's authority at a scene of writing.

I begin here by reviewing the arguments of Garber and Porter that invoke a metadramatic scene of writing between these literary rivals in two of Shakespeare's dramas, *1 Henry IV* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The overview of the arguments of Garber and Porter suggests some of the critical investments in constructing such a fratricidal scene of writing, how these critics are seduced by a phantasm of the playwright's exemplary masculinity and "imaginary puissance" (*Henry V*, Prologue, 25). The model of a scene of writing describing literary influence expands in these pages from a conflict or negotiation limited to a particular author, text, or debt, to an authorial (fratricidal) agon grafted onto a metadramatic scene of writing, to a dizzy scene including a range of authors and texts, though still nominally tied to a scene of writing's phantasmatic displacement of lack. The focus of study is not original in examining a struggle with Marlovian influence or even a literal, metadramatic scene of writing in *Romeo and Juliet* and other dramas. However, I look more closely at the psychoanalytic contours, gendered terms, and ideological content of such originary narratives. Focusing primarily on *Romeo and Juliet*, I suggest that Shakespeare grafts onto the dramatic scenes of fratricidal conflict a metadramatic scene of writing, a scene of distinctly literary catfights, a scene turning around a previous "castration" of literary influence and social stigmatism in the murderous "pricksong" (*R&J*, 2.4.21) of writing's agonistic self-construction and phantom revenges. This is a portrait of a Shakespearean authorial subjectivity bound up with a repeating, structuring scene of sodomy, an author whose writing protects against a phantom castration-sodomy while turning it around. The chapter ends with an extended fiction about a phantom "Shake-scene" of writing, a fiction that calls forth a review of issues raised by this critical approach in the chapter's epilogue. The study of Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare using a scene of writing can be interrogated for its investment in Bardolatry and the ideological narratives subtending that scene of writing. The Bloomian critical enterprises of saving the "author" and the canon are obviously motivated by ideological and psychic investments. These investments

can betray an imaginary identification with a portrait of the authority of Shakespeare, a Shakespeare who is "the transferential love-object of literary studies,"125 or a participation in the playwright’s puissant, unimpaired masculinity at a fratricidal scene.

A Scene Set in Arthur’s Bosom

In her essay, “Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision,” Garber begins by asking her reader to “imagine for a moment a scene set in Arthur’s bosom - that peculiarly English afterworld Shakespeare invented as the final resting place of Falstaff.” Garber then proceeds to sketch a scene where Shakespeare and Marlowe appear to be playing a game of cards, “[b]ut when we get a little closer, we can see instead of cards, they’re using plays - each has a handful of quartos, octavos, and, on Shakespeare’s part, some sheets of Folio.”126 In the description that follows, Marlowe begins a game of literary rivalry in which Shakespeare consistently counters and betters his opponent’s dramatic achievements. The imaginary scene and game is meant to put into narrative a friendly literary rivalry, in Arthur’s bosom, but this framing of the scene of writing suggests another aspect of influence, of a submerged opposition and enmity within the homosocial and literary influence:

Up there in Arthur’s bosom, seated at a table (if it’s Arthur’s bosom it’s probably a round table) are Shakespeare and Marlowe, busy playing what looks at first to be a game of cards.127

In Garber’s article, this scene will offer the critic the perspective of a false transcendence (“Up there in Arthur’s bosom”) and righteousness, what is an effect of literary posterity and a highly ethical critical orthodoxy favoring Shakespeare’s chivalrous bosom over Marlowe’s (Falstaffian) impropriety.128

125 Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality (Methuen: New York, 1987), xiv. This book presents a challenging, theoretical reading of “Shakespeare” far more sophisticated than her earlier work. In her preface she comments how Freudian theory inflects her argument “through the concept - and the mechanism - of transference. The transferential relationship Freud describes as existing between the analyst and patient is, I will argue, precisely the kind of relation that exists between ‘Shakespeare’ and western culture” (xiv).
128 The remainder of Garber’s essay takes its cues from Shakespeare’s text where the Marlovian overreacher (Hotspur) is parodied or vanquished, reiterating a critical orthodoxy favoring the supposedly gentle Shakespearean text over Marlowe’s drama, participating in Shakespeare’s authority. Such a critical consensus is in part defined by its preference for “Arthur’s bosom,” translating it into a round table of fraternity, over and against a phantom Marlowe’s scorn of God’s word; for instance, in suggesting “[t]hat St. John the Evangelist was bed-fellow to Christ and leaned always in his bosom; that he used him as the
Garber’s essay posits a second scene of writing between Shakespeare and Marlowe that balances the first gentle one. This second scene is a literal scene of fratricidal aspiration and contest between Prince Hal and Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*. In an argument making use of several textual echoes of *Tamburlaine* in *1 Henry IV*, Garber suggests that Hotspur’s heroism is a Shakespearean criticism by hyperbolic parody of the mode of heroism created in the character of Tamburlaine. Hal’s fratricidal defeat of Hotspur discloses a conflict between Shakespeare and Marlowe, or at the least, between the Shakespearean protagonist and the Marlovian protagonist. Shakespeare has created Hotspur in Tamburlaine’s image, and in that image he will have him vanquished by the Prince of Wales … Bearing in mind what we have noticed about the character of Hotspur, we may perhaps see in the final contest between the two Harrys as a battle of the playwrights as well as of warriors. “Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,” Prince Hal declares, and “all the budding honors on thy crest I’ll crop to make a garland for my head” (V.i.43; 70-71). Hal is the quintessence of Shakespearean kingship: subtle, witty, calculating, complex, balanced, political. Hotspur is singleminded, driven, excessive, humorless - as are all Marlowe’s protagonists. When Hal wins Hotspur’s “proud titles,” he wins not only a garland of palm, but also of bays - not only of war, but also of poetry and dramaturgy. Notice that Hal completes Hotspur’s final sentence, literally taking the words out of his mouth. Power and control over language here passes from one to the other. Does this odd critical evaluation of Hotspur’s character slip into a significant underestimation of Marlowe’s drama that vicariously participates in Hal’s political and Shakespeare’s literary, canonical ascendency? Is Garber’s imagination not directed to such a participation in setting up this fratricidal scene of writing? If Hal’s parody and defeat of Hotspur’s heroism (and version of proper masculinity) successfully promotes Shakespeare the dramatist over Marlowe, this is effected through the surrogate or metaphoric action of the characters, a scene orchestrated, in Garber’s view, by the author Shakespeare. In effect, what Garber sketches in this second scene is a metadramatic representation of literary rivalry, where Shakespeare has

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sinners of Sodoma.” The Baines Note, cited in Christopher Marlowe: Complete Plays and Poems, ed. E.D. Pendry (London: Dent, 1976), 513. The testimony of Baines as obviously testifies to the perception of Marlowe’s subversive threat as political subject and dramatist. The slander aimed at Marlowe’s sexuality is enmeshed with charges of blasphemy, rhetorical countertruths that are staged in his drama. See Goldberg, “Sodomy and Society: the Case of Christopher Marlowe,” for a nuanced review of this position, *Southwest Review* 69 (1984): 371-78. As Goldberg notes, Thomas Kyd’s extorted report of Marlowe’s atheism begins with this particular fiction of Christ’s sodomitical relations with St. Paul, a description modelled on the classical example of Corydon’s lament over Alexis in Virgil’s second eclogue. 129 Garber, “Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision,” 4-7. Garber follows Hal’s jesting suggestion that Hotspur is an inadequate model of masculinity in his preference of battle over love, an “unbalanced” embodiment of martial valour (esp. 5-6).

130 Garber, “Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision,” 7. It is odd that, in her alliance with Shakespearean sovereignty, Garber claims that Marlowe’s protagonists are humorless, which is just wrong; Hotspur also has his humor. Nearly all the epithets of praise for Hal might well be applied to Marlovian protagonists; Hal also shares more of their ruthless virtu than Garber’s contrast allows.
misrepresented his precursor’s work (and his debt to it) in a murderous misprision, an interpretation persuasively foisted onto the drama’s critical tradition in love with Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{131}

What remains in Bloom a shadowy psychic and textual battle waged by the ephebe poet, a battle waged through \textit{tessera} or “antithetical completion” here, stands out in Garber’s account as a witty self-representation of authorial ascendency grafted onto a dramatic scene, a scene whose seductive powers of repetition Garber seems under the spell of: “If we are willing to see Hal’s victory over Hotspur as a metaphor for Shakespeare’s dramatic victory over Marlowe [a victory that was never really in doubt for Garber or her audience], a subversion of the Marlovian sublime into a tempered mold of revision and balanced complexity, we may find a new context for these insistent echoes of \textit{Tamburlaine}.”\textsuperscript{132} Garber firmly locates the “rationale” for Shakespeare’s textual rivalry and revisionary ratios with Marlowe in the playwright’s revision of the inadequate Marlovian vision of heroism, masculinity, and kingship, so that the fratricidal scene paradoxically records Shakespeare’s debt to and appropriation of the Marlovian text, yet frees the transcendent “author” from such fratricidal competition and striving and (what is actually represented as) Hal’s murderous, rhetorical appropriation of his rival’s being:

\begin{displayquote}
I will redeem all this on Percy’s head,
And in the closing of some glorious day
Be bold to tell you that I am your son,
When I will wear a garment all of blood,
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,
Which, washed away, shall scour my shame with it. (\textit{1 Henry IV}, 3.2.132-37)
\end{displayquote}

Thus Garber’s first scene set in “Arthur’s bosom” is the emphatically pastoral version of literary rivalry as generous and playful, apparently free of any suggestion of unconscious enmity (where Marlowe ventures “a half-smile of triumph,” a “gentle” Shakespeare delivers his artful \textit{coup de theater} “with an apologetic smile.”)\textsuperscript{133} Indeed, Garber’s second scene of writing appears to describe, in the playwright’s narrative of fratricidal conflict, her own seduction by Hal’s fratricidal puissance as an extension of Shakespeare’s immense authority. Caught up in the playwright’s and Hal’s proleptic account of Hotspur’s death, Garber

\textsuperscript{131} Rather like Bloom but more explicitly, Garber would have Shakespeare hoist Marlowe on his own petard here. This is despite the fact that Marlowe might also engage with his overreachers and similarly punishes them, though without the critical comfort one might derive from the “ethical” edification of such a construction of Shakespeare’s scene of writing.

\textsuperscript{132} Garber, “Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision,” 7.

\textsuperscript{133} Garber, “Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision,” 3.
accepts the parodic narrative of a supposed Marlovian insufficiency and death as Shakespeare's dramatic victory, as her humane preference for Shakespeare's text over Marlowe's that the playwright has just possibly made available (in this staging). Garber's sensitivity to Shakespeare's parody of the Marlovian style is gratified, as she confesses, by a certain pleasure of detection in identifying the echoes of a Tamburlaine *treading on kings* in Hotspur's language of overreaching:

In the Shakespearean context, such language, and such actions, are not only excessive, but even parodic. They signify for Shakespeare, and they signal to us, something of Hotspur's limitations as a hero and a dramatic character: indeed, they prefigure his death.\(^{134}\)

If Garber's fratricidal scene of writing grants her a vicarious satisfaction in participating in Shakespeare's moral and literary victory, as a metadramatic model it also demands certain key assumptions. A first assumption is the equation between a representation of a Marlovian hero-villain, Hotspur, and the biographical author, and similarly, a Shakespearean sovereign, Hal, and the biographical author. Another assumption is that the playwright intended his audience, or members in it, to make this leap and appreciate the dramatist's self-celebration in Hal's stagey victory. (This last point does not seem to sit well with Garber's first chivalrous scene of literary rivalry and the gentle Shakespeare that dominates the picture despite his figurative murder of Marlowe. Garber's use of "Arthur's bosom" is an index of this unresolved contradiction.) A first revision to the model I would suggest here is to point up Shakespeare's highly appropriative relation to Marlowe's text, including his use of the self-ravishing overreacher.\(^{135}\)

Further, when one locates "Shakespeare" and "Marlowe" at this scene this is clearly a fiction or phantasy, a convenient fiction of the critic in imaginary collusion with the author. One can ask what sort of desire produces the recognition of this fiction, might the scene be a restaging of "imaginary puissance" to which the critic is seduced, and what other psychic and ideological investments might be served under the aesthetic mask of Shakespeare's "balanced complexity"?

\(^{134}\) Garber, "Marlovian Vision/ Shakespearean Revision," 3-5 (5).
In Shakespeare's Mercutio, Porter presents a case for a Marlovian presence and influence in Romeo and Juliet. The singular textual instance of a Marlovian revenant in his account is in Benvolio's report of Mercutio's death, a speech that echoes the Scythian shepherd's aspiring speech in Tamburlaine. In what he concedes are "the murkiest waters of this study," Porter puts forward the thesis that Mercutio "serves in some ways as a simulacrum of the dead competitor" or literary rival Marlowe. Reviewing Porter's argument, what emerges is another metadramatic scene of writing between Marlowe and Shakespeare, though with a different cast than Garber's scene. At Porter's scene it is Mercutio and Romeo who stand in for Marlowe and an "evanescent" Shakespeare respectively. Anticipating Bloom's rhetorically occluded narrative in Shakespeare of the poet's travails of masculinity, Porter's metadramatic scene of writing brings out the sexual dimension of the anxiety of influence while also testing the limits of this approach.

The first part of Porter's book devotes itself to describing the Elizabethan literary and artistic sources for the Roman god Mercury, a scholarly background preparing for the notion that Shakespeare's Mercutio takes on the attributes of this highly metamorphic god. It is in the second part of his book, in a chapter called "The Thief and Marlowe," that Porter sketches a notional scene of writing for Shakespeare. The scene follows from Porter's claim that Mercutio bears a resemblance to the murdered rival playwright Marlowe, especially in his death. Porter suggests that Mercutio's rashness and brawling death are derived from the playwright's memory of Marlowe's well-known quarrellous nature and "a great reckoning in a little room" in Deptford, so that Marlowe and reports of his death contribute to the playwright's conception of Mercutio's character and his death. This is fair game as speculation, though his assertion of the

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136 Porter, Shakespeare's Mercutio, 135-36. It should be noted that Marlovian influence in the drama is more considerable than this singular textual echo. Rather as the drama's representation of desire implicates "heterosexual" passion with the sodomitical, so Shakespeare's borrowings from Marlowe also extend to representations of desire in the romance plot. A fine essay by Harold R. Walley, "Shakespeare's Debt to Marlowe in Romeo and Juliet," Philological Quarterly 21:3 (1942): 257-67, details the considerable extent and manner of Shakespeare's debt to Marlowe's "Hero and Leander" for the drama's imagination of heterosexual love and the psychology of the young lovers.

137 Porter, Shakespeare's Mercutio, 136.

138 Porter, Shakespeare's Mercutio, 135-44 (140).

139 Porter, Shakespeare's Mercutio, 138. The critical thing for Porter is that "the brawl in the streets of Verona seems to coalesce with the brawl in the Deptford house where Marlowe was killed" (138). M.C.
generation of a “Shakespeare-Romeo link” from this primary link (of “Marlowe-Mercutio”) is a somewhat farfetched speculation in line with a nineteenth century approach to the works as the poet’s spiritual autobiography. I will suggest below how Porter’s argument is grounded in the notion of Shakespeare’s consolidation of proper (heterosexual) identity in light of Marlowe’s influence and death, a reading that resembles my own restoration of the sexual dimension in Bloomian theory, as well as indicating the apparent errors and limitations of this approach. I will also point out how if one follows these psycho-biographical lines of argument, Shakespeare might resemble Mercutio as much as Marlowe, and indeed, in phantasy’s dispersal of the subject, the author might also be cast into the character of a murderous Tybalt.

The grounds for Porter’s further link appear to lie in his construction of Shakespeare’s scene of writing, a scene at which the poet is writing *Romeo and Juliet* under the forces of an “irrational assumption of guilt for Marlowe’s death.” According to Porter, we can detect light traces of this guilt in *Romeo and Juliet*, where Shakespeare can be glimpsed in Romeo playing out some sort of “subliminal fratricide” in Mercutio’s death.140 To back his argument up a bit, Porter begins by stating that Shakespeare struggles for several years before 1593 in literary rivalry with Marlowe. When he comes to write *Romeo and Juliet*, Marlowe has been dead some two years and Shakespeare stages his most significant literary negotiation with his rival’s challenging (sodomitical) sexuality. Critically, in this account of literary negotiation, the rival’s mercurial sexuality is conflated with the “subject” of literary influence. Porter’s argument reaches its speculative limit when he suggests that Marlowe’s death must have aroused in Shakespeare both gratification and mourning, with a consequent unconscious assumption of responsibility which can be observed in the representation of Mercutio’s death:

Whatever the personal relations may have been between Marlowe and Shakespeare, what we know of their professional rivalry and the high degree of challenge and response, subversion and containment, and productive cross-fertilization in their work suggests a nearly universal psychological process would have been at work in Shakespeare in 1595. Whether or not Marlowe had been Shakespeare’s “very friend” (*Romeo* 3.1.112) or rival in love as on the stage, it seems nearly certain that, whether or not the news of Marlowe’s death occasioned sorrow, that news would also have occasioned immediate gratification in Shakespeare. With the passage of some time the gratification would have occasioned guilt and the need for atonement, and in such

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140 Porter, *Shakespeare’s Mercutio*, 143.
circumstances a common enough mechanism is the irrational and unconscious assumption of responsibility for the death. Romeo may bear some obvious enough type of indirect responsibility for Mercutio’s death, for not earlier making Mercutio party to the reason for his mild responses to Tybalt’s taunts, and perhaps for some heedlessness in his attempt to halt the sword fight. But the elaborate stage direction from the first quarto “Tybalt under Romeo’s arm thrusts Mercutio in” (3.1.89 S.D.), coupled with the emphasis at the end of Mercutio’s penultimate speech, “-why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm” (II. 104-5), carries a strong if fleeting suggestion of authorization by Romeo for Mercutio’s death, a death Shakespeare has added to the story and so bears his own peculiar responsibility for. We may thus have a trace of Shakespeare’s unconscious assumption of responsibility for Marlowe’s death.  

Porter’s argument makes Romeo at this scene act in as the uneasy projection of the playwright’s irrational guilt over Marlowe’s death, with Mercutio’s rebuke to Romeo as the workings of a haunting authorial conscience. Porter represents Shakespeare’s murderous aggression in negotiating his literary debt at the level of authorial symptom, with the playwright unconsciously writing out of his guilty conscience regarding Marlowe’s death (“a death Shakespeare has added to the story and so bears his own peculiar responsibility for”). The suggestion that Shakespeare’s writing effects a projective displacement and/or catharsis of fratricidal guilt is not easily demonstrable. In this account, the punishments of a “writing conscience” seems to follow the overdetermined path of the author’s assumed personal sacrifice of homophilic desire in consolidating proper gender identity, something we simply do not know about the author. As the Sonnets criticism might suggest, speculation proliferates on the subject of Shakespeare’s sexuality in the absence of such knowledge, though perhaps also because the text stages this desire and traces its phantom inhearing and simulation.

In an article published the year after his book, Porter insists that “Mercutio plays the major and indeed virtually the sole part in Shakespeare’s processing of the challenge presented by Marlowe’s sexuality.” Making homoerotic themes the most provocative and subversive aspects of Marlowe’s work, Porter somewhat reductively condenses Marlovian theatrical subversion into a transgressive, homophilic sexuality. The result is a fusion of the homoerotic themes being negotiated with Marlowe’s person and the

142 See Shapiro’s critique of Porter’s argument where he makes a similar point about our lack of knowledge regarding Shakespeare’s sexuality (*Rival Playwrights*, 80).
143 One could note here the many sonnets dealing with the imagery of monuments, crypts and the poet’s verse as a tomb for the beloved, and sonnet 151 beginning: “Love is too young to know what conscience is/ Yet who knows not that conscience is born of love?”
imagining of literary influence as an erotic seduction and figurative murder; in this manner, Porter brings
out the question of sexuality in negotiating influence that Bloom tends to downplay despite its importance
to his rhetoric. Porter repeatedly uses the language of “incorporation” and “exorcism” to describe
Shakespeare’s imaginary relations to Marlowe, to his threatening text and sexuality that Shakespeare
struggles with, eventually killing off Marlowe-Mercutio. Although he does not spell out this point, Porter
makes Shakespeare’s literary negotiations with Marlowe instrumental in the author’s anxious consolidation
of a heterosexual identity via the phantom, psychic negation of the sodomite. In Porter’s (rather
Bloomian) construction of a scene of writing between Romeo-Shakespeare and Mercutio-Marlowe, an
authorial writing out of guilt or conscience and a writing out of the repression of the phantom sodomite-
sodomitical desire both converge in Mercutio’s death. In a moment, I expand the focus of this scene of
writing to include the character of Tybalt who is, after all, the character who kills Mercutio.

Porter’s intertextual argument regarding Mercutio’s death is that it is Marlovian by virtue of Benevolio’s
report of it echoing some aspiring lines from Tamburlaine. When Benvolio returns from offstage to
announce the death of Mercutio, his spoken epitaph describes the aspiring spirit of one who strove against
prohibitions and limit, a striving that defines the Marlovian protagonist:

O Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio is dead!
That gallant spirit hath aspired the clouds,
Which too untimely here did scorn the earth. (R&J, 3.1.118-20)

145 Regarding this language, see Porter, Shakespeare’s Mercutio, 143, or “assimilation” and “exorcism” at
137. The implication of such “incorporation” or “assimilation” of the precursor would be the playwright’s
phantom identification with Marlowe, and hence, at Porter’s scene of writing, with Mercutio also. This
returns us to an argument in the reading of Bloom, where a homology was detected between the travails of
literary influence and a phantom, encrypted identification with the precursor (in election-love and poetic
covenant).

146 In short, are Porter’s phantom hermeneutics governed by the desire to dis-cover the figurative murder of
the sodomite required by the heterosexual matrix, a hegemony whose orthodoxy “Shakespeare” is supposed
to embody? Crucially, Porter’s argument is more valid as a critique of the literary and cultural censoring or
marginalization of both Marlowe and Mercutio than as a psychoanalysis of Shakespeare’s symptomatic
writing. For the former, see Porter’s essay, “Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Canonization of
Heterosexuality” and chapter seven of his Shakespeare’s Mercutio. In making Mercutio stand for
Shakespeare’s primary negotiation with Marlowe’s threatening homophilic sexuality, Porter has to sidestep
the Sonnets and cast Shakespeare into a decisively orthodox, heterosexual identity that is ahistorical and an
unconvincing portrait. Porter’s project is the result of contemporary sexual epistemology and the academic
struggles for representing Shakespeare’s sexuality; see Porter, “The Canonization of Heterosexuality,” 132.

147 The most lucid exposition of this thesis regarding the nature of the Marlovian protagonist might be
Garber’s essay, “Infinite Riches in a Little Room: Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe,” Two Renaissance
Mythmakers, 3-21. Of course, the classic statement of this thesis is the work by Harry Levin, The
There seems to be almost a slight suggestion of Mercutio’s culpability in his death in Benvolio’s line, “[w]hich too untimely here did scorn the earth.” Porter suggests that this speech recalls lines in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* where the hero asks Thermidas to betray Mycetes and ally with him. The suggestion of literary influence has merit beyond Porter’s own analysis of the “sound of Tamburlaine” in Benvolio’s tribute to his dead friend:

The image [recalled by Benvolio’s lines] is that of the overreacher associated with both the Scythian shepherd and his creator. In fact the lines echo a particular image of Tamburlaine’s from the second scene of Part 1. The immediate context is Tamburlaine’s urging Thermidas to forsake Mycetes and ally with him, the long stirring speech ending

> Then shalt thou be Competitor with me,  
> And sit with Tamburlaine in all his majestie  
> (1.2.208-9),

to which Theridamas replies,

> Not Hermes prolocutor to the Gods,  
> Could use persuasions more pathetrical  
> (II.210-11),

and swears allegiance. Tamburlaine responds with six lines to “Theridamas my friend” ending,

> Thus shall my heart be combine with thine,  
> Untill our bodies turne to Elements:  
> And both our soules aspire celestiall thrones  
> (II.235-37).

The echo in the last of these lines in Benvolio’s announcement of Mercutio’s death ( remarked by Malone as cited by Gibbons in his notes to the lines) also differs from other traces of Marlowe in *Romeo and Juliet* already discussed here, as from Tamburlaine’s use of the image, in being not only heroic but also retrospective and elegaic. Furthermore Benvolio’s lines are distinctive by virtue of the degree to which Marlowe’s appearance in them is abrupt, forthright, and extensive.

Though the revenant of Marlowe’s text is certainly suggestive here, his appearance in these lines seems highly enigmatic rather than “abrupt, forthright and extensive.” To call the drama’s evocation of an image of an overreacher’s death simply “heroic” and “elegaic” is in some contradiction with his thesis - although everything becomes permitted with ambivalence - about the playwright’s “subliminal fratricide,” ie., it grants the playwright both a consciousness and generosity that is supposed to be absent at this scene.

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148 If this assertion of a shade of culpability seems a stretch, it might still play to the audience’s punitive fantasies and/or play out the playwright’s ambivalence (if indeed Mercutio is in part a reflux of Marlowe in this drama, particularly in his death). One might compare the scene where Juliet’s nurse rebukes the departed Mercutio for his playful bawdiness and asks after his identity. Romeo’s response seems to represent Mercutio as a sort of self-ravishing Marlovian protagonist: “One, gentlewoman, that God hath made, himself to mar” (*R&J*, 2.4.121-22). The nurse repeats this line, “himself to mar,” which might suggest a Marlovian self-marring or bringing low for which he is responsible.


150 I do not actually disagree with Porter here: this duplicity is entirely possible. But if authorial consciousness were present, Porter neglects to examine the playwright’s possible appropriation and revision of the Marlovian themes here. The memorable scene in *Tamburlaine* is of a highly rhetorical,
A “Shake-scene” of Writing or a “School of Cats”: No Tygers Hart, and yet … “More fierce and inexorable far/ Than empty tigers” (R&J, 5.3.39-40)

Benvolio. Why, what is Tybalt?
Mercutio. More than Prince of Cats. O, he’s the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing pricksong - keeps time, distance, and proportion; he rests his minim rests, one, two, and the third in your bosom! The very butcher of a silk button, a duelist, a duelist! A gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause. Ah, the immortal passado! The punto reverso! The hay! (R&J, 2.4.18-27)

Bentiu: I, but not onely no ordinarie Cat, but a Muske-cat, and not onely a Muske-cat, but a Muske-cat with a gracious favoure (which sounds like a Princes stile Dei gratia): not Tibault or Isegrim, Prince of Cattes, were euer endowed with the like Title. (Thomas Nashe, Have With Yow To Saffron-Walden, 3.51)

Base-minded men all three of you [Peele, Marlowe, and probably Nashe], if by my miserie you be not warnd: for vnto none of you (like mee) sought those burres to cleaue: those Puppets (I meane) that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnish in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whom they all haue beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all haue been beholding, shall (were yee in that case as I am now) bee both at once of them forsaken? Yes trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes that he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute iohannes fac totum, he is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses: & let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. (Robert Greene, A Groatsworth of Wit, 12.144)

I now open up the investigation of Shakespeare’s scene of writing with Marlowe in Romeo and Juliet to a consideration of other authors, texts, and features of the contemporary literary culture, attempting to provide a more full description of this scene of intertextual play, citation and struggle. This involves reviewing the “vpstart crow” and Tygers hart slurs of Robert Greene in A Groatsworth of Wit and some of Thomas Nashe’s literary invective in Have With Yow to Saffron-Walden, texts which appear to have found their way, via some revisionary ratios, into a fratricidal scene of writing of Shakespeare’s romantic mythologized seduction, a scene of valorized male-male rivalry and an imaginary, transcendent union with the ideally powerful “friend.” This is explicitly a scene of spectacular and oracular seduction (“Could use perswasions more pathetical”), an espousal of a sublime male-male rivalry (“Then shalt thou be Competitor with me”), and of betrayal and the “deep love” of male bonding (“Thus shall my heart be combinde with thine”) in Marlowe’s text. As we have seen, the scene of Mercutio’s death is filled with dynamics of emulous rivalry and a suggestion of betrayal. In Shakespeare’s text the mythological afflatus is gone and the speech marks the death of the aspiring Mercutio. Thus the echo of Marlowe’s text is appropriate even if it is no more than an unconscious re-enactment of Marlowe’s text, though the echo seems motivated by the memory of Marlowe’s text and death.

tragedy. The scene of writing now expands to include Tybalt’s slaying of Mercutio and Romeo’s vengeful defeat of Tybalt, with the “author” dispersed at the scene. In this psychomachia of influence, the first of two scenes describes the author’s professional “castration” by Greene’s charges of rapacious literary theft and upstartism, a scene which might be thought to shadow the playwright’s genuine, significant literary debts to Marlowe at this point in his career. The second scene is modelled on the first and involves the “turning around” and repetition of this castrating charge, of a Tyger’s hart, a displacement in writing of remembered injury and/or lack into a scene; at this scene of writing the charges of a Tygers hart and literary debts are both displayed and negated. The two scenes are linked by a repeating “letter,” Greene’s Tygers hart to Nashe’s feline Tibault to Shakespeare’s vanquished “Prince of Cats” (2.4.19), a link made the more plausible by their shared context of literary squabbling and emasculating accusations of upstartism. I conclude by recognizing that the transcendent “author” may not be controlling this scene of writing, that the “author” himself is largely my imaginary recuperation through the reconstruction of this scene and its pursuit of the elusive, phantom Tygers hart. The playwright’s apparently playful, encrypted representation of a literary catfight at the fratricidal scenes is perhaps no more than an unconscious, symptomatic troping or the play of language.

The question of Greene’s attack on Shakespeare in A Groatsworth of Wit has given rise to a substantial critical debate. I give a selective background relevant to an approach to Shakespeare’s possible restaging of Greene’s catty remarks in Romeo and Juliet. Tyrwhitt first identified Shakespeare as the upstart crow in Greene’s posthumously published pamphlet. The basis of the identification was that Greene appeared to be “parodying a line in 3 Henry VI” - “O tiger’s heart wrapt in a woman’s hide!” (1.4.137) - and to thus


My development of Nashe’s influence on Shakespeare’s text, in the “Prince of Cats” echo and other verbal parallels, is indebted to Holmer, “Nashe as ‘Monarch of Witt’ and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.” 154 Just plausibly, the wounding memory of Greene’s attack is revisited in the character of Tybalt (or Tibalt in the second quarto), a character present in his source (Brooke) but enlarged from another literary text, the scuffle in which Nashe evacuates by hyperbole Gabriel Harvey’s previous “catty” attack and appelation of himself as a base feline character, reversing the identity of such a Tibalt in a mockery of Harvey’s pretentiousness, ie., this might be the same pattern that governs a Shakespearean representation of Tybalt as an inflated and therefore ridiculous, evacuated image of himself as the player-playwright with a Tygers hart, an appelation better used to describe the spirit of Greene’s polemic.
indicate the player-playwright he was abusing. Wilson’s review of the scholarship rehabilitates Malone’s argument about the mixed authorship of the Henry VI dramas, suggesting that Greene’s invective was based on Shakespeare’s revision of his plays: “Greene’s sneer about the “vpstart Crow, beatified with our feathers” was obviously meant to be taken as a charge of appropriation; in other words, Greene was accusing Shakespeare of stealing and adapting plays upon Henry VI by himself and his friends.” Of course, scholars have disagreed over the question of who exactly wrote or collaborated in the authorship of the “original” plays and their subsequent revisions.

Dover Wilson contends that the crux of the passage in which the dying Greene denigrates Shakespeare is the description of him as an “an vpstart Crow, beatified with our feathers,” which many commentators take to be only a variation of the slur on Shakespeare’s social and professional status as an actor. In effect, that he was a mere “Puppet,” “a cliche” with Nashe and Greene in talking of the acting profession. Wilson argues that Elizabethan contemporaries would have taken the “upstart Crow” description to allude to the crows of Aesop and Horace’s Epistles, crows that mimic and commit literary appropriations (the borrowed feathers of others) respectively:

Horace’s crow and Aesop’s were so closely associated in readers’ minds in Shakespeare’s day as to be practically identical; and the crow in the other birds’ feathers was closely associated with the idea of literary theft in the mind of anyone who knew anything of the classics and of many who did not. It was just because it carried this flavour of dishonest appropriation that Greene was so fond of employing the image in his periodic girding against the players who, he complained, flourished and waxed rich on the products of their starving authors.

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155 My account here follows J. Dover Wilson, “Malone and the Upstart Crow,” Shakespeare Survey 4 (1951): 56-68 (57), esp. 56-57. A.D. Wright is among the dissenters promoting Edward Alleyn as the “upstart crow.” See her Christopher Marlowe and Edward Alleyn (London: Adam Hart, 1993), 130-85 (esp. 168-85). Even if Wright is right, which I doubt, the following argument holds insofar as Shakespeare could assume the attack directed to him and took it somewhat to heart.

156 Wilson, “Malone and the Upstart Crow,” 57.

157 For one example, C.F. Tucker Brooke argued that The First Part of the Contention and The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke were originally the exclusive work of Marlowe, and were the basis for Shakespeare’s consequent revision of these plays in 2 and 3 Henry VI. See “The Authorship of the Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI, in Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 17 (1912): 141-211. The scholarship is too vast to review here, but John Bakeless provides an apt critical summary in The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe, vol. 2 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1964), 221-41. Far less convincing are those, like F.P. Wilson, who wish to defend Shakespeare against the notion that he commenced as a “dramatist as a botcher of other men’s plays,” making him his own great original as the first dramatist of the English history play. See Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 105.

158 Wilson, “Malone and the Upstart Crow,” 60.

159 Wilson, “Malone and the Upstart Crow,” 65.
Wilson’s proposition that the “vpstart Crow” passage turns on an accusation of literary theft does not exclude the more primary reading in which “vpstart Crow” identifies an actor-turned-playwright who has made inroads on Greene’s professional and class status. That is, Greene’s _crow_ blends a charge of plagiarism into a social caste slur and seems to indicate his resentment of Shakespeare’s skills as a dramatist. As much historical criticism demonstrates, although the status of the “player” was rising at this time, the acting profession were still attacked by their opponents as base “masterless men” and viewed with distrust. Greene’s splenetic attack uses this common prejudice against players whose history is interwoven with an ancient, abiding distrust of the drama’s mimesis as embodying a veritable, far-ranging ontological threat and “plague” of imitative, appropriative desire.\(^{160}\)

The force of Greene’s implicit charge of plagiarism should be qualified from a historical point of view. If not completely dismissing the charge of Shakespeare’s debt to his contemporaries, such a view leads to a discussion of the other, perhaps less defensible, more wounding accusations of “upstartism” levelled by Greene. One cannot absolutely dismiss Greene’s accusations of Shakespeare’s opportunistic borrowings, though viewing the charge of plagiarism in a historical context greatly moderates it, as does a consideration of the factor of Greene’s personal resentment.

Given that the contemporary theater culture saw a great deal of authorial collaboration and revision, the charge that Shakespeare has rapaciously stolen either Greene and/or others’ literary property seems a bit strained.\(^{161}\) As Dover Wilson suggests, it is quite possible that Shakespeare’s company bought the plays which he then revised.\(^{162}\) However, the _Tygers hart_ barb might indeed be based on

\(^{160}\) For instance, see Gerald Eades Bentley’s, *The Profession of the Player in Shakespeare’s Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), for example, 8-11; and Jonas Barish’s fine book, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), a work whose thesis might often be troped in a Girardian direction to account for this pervasive ambivalence towards the theater, even by its own practitioners. See the end of his chapter, “Puritans and Proteans,” esp. 127-31, for remarks concerning Shakespeare’s attitudes towards theatricality, and the following chapter, “Jonson and the Loathed Stage.”

\(^{161}\) “I have often asked myself,” Wilson writes, “why Greene harboured so much evident hatred for a man whom Chettle found of civil demeanour and all the world later agreed to speak of as ‘gentle.’ That Shakespeare rewrote his plays and made, as he evidently realized, a much better job of them, no doubt angered him. But to call that stealing was of course ridiculous; and it is difficult to believe the charge could have been seriously entertained for a moment, or that it was put forward with any other purpose than to injure his rival in the eyes of the public” (“Malone and the Upstart Crow,” 63). Wilson’s pro-Shakespeare bias promotes the playwright’s “gentle” nature, whereas the player-playwright’s _lack_ of gentility is the barb that Greene would saddle him with.

\(^{162}\) Wilson, “Malone and the Upstart Crow,” 62.
Shakespeare's using this particular line from *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke* in his 3 *Henry VI*, plays for which different scholars find quite different genealogies. A relevant thesis for my essay on influence would be that the former play was in part Greene's or Marlowe's, which play Shakespeare had undertaken to revise - or "plagiarize" in Greene's attack.\(^{163}\)

In this way, the *Tygers hart* barb would allude to Shakespeare's alleged literary theft vis-à-vis Greene or Marlowe, as well as to the fact that he is an "upstart" player turned playwright. Reviewing the publisher Henry Chettle's well-known apology in *Kind-Heart's Dream* for the offense taken to Greene's venom, Wilson concludes that the slandered poet Shakespeare must have taken offence. In response, he appears to have had his "honesty" and "uprightness of dealing" vouched for by "divers of worship," or powerful, influential men of nobility.\(^{164}\) Chettle's apology for publishing Greene's slander clarifies our sense that the "upstart crow" has been misrepresented as a rapacious, heartless thief who has purloined his plumes of authorship. If a real sticking point for Shakespeare was the class slur in the "upstart crow," he would still endure some embarrassment, even though the jackanapes conceit and *Tygers hart* might be as easily attributed to Greene.\(^{165}\) If we assume the attack was wounding in terms of Shakespeare's class aspirations in relation to his social and professional status as a player-playwright, might we hear its phantastic "*punto reverso!*" (2.4.27) in *Romeo and* 

\(^{163}\) The plays which become part of Shakespeare's canon as 2 and 3, *Henry VI* in the Folio are the bad quartos of *The First Part of the Contention between the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke*. The scholars who argue for Marlowe's original composition of these histories include C.F. Tucker Brooke and John Bakeless, whose findings are generally ignored by orthodox Shakespeareans. See Bakeless's chapter "Marlowe and Shakespeare" where he deals with the issue, in volume two of *The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe*, 221-241.

\(^{164}\) Wilson, "Malone and the Upstart Crow," 60-63.

\(^{165}\) Greene was, after all, a well-known dissolute who had advertised his prodigal career in print. And it is of further interest, as we learn in reading a *Defence of Conycatching* by Cuthbert Conycatcher, that "Greene had sold his *Orlando Furioso* to two different acting companies in succession, and after the fraud had been discovered had excused himself on the ground 'that there was no more faith to be held with players than with them that valued faith at the price of a feather', for they were 'men that measured honesty by profit and that regarded their authors not by desert but by necessity of time'. We do not know, but is it not likely, that this piece of sharp practice proved the final cause of Greene's ruin? It is highly improbable he found any company to employ him as a writer of plays afterwards, while it is of being 'forsaken' by the players that he complains on his death-bed" (Wilson, "Malone and the Upstart Crow," 63). Wilson is citing the text of "Cuthbert Conycatcher" in E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 325. If Greene's attack on Shakespeare appears merely characteristic of his denigration of players and his own double-dealings, unburdening on the players his own faults, it would doubtless still cause Shakespeare some pain.
Juliet, where the charge might be displaced in phantasy onto the uncomplimentary character of Tybalt in his name and reputation as “More than Prince of Cats” (2.4.19)?

Looking at Tybalt’s presence and function in the drama, particularly in Mercutio’s mock-praise of him, we might examine another, intertextual source for his name and character, a source that contributes to a picture of extremely mediated literary influence. In Thomas Nashe’s Have with Yov, one reads endless invective against Gabriel Harvey. Nashe sets up his opponent in phantastic dialogue by citing him and then damning him out of his own mouth. The characteristic rhetorical flourish consists of adding to his opponent’s own satire so as to turn it around upon him. I have already cited an example of this stratagem as one of the epigraphs to this section:

*Carnead:* Pol-cat and Muske-cat? There wants but a Cat a mountaine, and then there would be old scratching.
*Bentiu:* I, but not onely no ordinarie Cat, but a Muske-cat, and not onely a Muske-cat, but a *Muske-cat with a gracious fauour* (which sounds like a Princes stile *Dei gratia*): not *Tibault* or *Isegrim*, Prince of Cattes, were euer endowed with the like Title.\(^{166}\)

Might one suppose the “not *Tibault* ... Prince of Cattes” to be another intertextual source of the “Tybalt” we see in Shakespeare’s romantic tragedy? This relation appears indicated by the odd superlative construction that appears otherwise unmotivated in Mercutio’s satiric description of Tybalt: “More than Prince of Cats. O, he’s the courageous captain of compliments” (*R&J*, 2.4.19-20). In effect, the construction, “but not onely ... and not onely ... not ...” appears a source for the sleek “More than ...”.

Shakespeare’s Tybalt seems oddly patterned on this striking figure of a pretentious cat, which appears to be one of the sources for his name.\(^{167}\)

Again, in Nashe’s text, the nicknaming serves to “return to sender” Harvey’s ridicule of himself as a base feline, to visit his revenge on that “courageous captain of compliments” (*R&J*, 2.4.20). As Holmer writes:

Harvey appears to have been the first to use feline allusions, negatively for Nashe but positively for himself, and Nashe quotes Harvey to set him up for his own ridicule: “*But some had rather be a Pol-cat with a stinking stirre, than a Muske-cat with gracious fauour.*” In Nashe’s satiric dialogue, Harvey is answered through a mockery of his pretentiousness: “I, but not onely no ordinarie Cat, but a Muske-cat, and not only a Muske-cat, but a *Muske-cat with gracious fauour*”

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\(^{166}\)*Nashe, Have With Yov*, 3.51.

\(^{167}\)In *R&J*, this description of Tybalt is preceded by Benvolio and Mercutio discussing the probability that Tybalt has sent a letter of challenge to Romeo: “Any man that can write may answer a letter” (2.4.10). Mercutio’s jest, seems an oblique satire on the literary squabbling of Nashe and Harvey.
(which sounds like a Princes stile Dei gratia): not Tibault or Isegrim, Prince of Cattes, were euer endowed with the like Title" (351). 168

My psycho-biographical speculation is that, reading Nashe’s witty reply to Harvey’s slur, the passage had an uncanny power for Shakespeare. Had he not wished a few years earlier to so reply to such a “catty” attack of Robert Greene? i.e., to condemn Greene’s own upstart Tygers hart? Might Greene, though beyond the reach of Shakespeare, live again and die again in the author’s recreation of Tibalt-as-Tybalt, that “courageous captain of compliments” (R&J, 2.4.20) whose own pride is taken down in this “turning around” or “return to sender”? Does such a phantom revenge seem a sufficient motivation to entertain the possibility of the character Tybalt’s recreation by the author? Alternatively, if Shakespeare was already near completion of the romantic tragedy when he read Greene, might he have grafted aspects of the uncanny Tybalt-Tibault correspondance into late revisions?

If Shakespeare appears to identify his Tybalt with Nashe’s naming of his feline opponent Harvey, Shakespeare’s nicknaming of a literary rival would appear natural and follow the same “catty” logic. If the skeletal story of Tibalt’s slaying by Romeus is already in place, this might make it an especially attractive text for the playwright dramatize. The playwright is provided with a series of past and present “Tybalts” out of which to create his Tybalt. With Brooke’s Tibalt as his source, 169 and Nashe’s contemporary Tibault also contributing to his character, might an authorial memory of Greene’s Tygers hart be implicated in this Tibalt-Tibault series? Might the wounding Tygers hart be the secret motor behind this grafting of Nashe’s Tibault onto Brooke’s “Tibalt,” thus satisfying the author’s motive for a phantom “revenge”? Perhaps even in a self-reflexive mode? We will never know. The author in Romeo would take his surrogative revenge on Greene as such a tiger, that is, take revenge on Greene as the tigerish Tybalt. Is it the murderous author in Romeo who confesses, in his peculiar lines of bombast, “The time and my intents are savage-wild/ More fierce and inexorable far/ Than empty tigers or the roaring sea” (5.3.37-39)? Or indeed, these may be just such “empty tigers.”

169 See Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, vol. 1, 269-363, for Bullough’s introduction to and Brooke’s translation of “The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet.” One
This is a reconstruction of the author’s tigerish scenes of writing into the temporal disjunction of two scenes always implied in a Bloomian scheme, the first of influence and debt, the second of its arch rebuttal in a murderous misprision. (My reconstruction intends to draw out the phantastic nature of this pursuit of Shakespeare’s authority, to make prominent the gendered terms of influence’s castration in this analysis, and to indicate the manner in which class might figure in such a fiction.) The first scene describes Shakespeare’s general indebtedness to Marlowe’s text and the threat of “castration” entailed by his early influence. Greene’s slander painfully points up Shakespeare’s secondariness and publicizes this influence for the playwright. The first scene, the author’s agon with Marlowe, is further branded in the author’s memory by Greene’s allegation of literary appropriation, a branding in which “his Tygers hart” is particularly impressed. The second scene of writing turns around the direction of this lack, with the author displacing it in the representation of fratricidal conflict, a writing that follows phantasy’s tropic defence of reversal here. (The “turning around” of lack in the writing’s literal representation of rivalrous murder is quite a leap, bypassing the revisionary ratios of Bloom’s theory, but is prepared for by Brooke’s text as it is suggested by Nashe’s). Just possibly, in the author’s phantasy, the wounding allegation of “upstartism” and dishonest appropriation is “revenged” in the staging of Tybalt’s death as Greene’s.

Consider another scene, this one from Hamlet, where the tragic protagonist seems to call for a Tygers hart as an ideal agent of vengeful action. Shapiro has written succinctly about the obvious presence of Marlowe and Nashe’s Dido Queen of Carthage in the Player’s Speech of Hamlet, especially concerning Aeneas’ speech to Dido recalling Priam’s death. In this scene recalling Pyrrhus’ slaughter of Priam, Pyrrhus is evidently the model for a type of heroism Hamlet cannot embody (“Pyrrhus is an anachronism, a throwback to the revengers of the drama of a previous decade, to Marlowe’s heroes and to Shakespeare’s own Titus Andronicus”). The beginning of Hamlet’s speech is a false start, perhaps a significant one:

should also note that “Tibert” is a cat’s name in “the Reynaldian beast epic,” where “Tibault” in a naming original to Nashe. See Holmer, “Nashe as ‘Monarch of Witt’ and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet,” 315.

170 Dealing with many of the same issues as Shakespeare, Nashe redresses in Have With Yov Harvey’s treatment of Marlowe and Greene since their deaths, and the charge of his own imitation of Greene: “Those things which hee might haue related truly hee would not, and those that he would hee could not, for want of good intelligence. How he hath handled Greene and Marloe since their deaths, those that read his Bookes may judge: and where, like a lakes barreller and a Gorbolone, he girds me with initating of Greene, let him vnderstand, I more score it than to haue so foule a lakes for my groaning stoole as hys mouth” (3.132).
For Hamlet, Pyrrhus is a tiger, a Hyrcanian beast (the identification is so strong he gets the first line wrong because of this):

"The rugged Pyrrhus, like th’ Hyrcanian beast" –
‘Tis not so. It begins with Pyrrhus:
"The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms ....
(2.2.450-2)

It is perhaps only accidental that the image recalls the earliest identification of Shakespeare as Marlowe’s derivative imitator, when Robert Greene, parodically transposing a line from 3 Henry VI, described Shakespeare as possessed of a “‘tiger’s hart wrapt in a player’s hyde,’ [and] supposes he is able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you.” In the course of the decade separating Greene’s remarks from Hamlet, Shakespeare has gone from rapacious to gentle, from derivative imitator to generous recollector of his rival’s gifts. There is a long-standing tradition that Shakespeare performed the part of the Ghost in Hamlet. What is often forgotten is that this role is usually doubled with that of the First Player. If this was the case, Shakespeare himself acted this final bit of ‘scenical strutting and furious vociferaction.’ The rivalry, at long last, was over.171

In his balanced account of this possible textual revenant from Greene, Shapiro disperses “Shakespeare” between a Hamlet for whom revenge is impossible, the Ghost calling for vengeance, and finally, the First Player who performs the speech. In my version of this scene, “Shakespeare”-as-Hamlet would be longing for the Tygers hart he does not seem to possess (though he appears to invoke it), while the Ghost’s doubling as the First Player adds to the haunting aspect of this speech, the uncanny, flooding return of “th’ Hyrcanian beast” (Hamlet, 2.2.461-62). The wit of the “parapraxis” is the indication that Hamlet is in sympathy with the spirit of revenge of the Ghost and the “bombast” of the First Player’s speech, both roles played by the “vpstart Crow.” An additional source of wit may then lie in the traditional Shakespeare-as-Hamlet identification, with the author taking on “his Tygers hart.” If the Player’s speech recounting Pyrrhus’ wild heart does not facilitate but rather dulls Hamlet’s revenge, it might permit Shakespeare, in play, a metadramatic backward glance at his deceased detractor’s charge at just this point of renewed Marlovian “appropriation.” If Shakespeare generously recollects Marlowe’s gifts here, it is at least partly in order to render his style anachronistic, as Shapiro elsewhere insists (Hamlet’s praise of the “excellent play” [2.2.449] is not quite Shakespeare’s). Might the genial-gesture of recollection be to double-business bound in the allusion to the “Hyrcanian beast” (2.2.461-62), playfully refuting and affirming the charges of upstartism and rapacious appropriation?

171 Shapiro, Rival Playwrights, 131, 132.
In quite a different drama of the same period, *Twelfth Night*, there is another odd appearance of a *Tiger*, again in conjunction with elements that suggest some sort of revenant of Marlowe. Rescuing Viola, Antonio is arrested for shameful “private babble” (5.1.65) in the streets, and his past life of courageous, enviable pillaging comes back to haunt him. There is a startling combination of charges laid against the homophilic Antonio: of rapacious piracy, of the boarding and taking of a ship called the “*Tiger,*” of the wounding a certain “*Titus*” in battle. Have Greene’s charges of rapacious upstartism fused in Shakespeare’s imagination with those of literary piracy, which becomes played out in a fictional account of a literal piracy? This appears a nonsensical grouping of chance elements until one recalls that Shakespeare refers to his rival’s “great verse” as a ship in the opening line of his famous sonnet 86, an enemy who is in visited by an “affable familiar ghost” and has stolen the “matter” from his own enterprise.\(^{172}\) If this were a dream-analysis, one might be permitted to suggest that in the drama a charge of literary theft is being so reversed and affirmed in a phantasy economy, i.e., Shakespeare is now writing with Marlowe’s familiar ghost at his side. And as a further interpretive liberty, one might freely transpose the elements of “*Titus*” and “*Tiger*” in order to restore the poet’s uncensored wish. It might then make sense as recalling a scene of writing, much like sonnet 86 recalls such a scene when it insists that Marlowe’s verse and apparent literary “theft” and inspiration has not “astonished” his verse. “*Titus*” is the Marlovian progeny, *Titus Andronicus*, the play as ship and commercial enterprise that Shakespeare launches. He might even recognize his progeny to be a bit wounded in its relation to a Marlovian encounter: “And this is he that did the *Tiger* board/ When your young nephew Titus lost his leg” (5.1.62-63). He has boarded his rival’s verse with a *Tygers hart*, rapaciously appropriating the Marlovian vehicle, grappled with “the most noble bottom” (5.1.57) of his opponent. Of course, the “*Tiger*” is also, in this play of substitutions, Marlowe and his verse, so that the author’s *Tygers hart* is attributed to Marlowe, a different case.\(^{173}\) As for the effect of “Shakespeare”-as-\(^{172}\) In Wilde’s “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” an interpretation of sonnet 86 is canvassed where the inspirational “matter” that Shakespeare’s rival has stolen is a boy-actor named Willie Hughes (178). If one were to carry out this line here, the boy-actor as the matter and focus of inspiration mediates between Marlowe and Shakespeare as a gift, preparing for the poet’s remarks on “his” misprision in the following sonnet: “So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,/ Comes home again, on better judgment making./ Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter/ In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.”
\(^{173}\) Recall that Tamburlaine began as such a rapacious, usurping privateer feared by pirates. Before becoming King of Persia, he is “[t]he only fear and terror of the cruel pirates of Argier,/ That damned train, the scum of Africa” (*I, Tamburlaine*, 3.3.55-56). Cited in Richard Wilson’s “Visible Bullets: Tamburlaine the Great and Ivan the Terrible,” in *Christopher Marlowe*, 120-39 (128). Wilson’s essay situates and “implicates” Marlowe as a Tamburlaine figure in the imperialist society he lived in: this is the speculative
Antonio’s rapacious literary conquest, the “very envy and the tongue of loss/ Cried fame and honour on him.” (5.1.58-59). The “wish” here in the phantastical economy of writing might be the affirmation of such a phantasy of puissance from the “tongue of loss.”

The above fiction of a scene of writing hedges between a witty metadramatic and a symptomatic account of the fratricidal scene. But both these scenes require the dramatis personae to represent the author and his literary rivals he is engaged in combat with. Such claims of correspondances, even when couched in language like “Mercutio functioning as a simulacrum for Marlowe,” or Tybalt functioning as such for Greene, seem rooted in a critical wish to detect and participate in an authorial conflict with these literary antagonists, constructing an agonistic scene of writing with only a shadow life (comprised of textual link to my argument, making the rapacious pirate “Marlovian” also. Wilson provides historical material indicating how Marlowe was connected, through family relations, to the Deptford Docks. The playwright’s relative Anthony Marlowe was agent between 1576 and 1599 for the Muscovy Company, a leader in world trade and commerce whose monopolies greatly enriched its shareholders. Among its major players was Francis Walsingham, the famous spymaster Marlowe apparently worked for, which work may have led to his death.

Taking leave of such phantom tigers, I mention but one more that seems relevant to the bombastic imagination of rapacious vengeance, preying, and progeny being sketched. In Titus Andronicus, Titus speaks to his son: “Why, foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive/ That Rome is but a wilderness of tigers./ Tigers must prey, and Rome affords no prey/ But me and mine” (3.1.53-56).

After this serio-comic investigation into the phantom tigers of the Shakespearean text, the status of the flexible scene of writing should be clarified. In effect, is the scene of writing a description of the author’s psychic agon with the influential precursor, the author’s phantasied (symptomatic) displacement or recasting of lack into a literal, murderous scene in the romantic tragedy, or the author’s witty metadramatic re-presentation and reflection on this fratricidal scene and phantasy? With their nuanced differences, all these scenes have tended to come in and out of the present argument. I have limned the existence of the first, authorial agon of influence with Marlowe in R&J. Here, Shakespeare’s negotiations include the representation of Mercutio’s character and his threatening sodomitical sexuality, with the homology between literary influence and a phantom authorial identification with the precursor, revenants that seem to dictate the second scene of a recasting of lack in the drama’s staging of fratricide as a sort of “writing conscience.” The second, symptomatic account of influence at a scene of writing is implicit in the first with the difference that it entails, unlike Bloom’s model of misprision, the literal representation of the precursor’s murder. Transposing the author’s (private) psychomachia of influence and its murderous revisory ratios into a literal dramatic scene does several things. First, the psychic drama of the poet, his misprision and troping of the precursor’s text, is literally re-presented as a conflict between dramatis personae. The tropic or psychological defence is directly represented as the reversal of power in the fraternal rival’s murder, where the reversal of belatedness and its putative “castration” is turned around. The poet’s defensive murder of the precursor at this symptomatic scene of writing is guided by his pursuit of a proper, puissant poetic and gender identity, wrested from homoerotic conflict. Such a phantasied picture of a scene of writing in fratricidal conflict might conceivably be represented, as it appears below, by the author himself. In line with the author’s own knowing construction of this phantasy or fiction, the scene can be viewed as emerging as a metadramatic phantom in witty metaphors describing the combative aspects of writing or in cryptic allusions to authorial ascendency. Alternatively, the phantasy could be present at the level of the symptom (Porter) in telling textual revenants (as in the report of Mercutio’s death).
revenants) at best in the dramatic action. In any case, the fratricidal scene of writing is subject to an ideological critique via the playwright’s representation of the emplotment of the amorous and murderous by a defensive masculinity’s policings of male-male desire.

Before leaving these shadows, I observe how metaphors for combative writing from Nashe's *Have With Yov* tend to gravitate to scenes of fratricidal conflict in *Romeo and Juliet*. These other revenants of Nashe’s text in *Romeo and Juliet* appear to contribute to a phantom scene of writing grafted onto the fratricidal duels. In retracing this transportation of Nashe’s language into Shakespeare’s drama, the proposed phantom scene of writing is given a timbre that nods in tribute to Nashe’s biting satire. Many of Shakespeare’s textual borrowings from *Have With Yov* are used to describe the conflict between Mercutio and Tybalt, giving the scene a trace of that other rivalrous scene of writing. In effect, as a source structuring the signification of the Shakespearean text, the martial language of writing in Nashe limns the martial conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* as such a scene of writing.

The scenes of fratricidal conflict in the romantic tragedy are presented in colourful language that recalls some of the emasculating verbal abuse and catscratching of Nashe’s satiric pamphlet. Nashe has “a penchant for imagery of the duel and fencing for depicting his quarrel in ink,” using “several different metaphors for a quarrel, such as a cockfight, a catfight, and a penfight (3:30, 51, 133).” As Holmer observes, Shakespeare “fuses the two metaphors of the catfight and the swordfight through the means of fighting, namely scratching. The rapier is like the cat’s claw because it can literally scratch a man to death, as Mercutio gravely laments.”177 Answering in turn Benvolio’s and Romeo’s questioning whether he is hurt, Mercutio says, “Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, ’tis enough … Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death!” (3.1.94; 101-02). Another possible significant intertext in *Have With Yov* occurs in the satiric use of "fiddlestick" in the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, with its similar use in Mercutio’s return of Tybalt’s emasculating taunt that “thou consortest with Romeo” (3.1.46). Holmer details the epithet’s use by Harvey as a term of insulting insignificance, to Nashe’s answering use employing musical

177 In *Rival Playwrights*, Shapiro presents the ambivalence of literary relations: “We do well to remember that the drama of this period witnessed both a fellowship and a Poets’ War. It was probably neither as malicious nor as golden as some literary historians have made the age sound” (14).
and fighting elements, also noting a Nashean pre-echo of "consort." In sum, the martial, musical, and insulting language leading to Shakespeare’s fatal duel scene has a convincing structuring intertext in Nashe.

The Shakespearean difference from Nashe’s text is in extending the range of insult and dramatizing it in a "phallic" turning around in Mercutio’s brandishing his rapier, returning the charge of a phantom, emasculating sodomy:

Mercutio. Consort? What, dost thou make us minstrels? And thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here’s my fiddlestick; here’s that shall make you dance. Zounds, consort! (3.1.47-50)

Mercutio’s response to Tybalt indicates the emasculating nature of the taunt, which was essentially calling them sodomites. In Mercutio’s picking up the musical metaphor he threatens Tybalt with the like emasculation, making his rapier his phallic "fiddlestick," and claiming "I will not budge for no man’s pleasure, I" (3.1.56). Another speech in Romeo and Juliet, the earlier scene where Mercutio offers mock-praise to Tybalt’s fighting skills, anticipates and connects with the duel scene’s imaginative fusion of a deadly swordfight, metaphoric catfight, broadly phallic innuendo, and musical metaphors for duelling. A musical poetic twist to the duel may be present in the notion of a fighting “pricksong” (2.4.21), though this whimsical reading relies on taking the meaning of Mercutio’s line, “O, he’s the courageous captain of compliments” (2.4.19-20), rather narrowly, to indicate literary squabbling: Mercutio does, however, go on to speak of Tybalt’s affectation of speech. Mercutio also gives largely mock praise to Tybalt’s skill in duelling, a duelling in which he is “[t]he very butcher of a silk button” (2.4.23-24). The description seems to point to a sexual substitution and satisfaction taken in defeating one’s opponent, i.e., the duelist’s aggressive “touch” is likened to having someone sexually. Taking the “silk button” to name an anus, this

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179 By “intertext” I mean another text to which Shakespeare’s refers which contributes to the signification of his text. This is not quite the critical language of Bloom, who prefers to acknowledge only one “intertext” (the precursor’s) in the fixation and primal repression of literary influence. On intertext and intertextuality, I rely here on an article by Michael Rifflaterre, “Syllepsis,” in Critical Inquiry 6:4 (1980): 625-38, where he makes detecting the “absent” or “latent” intertext a matter of making sense of ungrammaticalities or peculiarities in a process of signification that occurs specifically between texts (esp. 625-28). However more plural and ranging Rifflaterre’s intertexts appear, there are some similarities to Bloom’s theory here, though the main difference might lie in the focus on the author’s psychic-textual agon in Bloom.
reading is prepared for by Tybalt’s aggressively phallic character. His name sounds of such a bault or
“bolt,” and he has previously been described as “[m]ore than Prince of Cats. O” (2.4.19), which sounds like
catzo here, Elizabethan slang for penis, giving him a further trace of a paradoxically phallic feline.180
Entering the shadowy realm of psychomachia again, might the fighting spirit of Shakespeare be in
Mercutio here, returning to his doppelganger Greene-in-Tybalt the courageous compliments he had
received of “his Tygers hart”?

Making Mercutio into a Nashe figure, as Holmer does, also makes some sense in the passage of
Mercutio’s mocking praise of Tybalt.181 Mercutio is like Nashe in

his intolerance to vain fencing boasts, his resentment of boyish accusations, and his genuis for
personal satire replete with invective name-calling and mock-titles .... In his quarrel with
Harvey, Nashe opposes, as does Mercutio, airs and newfangledness (3:30-31). Nashe’s hatred of
fads - the “new-fangled Gallardos and Senior Fantasticoes” (3:31) and Harvey’s looking and
speaking like an Italian and affecting “Italian puntillos” (3:76) - parallels Mercutio’s
animadversion against the “new tuners of accent,” “fashionmongers ... who stand so much on
the new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench” (2.4.26-30). Like Mercutio’s tirade
against Tybalt, Nashe denounces Harvey as “idle and new-fangled” (3:26), as a “swash-buckler”
(3:55) whose “horrible insulting pride” (3:56) needs someone like Nashe “to humble him”
(3:69). The princely airs of Harvey and Tybalt - that “spirit of Bragganisme” (3:109) - are
precisely what Nashe and Mercutio claim to eschew.182

180 Dr. Sirluck pointed out to me the possible interest of both the “silk button” and catzo in this speech. In
the “catty” context of this passage, it should also be noted that in Renaissance slang “cat” can mean
“whore.” Nashe’s feline satire in Have With Yov attaches this meaning of “whore” to Harvey’s pride,
perish to his pride of patronage, of himself as a “Muske-cat with gracious fauour” (3.50, 51). (Again, see
the “Cat o’ mountain” entry in Rubinstein’s A Dictionary, which cites the Nashe passage in question [45].)
Incidentally, “A very good whore!” (2.4.31-32) is one of the affecting, phantastic forms of speech that
Mercutio attributes to Tybalt.

181 Holmer makes a persuasive case for Mercutio as a Nashe figure. See esp., 326-37, and her reasonable
criticism of Porter’s thesis, 329-32. The rival challenge is not without problems. Holmer asks that “we
entertain the possibility that Shakespeare found Nashe suggestive for his characterization of Mercutio”
(332). Porter’s argument is not really refuted, nor does it work on the same level as Holmer’s. Porter first
suggests Mercury’s suggestiveness for Mercutio’s characterization and Marlowe enters the picture as
another source for Mercutio’s homophilic sexuality, and more peripherally as a literary influence and late
deceased rival. His phantom presence is evident in Benvolio’s announcement of Mercutio’s death and
perhaps in Mercutio’s rebuke to Romeo, but these are presented as probably an unconscious literary
revenant and a symptomatic acknowledgment of irrational guilt. Holmer’s thesis takes Nashe as a living
model for Mercutio whereas Porter makes Marlowe’s relationship to Mercutio more unconscious, mediated
and obscure. My whimsical fiction would also add “Shakespeare” to this list of Mercutio figures.
182 Holmer, “Nashe as ‘Monarch of Witt’ and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet,” 328.
Given all these textual echoes, whether or not we then want to make Mercutio into a Nashe figure, Nashe's text appears as a highly probable source and intertext for Mercutio's ironic mock-praise of Tybalt.\textsuperscript{183} Mercutio's emasculating "praise" of Tybalt takes on a new significance when it is put into a narrative of literary rivalry. The "argument" of Nashe's polemic, the taking down of Harvey's princely pride, might also point to the phantom presence of such literary catfights being parodically restaged in Tybalt-as-Greene: "More than Prince of Cats. O, he's the courageous captain of compliments" \textit{(R&J, 2.4.19)}. However, to the degree that a playfully appropriative and even generous influence exists here between Nashe and Shakespeare, a really persuasive narrative of a phantastic rebuttal of Greene's attack might not emerge (though a "school of cats[o]") seems oddly overdetermined here).

As reviewed above, Marlowe's dramaturgy and poetry influence \textit{Romeo and Juliet}, even if the precise scope of this is difficult to ascertain. As Porter suggests, Marlowe's personality and sexuality appear to contribute to the playwright's characterization of Mercutio. And Marlowe's historical death might even be suggested by Mercutio's death with the revenant from \textit{Tamburlaine}. In the narrative of fratricidal rivalry, this metadramatic moment of Mercutio's death would mark Shakespeare's victory over Marlowe, over an emasculating threat in influence and his sodomitical sexuality, with Shakespeare surpassing the ethos of the Marlovian overreacher as his tragic lovers go on to define a new sublime in romantic tragedy.\textsuperscript{164}

Such narratives of Shakespeare's triumphant scene of writing are retrospective, critical recastings of the playwright's supremacy. My supplemental revenants from Greene and Nashe inhabit this dialectic, but aim to make the "origin" more diffuse by dizzily multiplying it. In this reading, although I also put gender anxiety and class aspiration into the equation of authorial puissance, my diversification of Bloom's fratricidal agon does not quite dismantle its agonistic sublime or escape from the transferential relation with "Shakespeare." Authorial subjectivity and desire in this critical portrait are governed by a repeating scene of influence's phantom castration-sodomy which I detect in Shakespeare's text. These stagings of the scene

\textsuperscript{183} Holmer notes that Nashe was possibly associated with the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the time of composition-production of \textit{Romeo and Juliet} (late 1596), making it likely that Shakespeare would have access to \textit{Have With Yov}. In "Nashe as 'Monarch of Witt' and Shakespeare's \textit{Romeo and Juliet}," 326.
of writing pursue a phantastic gender identification relative to this phantom castration-sodomy, its negotiation and arch rebuttal. In this narrative of influence, the author's psychic defences and considerable wit are deployed in an apotropaic writing whose restaging of influence is a means to enjoyment, where repeated phantom revenges and inhearsings bear witness to the scene's uncanny power.\textsuperscript{185}

Unfortunately, the scene of writing recounted in these pages runs the considerable risk of reproducing the discourse of a Shakespearean critical orthodoxy and a punitive gender ideology that I maintain Shakespeare actually interrogates. This critical orthodoxy and Bloom love Shakespeare for his canonical centrality and transcendent superiority to everyone else. So the theoretical approach of looking at Shakespeare's scene of writing appears a symptomatic legacy of this hegemony, confirming it in the end, permitting the "gentle" playwright the occasional privilege of representing his fratricidal ascendancy while we participate in his authority. By these lights, my phantom recoveries of the author's Tygers hart also participate in the scenes of desire and authorial phantasy, speculating on the authority of Shakespeare, his "imaginary puissance" and mastery in authorial ruses of seduction to a scene. My backprojection of Shakespeare's authorial mastery at a fratricidal scene of writing receives a Wildean redress in the epilogue.

\textsuperscript{184} But as argued in the second chapter, even where this sublime relies on a specific revisionism and dramatization of Petrarchan poetics, the sublime is also embedded in a Marlovian sublime of an aspiring, self-ravishing transcendence: "One, gentlewoman, that God hath made, himself to mar" (R&J, 2.4.121-22).

\textsuperscript{185} Consider sonnet 86 again, where it is the beloved who substitutes for or mediates Marlovian influence?

\begin{verbatim}
Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, not his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
\end{verbatim}
Epilogue

The rejection of Falstaff possibly is a deep echo of Shakespeare’s own sense of betrayal by the young nobleman of the Sonnets, except that Shakespeare manifests extraordinary ambivalence towards himself in the Sonnets, while Falstaff’s almost innocent self-love is part of the secret of the fat knight’s genius. Like his admirer Oscar Wilde, Sir John was always right, except in blinding himself to Hal’s hypocrisy, just as the sublime Oscar was wrong only about Lord Alfred Douglas, poetaster and narcissist.

Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*.

Before taking leave of Shakespeare’s scene of writing, I ask again about Shakespeare’s “author function” and his position as an ideal or a transferential love-object of literary studies. I elaborate how the Bloomian scenes recounted in the above pages are symptomatic of a fascination with origins and a critical investment in Shakespeare’s ideal authority. I also wish to suggest how this scene might be staged as a seductive ruse by the author, an uncannily repeating scene in which the reader or critic is implicated by his imaginary participation. To this end I investigate a Shakespearean scene of writing in Oscar Wilde’s novella “The Portrait of Mr W.H.”. Wilde participates and intervenes in a Victorian literary history of reading Shakespeare’s works as testaments of his spiritual autobiography, making Shakespeare over in his own image as self-reflexively staging his phantom authority. Wilde’s text simulates for its own ends the staging of desire in the Sonnets, imitating their rhetorical affirmation of desire through negation: “And for a woman were thou first created,/ Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,/ And by addition me of thee defeated,/ By adding one thing to my purpose nothing” (sonnet 20). Wilde’s novella also capitalizes on and draws out the erotic draw of narcissistic and illicit phantasy in Shakespeare’s text, as in the displacement of the imaginary signifier of desire “W.H.” (“W.H.” for the controlling man in all hues, “Willie Hughes,” and William Himself). The eroticism depends on the poetic subject’s non-identity with the imaginary signifier and contributes, in the same trajectory, to the portrait of the author’s melancholic, sublime authority and artistic autogenesis: these are secured through his (tenuous) renunciation of desire or rejection in love.

As in the above epigraph, Wilde’s life and his text might appear as the uncanny model and precursor for Bloom’s account of Shakespeare’s scene of writing in the Sonnets. I have been arguing that Bloom’s scene of writing, his psychomachia of influence, functions in an ideological narrative of the origin of the text and

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the author’s “sublime” poetic identity and authority, where the disavowal of a necessary imitation repeats (or reproduces) the “sacrifice” of homosexual desire. I queried Bloom’s repeating scene (of a phantasied castration and its turning around) for its submerged trope of sodomy, making apparent the rhetorical force and ideological content of the scene, how it simulates a fetishistic sacrifice of a phantom homophilic desire collapsed with imitation in influence.

A good place to renew inquiry might be with the author “Shakespeare.” Bloom’s work on the canon and Shakespeare’s central place in it puts “Shakespeare” in what might be called a transferential relationship and makes him “the critical occasion for idealization.”188 This idealization is in part due to the critic’s imaginary participation in Shakespeare’s authority, an effect produced by the poet’s staging of scenes of desire, of loss or renunciation and recovery in the dramas. “Shakespeare” is the mediator of an alienated, projected, phantasmatic identity. Shakespeare’s drama is the “mirroring stage” in whose drama critics participate, projecting themselves into its ideal statues and phantoms. “The plays are the mirror in which we find reflected images of ourselves,” Willbern argues, “and they are the ground on which Shakespeare saw his own multiple identity dramatically represented.”189 If Shakespeare projects himself into his drama through the elaboration of his narcissism, this projective participation in the dramas would make them a phantasied displacement of authorial lack into scenes staged for the spectator or reader’s enjoyment.190 In Willbern’s account, as in my own, the critic’s participation and projective identifications curiously mirror the dramatist’s own participation in the drama’s scenes of desire, making the play into a ghostly communion with the playwright. Willbern observes earlier in his chapter: “Shakespeare is a ground for narcissistic projection and our echoing song; he is the mirror in which we see our idealized selves. For literary critics, idealization cooperates with identification.”191 Our imaginary participation in his drama and

188 The cited phrase is from a chapter to which the present epilogue is indebted, “What is Shakespeare?” in David Willbern’s book, Poetic Will: Shakespeare and the Play of Language (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 145. In The Western Canon and Shakespeare, Bloom repeatedly asserts Shakespeare’s centrality in an effort to validate the traditional canon, an effort to make the center hold.

189 Willbern, Poetic Will, 155, 156.

190 This poststructuralist, psychoanalytic account of the decentered authorial subject is indeed rather similar to the Romantic idea of Shakespeare’s genius for creating a vital cast of characters radically unlike himself or the notion of psychomachia in which aspects of the inner self, the subject’s inner stage, are portrayed on the theatrical stage.

191 Willbern, Poetic Will, 152.
identification with "Shakespeare" would seem to secure for him an idealization as "author" of our mediated, ideal selves.

Willbern notes that such promotion of Shakespeare's greatness can result in an ambivalence towards the ideal author, but I would rather emphasize here that the idealization has relations to imaginary identification with that authority that are pertinent. Bloom reserves his candid criticism for "current Anglo-American writing" about Shakespeare in academia. These critics he describes "(without malice) as gender-and-power freaks" and professional Resenters. This description is not without its comic dimensions, especially considering the manner in which Bloom's own analyses are directed by a vicarious concern for the poet's gender (im)puissance in influence, as witnessed in Bloom's investments in Shakespeare's authority and a Falstaffian spirit. The third chapter examined how Bloom's "portrait" of Shakespeare's authority at a scene of writing obscurely but surely stages the murder of the sodomitical other in a rejection of the profane "father" Falstaff, while Bloom also partakes, in this vision of Shakespeare, of the dead father's authority in a phantom identification.

Recurring to Bloom's argument, when he presents Falstaff as Shakespeare's authorial alter ego and surrogate in the victimization of influence, the guiding text is the Sonnets: "The Sonnets dramatize their speaker's rejection, akin to the pathos of Falstaff's ruin." As we saw earlier, when attempting to void Marlowe as a significant influence, Bloom makes the motor of Shakespeare's apotropaic writing the varied "displacement" of his rejection in love, so the scenes of writing in both the Henriad and the Sonnets are records of the author's spiritual autobiography, a narrative of negotiating this sexual loss and illicit desire with his alternating fear of victimization and his self-punishment.

192 Willbern, Poetic Will, 145-46. In his footnote, Willbern instances Bloom as representative of the critical phenomenon of idealizing the absent, patriarchal origin (n.12, 223). Fineman's idealization of Shakespeare as the inventor of poetic subjectivity is given as another example in the same footnote.
193 Bloom, Shakespeare, 734, 10.
194 Bloom, Shakespeare, 743.
Although he provides no sustained reading of the Sonnets, in his “Coda: The Shakespearean Difference,” Bloom’s comments on Joel Fineman’s *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye* reflect his own view of “Shakespeare” and a melancholic interiority sustained by loss:

The late Joel Fineman, questing to understand Shakespeare’s “subjectivity effect,” found in the Sonnets a paradigm for all of Shakespeare’s (and literature’s) bisexualities of vision. Setting aside Fineman’s immersion in the critical fashions that ascribe everything to “language” rather than to the authorial self, he nevertheless had an authentic insight into the link between Shakespeare’s portraits of the ever-growing inner self, and Shakespeare’s preternatural awareness of bisexuality and its disguises. In Bloom’s (mis)reading of Fineman, it is the poetic subject’s bisexuality of vision that effects a psychic agon whose effects are greater interiorization (“the ever growing inner self”). Commending Fineman’s *authentic* insight into Shakespearean bisexuality, Bloom essentially applauds how Fineman’s account produces the ideal author’s exemplary self-divided heterosexuality, rhetorically conserving the homosexual loss as the source of Shakespearean interiority and reflexivity. Bloom’s portrait of an ideal Shakespeare not only credits him with schooling Freud in this vision of bisexuality in his characters (“Here, as ever, Shakespeare is the original psychologist, and Freud the belated rhetorician”), Bloom also assumes that “bisexualities of vision” support the poet’s writing through his assumption of homosexual loss. In Bloom’s here reproducing an authentic, biographical Shakespeare linked to the first person of the Sonnets, an exemplary instance of the autonomous self which is a historical product of eighteenth century editorial practices. His work thus follows the longstanding literary tradition of speculating on the life-story behind the Sonnets:

We do not know how closely to integrate Shakespeare’s life and his sonnet sequence, but critics have intimated, to me convincingly, that Falstaff’s relation to Hal has a parallel in the poet’s

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196 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 714. What Fineman tracks as the poetic subject’s loss of a visionary self-presentation in the fall into heterosexuality and (self-)difference, where the poet’s specular desire is troped as homosexual, Bloom tropes in his own totalizing vision (that actually drops the specular trope) of a bisexual self-division in which alterity is sublated, containing alterity in the individual’s bisexual nature.

In granting Fineman’s his “authentic insight,” Bloom also appears to be thinking of the early essay “Shakespearean Doubles.” Although Bloom makes a strategic (mis)reading of Fineman’s work, see another non-Shakespearean essay by Fineman, “Psychoanalysis, Bisexuality, and the Difference Before the Sexes,” in *Psychosexual Imperatives: Their Role in Identity Formation*, ed. Marie Coleman Nelson and Jean Ilkenberry (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1979), which investigates the position of the thesis of bisexuality in Freud’s thought; see esp. 109-123.

relation, in the Sonnets, to his patron and possible lover, the Earl of Southampton. Whatever it was that Shakespeare experienced with Southampton, it clearly had a negative side, and too searingly reminded him that he was indeed a player and not a king.198

I submit that Bloom’s portrait of an ideal Shakespeare transmutes the illicit sexuality of the Sonnets into another source of Shakespeare’s sublime interiority, melancholic masculinity and artistic inspiration—through loss. Bloom here carries on the tradition of reading the Sonnets as testament to the poet’s spiritual autobiography, a tradition ideologically and psychically invested in Shakespeare’s ideal authority, reproducing that authority and its own through maintaining the sonneteer’s illicit desire in the structure of the fetish.199 Bloom’s slightly scandalous “quest to know Shakespeare better” leads him to the primal scene of the poet’s personality, the Sonnets,200 rendering a “Shakespeare” whose illicit sexuality is canvassed in setting the scene of writing. De Grazia insists that Shakespeare’s interiority is somehow a fiction produced by Malone’s critical apparatus and the project of authenticating “Shakespeare’s” corpus, an interiority working to maintain the author’s integrity and ideal character despite the poetic persona’s so-called illicit passions in the Sonnets: “By postulating depth to the text [as psyche], the verbal disturbances on its surface are evaded; linguistic activity that cannot be pressed into the service of a coherent and decent subject is consigned to hidden motives beneath.”201 Bloom is in this tradition of critics, though he apparently views the poet’s interiority as (at least in part) the effect of his renunciation of homosexual desire or attachment. Problematically, for Bloom’s analyses, this is a fetishized process that reaches the status of exemplary literary paradigm for “subjectivity effects” in the poet’s invention of the human, of a Shakespearean subjectivity; meanwhile, this sublimation also supports the poet’s apotropaic writing.

198 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 726. See also, for another setting of the scene of writing, Bloom’s (self-serving) vindication of Shakespeare’s character: “I am hardly determined to vindicate Falstaff, but to Shakespeare, clearly, the poet’s own love for the young nobleman in the Sonnets was anything but grotesque or self-serving” (289).

199 *Shakespeare Verbatim*, by de Grazia, is important for historicizing the question of the production of Shakespeare’s authority.

200 Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 735. Bloom’s emphasis on Shakespearean interiority appears motivated by a desire to stage the sonneteer’s illicit desire while maintaining the poet’s integrity and ideality. From a similar angle, in the seventh chapter of *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England*, Bruce Smith makes an argument for the privacy of the Sonnets, making their self-conscious secrecy and representation of inward life the authentic Shakespeare in his “confession” of sexuality. Smith argues that the poet invents the myth of the secret sharer, a discourse on homosexual desire that installs a hermeneutics of suspicion in reading.

201 See Margreta de Grazia, “The Motive for Interiority: Shakespeare’s Sonnets and *Hamlet*,” *Style* 23:3 (1989): 430-44 (431-32), and “The Scandal of Shakespeare’s Sonnets.” De Grazia’s readings of the author function might attempt to further account for how the censoring readings of Shakespeare that produce him
Wilde’s “The Portrait of Mr W.H.”: Against the Bloomian Sublime

While Wilde’s “The Portrait of Mr. W.H.” examines the position of repression and sublimation in Shakespeare’s creative process, it queries (through inhabiting) an emerging aesthetic in which the playwright’s rejection in love or renunciations are a source of his “sublime” authority. On one level of the narrative, homophilic desire is redeemed in art and literary criticism’s sublimations, but such a theory and redemptive aesthetic are also shown to have tragic consequences in the historical climate that dictates these sublimations. As in the Wildean text that stages Shakespeare’s scene of writing and reproduces the scene, literature can also function otherwise, to interrogate an aesthetic of redemption informing our participation in the ideal author’s being, and to interrogate this precisely via the text’s staging of imaginary desire.202

In Foucault’s words, the author is “the ideological function by which we mark the fear of the proliferation of meaning,” the figure used to censor and limit the text’s meanings, the “modes of existence” and possible appropriation of subject positions made possible by the text.203 I have been arguing that the “author” is also the means by which the critic participates in an ideal authority, communing with the author, through a shared loss and negation out of which the self is constituted. In presenting a scene of writing beginning with Shakespeare’s homosexual passion in the Sonnets, Wilde’s novella deploys the “author” against its usual function (according to Foucault) of limiting the text’s meaning and censoring subject positions made available by the text: the author becomes a critical resource for a counter-discourse of identity. But the novella also critiques the desire to limit textual meaning, even on the part of Cyril Graham and Erskine when they adopt a somewhat too narrow view of Shakespeare’s art. In both political and artistic terms, the text appears to espouse a playful lability of meaning and mobility of subject positions.204

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202 See Leo Bersani, “Against Ulysses,” in The Culture of Redemption (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), and his discussion of that novel’s participation in a modernist aesthetic animated by the principle of redemption.

203 Foucault, “What Is an Author?”, 119, 120.

204 Alan Sinfield makes the novella into a critical allegory, with Willie Hughes as the phantom defining other, of the fictive status of a queer identity in Wilde’s own culture. Of course, Wilde’s fiction and life have contributed to the “forging” of a modern queer identity. See the section ending Sinfield’s first chapter, a section entitled “Looking for Mr W.H.,” esp. 17-21, in The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
Wilde’s novella deftly dramatizes the strategies, difficulties and dangers of authorizing homosexual desire, claiming a place in a literary history of Shakespeare studies that also frames this critical history for its homoerotic energies and identificatory phantasies. Wilde’s “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” is a text that stages Shakespeare’s cultural authority, reflecting on the manner in which this authority is in part a product of the (mis)interpretation of the playwright’s sexuality. The question of the interpretation of literary texts, including this one, became apparent at Wilde’s trials. The representatives of the law insisted on interpretative privilege, attempting to read literary meanings as sexual and incriminating, while also arresting the purposely labile play of textual meaning. From a retrospective position that projects the punitive sentence of “gross indecency” at the trials into the secret of Shakespeare’s heart in the novella, one might read Wilde’s own phantom status in his text through his personal transgressions and punishment. But if authorial self-sacrifice and punishment bestow a certain illusory unity to the text’s production and meaning, the novella also works by declining to unequivocally affirm this story of secret sexuality. Wilde’s phantom presence in the text might similarly derive from his staging of authorial desire at a scene of writing that transgresses normative gender and sexuality.


In “What Is an Author?”, Foucault cites “writing’s relationship with death” and writing’s link “to sacrifice, even the sacrifice of life,” in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of the author’s absence in his work, where he assumes “the role of the dead man in the game of writing” (102, 103). Foucault locates one source of the contemporary author’s nearly sacred status in discourse’s punishable transgression: “Texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors ... to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be trangressive” before being variously reappropriated, in this sceptical view, by power (108). Does Foucault’s notion of the author generate another illusory unity of the text by the author’s phantom punishment or sacrifice?
At his trials, Wilde is interrogated by Edward Carson about his own personal passions on the grounds of passages from his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He redirects the literary “evidence” to the Sonnets of Shakespeare as the authority for these “literary” passions:

Then you have never had that feeling? – No. The whole idea was borrowed from Shakespeare, I regret to say – yes, from Shakespeare’s sonnets.

I believe you have written an article to show that Shakespeare’s sonnets were suggestive of unnatural vice? – On the contrary I have written an article to show that they are not. I objected to such a perversion being put upon Shakespeare.\(^{208}\)

The citation, taken from Montgomery Hyde’s reconstructed (from newspaper articles) account of Carson’s interrogation of Wilde at his first trial, indicates how the trials and the novella both hinge on the interpretation of the “homograph,” on representations that threaten proper sexual difference and stable gender identity with their indifference.\(^{209}\) The historical fact that Wilde offers his novella as a defence of Shakespeare’s character (and of his own) is an uncanny repetition of the text’s staging of the attempted appropriations of Shakespeare’s authority, beginning with Cyril Graham’s interpretation of the Sonnets.

The novella proposes an account of Shakespeare’s scene of writing that describes the sustaining fictions of the critic’s phantasied identification with the poet and his “perfect” love, and the corollary of this, the encryption of homosexual desire in the soul’s “great romance.”\(^{210}\) That is, in “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” the ideal identification between Shakespeare and his beloved is replicated by the critic’s imaginary identification with Shakespeare. The critic may also, like Cyril Graham, project himself into the text he is decoding (Cyril appears to be an anagram for lyric) and the fictive character Willie Hughes.\(^{211}\) The novella finally suggests that Shakespeare’s authority partly derives from his staging of an imaginary economy simulating loss and anticipated recovery, seducing the reader to a participation in the displacement of the imaginary signifier (“W.H.” or the titular portrait of the novella), a displacement of the signifier of self-

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\(^{209}\) Following Lee Edelman’s model in *Homographesis*, the “homograph” threatens sexual difference with its indifference. The ambiguous “homograph” can seduce the reader with its possible ob-scene sodomy and displayed gender indifference, and/or precipitate homosexual panic and anxiety about reading this “homograph” (“Homographesis,” 11-12). Two such examples from the Wildean text are the effeminate Cyril playing “the only perfect Rosalind” (156) in a university production, and the narrator’s observation regarding the seduction of Shakespeare’s dramas through the use of boy-actors to play the women’s parts and “the ambiguity of the sexes” (191).

\(^{210}\) Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” 206, 213. I return to this issue below.

\(^{211}\) Cohen, “Indeterminate Wilde,” 201.
presence dictating desire's path of perpetual anticipation and displacement. Frustrated again in attempting to verify the existence of “Willie Hughes in Elizabethan literature,” the narrator complains: “But the proofs, the links, where were they? Alas! I could not find them. It seemed to me that I was always on the brink of absolute verification, but that I could never really attain to it.”

The “Cyril Graham theory of the sonnets” proposes the centrality of a boy-actor, Willie Hughes, to Shakespeare’s scene of writing, as the source of literary inspiration or “onlie begetter” of the Sonnets. In the theory first proposed by Cyril Graham, one Willie Hughes is also supposed to be at the center of Shakespeare’s dramatic art, providing “an incarnation of the Idea in a beautiful and living form,” ie., of the Platonic ideal in his role as boy-actor:

There was, however, more in his friendship than the mere delight of a dramatist of one who helps him to achieve his end. This was indeed a subtle element of pleasure, if not passion, and a noble basis for an artistic comradeship. But it was not all that the Sonnets revealed to us. There was something beyond. There was the soul, as well as the language, of neo-Platonism.

The homophonic puns in the sonnets on “hews” and “use” are taken to describe a scene of Hughes’s use, not only on the stage, but at a scene of writing invoking a sodomitical desire and its ideal sublimation in writing. In this theory, there is an authorial displacement of sexual desire into the “truth” pursued in writing or in an ideal incarnate on stage. The theory proposes that the author’s homosexual loss sustains his writing and is restaged and recovered in phantasy and a narcissistic economy of writing. The phantasied recovery of the homosexual object by proponents of the theory in the novella appear to simulate Shakespeare’s art, as in the narrator’s own “artistic desire for perfect representation.” This artistic desire is

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212 Compare Fineman’s appreciative remarks on Wilde’s novella and its critical insights, a theory that indeed anticipates his own work on Shakespeare’s Sonnets (Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 28).
215 Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.” For example, between the lines at 160-62.

The identification of W.H. as a William Hughes goes back at least as far as Edmond Malone. See de Grazia, Shakespeare Verbatim, 155. Wilde’s contemporary Samuel Butler follows him in a less playful investigation the Will Hughes thesis, in Shakespeare’s Sonnets Reconsidered (London: Jonathan Cape, 1899), tracing the origination of the thesis to Tyrwhitt in dialogue with Malone (21-22), and giving convincing reasons for supposing the dedicatee W.H. to be a boy closer to Shakespeare’s social rank (76-85). In The True History of Shakespeare’s Sonnets (London: Martin Secker, 1933), Lord Alfred Douglas strenuously defends Shakespeare’s character against imputations of homosexuality, while restating the case, within his own critical misprision, for the dedicatee W.H. being one William Hughes (11-41).
troped as a homosexual self-presence through the representation of “Willie Hughes,” as proper name, as forged portrait, and as boy-actor on stage.\textsuperscript{216}

As the novella suggests, the thesis of an essential, secret truth to the Sonnets is comically amiss, specifically when the theory literalizes loss in the forged portrait or fictional proper name “Willie Hughes.” The theory’s motivating phantasy of self-presence would effectively truncate the possible play of signification of the dedicatory letters “W.H.” Erskine relates to the narrator a memory of Cyril’s presentation of his theory of the “true meaning of the poems” in the poet’s passion for Willie Hughes:

As for the other suggestions of unfortunate commentators, that Mr W.H. is a misprint for Mr W.S., meaning Mr William Shakespeare; that “Mr W.H. all” should be read ‘Mr W. Hall’; that Mr W.H. is Mr William Hathaway; that Mr W.H. stands for Mr. Henry Willibie, the young Oxford poet, with the initials of his name reversed; and that a full stop should be placed after ‘wisheth,’ making Mr W.H. the writer and the the subject of the dedication, - Cyril got rid of them in a very short time; and it is not worth while to mention his reasons, though I remember he sent me off into a fit of laughter by reading to me, I am glad to say not in the original, some extracts from a German commentator called Barnstorff, who insisted that Mr W.H. was no less a person that ‘Mr William Himself.’\textsuperscript{217}

This decisive arrest of the letter and text’s signification in Cyril’s interpretation would curtail the proliferation of meaning designed by the author, limiting the meaning of the text to an authorial scene of writing. Cyril’s reading appears overdetermined by his misprision, his identifications with Shakespeare and Willie Hughes in participating at this scene of passion. Precisely because of its rhetorical negation here, Shakespeare’s scene of writing might admit of the last absurd proposition (“that Mr W.H. was no less a person that ‘Mr William Himself’”) in a model for the poet’s writing, an economy of narcissistic, phantasied self-sending creation.\textsuperscript{218}

The Cyril Graham theory follows the tradition of reading Shakespeare’s dramas as spiritual autobiography, so that the theory is an extension of an allegorical tradition. That tradition’s idealism is subverted by embodying the ideal’s support in the author’s desire for Willie Hughes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Still less would he admit that they were merely a philosophical allegory, and that in them Shakespeare is addressing his Ideal Self, or Ideal Manhood, or the Spirit of Beauty, or the Reason, or the Divine Logos, or the Catholic Church. He felt, as indeed we all must feel, that the
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{216} Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” 152.
\textsuperscript{217} Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” 160-61, 159.
\textsuperscript{218} See Danson’s essay, “Oscar Wilde, W.H., and the Unspoken Name of Love,” for an analysis of how the novella generally invites a conversion of the negation of sexuality into an affirmation of its presence.
Sonnets are addressed to an individual, to a particular young man whose personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with terrible joy and no less terrible despair.\textsuperscript{219}

Proposing that the source of Shakespeare’s genius can be attributed to homosexual desire and its sublime restagings upends Romantic idealisms, or puts them into a “perverse dialectic” making that ideal dependent on the tenuous sublimation of homosexual desire. So that we might ask of “Shakespeare” whether he was a “[l]over of an ideal or a perversion.”\textsuperscript{220} Wilde’s novella dramatizes the dynamic described in Freud’s text “On Narcissism,” where a nebulous homosexual desire contributes to the constitution and maintenance of an ideal. (“In this way large amounts of libido of an essentially homosexual kind are drawn into the formation of the narcissistic ego ideal and find outlet and satisfaction in maintaining it” [11, 90].) If Shakespeare and his text functions as an “ego ideal” in the novella, this ideal does not necessarily oblige the subject to repress perverse sexuality and desire, though it might act as a model for the sublimations of writing’s narcissistic self-elaborations. (“As we have learnt, the formation of an ideal heightens the demands of the ego and is the most powerful factor favouring repression; sublimation is a way out, a way by which those demands can be met without involving repression” [11, 89].)\textsuperscript{221}

By framing his story with talk of forgeries and making the portrait a forgery, Wilde’s novella provides the reader a view on the truth of the theory as a matter of specular desire’s forgeries of closure, stability, and unity. The text comments on the phantasies of anchoring meaning in the “author,” a proper name, or a picture. The portrait also functions to disclose the motivation of such readings in an identificatory misprision. The “fatal portrait” is produced by Cyril to provide a proof to his desire-laden theory: the portrait is to ground the dissemination of meaning, rather as the potentially proliferating meanings and multiplication of identities of the initials W.H. are reduced to a proper name, “Willie Hughes.” The portrait is to be used as the frontispiece to Shakespeare’s text, to act as a totalizing frame grounding interpretation:

\textsuperscript{219} Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” 159.

\textsuperscript{220} This phantom question is asked in Joyce’s \textit{Ulysses} as Stephen is expounding his theory of the author’s spiritual-as-sexual autobiography in the works. Ed. Richard Ellmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 174.

\textsuperscript{221} In this schema of sublimation, “object-libido” is transformed into “narcissistic libido” on what might be “the universal road to sublimation” (11, 369). But the radical aesthetic of Wilde’s novella suggests that this \textit{apparent} conversion does not necessarily entail abandonment of the “original” homosexual object.
We then arranged that the picture should be etched or facsimiled, and placed as the frontispiece to Cyril’s edition of the Sonnets; and for three months we did nothing but go over each poem line by line, till we had settled every difficulty of text or meaning.222

The insistence on the possibility of stable meaning is a phantasy of the proper name or the portrait grounding meaning, which they might do in the imaginary register of self-presence.223

Like Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence, Cyril Graham’s theory focuses on the psychic travails of the author and his literary creation out of an elaboration - a sacrificial misprision in Bloom’s account - of homosexual (as imitative) desire. The novella is a precursor to Bloom’s theory and a fictional illustration of how his theory of poetic misprision and its scenes of seduction might work, making prominent the subversive element of a displaced, phantom sodomitical desire in interpretation and writing. As the crucial point of contrast, in Bloom’s initial (swerving?) account of the anxiety of influence, of the primal scene of instruction and the covenant of election-love with the precursor, the emphasis is rather on the necessary destruction of this desire for the poet’s survival as a poet.

The scenes of writing in the novella, of reading and writing with the necessary interpretations that accompany each, repeat in fictional form the playwright’s desire for Willie Hughes. This desire for a phantasm of presence in imagining the boy-actor remains the theory’s guiding “phantom puppet,”224 a sort of imaginary, narcissistic lure for the characters in the novella determining the interpretation of the “onlie begetter.”225 The originator of the theory, Cyril Graham, is in a narcissistic circuit of identification with his invention “Willie Hughes,” and perhaps Shakespeare. As Erskine recounts, Cyril acted at university and was the “only perfect Rosalind” that he had seen.226

223 Again, compare Fineman, Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 28.
225 The collapse of homosexual, imitative and narcissistic desire in the novella would be problematic if it were a psychoanalytic text demonizing the mimetic “contagion” of an abjected homosexuality, intent on stigmatizing the narcissistic, imitative homosexual, i.e., the ideological content of Bloom’s text. In Wilde’s text, these equivalences rather function to position the “homosexual” with a type of dangerous supplement to poetic meaning and proper identity.
The novella’s narrator identifies with Shakespeare and his passion for the beloved boy-actor when he recounts his “great romance” with the phantastic theory. The narrator repeats in phantasy the narcissistic restagings of homosexual passion Shakespeare is supposed to have effected in his dramatic art:

Yes: I had lived it all. I had stood in the round theatre with its open roof and fluttering banners, had seen the stage draped with black for a tragedy, or set with some gay garlands for some brighter show ... As the trumpet sounded for the third time she leant forward, and I saw her olive skin and raven’s-wing hair. I knew her. She had marred for a season the great friendship of my life. Yet there was something about her that fascinated me ... I saw “As You Like It,” and “Cymbeline,” and “Twelfth Night,” and in each play there was some one whose life was bound up into mine, who realised for me every dream, and gave shape to every fancy. How gracefully he moved! The eyes of the audience were fixed on him.²²⁷

The narrator discovers “the whole story of my soul’s romance” in the Sonnets, a writing of Shakespeare’s spiritual autobiography that is likened first (as above) to a sort of stage of the unconscious, and then compared to an encrypted writing, rather as the portrait was discovered in another chest or trunk:

How curiously it had all been revealed to me! A book of Sonnets, published nearly three hundred years ago, written by a dead hand and in honour of a dead youth, had suddenly explained to me the whole story of my soul’s romance. I remembered how once in Egypt I had been present at the opening of a frescoed coffin that had been found in one of the basalt tombs at Thebes. Inside there was the body of a young girl swathed in tight bands of linen, and with a gilt mask over her face. As I stooped to look at it, I had seen that one of the little withered hands held a scroll of papyrus covered with strange characters. How I wished now that I had had it read to me! It might have told me something more about the soul that hid within me, and had its mysteries of passion of which I was kept in ignorance. Strange, that we knew so little about ourselves, and that our most intimate personality was concealed from us! Were we to look in tombs for our real life, in art for the legend of our days?²²⁸

Wilde’s theory of the “soul’s romance” revealed in art and Bloom’s theory of influence as “family romance” both address the problem of the self as other and promote the importance of lost, encrypted love.

The covenant of poetic vision and imaginary identification is embraced in Wilde’s novella, whereas the poet’s refusal of influence, tropic defences, and uncanny struggle with the precursor is the means to a sublime poetic incarnation in Bloom’s theory.²²⁹ Of course, this comparison conflates a theory of Shakespeare’s tenuous displacement of homophilic desire at a scene of writing (Wilde) with a theory of the

²²⁹ The homophilic interpretations of Cyril and Erskine appear to be in a substitutive relation to homosexual desire. Their “sodomitical identifications” might be a displaced means to participate in this economy of desire. Regarding sodomitical identification, see Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins, 179-81. Silverman theorizes how authorial subjectivity might participate in the fiction’s scene of passion through a sodomitical identification’s narcissistic defence against lack, in an identification with and desire for the phallic father.
poet's murderous psychic agon in literary influence (Bloom), but when he speaks of the Sonnets, Bloom's theory is remarkably akin to Wilde's. Both accounts stage homoerotic desire and misprision at the origin of the text and its "authority." If Bloom's early theory of influence requires that the strong poet make a murderous swerve from the precursor, a swerve from loving emulation, Wilde's novella seems to playfully elaborate the phantom identifications with "W.H." that entail such a "perverse" interpretation and writing.

Cyril's theory of the Sonnets, and his proof for it in producing the portrait from a locked chest, is based on a loving imitation of Shakespeare's art and his identification with the boy-actor at the heart of the theory. The portrait in Shakespeare's Sonnets is an ideal picture of the beloved that the poet has imprinted in his heart, or an external image he phantasizes bringing inside or encrypting: "Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled/ Thy beauty's form in the table of my heart" (24); and "With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,/ And to the painted banquet bids my heart" (47). In Wilde's text, Cyril reports discovering the portrait inside a chest in a punning literalization of the erotic motive of an imaginary incorporation in Shakespeare's sonnet: "Thee have I not locked up in any chest,/ Save where thou art not, thou I feel thou art,/ Within the gentle closure of my breast" (48). There is an anagrammatic mutation between Cyril and lyric, so that Cyril is a grammaticalist of sorts, where "encrypted in the decrypter's name is the object of interpretation." Cyril thus repeats a narcissistic scene of writing by recognizing himself in Shakespeare's lyric text, occupying in phantasy the positions of both Shakespeare and his beloved in his own writing of the theory. These specular identifications are standard tropes of epideictic poetry's self-praise that Fineman sees Shakespeare as inheriting in his novel invention of poetic subjectivity in the Sonnets.

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230 Compare Cohen's similar interpretation of the importance of several of these sonnets: "Cyril's coffered forgery simply dramatizes in fiction Shakespeare's repeated image of his friend as an 'up-locked treasure' in a 'chest' (sonnet 52)" (Cohen, "Indeterminate Wilde," 200).

231 Cohen, "Indeterminate Wilde," 201.

232 According to Fineman's analysis in Shakespeare's Perjured Eye, the presence of self-reflection in epideictic poetry is given its "homosexual turn" by Shakespeare, who reserves desire proper, caused by the slide of the signifier, for a misogynist heterosexuality in this poetics. Wilde's novella does not attribute sexed, opposite morphologies to the ideal picture (male) and fallen sign (female) that Fineman finds in the Sonnets. The novella describes both the boy-actor (188) and the Dark Lady (197) as players on the virginals, pointing to their shared Shakespearean roles as guarantors of pure mimetic reflection of truth and desire, linguistic and libidinal, though both these characters are represented as erring.
Cyril, Erskine, and the narrator all appear guided in their interpretations by an ideal, phantom identification with Shakespeare and an imaginary participation with the author at a scene of writing, a scene of narcissistic self-reflection and plenitude with a phantom recovery of homophilic desire in the writing of the theory. Of course, behind these characters is the author "Wilde" who repeatedly signs (as "wild") his desire in the text, where the fictional status of the novella and its framing devices of forgery and misprision almost lift him out of the drama.\(^{233}\)

In the third chapter, I retraced Bloom's misprision regarding Falstaff, the identificatory phantasy of this "devout Falstaffian,"\(^{234}\) his critical insight via blindness, his thesis regarding the true spirit of Shakespeare, a spirit allegedly born of a homosexual rejection or his renunciations. This misprision nearly exactly replicates the drama staged in "The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” where Cyril, Erskine, and the narrator all project themselves into another scene of writing and creative dialectic, now between Shakespeare and the fictional Willie Hughes as the author’s ideal "spirit,” another economy of the narcissistic recovery of loss in writing’s representations. Both narratives make homosexual desire - a desire crucially collapsed with the imaginary and imitation, though to different ends - and loss the source of artistic creativity. On the level of recounting the author’s narcissistic self-elaboration in writing, these narratives fetishize (Bloom) or foreground in order to problematize (Wilde) homosexual desire’s repression as a support of writing and its place in an ideal identification with Shakespeare. In both theories, the critic identifies with the ideal spirit of "Shakespeare,” though Bloom is not granted the same opportunity to frame, as a sustaining fiction of the theory, his authoritative misprision.

Wilde’s novella presents a picture of Shakespeare’s authority and unimpaired masculinity in his "perfect" love of Willie Hughes; his writing and this authority requires the \textit{apparent} sacrifice of homosexual desire. The novella sketches the redemptive passion of the proponents of the fatal theory, the manner in which the elaboration of the theory acts as substitute for the prohibited, disavowed desire:

\begin{quote}
Art, as so often happens, had taken the place of personal experience. I felt as if I had been initiated into the secret of that passionate friendship, that love of beauty and beauty of love, of
\end{quote}

\(^{233}\) See Cohen, "Indeterminate Wilde," for a brief analysis of Wilde’s signature (208-09). For three instances of Wilde’s signature (as "wild") in the text, see 156, 157, 218.  
\(^{234}\) Bloom, \textit{Shakespeare}, 731.
which Marsilio Ficino tells us, and of which the Sonnets, in their noblest and purest significance, may be held to be the perfect expression.\textsuperscript{235}  

Similarly, in the overarching design the narrator is compelled to give the Sonnets, it becomes a drama that reshuffles the order of the sonnets in order to redeem in the end the love of the poet and Willie Hughes:

Psychological and artistic reasons necessitated this change, a change that I hope will be adopted by all future editors, as without it an entirely false impression is conveyed of the nature and final issue of this noble friendship.\textsuperscript{236}  

In the narrator's composition of a four act drama recounting the story of the poet's soul, with the final redemption of his desire (the "final issue of this noble friendship"), the perfection of Shakespeare's love for Willie Hughes is the touchstone for a masochistic identification with the poet's abjection: "Evil rumour has now stained the white purity of his name, but Shakespeare's love still endures and is perfect."\textsuperscript{237} A redemption of suffering and the homophilic sacrifice is effected, with a certain pathos to this melancholic masculinity befitting a Bloomian meditation. Consider, as an example of this pathos, the passage which recounts the narrator's initial conversion to the theory by Erskine, who advises against his belief in the theory for which Cyril has died: "He tried to smile, but there was a poignant pathos in his voice that I remember to the present day .... I thought of Cyril Graham, and my eyes filled with tears." Or consider the narrator's description of Erskine showing him the portrait for whose "truth" Cyril Graham had died: "'This is the portrait of Mr W.H.,' said Erskine, with a sad smile. It might have been a chance effect of light, but it seemed to me that his eyes were swimming with tears."\textsuperscript{238}  

In each instance, a certain Shakespearean authority attaches to the memory of Cyril Graham as the loss approaches the sublime through self-sacrifice.

Though in different ways, Cyril and Erskine both claim to give their lives for the (spiritual and sexual) truth of the theory. Cyril's letter to Erskine states that "he believed absolutely in Willie Hughes; that the forgery had been simply done as a concession to me, and did not in the slightest invalidate the truth of the theory; and that in order to show me how firm and flawless his faith in the whole thing was, he was going

\textsuperscript{235} Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr W.H.," 210. Of course, the phrase, "in their noblest and purest significance," points to the other, sexual significance that can be read in Shakespeare's passion.  
\textsuperscript{236} Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr W.H.," 197. The narrator continues his scheme by making the Sonnets into a drama of the soul and its redemption: "My whole scheme of the Sonnets was now complete, and, by placing those that refer to the dark lady in their proper order and position, I saw the perfect unity and completeness of the whole" (205). Apparently following psychological and artistic reasons, Samuel Butler and Lord Alfred Douglas both follow a similar reshuffling, the latter within a redemptive trajectory.  
\textsuperscript{237} Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr W.H.," 206.
to offer his life as a sacrifice to the secret of the sonnets." Cyril’s suicide appears an attempt to atone for his secret passion and redeem it as an ideal through his “sacrifice to the secret.” On the other hand, Erskine’s “forged” suicide might restore some faith in the theory precisely by its considered deception: “Did Erskine merely want to produce a dramatic effect? That was not like him. It was more like something I might have done myself.” The appeal of Erskine’s false suicide note is precisely its dissimulation of “a sacrifice to the secret of the sonnets,” a simulation opposed to Cyril’s fatal literalism. Such is the radical Wildean aesthetic in the novella, I would argue, an aesthetic that assumes authority through an elaborate forgery and simulation of the homosexual self-sacrifice, thereby putting Shakespeare’s sacrifice of desire into question.

The scene of writing in Wilde’s novella works to legitimate perverse desire by presenting it at the origin, as an origin that is not so much repressed as sublimated and encrypted between the lines of the narrative and in the language of the text. Wilde foregrounds Shakespeare’s scene of writing to renegotiate his authority, an ideal authority in which Wilde participates. The author’s perverse desire escapes repression here through sublimation’s narcissistic elaboration of the self in writing. Such “authority” can be used to supplement accounts of sexuality and desire that are normativizing or censoring, suggesting that the pleasure of the text, even the encrypted enjoyment of its language (“His very name fascinated me. Willie Hughes! Willie Hughes! How musically it sounded!”), derives from transgressing such prohibitions. Indeed, Shakespeare emerges as an ideal in the Wildean text for his narcissistic self-elaboration at a scene of writing, in a writing that is less supported by the renunciation of desire promoting an aesthetic of redemption, though these phantoms are also present, than it is a perverse body made available for transgressive enjoyment.

Through his presentation of Shakespeare’s scene of writing and the misprisions guiding creation and interpretation alike, Wilde participates in and frames an ongoing literary history of Shakespeare, producing his own legacy.

239 Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr W.H.,” 166.
240 Wilde’s novella affirms that devotion to the truth of an ideal might betray a lack of confidence in it, and perhaps a wish to maintain a masochistic relation to the punishing ideal: “Martyrdom was to me merely a tragic form of scepticism, an attempt to realise by fire what one has failed to do by faith” (219).
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