Becoming Youth: Coming of Age in Shakespeare and Marlowe

by

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Abstract

While studies in Renaissance childhoods, literary and historical, are becoming more prominent, this work has failed to distinguish between children and adolescents, leaving youth, as such, largely unexamined. My project attends not to the children of early modern drama, but to post-pubescent characters in their teen years, and argues that many plays literalize the 're-naissance' of teenagers ('adolescents' or 'youths' in early modern England), reimagining what it meant to be young during a period when discourses surrounding youth were already clearly, yet crudely, defined. This thesis is a historicized analysis of young characters in several plays: Marlowe's *Edward II*, and Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry IV, Part 1*, *Henry IV, Part 2*, *Henry V*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. I argue that these plays intervene in the standard definitions so frequently applied to teenagers during the early modern period. The perception, on the one hand, of youthful behavior as violent, reckless, and rash was commonplace: Protestant preachers and moralists of the day insisted that young people were naturally prone to sin, rebelliousness, and unruly behavior, and so required strict regulation. On the other hand, optimistic portrayals of youth abounded as well: the age of youth was associated with hope and beauty as often as it was with folly and sin. These dual perspectives were rudimentary types, broadly construed and indiscriminately applied. My dissertation works to account for the presence of highly nuanced, individuated, and agential teenaged figures in the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe in the context of this widespread yet limited perception of youth. The

literary text, I claim, both participates in and works to disable discourses of youth in the period.

Preface

Part of Chapter Two of this dissertation, "Youth and Gossip: Prince Hal and Anne Page," is forthcoming as a chapter in *The Merry Wives of Windsor: New Critical Essays* (eds. Evelyn Gajowski and Phyllis Rackin, Routledge, 2014). The chapter is entitled "'Who hath got the right Anne?': Gossip, Resistance, and Anne Page in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives*."

For my mother

and

For Emma and Malory, *Blessed, and mine own*

I wish to thank

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Introduction

Becoming Youth

I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting . . . (*The Winter's Tale* 3.3.58-61)

Shakespeare's old shepherd in *The Winter's Tale* voices a complaint commonly heard in early modern England: that the age of youth spells little but trouble. Elsewhere in this play, Antigonus offers a similar but more specific critique of the young, speaking of his three daughters, the eldest of whom is eleven. Should Queen Hermione prove false, he tells Leontes, he'll "geld 'em all. / Fourteen they shall not see, / To bring forth false generations" (2.1.149-50). Despite the belief, frequently asserted today, that early moderns had little concept of the age of youth, the period's drama suggests otherwise: people had plenty to say about this age group: often, that the young were a rebellious bunch who required containment and strict subordination, and sometimes, that they were emblems of hope and joy.

Such perceptions, though, tended to function as rudimentary types, broadly construed and indiscriminately applied. Youth was perceived merely as a choosing time, as Paul Griffiths explains, a stage in life when one opts to pursue a difficult path to heaven or to secure a certain fall into hell. The representation of youthful behavior as violent, reckless, and rash was commonplace: Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos describes a point made insistently by Protestant preachers and moralists of the day: that young people were naturally prone to sin,

rebelliousness, and unruly behavior, and so required strict regulation. Encapsulated in the familiar narrative of the prodigal son, the sin-and-redemption pattern proliferated in the didactic literature of the period. Sixteenth-century morality plays, such as the anonymous *Interlude of Youth* (c. 1513) and R. Wever's *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1547) depict the redemption of the stock character Youth from the clutches of such foes as Riot, Pride, and Abominable Living. The interlude *Nice Wanton* (c. 1547) advocates the subjugation of youth to parents and to God, as the Messenger's Prologue makes clear:

> The prudent Prince Solomon doth say,
> 'He that spareth the rod, the child doth hate.'
> He would youth should be kept in awe alway
> By correction in time at reasonable rate,
> To be taught to fear God and their parents obey . . . (1-5)

Similarly, conduct literature about youth, bearing such titles as Anthony Stafford's *Meditations and Resolutions, Moral, Divine, Political, Written for the Instruction and Bettering of Youth* (1612), also stressed the importance of moral and religious instruction, along with strict subjugation, in the shaping of young people.

The old men of *The Winter's Tale*, then, articulate a view commonly held and expressed by early moderns, but in this play and several others, Shakespeare and Marlowe do much to destabilize this view. Youth, while extant as an age category, was yet only crudely defined; I suggest that the playwrights invent, in their dramatic renderings of teenaged characters, new ways of thinking about the

young. The plays depict teens coming of age on their own terms, engaging in self-definition outside the usual narratives established in conduct literature and morality plays. This project explores characters in their teen years in Marlowe and Shakespeare, focusing on Marlowe's *Edward II* (1594), and Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part I, Henry IV Part 2,* and *Henry V* (1598-99), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1598), *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), *Pericles* (1607), *The Winter's Tale* (1609), and *The Tempest* (1611). Studies in Renaissance childhoods, literary and historical, are becoming more prominent, but this work has failed to distinguish between children and adolescents, leaving youth, as such, largely unexamined. Scholars in this field tend to subsume children, teenagers, and young adults under a single category, reading them in terms of their shared subordinate status. Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy's *Shakespeare and Childhood* (2007) and Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore's *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe* (2006) collect important essays on early modern childhood, essays that work to reintroduce the agency of children into the construction of childhood, but also conflate children and teens. My project attends not to the children of early modern drama, but to post-pubescent characters in their teen years, and argues that the plays in question literalize the 're-naissance' of teenagers ('adolescents' or 'youths' in early modern England), reimagining what it meant to be young during a period when discourses surrounding youth were already firmly in place. The plays intervene in those discourses, concretizing abstractions; they sharpen, refine, and destabilize existing ideas of youth.

Like Diane Purkiss, who has written of teenaged girls in Shakespeare, I sometimes apply, self-consciously and anachronistically, the term 'teenager' to the youth of early modern drama: Purkiss does so "because of the way the word 'between' is echoed in it" ("Fractious" 57). Teenagers are 'between' in the sense that they are neither children nor adults; they exist between cultures, liminal and marginal.[1] Purkiss' idea of the liminal teen helps inform my readings of young characters; however, with my own use of the word 'teenager' I mean also to suggest that Marlowe and Shakespeare invented the youthful subject we claim now for our own: their destabilized renderings of young people are perhaps responsible for the version of 'the teenager'—that creature who is resistant to authority, emotional, prone to peer pressure, and above all impossible to understand— that we recognize today. The term 'teenager' is today freighted with signification, and by invoking the word in analyses of early modern drama I want to acknowledge this debt: our current concept of this age group, the very significance the word now carries, we owe to Marlowe and to Shakespeare. This idea, that the playwrights invented youth as we know it, is an important one, and I will revisit it in some detail in my discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* in Chapter Three. However, the main concern of this project is not to delineate a clear connection between the dramatists' view of youth and our contemporary view; rather than delving too far into the question of how, or whether or not, the plays produced the version of youth culture we are familiar with today, I investigate the

[1] Purkiss also points out that to apply the word 'teen' to the youth of this period "is not quite as anachronistic as it seems," since the *OED* dates the word's first recorded use to 1673. 'Adolescent' has medieval origins, with a first recorded use in 1482 (57).

means by which these plays destabilize perceptions of youth extant in Marlowe and Shakespeare's own time.

The central concern of this study, then, is the disjuncture between the complex subjectivity of youth produced in the drama and the hegemonic production of youthful subjects elsewhere in the culture. Marlowe and Shakespeare shared an interest in individuating young people, in writing nuanced, distinctive characters in place of the familiar figures of didactic literature, in overturning their culture's drive to essentialize youth. They grasped, perhaps indeed celebrated, what other writers around them seemed not to: that youth elude tidy classification. The young are ambiguous, largely unknowable, because they are deeply invested in a private process of becoming. To ignore the category of youth, or to subsume it under the category of childhood, as today's literary critics tend to do, is also to discount the possibility of such ambiguity, of multiple, individuated young selves. Jennifer Higginbotham's recent monograph, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Sisters*, makes a case for examining girls and girlhood in early modern literature and drama. While she focuses mainly on infant and prepubescent girls, Higginbotham's argument provides a useful index to my own: the category of the 'girl,' she claims, unsettles predominant, reified categories of female identity: both the contemporary scholarly triangulation of men, women, and boys, and the early modern life cycle categories of maid, wife, and widow (2). Early modern girls, incongruent with such categories, "exposed womanhood as a social backformation" (9). Thus, when early modern scholarship discounts girls, it participates in a patriarchal collapsing of various female identities into a single

one, definable only in opposition to a male identity (2). A sense of identity as multiple, discursive, and ambiguous is instead at work in the drama, and this is the case, as I see it, for both girls and boys—although, as I discuss further below, the destabilization of identity is even more pronounced for male characters.

Historicizing Youth in the Drama

I approach the topic of youthful self-fashioning in these plays by way of historical research, seeking an analysis that is, in Jonathan Dollimore's words, "at once historically aware and textually sensitive" (*Radical Tragedy* lxiv). Reading these plays in terms of their representations of destabilized youthful subjectivity, I set them within the context of several discourses relevant to the English early modern period: resistance theory, gossip, privacy, and oral narrative. In reading the drama in this way, however, I avoid allowing historical background to eclipse or obscure the literature itself. Catherine Belsey's introduction to *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden* offers an insightful discussion of the uses of cultural history in literary analysis: cultural history, she writes, "records meanings and values, which is to say that its concern is not so much what individuals actually did, but more what people wanted to do, wished they had done, what they cared about and deplored. . . . cultural history recognizes a conflict between residual and emergent values" (6-7). It is this very sense of conflict that interests me: that is, the distance between widely articulated and accepted, conduct-book values, which position youth as a construct of adult society, and the resistant self-fashioning of teenaged characters. As Belsey posits, fictional texts participate in the

construction of cultural meaning (xiv); this sort of history is "history at the level of the signifier" and is "decisively textual. . . . The materials of cultural history reside in the signifying practices of a society, and these include its fictions" (8). A materialist perspective serves a reading of teenaged characters as youth who resist cultural conditions predominant at the time of their creation, for this theory allows that plays may be read as instigators or even producers of cultural change, change "as evidence that the way things are is no more natural or inevitable than the way they used to be" (Belsey 18).

In its emphasis on such change, cultural materialism tends to break with new historicism, an interpretive model that has traditionally employed a model of containment not amenable to my own analyses. However, I find that Stephen Greenblatt's recent book, *Shakespeare's Freedom*, a study of the limits of power in Shakespeare, nonetheless helps to frame my point about youth in the drama. Greenblatt writes that Shakespeare's work, "alert to every human fantasy and longing, is allergic to the absolutist strain so prevalent in his world, from the metaphysical to the mundane" (3). In his exploration of radical individuation, or singularity, in Shakespeare, Greenblatt writes about beauty, hatred, authority, and autonomy, arguing that while Shakespeare lived in a world of limits, of absolutes, these limits "served as the enabling condition of his particular freedom" (1). Exploring absolutes, negotiating and overreaching boundaries, Shakespeare's characters are enhanced, not diminished, by such limitations. And this point resonates especially, I think, with young characters, in both Shakespeare and

Marlowe, who push up against the seemingly immovable barriers of inferiority and essentialism.

Of course, as Jason Scott-Warren has recently pointed out, "to claim that literary value and historical force coincide is a project fraught with difficulties" (11). One problem is evidence: analysis of a play, for example, may reveal its radical tendencies, but it is difficult to know what difference, if any, such tendencies may have made in the past (12). Then, too, there is literature's possible marginality in relation to history; to address this difficulty, Scott-Warren turns, like Belsey, to the cultural history of literature. As David J. Baker and Willy Maley contend in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, history and literary criticism should not be "mutually subsuming," but rather "mutually informing and mutually critical. It is the gap between these separate disciplines, we suggest, and the tensions that proximate distance generates, that are most likely to stimulate a worthwhile 'conversation'" (5).

Even as I adopt this critical posture, I write with an awareness of a particular tension implicit in such a 'conversation': certainly it is possible to argue that the social constructionism I apply to teen characters, reading them as ambiguous, unstable selves produced by yet resistant to a certain culture, is at odds with my simultaneous application of historical discourses to the plays. Here, by way of an example, I turn to Duke Pesta's essay on fairy tale in *The Tempest*, as this is a topic I approach as well. Pesta contends that one cannot read fairy tale in this play through a postmodern lens, for to do so "is to self-fashion early modern fairy tales into something politically expedient for today's academy,

however a-historical the construction" (58). The play ought to be read through its historical context, where 'historical context' differs substantially from 'historicism': we should account for Elizabethan ontology by acknowledging that it indeed held a place for monsters and fairies, witches and devils, rather than applying a perspective born of our own contemporary assumptions and critical interests. We may no longer believe in monstrous creatures like Caliban, but many Elizabethans certainly did (58). Perhaps a-historical readings are to blame for feminist critics' failure to locate any sense of agency in Miranda, as I discuss in Chapter Four. Still, I maintain that a materialist approach is not necessarily a-historical, if one ascribes to Marlowe and Shakespeare, as I do, the ability to write highly original characters, characters who revise or reimagine culturally scripted versions of themselves. The literary text, I think, is indeed capable of both participating in and fracturing discourses of youth in the period.

In historicizing the plays, I use examples encompassing a very long stretch of English history (roughly 1500-1700), examples that do not all coincide neatly with the dates of the plays in question, all of which are clustered tightly together, composed between 1594 and 1611. Again, this is a self-conscious approach: I attempt to demonstrate the broad scope of early modern perceptions of youth. To use historian Keith Thomas' term, my method is that of a 'lumper' as opposed to a 'splitter;' splitters, he says, look carefully for differences rather than similarities, but the "relentless urge to draw distinctions often results in some striking resemblances and continuities being overlooked" (*Ends* 6). There is little difference, for example, in the thrust of the conduct literature regarding youth

across the seventeenth century: Stafford's *Meditations and Resolutions* (1612) and John Strype's *Lessons Moral and Christian for Youth and Old Age* (1699) both suggest the importance of moral and religious instruction in the shaping and directing of the young. Early in the century, Stafford claims that a "yong man is like a horse; who, if hee want a curbe, will runne himselfe to death. Those parents, therefore, are wise, who joyne correction, with direction, and keepe those in, who else would lash-out" (89-90). And in 1699, Strype insists in a sermon,

> how much the Future Good of the Universe depends upon the Sobriety of Youth. If they that are to come next upon the Stage of the World, to act their Parts there, would but avoid the Folly and Wickedness of the present Age, and frame themselves to better and wiser Courses than are now commonly taken, how much happier would the Condition of Mankind be? For 'tis a very bad World we live in, (that we all feel, and as many as are Good, lament). And such Root have Vices got in the Hearts of Men, that there is little hope to see any Amendment in our Days. And there is no Way but one to mend this Degenerate World under the mighty Grace of God; and that is, that Care be taken, that the next Generation be made better. (3)

There is a significant degree of continuity, then, in the perceptions of youth relayed in such conduct literature; the differences that interest me occur not across the centuries of such work, but between cultural context and the drama. While there are more positive views of youth in the literature, such as Thomas Powell's 1676 sermon for young men (*The Beauty, Vigour and Strength of Youth Bespoke*

for God), it strikes me that the portrayal of youth as hopeful and godly is no more useful to young people than the early reformists' ideas about women's education, with their heavy focus on morality and chastity. That such conduct writings persisted well after the production of the plays I focus on perhaps suggests that rather than ameliorating anxiety regarding the young, the plays provoked questions that served only to deepen it.

Defining Youth

A key problem in historicizing the literature pertinent to this project is scholarly disagreement in the understanding of 'children' and 'youth' as these terms existed during the early modern period. Colin Heywood, for example, notes in *A History of Childhood* (2001) that a popular awareness of adolescence was likely not in evidence in this period, and would not appear until G. Stanley Hall's 1904 publication of *Adolescence*; as young people were placed in age-graded schools, "a heightened interest" developed in defining adolescence (28-29).[2] Keith Thomas includes anyone "under fifteen" in his discussion of the period's children ("Children" 51); Michael Witmore also uses fourteen as the upper limit of childhood in *Pretty Creatures: Children and Fiction in the English Renaissance*.[3] Edel Lamb, working toward a definition of Renaissance childhood

[2] Careful to sketch out the debate among historians, Heywood cites both Barbara A. Hanawalt, who argues that adolescence was recognized and defined even in medieval Europe, and James A. Schultz, who claims that, in medieval German texts, no idea of adolescence exists. Heywood also points to Natalie Zemon Davis' seminal essay on youth groups in sixteenth-century France, along with articles on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century apprentices as adolescents by Anne Yarborough and S. R. Smith.

[3] Fourteen was generally considered the onset of puberty in the early modern period; Witmore cites twelfth-century encylopedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus, widely translated by the early

and adolescence through her study of the children's playing companies, dispenses with the problem of age by suggesting that the concept of early modern childhood is largely relational: childhood is "a status relative to figures of authority in the contexts of domestic, education and work . . . a status of subservience" (4), and is thus a category that may include teenagers.[4] Similarly, Kate Chedgzoy asks whether those studying children in early modern literature ought to "complement or complicate the category of childhood by also invoking that of adolescence" (23), but answers the question through a conflation of the two categories: she suggests that childhood is a "relational condition that does not end with accession to adulthood" (24).

However, two comprehensive historical studies of early modern youth, Paul Griffiths' *Youth and Authority* (1996) and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos' *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (1994), carefully disentangle adolescence from childhood; for, as Griffiths writes, a lack of attention from historians has silenced young voices (11). While Griffiths acknowledges a certain flexibility in age-definition during the period, his analysis of language used in judicial records and contemporary publications demonstrates that a distinct phase

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moderns, who placed the end of the second life stage, *pueritas*, or childhood, at fourteen (*Pretty* 28). Ursula Potter cites 'The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights' (1632), which identifies fourteen as the age of female sexual maturity (273).

[4] S. F. Daw's interesting work on J. S. Bach's choir singers in mid-eighteenth-century Leipzig offers a less relational analysis of young performers: Daw uses voice breaking among choir members to discern age of male puberty at the time, finding that few voices had begun to break before age sixteen, and most had completed breaking between seventeen and a half and eighteen and a half years (89). Of interest here is what Daw calls "the strict ascendency of age" (88): tenors and basses had completely broken voices, and sopranos' voices were still unbroken, but alto singers were in the midst of voice breaking. Thus possible maximum and minimum ages applied to alto singers. These findings contrast interestingly with the conflating of age categories frequently seen in early modern scholarship.

of adolescence did exist: "contemporaries nearly always distinguished a stage of life between childhood and adulthood which they usually called youth" (20). Ben-Amos' study argues that adolescence and youth was "a long and dynamic phase in the life cycle" (8) rather than a mere prolongation of childhood.[5] In this phase, young people were transformed into adults through various mental, social, and economic processes (8). Many life-cycle models, Ben-Amos points out, particularly those using six or seven ages, "allowed for a distinction between childhood and boyhood on the one hand, and adolescence, youth and maturity on the other" (29). Michael Mitterauer arrives at a clear conclusion in *A History of Youth* (1992): "The important thing is whether such a transitional period, with specific social tasks such as courting, preparation for marriage and setting up home, rehearsing for adult work-patterns and so on, actually occurs. For early Europe, the answer is a decided: yes!" (15). The rise of the diary and the autobiography at the beginning of the early modern period, he contends, indicates a process of youthful individuation (27). Yet another major study, Konrad Eisenbichler's *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society 1150-1650* (2002), acknowledges that while the term 'teenager' did not exist in the period, people were certainly aware of a phase of the life-cycle between childhood and adulthood, "and they had a vocabulary to describe it. Latin used the term *adulescens*; English had adolescent and youth; Italian had *fanciullo* and *giovane*" (2). This age group, Eisenbichler points out, has generally been ignored by early modernists. Accordingly, his volume seeks to examine the contributions of early

[5] Ben-Amos uses 'adolescence' to denote the years around puberty, and 'youth' to denote people in their mid-teens and upward (9). I apply the term 'youth' to both age groups.

modern youth to Western civilization "in light of their adolescence" (4). It is important to note, too, the debt these books on youth owe to the earlier work of historians Natalie Zemon Davis, Bernard Capp, and S. R. Smith, who have studied youth groups in early modern Europe; I turn to their essays in my discussion of Marlowe's *Edward II* in Chapter One.

Behind the argument that no stage of life known as youth existed in early modern Europe lurks the early work of amateur historian Philippe Ariès, whose influential but hotly contested *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) offered the surprising assertion that the medieval world possessed no conception of childhood; moreover, Ariès contended that Europeans failed to "distinguish between childhood and adolescence" before the late eighteenth century (qtd. in Smith 219). If current scholars continue to disavow youth as a life stage distinct from childhood, they accept the premise that youth lived under the thumb of adults just as children did: children and youth shared a single, subordinate identity. It's true, Griffiths stresses, that young people in early modern England were regarded as subject to adult male authority, and that authority figures enforced youthful subservience for as long a time as possible. A youthful society,[6] early modern England saw its young people reach independent adulthood rather late in life: marriage ages increased thorough the period,[7] and in the world

[6] According to Wrigley and Schofield's *Population History of England*, Tudor and Stuart society was largely populated by young people, with the population becoming increasingly youthful towards the middle of the sixteenth century, when some 40 per cent of English people were under age 24 (215-17). By the end of the seventeenth century, according to Keith Thomas, over 30 percent of the population was under age 15 ("Children" 51).

[7] Wrigley and Schofield find an average first marriage age of 28 years for men and 26 years for women in the period 1600-49; De Moor and Van Zanden offer similar findings for the same

of work, authorities often delayed young people's entry into service and journeywork in order to protect settled craftsmen and retailers (Griffiths 5).[8] However, Griffiths' work looks beyond youth as a construct of adult society, investigating instead "the nature of youthful experiences, how the young interpreted the implications of their appointed inferiority" (13). In such an approach, "different stages of youthful independence and creativity will come into view—the freedom to play and socialize, resistance, irreverence" (16). Ben-Amos, too, while she begins with adult perceptions of youth, devotes much of her book to youthful experience in early modern English society. A clearer picture of youth emerges in these studies that work to extricate youth from discourses around childhood.

How did adults perceive youth? What views of youth were widespread in the period? Ben-Amos examines the most common images of young age occurring in religious manuals, educational writings, autobiographies, and literature, and finds that contemporary writers and theorists were largely convinced that youth were prone to sin and vice; John Bunyan's spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding* (1666), she points out, aligns adolescence with sin, lustfulness, and ungodliness. Protestant preachers and moralists wrote of the immoral activities of youths; youthful disobedience and insubordination were

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period: 25 years for women and 27.5 for men. Even among Italian women, who married somewhat younger, "the benchmark age was 19" (De Moor and Van Zanden 18).

[8] Susan Brigden points out, too, that the incredible boom in population (London grew from about 60,000 to about 200,000 between 1500 and 1600) put great pressure on the guild system: masters faced penalties for taking on more than two apprentices, suggesting that numbers of apprentices were growing too quickly. "From about the turn of the sixteenth century, mastership could no longer be the expectation of every apprentice and journeyman. . . . The mounting burden of population upon an inflexible economy had the effect of holding back youth" (45-46).

assumed, and rooted "within the tradition of Christian morality and medieval preaching" (17). In a society that believed in a "divinely ordained social order" (18), insubordinate youth were feared for the threat they posed to this order; young people were to be tamed and regulated. Thus early modern discourses about the vices of youth were closely related to broader social concerns with stability: youthful insubordination was a threat to orderly socialization. Many people viewed the young, Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson contend, "as the primary instigators of disorder" (33). Age, like class and gender, was a principle of authority and order; the young, perceived by adults as violent, reckless, and rash,[9] were rigidly subjugated to their elders (Griffiths 37). While all young people were expected to subjugate themselves to their elders, teenaged girls must have felt the effects of suppression more acutely than boys; as Griffiths notes,

> it was hoped that young men would depart youth with the appropriate wisdom, prowess, and resources to become householders, employers, husbands, fathers, or magistrates; young women would emerge from youth as competent mothers, wives, and domestic workers. (28)

Ben-Amos concurs that teenaged girls' opportunities were restricted, to suit their future positions as wives (133). She devotes a chapter of her book to the "autonomous phase" most teenaged girls experienced as servants, but still emphasizes the delimited nature of female experience: although most girls left

[9] Such renderings of youth occur in Anthony Stafford's *Meditations and Resolutions, Moral, Divine, Political, Written for the Instruction and Bettering of Youth* (1612); William Guild's *A Young Man's Inquisition, or Trial* (1608); the anonymous *Office of Christian Parents* (1616); John Strype's *Lessons Moral and Christian for Youth and Old Age* (1699); and Thomas Brooks' *Apples of Gold for All Young Men and Women and a Crown of Glory for Old Men and Women* (1662).

home during their teen years, the opportunities available to them were much less diverse than those open to teen boys (134).

Both Griffiths and Ben-Amos point out, though, that attitudes toward youth in the period were ambiguous. Optimistic portrayals of youth existed alongside darker ones: Griffiths points, for example, to Powell's sermon, *The Beauty, Vigour and Strength of Youth Bespoke for God* (1676). Youth was often associated, according to Ben-Amos, with hope, beauty, blossoming, vigour and wit, in addition to folly and sin (23). Conversion rhetoric, in particular, offered a positive view of youth; where moralists felt children were incapable of reasoned decision-making, they viewed youth as more capable, as people newly fit, but still sufficiently malleable, to receive religious instruction. The age of youth, therefore, was often referred to as the 'choosing time,' a time in which people decided whether "to start out along the long and winding road to heaven or to bask in worldly slumber and secure an awful fall into hell" (54). Youth, Griffiths writes, was depicted as "'contested territory;' a struggle for conformity in which piety and civility stood at polar points to impurity and independence" (18). He cautions us, then, against drawing a conclusive portrait of youth, since contemporary images of youth varied and shifted, and could be manipulated to suit particular purposes. The most widely articulated view, though, occurring perhaps as a result of such ambiguity, was that people of this age group presented "a perennial problem. . . . Above all, the problem of youth was an issue of sexuality, disobedience, lust, and excess" (60).

Where did youthful experience itself fit within adult constructions of young age? Griffiths stresses that historians ought to contextualize youth not only publicly, in terms of their relationship to adults and the adult world, but also privately, in terms of peer association (236). Ben-Amos, tackling the question of whether or not there was indeed a youth culture, argues that three aspects of youthful experience differentiated the young from the adult world: religion, leisure, and sexuality (184).[10] Griffiths also investigates aspects of the youthful milieu, including religion, recreation, sexual behavior, and service. He finds that youthful responses to post-Reformation regulations of the time, space, and mores of youth varied, from acceptance to rejection, conformity to opposition (177). Many contemporary writings offered images of pious youth, bent on salvation,[11] but manuscript sources referring to youth engaging in games and song rather than worship abound as well,[12] while ale houses and bawdy houses figured significantly in the lives of young apprentices. And between these poles—piety and profanity—stretched a wide gap: "an extensive middle territory in which people blended orthodoxy with their own assumptions about authority, piety, work, time, youth, conviviality, and play" (233). This territory functioned as an

[10] Martin Bainton's 2001 article, "'Good Tricks of Youth,'" finds that while the notion of 'youth culture' is anachronistic in studying Elizabethan England, "it is fair to say that the younger generation--particularly apprentices and law students--defined themselves against adult society in terms of their corporate solidarities and leisure pursuits" (para. 1). Edel Lamb finds elements of youth culture, including "authority and agency," in the children's playing companies (110).

[11] These include, for example, Abraham Jackson's *The Pious Prentice, Or the Prentices Piety* (1640); Thomas Gouge's *The Young Man's Guide* (1676); and William Martyn's *Youth's Instruction* (1612).

[12] Griffiths here refers to diaries of youths, municipal records, and court proceedings.

"arena of accommodation" (394); working within existing authoritative structures, the young carved out their own sense of place and space.

Depictions of youth in sixteenth-century morality plays typify historical findings: the anonymous *Interlude of Youth* (c. 1513) follows a sin-and-redemption pattern, where Youth, preferring the company of Riot, Pride, and Lady Lechery, must forsake these friends, turning instead to Charity and Humility. Youth begins the play relishing his "youth and jollity" (1.46) and "peerless" physicality—"My hair is royal and bushed thick;/ My body pliant as a hazel-stick" (1.42, 47-48)—and anticipating a trip to the tavern with Riot. By play's end he is much subdued: "Good Lord, I pray thee, have no indignation,/ That I, a sinner, should ask salvation" (8.153-54). Charity and Humility quash Youth's initial refusal to conform, but, as Claire Sponsler observes, this interlude plays out contemporary fears of rebellious youth (89): "What unfolds in the play is an extended attempt to force Youth to submit to the demands of authority and to come back under the sway of normative social structures" (91). In a similar vein, R. Wever's *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1547) represents cultural anxieties pertaining to the age of youth. In this interlude, Lusty Juventus (Flaming Youth) celebrates the pleasures of youth, desiring nothing more than to "haue a daunce or two,/ To passe the tyme away in pleasure" (77-78). Converted to piety by Good Counsel and educated in religion by Knowledge, Juventus yet quickly falls victim to the wiles of Hypocrisy, Fellowship, and Abominable Living. Fortunately, God's Merciful Promises grants the fallen Juventus forgiveness and grace, and Juventus declares himself saved:

O synfull flesh, thy pleasures are but vayne,

Now I find it true, as the scripture doth saye,

Brode & pleasant is the path which ledeth vnto payne

But vnto eternall life ful narowe is the waye. (1084-87)

The anonymous interlude *Hick Scorner* (c. 1513-16) follows a similar fall-and-redemption formula, in which Hick Scorner, Imagination, and Free Will capitulate to the preaching of Contemplation and Perseverance, and likely draws on *Youth*, according to Ian Lancashire in his edition of the two plays (Lancashire also argues that both function not only as morality plays but also as political satire). Other interludes of the period treat the importance of educating and disciplining children; examples include *Nice Wanton*, John Redford's *Wit and Science* (1539), and *The World and the Child* (c. 1500-22). Such plays dramatize the contemporary view of youth as a 'choosing time,' a period of life during which one selects the easy path or the hard, while they also register cultural fears of youthful disorder, rebellion, and ungodliness.

Becoming Youth

In their own plays, Marlowe and Shakespeare institute a shift in such perceptions. The playwrights recast essentializing, totalizing views of young people by writing unfamiliar, unstable young characters; a penchant for ambiguity and a sense of unsettled identity characterize these teens. Not merely rebellious, they enact complex forms of resistance through which they find room to define themselves outside existing, normative boundaries. Indeed, what makes these

characters especially interesting is their appearance in literature at a particular historical moment: Marlowe and Shakespeare create, during a period of resistance in historicized culture, young characters who enact their own forms of resistance, both personal and public. Created during a period of English history charged by resistance to tyranny, these characters illustrate the distance between perceptions of youth as oppressed subordinates and the period's spirit of resistance. Because resistance theory itself is particularly resonant in Marlowe's *Edward II*, I discuss it in detail in Chapter One; however, self-fashioning through resistant behavior is the characteristic binding together all the young characters in this project.

The complex subjectivity of youth in the drama should be considered in light of the burgeoning sense of interiority evident during the Renaissance. It is true that critics are now questioning the commonplace that self-fashioning was an early modern innovation, contending that roots of an interiorized sense of self are to be found much earlier; I turn to these claims in Chapter Three. However, a new anxiety concerning the guarded, interior self was certainly apparent. The notion that people possessed secret hidden selves, distinct from selves made public, was cause for concern. Early moderns, grappling with new ideas of interiority, began to try to stabilize subjectivity. Linda Woodbridge writes, in "Impostors, Monsters, and Spies," of the period's preoccupation with imposture: vagrants, in particular, were suspected of deceitful behavior (merely feigning illness or homelessness) because they were mobile, "visibly untethered": vagrants "shifted roles and identities in an age officially committed to rigid occupational categories and starting to be concerned about stability of identity" (para. 1).

Elizabeth Hanson explores the period's "obsession with the discovery of the heart's secrets" (1), examining interrogatory torture as a means of producing a "narrative of discovery, a movement from unknowing, through labor, to an encounter with truth" (25). To discover someone's inner self is to reify that self, to essentialize and thereby stabilize identity. If secret, protected inner selves generate anxiety, then the means of relieving that anxiety is to disclose, forcibly if necessary, the inner self, to lay bare that interiority; early moderns learned, therefore, to look on one another as "secrets awaiting discovery" (Hanson 2).

It seems to me, though, that early modern youth are an exception to this theory; they tended not to be construed in these terms. Where youth were concerned, the fear of unstable, hidden selves generated a different response: adults preferred to erase or flatten, rather than excavate, youthful subjectivity. Outside literature, there is little to suggest that anyone was interested in bringing to light the heart of the young. Perhaps adults saw no need; or, more likely, perhaps the fear in this case was especially acute: the young were a marginal group, and, like vagrants, they tended to be highly mobile. What, early moderns might well have wondered about their youth, might lie beneath? This is the question Shakespeare and Marlowe address, investigating the young subject outside their culture's oversimplified parameters. Their investigation, however, does little to relieve the threat of secret selves; rather, it purposefully creates unknowable subjects, instigating a productive anxiety around the young that, I think, remains with us today, as we continue to bemoan the impenetrability of the teenager.

The nature of the teenaged self, then, as Marlowe and Shakespeare write it, is ambiguous, unsettled, and decentered. It is important to note, however, that for this perspective I draw on historicist and materialist readings of the early modern subject that are not without their detractors; critical opinion on the nature of the self-fashioning Renaissance subject continues to be divided. Early works, notably Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy* and Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, argue that the early modern autonomous self is decentered and disunified, socially and culturally constructed. Katherine Maus' study of inwardness in the theatre posited an even more profoundly destabilized self, a self divided by the "discrepancy between 'inward disposition' and 'outward appearance'" (13). Terry G. Sherwood, on the other hand, has recently made a case for a more coherent self in *The Self in Early Modern Literature*, arguing that Christian humanism and Protestant vocation encouraged a sense of continuity and stability in selfhood: the communally held belief that Christians should unite in serving the common good "stabilized and sustained the self" (8). Sherwood draws on Robert Ellrodt's vigorous opposition to a postmodernist sense of contingency, and his insistence on an "unchanging self" in metaphysical poetry (Ellrodt 7), though Sherwood does suggest that critics not polarize too sharply the boundaries of the early modern self. For my own reading of the young subject, I must side with a social constructionist view of the self, for I find that the teenaged selves represented in the drama are contingent and ambiguous, deliberately fragmented by their authors, who work to extract them from essentialism and typology.

The Plays

I begin with Marlowe's *Edward II*, the earliest of my chosen texts, and also a play foundational to the versions of youth represented in Shakespeare. This chapter reads young Prince Edward in terms of early modern resistance theory, demonstrating how the boy resists both tyrannical authority and the construction of himself as a helpless, vulnerable child. I suggest that Marlowe destabilizes identity in this teen character by insistently queering him, or making him strange: while it is possible to read the boy as a normative response to his father's queerness, this chapter argues for a queered subjectivity in the boy that enables his resistant self-fashioning. Importantly, Marlowe deliberately queers the prince's age in the play, first scripting him as much younger than the fourteen-year-old prince of historical record, and then causing him to grow up in what seems like an instant. Declining to specify an age for Edward, Marlowe insists upon his strangeness, his non-normative growth in the play. This unsettling of youthful subjectivity through a destabilizing of age resonates throughout my project: it happens that, in every play I include here, age is specified for female characters, but not for male characters. The effect, in terms of my reading, is that the boys' subjectivities tend to be a little looser, even more open to question, than the girls'; however, while 'boy' appears to a somewhat less stable category than 'girl,' Shakespeare is clearly interested in querying the status of female teenaged identity as well.

My second chapter begins with one such female teen, Anne Page of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, who is indeed notable for her ambiguously rendered sense of self, notwithstanding her specified age of sixteen. Pairing her with Prince Hal of the Henriad, I read both boy and girl within the context of the period's concern with detraction and gossip, suggesting that the circulation of gossip in these plays enables the articulation of a singular teenaged self. Placing Hal after Edward, I also gesture toward the ways Shakespeare's boy echoes Marlowe's: young figures in English history plays, enmeshed in the political resistance of their time and place, both boys also masterfully complicate imposed identities.

If Romeo and Juliet, subjects of my third chapter, are the premier dramatic representations of youth in the period, it is largely because we impose this status upon them today, recognizing them as familiar teenagers, the teenagers of our own time. In this chapter, however, I argue that to Shakespeare's audiences, they would have appeared deeply unsettling, for the play does much to construct an individuated version of youthful subjectivity. I read this play through the discourse of privacy, a new and burgeoning concept during the Renaissance, and suggest that Romeo and Juliet construe themselves as subjects through a private language, consisting in lies, secrets, and confessions. A private, shared language both reflects and produces the incipient self-fashioning of the young protagonists.

Finally, I turn to the teenaged girls in three of Shakespeare's late romances: *The Tempest, Pericles,* and *The Winter's Tale*. Examining the ways these plays adapt familiar folk tales, this chapter argues that the girls script

subjectivities within the context of those tales: each girl, heavily invested in her play's metatheatrical strategy, intervenes in narratives told about herself with a narrative of her own making. The girls, as I will discuss especially in relation to Miranda, resemble the heroines of what Frye called Shakespeare's 'green world' comedies, in the sense that they leave an oppressive situation, achieving a metamorphosis before returning to their normal world; the affinity with comedy is also evident in the radical nature of the girls' resistance to their parents and cultural norms. Here I think of Rick Bowers' assessment of early modern English comedy, where "identity is fluid, unlikelihood insists on setting terms, and confusion enjoys license at the same time as it tests new senses of personal and political assertion." Radical comedy "pierces to the root of cultural authority" (2). Then, too, Sherman Hawkins' modification of Frye's thesis might usefully be applied: he distinguishes green world comedies (*As You Like It*) from siege comedies, where outside characters enter and transform a more urban space (*Twelfth Night*), pointing out that only in the former type do we find generational opposition. Romance's affinity with comedy indeed seems to support the productive destabilizing of identity apparent in Shakespeare's girls; the teens of the late romances echo earlier manifestations: Anne Page is also a product of comedy, and even Juliet at least begins her tragic tale in the realm of the comic.

All of the plays I address in this study participate and intervene in familiar cultural discourses about youth: emblems of hope, vigor, and wit, young people were admittedly possessed of certain merits, but they were also an unsettling presence in a society worried about order. Mainly, it was important for adults to

steer the young away from ungodly excess and contain them within normative social structures. In the plays I wish to analyze, however, young characters repeatedly veer away from that apposite framework. In some ways the chapters of this project are self-contained, with each exploring the distinctive means of resistance deployed by certain characters, yet resistance is also what links each character to the others. If youth was merely a 'choosing time,' the period of life seen as 'contested territory,' a time when people felt most keenly the opposing tugs of godliness and irreverence, the young characters Marlowe and Shakespeare created are surprising indeed, for they find myriad ways to fashion themselves quite outside this basic polarity. I focus, then, not on youthful suffering or disempowerment, but on agency; not on silence, but on speech; and not on straightforward rebellion, but on complex forms of resistance.

Chapter One

Youth Made Strange: Resistance, Self-Fashioning, and Marlowe's Boy King

So wise so young, they say, do never live long. (*Richard III* 3.1.79)

Like the child princes of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, young Prince Edward of Marlowe's *Edward II* displays a precociousness that, according to his mother, signals a short life to come: "Ah, boy, this towardness makes thy mother fear / Thou art not marked to many days on earth" (3.2.79-80). In Shakespeare's play, Richard suggests that both Prince Edward and his brother Richard, the young Duke of York—"bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable," a "parlous" boy who may easily "taunt and scorn" his uncle (3.1.154, 152)—endanger their lives through such anomalous behavior. "Short summers," says Richard in an aside, "lightly have a forward spring" (3.1.94), and indeed the precocious boys, newly aware of their responsibilities as royals, have not long to live. In Marlowe's play, Edward's mother voices the same warning to her son when he likens his support of his father to Atlas bearing "heaven's great beams" (3.2.76): such 'towardness,' his mother believes, will lead only to an early death. Struggling against domestic tyranny, all three boys are faulted for overreaching; they surmount the parameters of expected behavior for the young. But unlike Shakespeare's princes, Marlowe's character does not finally occupy the space made available to him; he is not figured as a helpless child, easily overpowered (and ultimately murdered). He is, rather, a self-fashioning teenager: defying parents and proverbs, he lives to become king, execute his enemies, and commit his own mother to the Tower.

Marlowe's Edward stands as an early literary example of a resistant teen: scripted by his parents as helpless, vulnerable, and childlike, Edward recasts this narrative as he comes of age. Like the Shakespearean teens I turn to in later chapters, Edward resists the construction of a particular version of himself. What makes him an especially interesting and noteworthy example of such resistant self-fashioning is his appearance in a play overtly concerned with the concept of principled political resistance. *Edward II* treats political unfairness, and the duty to resist tyrannical leadership. Young Edward becomes an aggressive participant in the play's pattern of resistance: the newly-crowned, fourteen-year-old king, even as he weeps for his lost father, fulfills his duty to resist the tyrannical leadership of his mother and Mortimer. What makes this resistance possible is Edward's shift in self-perception and self-representation: he neither believes nor enacts the role expected of him. The boy's act of political resistance at the end of the play indeed depends on his undertaking a process of youthful self-fashioning.

A troubling sense of instability surrounds young Edward, and is key to his resistant self-fashioning: the prince evokes a certain strangeness, or what I will term, in regard to a play that has often attracted the attention of queer theorists, a queerness. Importantly, queer work on Marlowe's play tends to focus on homoeroticism rather than on homosexuality; critics and cultural historians generally agree that homosexuality, as we think of it today, did not exist in early modern England as a specific sexual identity, and that it would therefore be anachronistic, even in such a play as *Edward II*, to discuss a homosexual early

modern subject.[1] Alan Bray's analysis of the masculine friend and the sodomite, two familiar yet sharply conflicting early modern images, finds that these versions of male intimacy "paralleled each other in an uncanny way" ("Homosexuality" 40). Bray argues that in *Edward II*, Marlowe places what appears to be a sodomitical relationship "wholly within the incompatible conventions of Elizabethan friendship, in a tension which he never allows to be resolved" (49). The play's suggestion of sodomy is complicated by sodomy's proximity to male friendship, by the lack of overt signs of homosexuality in the play, and by the complex web of associations connected to the term 'sodomite.'[2] The precise nature of Edward's relationship with Gaveston remains ambiguous, and at any rate does not seem particularly to influence the barons' rebellion, for they are concerned mainly with Gaveston's low birth, his 'baseness.' Mortimer Senior even believes that King Edward should "have his will," since "the mightiest kings

[1] The premise of Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, that homosexuality did not exist in the period, has been highly influential; as Jonathan Goldberg writes, Bray's work remains "the groundbreaking and unsurpassed historical investigation for the period; its signal contribution was to find ways of talking about homosexuality before the advent of *the homosexual*" ("Introduction" 4-5). The book has influenced such subsequent work on the subject as Goldberg's own collection of essays, *Queering the Renaissance*, Mario DiGangi's *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, Gregory Bredbeck's *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton*, and many essays, notably DiGangi's "Marlowe, Queer Studies, and Renaissance Homoeroticism," and Thomas Cartelli's "*Queer Edward II*: Postmodern Sexualities and the Early Modern Subject." Other critics, such as Bruce Smith in *Homosexual Desire* and Emily Bartels in *Spectacles of Strangeness*, invoke but qualify Bray's premise: Bartels writes that homosexuality "was beginning to have a place, however nameless, formless, and faint, in Renaissance discourse" (147). In writing of *Edward II*, she contends that sodomy is "finally neither unseeable nor unspeakable" (145). It is also important to note the work of medieval scholars in the fields of queer theory and the history of sexuality: Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger's *Queering the Middle Ages*, for example, works to recover "cultural meanings that are lost, obscured, or distorted in work that either ignores questions of sexuality or attends only to hegemonic or heteronormative understandings of it" (xvi).

[2] Bray explains that 'sodomy' to the Elizabethans signified something closer to 'debauchery,' covering a range of sexual acts; moreover, a 'sodomite' was not merely sexually aberrant, but rebellious and unnatural in other ways as well: he might be an atheist, a blasphemer, a liar, or in some way a "rebel against society and the truth" ("Homosexuality" 41).

have had their minions" (1.4.390-91), and his nephew agrees, scorning not Edward's "wanton humour" but rather his sovereign's choosing to sport with "one so basely born" (1.4.403). Today, Mario DiGangi notes, our "modern ideological formations . . . more crisply distinguish homoeroticism from friendship, sexual desire from social desire" than did early modern gender ideology (*Homoerotics* 12).

Without making reference to a specifically homosexual subjectivity, it is yet plausible, and productive, to read certain of the play's characters as queer; to understand them, that is, in terms of their refusal to comply with cultural standards by exhibiting normative behaviors.[3] The play is a destabilizing work in that it dramatizes the possibility of queer selves; as James Voss has argued, Gaveston stands not merely as an aberration of accepted behaviors and values, "but rather as a challenge to their legitimacy, an alternative way of life and world view" (518-19). I find that Marlowe represents his young prince in precisely these terms: Marlowe queers Edward, not in a homoerotic sense, but rather by destabilizing his youthful identity.[4] Edward's parents deliberately cast him as a helpless child as a means of fixing him in a normative position that allows them both to understand him and to keep him subject to their will. But Edward resists this scripted version of himself, this imposition of traits associated with the age of childhood. He is queered by suddenly seeming much older than his parents have

[3] Michael Warner argues that the use of the term 'queer' "rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal" (qtd. in Cartelli 213).

[4] For recent essays on the topic of non-sexual queer studies, see Janet E. Halley and Andrew Parker's *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*.

made him out to be, bursting into prominence and power near the play's end. That Marlowe declines to specify an age for this young king, historically crowned at fourteen, serves further to destabilize an already startling character, and age itself becomes an uncertain, unstable category in this play. The prince at first appears to be much younger than the fourteen-year-old boy in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Marlowe's main source, but Edward's conduct later in the play demonstrates clearly that he is not a young child. While it's true that Edward's sudden surge to power is a product of necessary dramatic compression—Marlowe abbreviates the considerable time that elapsed between Edward II's death and his son's coming to power[5], making Edward the son seem to grow up in an instant—this compression only assists and intensifies the queering of the teen character.

In reading Edward as queer, I draw on a recent critical conversation on what has been termed the 'queer child.' In queering the child (a category that, among queer theorists, includes characters in their teen years), such theorists as Kathryn Bond Stockton (*The Queer Child*), Lee Edelman (*No Future*), and Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (*Curiouser*) open a discourse for discussing childhood and adolescence outside heternormative boundaries. At stake in this criticism is a need to understand, challenge, and denaturalize the constructed nature of childhood and youth. Some queer theorists (such as Stockton, Bruhm, and Hurley) seek to point up the queerness of the child, while others (such as Edelman) read the child instead as an immutable figure of futurity, and thus

[5] Ian Mortimer's biography of Edward III, *The Perfect King*, details the rule of Mortimer and Isabella during the first four years of the young king's reign: "he had been utterly disempowered by his mother and Mortimer" (4). Crowned in 1327, Edward III did not successfully seize control of the throne and execute Mortimer until 1330, shortly after he turned eighteen.

inherently normative. Stockton writes that "the child from the standpoint of 'normal' adults is always queer" (7), while Edelman insists that the child has "come to embody for us the telos of the social order and has been enshrined as the figure for whom that order must be held in perpetual trust" ("The Future" 21). While I have elsewhere questioned the frequent literary application of this theory to books *about* children and teens, written for adults, rather than to books *for* children and teens[6], I do find it a useful means of theorizing the inherent instability of Marlowe's teenaged character. And to queer age, I must emphasize, is indeed to destabilize it, not to empty it of meaning, nor to blur the boundaries between childhood and youth to the point where the distinction between them becomes irrelevant. Rather, in Marlowe's play, the queering of youth is a questioning of youth, a way to alter inveterate ideas about that stage of life, a way, in short, to make it strange.

Youth and Early Modern Resistance

This strangeness, or queerness, that Marlowe accentuates in his teen character buttresses the young king's eventual ability to take command and resist tyrannical authority. Interestingly, *Edward II* links queerness and political resistance: Edward III, although of course a medieval king, typifies the early modern ideal of principled political resistance, and Marlowe's destabilizing of age enables and perhaps embodies that very spirit of resistance. Marlowe wrote about his self-fashioning boy king during a period of history that was, as Linda

[6] See Rachel Prusko, "Queering the Reader in *Peter and Wendy*."

Woodbridge emphasizes in *English Revenge Drama*, an era charged by resistance to tyranny: "across Europe, it was an age of iron-fisted rulers, political assassinations, and tracts justifying resistance" (138). Resistance writing proliferated under Mary I; following England's return to Catholicism, many exiled Protestants wrote against Mary. Of central importance were two texts penned by Marian exiles John Ponet and Christopher Goodman. Ponet's *A Short Treatise of Politic Power, and of the True Obedience which Subjects Owe to Kings* (1556) finds tyrannicide entirely justifiable: he asserts that "it is lawful to kill a tyrant" as it is "natural to cut away an incurable member" to save the body (qtd. in Woodbridge 141). Goodman's *How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyed of their Subjects, and Wherein They may Lawfully by God's Word be Disobeyed and Resisted*, published from the continent two years after Ponet's call for tyrannicide, foregrounds the concept of principled political resistance: Christians are obliged to obey God, not tyrannical human authority, and thus have a duty to resist. The common people, Goodman complains, "thinke themselves utterly discharged, whither their Prince be godlie or ungodlye, wise or foolish, a preferer of the comon welthe or else a distroyer, all is one to them, they muste be obedient, because they are ignorant" (145).

Similarly, John Knox invoked a social contract when he wrote, also from exile, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), a call to remove Mary from authority: it is the responsibility of each citizen to resist tyranny (Woodbridge 147). "It is a thing impossible," rages Knox, that a female ruler could ever be pleasing to God; it follows, therefore, that

responsible Christians must "study to repress her inordinate pride and tyranny to the uttermost of their power" (Knox 43). These resistance theorists wrote specifically against Mary, but Peter Herman reminds us that "obedience to the crown was always conditional upon the monarch respecting the people's liberties and the rule of law" (14); Herman points, for example, to the deposition of Richard II in 1399, and notes that between 1327 and 1485 there were five depositions of English monarchs (15). Renaissance resistance theory, then, stressed a subject's duty to resist unjust or ungodly commands from a leader; in Marlowe's play, young Edward must, and does, fulfill this duty when he finds himself caught in a poignant dilemma: his own mother and her lover are themselves the criminal leaders he must resist.

In his analysis of the Henrician Reformation, Greg Walker notes that definitions of tyranny at the time were also based on the sovereign's character. Walker outlines the models of tyranny put forward by Erasmus in his *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516): where the good king is honest, the tyrant is corrupt; where the good king obeys the law, the tyrant perverts justice; where the good king listens to his subjects, the tyrant hears only the voices of sycophants. Henry, in embarking upon his Great Matter, spurned both the wishes of his people and the words of his advisers, and the results were "wide-ranging and catastrophic" (13). From the first session of the Reformation Parliament in 1529, English society existed "in a state of extended shock" (14). The 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace, protesting Henry's divorce, his religious policies, and the enclosure movement, resulted in the executions of nearly 200 people; the reign of his son,

Edward VI, saw both the Western Rebellion, a display of resistance to religious change, and the massive uprising in eastern England known as Kett's Rebellion, in 1549 (Herman 99). By the time Elizabeth inherited the throne, England was a demoralized, disordered nation.

To what extent did early modern youth, then, enjoined as they were to conform, caught within a mesh of authoritative structures, situate themselves in this larger culture of resistance? Susan Brigden discusses the important example of youth and the Reformation: young people were of particular interest to Protestant reformers, who linked notions of renewal to the rising generation; London's youth "were known to be politically unstable and easy to rally to a cause" (47). Disaffected apprentices and servants, for example, tended toward rebellious behavior, which could, reformers felt, be harnessed in support of the Protestant cause. Unharnessed, however, youthful intractability was worrying; Brigden points to the "constant alarm of the authorities at the association of young people, and fear of what they might do" (48). London apprentices, she contends, presented "a spectre of instability. . . . Adrift from their families, adolescents would look for new associations and find the gang" (48-49). Chris Fitter writes of the anti-injustice riots of 1595 as a backdrop and perhaps stimulus to *Romeo and Juliet*: the Apprentice's Insurrection of June 29 saw a thousand people gather at Tower Hill, armed with clubs, swords, and daggers (161). Bernard Capp provides a later example: he writes of street riots involving London apprentices during the 1640s; he also points out that apprentices formed an association of some 300

during the Exclusion Crisis.[7] According to both Capp and S. R. Smith, London apprentices at the time were "strongly politicized" (Capp 213); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos writes that they were "notorious for their riotous activities" (183).

The phenomenon of misrule also raised apprehensions about youthful disorder. May Day and Shrovetide, in particular, occasioned the festive overturning of authority; during Shrovetide, London apprentices sacked bawdy houses and playhouses, while schoolchildren barred their teachers from the classroom (Griffiths 150). Such misrule, according to Paul Griffiths, served to tighten restraints on youth: searching the records for "even a gesture of support" for the Shrovetide sackers, he finds only "a chorus of complaints and stringent measures to prevent disorder" (155). We should likewise consider the findings of Natalie Zemon Davis' well-known study on youth groups in sixteenth-century France, "The Reasons of Misrule," which analyzes themes of "youth, misrule, pleasure, folly, even madness" (43) among the organizations known as the *Abbayes de la Jeunesse*, or 'Abbeys of Misrule.'[8] These youth groups—for such, Davis makes clear, they were—engaged in forms of carnival, often charivaris and parades, to mock such figures as the subjugated husband, the domineering woman, or the remarrying widow. The nature of this misrule, Davis concludes, was not rebellious, since it served to protect existing community values;

[7] Smith, also writing on apprentice culture, observes that representations of "dishonest and rowdy" apprentices appeared frequently on the London stage; his examples include *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and *The City Madam* (1658).

[8] Davis' article is also a clear refutation of Ariès' claim that Europeans did not distinguish between childhood and youth until the late eighteenth century; in addition to her work on what were clearly youth groups, Davis also points to early modern French medical, religious, and popular sources on adolescence, showing that "the characterization of adolescent behavior in these works is not the same as would be made today, but it is a characterization!" (50n.63).

importantly, though, it did create a space for youthful autonomy and the expression of the "raucous voice" of the young (55) in the community. In the Abbeys, youth found important avenues to social commentary, and even criticism.[9]

While the voice of young Edward in Marlowe's play is not exactly raucous, he does ultimately make himself heard, exemplify the spirit of resistance so prominent in Marlowe's day, and overturn, perhaps with an echo of the carnivalesque quality of youthful misrule evident in sixteenth-century youth groups, feast days, and riots, the tyrannical authority of Mortimer and the queen, his mother. Writing of a medieval boy king from his own place and time, Marlowe exploits the historical record, in this case fertile ground for a playwright clearly interested in queer and resistant subjectivities, to heighten such qualities, already somewhat apparent in the historical figure. In early fourteenth century England, young Edward's dilemma was compelling: positioned as a normative, healing presence in a time of great political turmoil, he would also be called upon, while still a teen, to launch a fierce political resistance and overturn the existing order. At the time of his birth, his father, and indeed all of England, welcomed him with joy in the midst of the civil unrest resulting from the loss of Piers Gaveston, who was murdered by the earls of Lancaster, Warwick, and Hereford in 1312. Born later that same year, Edward, writes his biographer Ian Mortimer, "redeemed the situation. By his very birth he had pulled the country back from

[9] Near the end of her essay, Davis points out that while most political or social criticism implicit in carnival did not lead to political action, there were instances in the period of rebellion resulting from carnival: she cites, for example, the sacking of Berne, Switzerland by young peasants in 1513, following some June revels, and an uprising in France during the Mardi Gras carnival of 1558.

the abyss" (19). His birth at once assuaged the king's grief and provided England with an heir to the throne (Mortimer 19). Once crowned, however, young Edward III, only fourteen years old, would face a deadly threat in the shape of Mortimer, who wielded complete control of the boy king, and of England. Edward's biographer imagines the scenario: "Around him the majesty of the court was swirling and laughing, delighting in its newly found wealth. But at the eye of the whirling storm he sat alone on his throne, not knowing what was going to happen next" (Mortimer 56). The complexity of this figure, the isolated, powerless boy king, seems to have intrigued Marlowe.

"If he be strange . . ."

Queer subjectivities dominate *Edward II*; Marlowe's teen character comes of age in a world preoccupied with, and deeply troubled by, an acute sense of difference: the play opens with two soliloquies from Gaveston, the play's premier embodiment of non-normative subjectivity. To the barons Gaveston is a figure of irreconcilable difference: low-born, "base and obscure" (1.1.100), a "base peasant" (1.4.7), Gaveston's very presence at court at court is deeply discordant and cause enough for their hatred. "You that are princely born should shake him off," Warwick informs the king. "For shame, subscribe, and let the loon depart" (1.4.81-82). Marlowe's use of historical sources points to his particular interest in Gaveston: while the play's main source is Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Maureen Godman has pointed out that for his portrait of Gaveston Marlowe drew particularly on John Stow's 'Summarie' of 1565, an

abridged English history which devotes a third of its eleven octavo pages on the reign of Edward II to a treatment of Gaveston; of the *Chronicles*' forty-two folio pages on Edward, in contrast, just five concern Gaveston. Moreover, Stow's Summarie provides Marlowe with his representation of Gaveston as base-born and morally destructive, a man who "brought the kyng to manyfolde vyces: as adultery and suche other . . ." (qtd. in Godman 162); Gaveston's low birth and opportunism do not figure in Holinshed's account.

Marlowe's use of Gaveston points up the playwright's interest in queer selves and queer ways of being in the world; as Voss argues, "the tragic confrontation which destroys Edward is not the collision of individual personalities alone, but also the clash of incompatible ways of life, opposing types of state order, and contrary systems of values and ideas" (519). The pairing of Edward and Gaveston queers the political order and even the significance of lineage, threatening the "'natural' order of the kingdom" (519). The historical Edward II, according to Mortimer, wished above all else to assert his individuality, and so "embarked on a personal rebellion against authority which lasted for much the rest of his reign" (18). In Marlowe's play, such rebellion is of course evident in Edward's insistent desire to "frolic with my dearest Gaveston" (1.4.73), but manifests more broadly as well, in his refusal to meet the expectations of the peers in his behavior and comportment: Edward queers both the role of the king and masculinity itself. Mortimer demands of him,

> When were thou in the field with banner spread?
>
> But once, and then thy soldiers marched like players,

With garish robes, not armour; and thyself,

Bedaubed with gold, rode laughing at the rest,

Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,

Where women's favours hung like labels down. (2.2.181-86)

Edward, as Robert A. Logan notes, is also controlled by his emotions and given to obsessive behavior, both considered unmanly characteristics; however, because the play does not "dwell overtly" on Edward's "lack of manliness," it invites us to view the usual link between passion and unmanliness with suspicion (94).

Indeed the play continually encourages us to query the category of 'natural;' as Emily C. Bartels has argued, all of Marlowe's plays undermine his society's attempts to "prove the alien inexorably alien" and try to "expose cultural stereotypes and discriminations as constructs" ("Strange" 9). Like the barons, Kent believes Edward is an "unnatural king, to slaughter noble men / And cherish flatterers" (4.1.8-9); he also faults Edward for not behaving in a manner befitting a brother: "Nature, yield to my country's cause in this. / A brother, no, a butcher of thy friends, / Proud Edward, dost thou banish me thy presence?" (4.1.3-5). Eventually, Kent comes to see his own behavior, and Mortimer's, as unnatural as well; he asks of himself,

why hast thou, of all unkind,

Borne arms against thy brother and thy king?

Rain showers of vengeance on my cursèd head

Thou God, to whom in justice it belongs

To punish this unnatural revolt! (4.6.5-9)

Queen Isabella stands similarly accused: Edward calls his wife "that unnatural queen, false Isabel" (5.1.17). And indeed she seems to adopt this view of herself, for she has lost her husband to his minion. While she would rather "die a thousand deaths" than "love not him," Edward's affections lie elsewhere: "For never doted Jove on Ganymede / So much as he on cursèd Gaveston . . . I love in vain; he'll ne'er love me" (1.4.194, 195, 180-81, 197). Marlowe presents a decidedly 'unnatural' marriage between Isabella and Edward; she complains that Gaveston has corrupted her lord and is "a bawd to his affections" (1.4.151), while her husband physically pushes her away, instructing Gaveston to let her "droop and pine" (1.4.162). She succeeds in regaining Edward's (normative) affections—"a second marriage 'twixt thyself and me" (1.4.335)—only once she has persuaded Mortimer to repeal Gaveston. Gaveston, meanwhile, continues to force upon the queen a vision of herself as unnatural, extracting her from the customary role of wife by replacing her with himself: she accuses him of robbing her of her lord, but Gaveston counters, "Madam, 'tis you that rob me of my lord" (1.4.161).

Unnatural selves populate this play; selves are queered or destabilized to the point where audiences struggle to understand characters, and characters to understand themselves. For Isabella, this struggle amounts to a denaturalization of the self; Edward prohibits her from fulfilling both her private role as his wife and her public role as queen, stripping her of all political power. For Edward himself the problem is inverted: for him the queered self *is* a naturalized self, the only self he recognizes. He tells Gaveston, mourning the latter's imminent

departure, “Thou from this land, I from myself am banished. . . Happy were I, but now most miserable” (1.4.118, 129). To be banished from oneself, in Edward’s terms, is to be divided from the man who is both emblem and reflection of his own queerness, the man he loves because “he loves me more than all the world” (1.4.77). Edward inhabits a subjectivity that is “exceedingly unstable,” writes Greenblatt: “When Gaveston is killed, Edward has within seconds adopted someone else” (“Marlowe” 60). The normative roles of husband and king—all that remains once Gaveston is gone—strike Edward as strange and unfamiliar, prompting the speedy selection of Spenser as favorite. At the end of the play Edward must make an effort to recall that he is a king, and wonders what significance the title might hold:

> But when I call to mind I am a king,
> Methinks I should revenge me of the wrongs
> That Mortimer and Isabel have done.
> But what are kings, when regiment is gone,
> But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?
> My nobles rule, I bear the name of king;
> I wear the crown but am controlled by them,
> By Mortimer and my unconstant queen . . . (5.1.23-30)

But Edward’s efforts to call to mind he is a king once “regiment is gone,” are not new, for he has never successfully performed the role of king. His confusion near the play’s end merely points up the sense of difference resonating throughout the play. Forced to yield his crown, Edward refers to himself in the third person, a

common occurrence, as Jonathan Hart explains, in the Marlovian canon. Characters frequently apostrophize themselves, and in this sense apostrophe "tries to shape or stabilize the self" (37). In Edward's case, such apostrophizing intensifies the effect of a man now thoroughly estranged from a part he never really played, yet to which he still desperately clings: "Here, take my crown, the life of Edward too! . . . All times and seasons, rest you at a stay, / That Edward may be still fair England's king" (5.1.57, 67-68).

Important to the play's destabilization of Edward (and, later, of his son) is the uncertainty around his age. Early in the play, the barons figure Edward II as young, offering youth as an excuse for his unorthodox behavior. Mortimer Senior advises his nephew,

> Then let his grace, whose youth is flexible,
> And promiseth as much as we can wish,
> Freely enjoy that vain, light-headed earl
> For riper years will wean him from such toys. (1.4.398-401)

The customary early modern binary is evident here: Edward's youth both accounts for his rebellious behavior and proffers hope for the future, for, being young, he is pliant and full of promise. Later, Baldock presses this assessment of the king further when he compares Edward's behavior to a child's: he praises Edward's resolve to be revenged on the barons, since the king ought not to be "tied to their affection / As though your highness were a schoolboy still / And must be awed and governed like a child" (3.2.29-31). The parallel Baldock draws between childhood and subordination neatly prefigures the prince's first

appearance a few lines later; thus father and son appear similarly childlike and subordinate, a seemingly straightforward correlation that Marlowe will take pains to trouble. Following Edward's deposition, Kent complicates the issue of the king's age: "Hence will I haste to Killingworth Castle, / And rescue agèd Edward from his foes" (5.2.119-20). And indeed in the very next scene, we find Edward referring to himself as old: "My daily diet is heart-breaking sobs / That almost rends the closet of my heart. / Thus lives old Edward, not relieved by any . . ." (5.3.21-23). Logan, noticing the sudden shift in Marlowe's representation of the king's age, concludes that "a unified conception of the protagonist is not Marlowe's primary interest" (94), nor is it necessary, since the play's own sense of "poetic justice and clarity" (94) answers for any confusion occasioned by Edward's ambiguous, complex character. I think, though, that the king remains steadfastly strange: that Marlowe opts not to provide an age for Edward, yet does provoke questions about his age, only amplifies the sense of uncertainty that is so vital a trait of this character.

This queering of age, then, supports a reading of Edward as strange, as a figure of contrariety; the problem of contraries, of insurmountable differences, is a chief concern in the play. John F. McElroy stresses that the world of the play is a world of "*fundamental* contrariety—a world in which oppositions and polarities are absolute and cannot be rationally absorbed, transcended, or reconciled" (215). In such a world the barons struggle, as Isabella and Mortimer conspire to repeal Gaveston, with the strangeness of the situation: "Can this be true," asks baffled Lancaster, "'twas good to banish him, / And is this true, to call him home again? /

Such reasons make white black and dark night day. . . . In no respect can contraries be true" (1.4.245-49). Characters in the play are never quite sure what to make of Edward, what indeed to *do* with him, before and after he is deposed. He is so queer, so strange, so out of place, that he defies categorization. If his place is not on the throne, then where is it, and who should take responsibility for him? The deposed king's question when Leicester resigns his charge—"And who must keep me now?" (5.1.137)—is a poignant reminder of Edward's failure to belong, or to be understood. Anomalous in his world, Edward continually frustrates expectations, and this is true even when he is forced to endure great suffering and torture. Gurney wonders that "the king dies not;" Matrevis replies, "He hath a body able to endure / More than we can inflict, and therefore now / Let us assail his mind another while" (5.5.10-12).

Marlowe suggests, in effect, that contraries *are* true, and yet his characters refuse to exercise any degree of forbearance, making the differences between them irremediable. Everywhere the play draws attention to its characters' inability to tolerate—to "brook"—one another's behavior. Mortimer Senior, for example, disgusted by the sight of Gaveston sitting next to the King, insists that no man of noble birth can "brook" the sight: "*Quam male conveniunt*!" (1.412). Warwick continues the same line of argument in favor of overruling Edward in the matter of his minion, demanding of the king, "Think you that we can brook this upstart pride?" (1.4.41). Edward and Gaveston, for their part, remain similarly resolute: Edward meets Kent's complaint that Gaveston is too low born for the titles Edward lavishes on him with "Cease, brother, for I cannot brook

these words" (1.1.159), while Gaveston announces that he cannot "brook these injuries" (2.2.71) when the barons continue to mock him upon his return in Act Two. And Edward, nearing the end of his life and wishing to be "king till night," asks Leicester to "weigh how hardly I can brook / To lose my crown and kingdom without cause" (5.1.59, 51-52). Marlowe's use of the verb 'brook' belongs to the play's particular pattern of rhetorical repetition, a characteristic of Marlowe's style that McElroy has labeled a "rhetoric of disjunction" (216)—that is, the insistent repetition of grammatical forms that reinforce contrariety. This pattern (McElroy's example is the often repeated noun 'will,' as in Edward's "I'll have my will" [1.1.77]) makes us acutely aware of the "unbridgeable disjunctions both between and within the characters" (217).

"A prince so young as I"

Prince Edward does not appear in this world of irreconcilable difference until the play's third act, and the lateness and timing of his entrance might at first suggest a recuperative role for the boy. Just before the prince's entrance, his father learns that the rebel barons have seized Gaveston; just after it, he learns that the king of France has seized Normandy. The boy, whom his father calls "little son," must travel to France with his mother to smooth things over with Valois. Situated as a peacemaker, the remedy for his father's woes and political struggles, the young prince is also held up as the antidote to the father's strangeness; in both roles he embodies the hopeful image of youth prevalent in Marlowe's day. Edward's mother tells her son that she "triumph[s] in the hope of thee, my joy"

(4.2.28). The prince exists, putatively, as the normative response to his father's queerness: as Edward relies on the boy to mend relations with France, Isabella plots to use him in the event that she cannot regain her husband's affections: "Yet once more I'll importune him with prayers. / If he be strange and not regard my words, / My son and I will over into France" (2.4.63-65). The queen and the barons envision replacing a queer king with a normative one—and, being but a boy, this new king, they imagine, will fall easily under their control.[10]

Yet young Edward remains resolutely strange, a difficult and unstable character very much invested in the play's pervasive interest in contrariety and ambiguity. The surprising reversal of power he achieves at the play's end replicates and originates in his resistant self-fashioning; like his father, young Edward fails or refuses to recognize the manufactured version of himself, and cannot be naturalized as the typological figure the queen and Mortimer seek. They require both that he exert a normalizing pressure on England by replacing the current, aberrant king, and also that he remain powerless. Thus they attempt to force him into this normative subject position, largely by fashioning him as younger, and therefore more helpless, than he is. The play's adults, including his own father, are bent on scripting Edward as a defenseless child, calling him "little son," "little boy," "youngling," and "child." Even very late in the play,

[10] Critics writing on the play have often echoed this perception of Edward, reading the prince as the solution to the problem that is his father. Sharon Tyler, for example, argues that Edward is the only character who can "reaffirm the legitimate kingship corrupted by Edward II" (61) and she views his growth as linear and normative: he has been "consciously—self-consciously—growing up . . . . By the final act he can command; he has become the king his father should have been" (61-62). Carla Prichard similarly contends that the "child-king is the one who restores order to the empire by normalizing relationships" (30), while Judith Weil, although her chapter on Edward deals with difference and contrariety, views young Edward as a curative: Marlowe ends his play on a note of clarity, allowing us to "observe how a process that has engendered contradictions, finally drives them out" (146-47).

immediately preceding his own fall, Mortimer continues to exaggerate his own power by insisting on young Edward's subordinate status, figuring him as a frightened schoolboy: "I view the prince with Aristarchus' eyes / Whose looks were as a breeching to a boy" (5.4.51-55). In resisting the forces of tyranny, Edward also extracts himself from oppressive discourses around childhood: prefiguring the Shakespearean teens who follow him, Edward's coming of age occurs on his own terms.

Edward seems at times to oblige his parents; he "properly enacts the subjectivity into which he has been recruited by society—that of the loving, obedient son" (Deats, *Sex* 179). He remains constantly at his mother's side, like a child not yet 'breeched,' and claims he will continue to do so until he "be strong enough to break a staff" (4.2.24). Similarly, he responds in a seemly fashion when his father orders him to accompany his mother to France: "Commit not to my youth things of more weight / Than fits a prince so young as I to bear" (3.2.74-75). The sudden reversal in the lines immediately following, however, calls into question his appropriate display of reticence: "And fear not, lord and father, heaven's great beams / On Atlas' shoulder shall not lie more safe / Than shall your charge committed to my trust" (76-78). This promise to his father points to the "towardness" (79) that his mother fears will shorten his life; she recognizes in her son a desire to overreach established limits, to disrupt norms, and this dangerous behavior worries her. What's most queer about Edward has little to do with sexuality; his queerness issues instead from the unstable sense we have of his age. The boy who takes the stage as a vulnerable, defenseless little

child veers suddenly into adultlike behavior, which is in turn qualified by his weeping and empathy for his mother even as he passes sentence upon her.

Marlowe queers, rather than sexualizes, the boy king, and he does it mainly through a destabilization of his age. To use Stockton's term, this boy does not grow up, but sideways: "the child who by reigning cultural definitions can't 'grow up' grows to the side of cultural ideals" (13). Marlowe's Edward cannot follow the 'natural,' normative progression established for him: he is at once much younger and much older than the fourteen-year-old boy who took the throne in 1327. Treated by his parents as a little child, Edward must nevertheless rise to defeat tyrants and rule a nation while yet an adolescent. Reading Edward's growth as non-normative, I draw as well on Robin Bernstein's coining of the term 'agequeer' in an analysis of Louise Fitzhugh's 1964 novel *Harriet the Spy*, for while some have read Harriet as a proto-lesbian, indeed "what is queerest about Harriet is not her gender or her (lack of) sexual or romantic desire, but her age" (114). Harriet, along with her fellow child characters, engages in adult activities and behaves in a mature manner not at all befitting her ten years. Bernstein argues that Fitzhugh "destabilizes age; her inclusion of adultlike children and immature adults disarticulates age as an identity from chronological or biological age" (115); finally, the novel positions agequeerness as "crucial to survival" (118), since it allows Harriet to transform, privately, into the person she desires to be. In *Edward II*, agequeerness similarly opens to the young king the opportunity to self-fashion. The instability around his age lets him evade the oppression of normative development and set his own path for becoming King Edward III.

In an interesting reading of young Edward—likely the only piece of Marlovian criticism wholly devoted to this character—Marie Rutkoski argues, as I do, that the prince is not the stabilizing force in the world of the play that he seems at first glance to be. However, she reads the boy as non-normative because he participates in the play's homoerotic discourse, occupying, with Gaveston and Spencer, the position of minion:

> The boy Edward, though he will become a king, remains a subject in this sense: he is subject to being identified and described according to how the play treats his competitors for the king's affection, and he is therefore associated with the homoeroticism and political upheaval that characterize Gaveston and Spencer Jr. (286)

This reading suggests that young Edward is unavoidably defined by his proximity to the play's other minions (where 'minion' may refer to lover, political favorite, or child), and thus becomes ensnared in the "homoerotic and sodomitical dynamics of the play" (281). It is true that Marlowe's decision to make Gaveston and young Edward contemporaries intensifies Marlowe's queering of the boy. According to the historical record, Gaveston died before Edward was born, leaving the child to ease his father's grief and afford new hope to the nation. He served as Gaveston's replacement; Mortimer notes that the prince and his nurse came to live at Wallingford Castle in 1314, formerly the dwelling of Piers Gaveston; the king also "conferred gifts and titles on his son in the same way he had given them to Gaveston" (26). Marlowe, however, by making the prince and Gaveston co-exist, renders the situation stranger still: instead of substituting son

for minion, Marlowe makes them rivals. While Rutkoski correctly demonstrates that the two characters occupy a similar space in relation to the king, I believe Marlowe's queering of the boy operates quite apart from the play's homoerotic contexts and is entirely non-sexual. I do agree, however, with her more general point that "where Prince Edward is concerned, the play at every turn denies us stable ground" (290).

It is this very lack of stability, this destabilizing or queering of identity, that makes young Edward the resistant figure that he is: resistant at once to the imposition of prescribed identity and to political tyranny. Like his father, Edward cannot or will not acknowledge the 'self' made available to him, and in the boy's case the failure to naturalize himself as expected makes him capable of resisting: his otherness is a strength he will wield in a way his father could not. In Prince Edward's case, the failure to recognize a normative self lets him self-fashion into a powerfully resistant king. While King Edward believes his son has been led astray by the rebels— "Ah, nothing grieves me but my little boy / Is thus misled to countenance their ills" (4.4.48-49)—and fully expects that the prince, a mere "lamb encompassèd by wolves" (5.1.41), will be deprived of the crown by Mortimer, it seems young Edward has already been at work troubling this version of himself. Early in Act Four we find the prince defying Mortimer and his mother: "How mean you, an the king my father lives?" he demands in response to Mortimer's pointed suggestion that the prince will soon be king. "No, my Lord Mortimer, not I, I trow" (4.2.43-44). Pressed further by his mother and Sir John of Hainault, young Edward continues to insist, "I think King Edward will outrun

us all" (68), and soon after asks his uncle, when Kent mentions Edward II's fall, "Tell me, good uncle, what Edward do you mean?" (4.6.32). Once his father has been deposed, the prince's appeal to his mother and Mortimer to keep Edward II on the throne suggests an ironic awareness of how they perceive him, and how this stereotype might work to his advantage: "Mother, persuade me not to wear the crown. / Let him be king; I am too young to reign" (5.2.92-93). Resistant to wearing the crown but informed that he must rule because it is "his highness' pleasure," young Edward continues to play for time: "Let me but see him first, and then I will" (94-95). Nor does he hesitate to stand up to Mortimer; to Mortimer's accusation that Kent has betrayed his brother, Edward offers the quick response, "But he repents and sorrows for it now" (108). He defends his uncle and defies Mortimer, refusing to go with him (108-10).

It is true that once crowned, Edward acknowledges his fear of Mortimer; in defense of Kent's life Isabella "dare[s] not speak a word," and Edward concurs: "Nor I" (5.4.96-97). Yet, in another of the play's many instances of contrariety, Edward immediately qualifies his fear and powerlessness, for Marlowe shows the young king thinking through his new role as he attempts to save his uncle's life: "Nor I, and yet methinks I should command; / But seeing I cannot, I'll entreat for him" (5.4.97-98). This first attempt at asserting a kingly authority fails; yet, as Edward wavers between impotence and power, finally deciding to exert whatever influence he can muster under the circumstances, Marlowe reveals the new king undergoing his own process of becoming. He asks his mother a reasonable and perceptive question about Mortimer: "What safety may I look for at his hands / If

that my uncle shall be murdered thus?" (5.4.109-10). His mother, characteristically, responds with an attempt to suppress the boy's questions, to maintain his subordinate and childlike position: "Fear not, sweet boy, I'll guard thee from thy foes. / Had Edmund lived, he would have sought thy death. / Come, son, we'll ride a-hunting in the park" (111-13). But Edward's sarcastic reply is sharper than she expects—"And shall my uncle Edmund ride with us?" (114)—necessitating a harsh rejoinder quite at odds with her cajoling tone of a moment earlier: "He is a traitor. Think not on him. Come" (115).

Perhaps Edward merely pretends to fulfill the role of subordinate child that the play's adults have thrust upon him; in examining the boy's motives and methods as he rises to resist Mortimer and his mother, critics have debated whether Edward enacts the ideal filial prince or is instead a young Machiavel. To Judith Weil, young Edward is a force for restoring order and avenging his father's death, while Kathleen Anderson points out that we might also read Edward as a "Machiavellian prince who, in the final scene, mourns his father, then seizes power from Mortimer and Isabella" (29).[11] Marlowe raises, but does not answer, the question of Edward's motives: does he scheme his way into power from the beginning, or is he the innocent child he appears to be, pressed unwillingly to the throne in the wake of his father's early demise? Importantly, Edward resembles neither the play's conniving adults nor the helpless child those adults believe him to be; rather, he remains an ambiguous figure. While I argue that Marlowe troubles his youthful identity, I do not suggest we read Edward as boy whose true

[11] On this debate, see also Voss, p. 529; McElroy, p. 207-08; Deats, *Sex*, p. 179. Anderson also makes a compelling case for Isabella as a Machiavellian politician; she is a "smart, callous and practical" queen who falls "only because her son gains more power than she can" (33).

motives become clear as the action unfolds, a boy who finally bursts forth as the man he was meant to be. Rather, Marlowe insists upon the instability of this character. We cannot untangle the true nature of this prince with any sense of certainty, and this destabilizing of identity is indeed the point. To a degree, Edward functions as a precursor to Shakespeare's Prince Hal, whose penchant for performative anonymity I discuss in my next chapter: both teenaged boys complicate, recast, or entirely evade absolutist interpretations of themselves.

The prince is not nearly so transparent a character as we might expect, given that in the world he inhabits, most other characters freely, and conspicuously, dissemble, leaving us well aware of their motives. While queerness and contrariety characterize the prince, self-conscious dissembling is a chief tactic of most of his fellow characters. Spencer, for instance, advises Baldock, "You must be proud, bold, pleasant, resolute, / And now and then stab as occasion serves" (2.1.42-43). Edward, fully aware that his barons are dissembling with him, asks, "Can you in words make show of amity, / And in your shields display your rancorous minds?" (2.2.32-33). Similarly clear sighted at the moment of his death, Edward sees that Lightborn, too, dissembles: "What means your highness to mistrust me thus?" asks Lightborn, to which Edward replies, "What means thou to dissemble with me thus?" (5.5.79-80). Kent knows he must dissemble to save his own life; once he reconsiders his rebellion against his brother, he tells himself to "calm this rage. / Dissemble or thou diest, for Mortimer / And Isabel do kiss while they conspire" (4.6.11-13). Mortimer praises Isabella's abilities: "Finely dissembled. Do so still, sweet queen" (5.2.74), he

says when she gives Matrevis a ring for Edward as a sign of her love and efforts to "work his liberty" (5.2.71). And Mortimer himself, the play's chief dissembler, boasts that his villainy has made him invincible: he is "Jove's huge tree," and "others are but shrubs compared to me; / All tremble at my name, and I fear none. / Let's see who dare impeach me for his death?" (5.6.11-14). He is surprised to receive an immediate reply to this question, for the queen enters at this point to tell him that young Edward, despite Mortimer's insistence that he is "yet a child," has discovered their villainy and sworn revenge.

Contrariety, a main feature of the play and especially evident in both Edward the father and Edward the son, differs significantly from dissembling: contrariety generates ambiguity, while dissembling is merely a lie. To dissemble is to conceal an essential truth: if a person hides something, he can be found out. Young Edward's subjectivity is not nearly so stable, so easily made manifest. The play's other characters cannot come to terms with difference, with contraries; dissimulation, on the other hand, functions in this play as a simple binary that stabilizes subjectivity: either a man is who he claims to be, or he is not. Shakespeare's teens, as I will discuss in coming chapters, sometimes work to conceal a private self from the adults in their lives, and we as the audience become privy to that inner self; this is the case particularly with Romeo and Juliet. In Marlowe's play, however, we have only a persistent queering of the teenaged subject; if Edward harbors a private, even a Machiavellian self, Marlowe does not offer it up to his audience.

Characters' use of manipulative language, spoken and written, accents this important disjunction between Edward and his dissembling foes. The play continually acknowledges the power that lies in speech: "Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words," King Edward begs Gaveston; "kind words and mutual talk makes our grief greater; / Therefore with dumb embracement let us part" [1.4.117, 133-34]). Specifically, characters know very well that they may exert control through carefully engineered language; hence the oft-repeated injunction to 'speak fair.' Seeking license to "frolic" with Gaveston, Edward knows that "it boots me not to threat; I must speak fair" (1.4.63); Isabella says of her husband, whom she is trying to win back from Gaveston, "I must entreat him, I must speak him fair" (1.4.183). Likewise, Gaveston has to remind Edward, in the latter's dealings with Isabella, to "dissemble with her, speak her fair" (2.2.228). Late in the play, Leicester advises the raging King to recall the departing Winchester and Trussell, to whom he has refused to resign his crown, and "speak them fair, / For if they go the prince shall lose his right" (5.1.91-92).

Characters try to wield control both by 'speaking fair'—dissembling—and by attempting to regulate others' speech, but frequently their efforts fail; the play at once acknowledges the power of words and contains that power. Marjorie Garber analyzes the limits of language in Marlowe's plays: "however great its power, language is ultimately an enclosure" ("Infinite Riches" 13). Isabella, for example, pleads successfully on Gaveston's behalf in order to win back her husband: even though Pembroke has informed her that "no speaking will prevail, and therefore cease" (1.4.220), she perseveres and convinces Mortimer to recall

Gaveston. However, Garber points out that her victory here constitutes "the quintessential example of the false enclosure, which traps the encloser" (15), for Gaveston's return only ensures both his death and Edward's. The king's bizarre fantasy of hanging a golden tongue from Isabella's neck as a reward for her successful pleading (1.4.328) is merely a conspicuous reminder of the limits of language (Garber 15). And the queen's ability to wield influence through language only declines as the action progresses. By the middle of Act Four, having gained ground in his fight against the king, Mortimer ceases to hear Isabella. Her speech to the lords and her son in scene four, an analysis of the "civil broils" plaguing England, ends abruptly with Mortimer's interruption: "Nay, madam, if you be a warrior / Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches" (4.4.15-16). By the play's end the queen has lost any power she might once have had to influence others through her speech, and is indeed too frightened of Mortimer to speak at all, even to support her son in his bid to save his uncle's life: "Son, be content. I dare not speak a word" (5.4.96).

Mortimer himself stakes his very life on the power of manipulative language. He writes (or perhaps dictates) what he considers an indeterminate letter ordering the king's death, believing that he does so "cunningly," for the letter can be variously read. Left 'unpointed,' or unpunctuated, the letter either "contains his death" or "bids them save his life" (5.4.7) depending on how it is read:

> '*Edwardum occidere nolite timere, bonum est'*,
>
> 'Fear not to kill the king, 'tis good he die.'

But read it thus, and that's another sense:

'Edwardum occidere nolite, timere bonum est',

'Kill not the king, 'tis good to fear the worst.'

Unpointed as it is, thus shall it go,

That, being dead, if it chance to be found,

Matrevis and the rest may bear the blame

And we be quit that caused it to be done. (5.4.8-16)

Mortimer, in Garber's terms, both writes and unwrites the letter ("Here's Nothing Writ" 51); he believes the letter can signify without signifying, and that he can both claim ("'Tis my hand" [5.6.47]) and disavow ("This letter, written by a friend of ours" [5.4.6]) his authorship. He considers the letter an artful piece of indeterminacy, and as he gloats he even relies on a dangling modifier, 'being dead,' so as merely to suggest Edward's death, as he does in his letter, rather than explicitly attaching name to deed.

Of course, the letter turns up again to reveal Mortimer's machinations, to enclose him as Isabella's words did her (Garber, "Infinite Riches" 16), and significantly, Edward III grasps its meaning instantly, easily dismantling Mortimer's equivocation. Indeed, perhaps young Edward is the one character *not* enclosed by language: the prince does not dissemble, he does not 'speak fair;' indeed he rarely speaks at all until he's ready to assert his authority. When he does, we witness his interpretation of the youthful misrule so common and so worrisome in Marlowe's England: Edward inverts the 'natural' order of his world when he reverses the imposition of silence, failing to remain in the position of

powerlessness to which he has been assigned. By the end, the rebel voices fall silent and it is Edward's that we hear; the play finally yields the authority of language to the boy. He is not, as he informs Mortimer while meting out a sentence of death, "frighted with thy words" (5.6.27), but Mortimer and the queen are struck truly dumb: the Queen "dares not speak a word" (5.4.96), and Mortimer, finally silenced, "will rather die/ Than sue for life unto a paltry boy" (5.6.56-57). Even Edward II, by the fifth act, has "no power to speak" (5.1.93), and must therefore entrust that power to his son: "Traitor, in me my loving father speaks / And plainly saith 'twas thou that murdered'st him" (5.6.41-42).

It is, as the queen puts it, the beginning of a tragedy for her and Mortimer when they realize how significantly they have underestimated the boy king. Having remained quiet through much of the action, observing the treacherous dissimulation and villainy unfolding all around him, the boy finds his voice and brings down the tyrants. Drawing strength from his attendant lords, who remind him, "Fear not, my lord. Know that you are a king" (5.6.24), Edward III seizes power, naming Mortimer for what he is: "Villain! . . . Think not that I am frighted with thy words. / My father's murdered through thy treachery, / And thou shalt die . . ." (5.6.25-29). Having sent Mortimer to his death, Edward turns to his mother: he accuses her of conspiring with Mortimer to murder the king, and dispatches her to the Tower to await trial: "If you be guilty," he promises, "though I be your son, / Think not to find me slack or pitiful" (5.6.81-82).

It is through a queer subjectivity, and a profoundly ambiguous portrayal of self, that Edward finds his way around typological renderings of childhood and

youth and sets the complexity of his own resistance apart from Mortimer's manifest tyranny. The boy king's relationship with his mother, and his persistent weeping, to which Marlowe insistently draws our attention throughout the scene, complicate his sudden rise to power and remind us of his tender years. "Forbid me not to weep," Edward says to his mother. "He was my father" (5.6.34). Edward knows he must resist these criminal leaders, and he does, but he does so while yet an adolescent, not a man. He realizes his mother's words, and her pointed reminders of their relationship, might yet sway him; and he remains unsure of himself in her presence, telling his lords that he does not "think her so unnatural" (5.6.76) as to conspire with Mortimer and have her husband killed. Certainly, Marlowe reminds us that the king is indeed young, but the play thoroughly complicates existing notions of what, exactly, being young entailed. What he depicts in this play is, specifically, the resistance of youth, political and personal. Catherine Belsey, writing on the prince in her chapter in Shakespeare and Childhood, observes the disjunction in the play "between the innocent child and the authoritative king", and finds that the newly crowned Edward finally "remains a child," given that he weeps as he metes out justice ("Little princes" 39-40). Edward is, however, categorically *not* a child, but rather a teenaged boy who resists the rhetoric of helplessness inflicted upon him (by parents and critics alike) as he invokes the period's discourse of principled political resistance, sends his mother to the Tower and the rebels to their deaths, and detaches his own version of himself from the "lamb encompassèd by wolves" his father once imagined him to be.

Marlowe, as Bartels points out, was interested not in types but in individuals: "it seems no coincidence that after Marlowe the stock type begins to lose its prominence on the Renaissance stage" ("Strange" 16). To that stage Marlowe introduced the strange, the alien, the other: "a Scythian barbarian, a black magician, a Machiavellian Maltese Jew, a homosexual king, and an African queen" (Bartels, "Strange" 8). To this list I add a queer youth, for, like Marlowe's other unfamiliar characters, young Edward sidesteps the borders of the possible. Edward ought to be an unambiguous figure, the rightful king, healer of a nation. Yet Marlowe is at pains to complicate the boy, to provoke an interest in him, to show us what happens when a teenager extracts himself from typology and metaphor. Unlike Edward the father, who figures himself as a wren fighting a lion and knows the struggle is "all in vain" (5.3.35), the son is not, and perhaps has never been, a "lamb encompassèd by wolves." While Edward II can, ultimately, only "clothe himself in the metaphors available to his station" (Greenblatt, "Marlowe" 57), Edward III successfully transcends the restraints of custom and his culture's notions of the natural, succeeding precisely where his father failed.

Chapter Two

Youth and Gossip: Prince Hal and Anne Page

Marlowe's Edward, queer, ambiguous, and difficult to read, prefigures and helps to situate the many young characters Shakespeare would go on to explore. Edward functions especially clearly as a precursor to the madcap Prince Hal of the second tetralogy, to whom I now turn as an early example of a resistant, self-fashioning Shakespearean teen. Pairing Hal with Anne Page of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I hope to demonstrate the interventions these two characters make in their period's widespread view of youth. It is true that perceptions of youth, familiar and absolute to early moderns, come vividly to life in both characters: wild and disreputable, frittering away his time with tavern degenerates, Hal embodies the commonly held view of teenagers as reckless and rash. And, in repenting his folly and reconciling with his father, he enacts another familiar narrative of youth: that of the prodigal son. Young Anne Page, for her part, is the lovely, dutiful, and mostly silent sixteen-year-old daughter of the Pages in *The Merry Wives*; she is present in the play, it would seem, as a mere plot device, a prop in her parents' staging of an appropriate marriage. It falls to Anne, too, to act the part of the smitten young girl, in love with the dashing Fenton, another entirely predictable role.

What Hal and Anne share, though, is an interest in exploring possible selves outside the scope of these well worn narratives. These two teens recast absolutist ideas of the young and engage in self-fashioning; in doing so they

undertake a form of resistance that constitutes more than simple teenaged rebellion against adult or parental authority. Hal and Anne resist a culturally embedded way of thinking about youth; they rework a set of standard definitions of who and what young people are. I will argue that in doing so, they rely on the circulation of gossip that features so prominently in the Henry trilogy and in *The Merry Wives*. Both characters are often the subject of gossip, and the destabilized identity resulting from this gossip proves useful: gossip becomes a force for disorder that disrupts received wisdom regarding the teenaged self. Hal takes such disruption a step further through his membership in what I will describe as a group of neighborhood 'gossips'—his cronies at the tavern. It is with these friends that Hal explores, beyond the reach of his father's authority, questions of his own identity.

This exploration, for both Hal and Anne, involves a retreat into a state of ambiguity, even into a kind anonymity, in the sense that they become—to parents, peers, and audience—unknowable: the plays refuse to offer a singular identity for either character. Self-fashioning is a process with no end point for these teenagers, who never do emerge from their experiences as completed, coherent versions of themselves. Rather, the destabilizing of identity that occurs as they question who they are, or have been told to be, is itself the point. Much like early modern commentators on youth, today's literary critics (as I discuss below) tend in their readings to apply an essentialized understanding of character to Hal and Anne, one that does not allow for the complexity and ambiguity that, I will argue, inhere in Shakespeare's representation of both teens. In these plays, self-

fashioning entails 'becoming' more than it does 'arriving.' And to an important extent, in both the Henry trilogy and *The Merry Wives*, such self-fashioning is tied to persistent and pervasive gossip.

Gossip and detraction

While the term 'gossip' originally meant 'godparent' (of either sex), its meaning shifted during the early modern period to reflect the collective and sociable nature of women's work: as Bernard Capp writes, women relied on a network of neighbors or 'gossips' for assistance in the smooth running of their households, and especially in childbirth. Supportive friendships among women were a necessary part of everyday life; the social economy of the household rested on a complex network of barters and loans, a network itself dependent on "a culture of good neighborliness" (56). Particularly among the poor, such mutual support was vital in times of illness or other crisis. Beyond its functional significance, though, gossiping was about "bonding and belonging" (57). Social identity developed from inclusion in the neighborhood, and, with it, life-long friendships among 'gossips.' Patricia Meyer Spacks, in her study *Gossip*, looks at such interactions as manifestations of what she terms "serious gossip," the sort of gossip that exists as a "function of intimacy" (5). Serious gossip broadens its participants' understanding of themselves and others, and, importantly, becomes a means of self-expression and resistance for the subordinated (5). Serious gossip differs from malicious talk, of the sort typified by Iago (4), and also from 'idle

talk'—non-purposeful, non-malicious, mostly thoughtless banter, of the sort one might indulge in at a cocktail party.

Viewed from an evolutionary perspective, gossip is serious indeed. Robin Dunbar's study, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*, argues that for early humans gossip helped remedy the threat of predation, since gossip solidifies large groups (17). Indeed, Dunbar goes so far as to suggest that gossip is the reason humans developed language at all. Nearly all of our verbal interactions, he argues, consist of gossip; we are perpetually fascinated by the doings of other people, the minutiae of everyday life. Language evolved not merely to allow us to exchange information, but, more importantly, to allow us to gossip, because gossip facilitates the bonding of groups: "If being human is all about talking, it's the tittle-tattle of life that makes the world go round, not the pearls of wisdom that fall from the lips of the Aristotles and Einsteins" (4). As apes groom each other physically, he suggests, so do humans groom vocally, forming cohesive groups through the exchange of social information.

It was perhaps gossip's ability to knit together communities, however, that spurred the disapproval of many early modern male commentators. Anxiety about women's talk, Capp writes, appeared in the "repeated attacks on 'gossiping'" which reflected concern with "unsupervised female sociability" (50).[1] Gossip carried associations of "trivial tittle-tattle, of useless, senseless verbal effusion" (Fox 177). That men feared women's gossip, condemning

[1] Renaissance writings in this vein include William Dunbar's *The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* (ca. 1507); Samuel Rowlands' *Tis Merrie when Gossips meete* (1602) and *A whole crew of kind Gossips, all met to be merry* (1609); W. P.'s *The Gossips Greeting* (1620); and the anonymous *A Talk of Ten Wives on Their Husbands' Ware*. A gossips' meeting also appears in Gosynhyll's *The Scole House of Women* (1560).

gossiping women as "idle and garrulous" (Capp 51), is unsurprising, says Capp: gossip amounted to unregulated female speech, and so constituted a distinct threat to the patriarchy. "What were the women doing, and saying? Could they be trusted to behave responsibly without male supervision" (60)? [2] Not just the bane of the insecure husband, gossip clearly had its dangerous side: idle, irresponsible 'loose talk' could stir resentment and incite strife among neighbors. While a friendly, supportive network of 'gossips' could welcome a newcomer into a neighborhood, helping her establish "a social identity and status" (58), gossip was also a means of policing behavior, and damaging narratives could generate "a collective disapproval too powerful for the subject to ignore" (60). Gossip could prove "divisive and disruptive" (60).

Dangerous, disruptive gossip took the form of defamation, or 'detraction,' an important concept to Renaissance thinkers. Detraction is, for example, the allegorical meaning of the Blatant Beast in Book VI of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a monster "suppresst and tamed" by the knight Calidore, "that neuer more he mote endammage wight/ With his vile tongue, which many had defamed" (VI. XII. 38). The Beast, though, eventually breaks his bands and "raungeth through the world again," wreaking havoc with his "barking and biting" (VI. XII. 40), the final enemy of earthly immortality. In *I Henry IV* it is detraction that leads Falstaff to reject the principle of honour: ". . . will [honour] not live with the living? No.

[2] Linda Woodbridge has suggested that fear was not the only factor at play in Renaissance men's distaste for women's gossip. Envy, too, drove their resentment: "Women could consort with their friends after marriage in ways men felt they could not" (*Women* 237).

Why? Detraction will not suffer it" (5.1.136-37).[3] And in *The Tempest*, Stephano, discovering a monster with "four legs and two voices," observes that the monster's "forward voice is to speak well of his friend; his backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract" (2.2.85-86). Fear of detraction stemmed from a fear of oblivion, which loomed large during the Renaissance; fame was much sought after as a remedy, to the point where the pursuit of earthly immortality nearly eclipsed the desire for eternal life. Writers and artists, Keith Thomas points out, were greatly preoccupied with what people might say about them, but so too were blacksmiths, physicians, and law students (*Ends* 239-40). To be known, and, later, remembered, became vitally important.[4]

Given this preoccupation with reputation and posthumous fame, it stands to reason that detraction was cause for worry. Libel and slander, previously considered moral transgressions, became criminal offenses during this period, with the court of the Star Chamber taking principal responsibility for hearing defamation cases. Such 'libels' brought before the court often took the form of disparaging songs or verse, insulting or scandalous letters or pictures, and false

[3] Keith Thomas disentangles the complexities of the early modern concept of 'honour' in *The Ends of Life*, demonstrating the largely hierarchical premise of the term: hounour was "the external recognition of superior worth" (149); it also referred to the morals and values of 'honourable' people, resulting in an ambiguous mixture of virtue and reputation as the defining characteristics of honour (154-55).

[4] Reputation and slander are central to Shakespeare's thinking. Witness, for instance, Cassio's anguish: "O, I ha'lost my reputation, I ha'lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial!" (*Othello* 2.3.247-48). Several of Shakespeare's plays reveal, Joyce H. Sexton has argued, his "lasting absorption with the theme of false accusation" (9): *Othello, Much Ado, Cymbeline,* and *The Winter's Tale* all have to do with a woman slandered.

allegations (Fox 307-08).[5] Sexual allegations against women, for example, were often the subject of defamation cases, since women's reputations were predicated on sexual 'honesty' (Capp 61). Spacks writes that detraction was indeed perceived as "mortally destructive" from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, with little change in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (27). Disgrace or 'ill fame,' Thomas points out, had devastating legal and social consequences, especially in England, where criminal trial juries were permitted to consider the accused's reputation, and where reputation also governed one's relationships with neighbors, employers, and business people (*Ends* 176). In terms of its ability to sully reputations, then, gossip possessed a potentially terrible power.[6]

Historians and anthropologists alike have thus focused on what Jennifer Holl terms gossip's "transgressive faculty" (63),[7] a concept that will inform my discussion of Prince Hal and Anne Page in this chapter, in terms of their youthful self-fashioning; it is important, too, though, to recall gossip's "more conciliatory strains" (Holl 65), its ability to bind communities together. Theorizing resistant

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[5] In addition to Fox's analysis of libel in Chapter 6 of *Oral and Literate Culture*, see Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae's *Early Stuart Libels*, an online database containing more than 350 late Elizabethan and early Stuart political poems from manuscript sources.

[6] Gossip infiltrated society even as a professional activity during the English Renaissance period. Emily Ross's "Lip Service" examines the relationship between gossip and early modern English state intelligence, a system comprised of ambassadors, spies, newsletter writers, and a secretarial bureaucracy. Gossip and intelligence, she argues, are closely related in that both require "speculative information about people and their relationships" (195). Fox, too, discusses the spread of news and information by word of mouth in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England: when people spoke of the "'noise,' 'murmur,' or 'mutter' in the country, they referred to the constant buzz of people talking to each other: asking for news, swapping stories, exchanging views" (336).

[7] Both Spacks and Capp take this approach; Holl also cites Pamela Allen Brown's *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, Steve Hindle's "The Shaming of Margaret Knowsley," and Mario DiGangi's "Women's Speech: Attacks and Resistance."

voices in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott argues that weaker groups must often rely on veiled, muted, or anonymous forms of resistance; in order to "infiltrate the public transcript with dissent and self-assertion," (138), they must leverage what he terms a 'voice under domination.'[8] This voice can often be heard in elements of oral culture: gossip, rumor, linguistic tricks, euphemisms, folk tales (137). Such forms depend on anonymity to protect rebellious voices, and to disguise the 'hidden transcript'—the ideology of dissent—propelling those voices. "Oral traditions," Scott argues, "offer a kind of seclusion, control, and even anonymity that make them ideal vehicles for cultural resistance . . . short of killing its bearer, the human voice is irrepressible" (160, 162). Spacks would agree: gossip, especially malicious gossip, "supplies for under classes an outlet impossible to shut off" (30). The space of carnival—evident in the folk ritual that concludes Merry Wives—also makes room for dissenting voices, Scott observes: such rituals of reversal as charivari, coronations, market fairs, harvest celebrations, and spring fertility rites allow "certain things to be said, certain forms of social power to be exercised that are muted or suppressed outside this ritual sphere" (173). Although both men and women engaged in gossip, Capp points out, only women's talk was disparaged as such, because it was perceived as "the subversive behavior of subordinates" (63).

Gossip was frequently associated with other members of the 'lower orders' as well: servants, maidservants, vagrants, beggars, and 'the vulgar sort' in

[8] Scott's book, examining confrontations between dominant and subordinate groups, uses the term 'public transcript' to denote the required public performance of both subordinates to masters, and masters to subordinates. This "dialectic of disguise and surveillance," writes Scott, "pervades relations between the weak and the strong" (4): the weak must enact deference, the strong, mastery.

general were considered "credulous and gullible in all that they heard" (Fox 339), and feared for their lack of discretion. Among these lower orders we find "disorderly youngsters," who, Fox notes, were feared for their propensity to spread rumour, gossip, and news around town (340); they learned to sing and repeat libelous ballads (326), a highly public form of oral dissemination that "could be devastating on its victims" (327), often resulting in both private and professional ruin. Teenagers were especially feared in this regard: unruly speech characterized disorderly youth. The young could spread dangerous information, thus posing a threat to orderly society; apprentices, for example, often conveyed news to and from their masters, and tended to gossip freely amongst themselves. Capp writes of maidservants' gossip networks, highly effective forms of "covert resistance" in that they allowed young servants to spread malicious tales among their friends about their masters (170). Servants gained leverage in the household through the threat of gossip, for many realized the power of unleashing illicit family secrets: not only could servants sabotage domestic order, but their revelations could land their masters and mistresses in serious legal trouble. Most often such revelations were of a sexual nature, but servants also accused their employers of such crimes as theft and murder (172); witness Falstaff's boy in *Henry V*, whose soliloquy details the thieving of Pistol, Bardolph, and Nim, "sworn brothers in filching," as he describes the three, who "do not amount to a man" (3.3.41-42, 30).[9]

[9] For an interesting reading of Falstaff's boy and youthful vagrancy, see Mark H. Lawhorn, "Falstaff's Page as Early Modern Youth at Risk."

For the young, gossip as dissent, as a force for disorder, seemed especially important in that it opened a safe space for resistance, supplying leverage they could wield against their superiors. The kind of resistance that interests me in Shakespeare's depiction of youth, though, goes beyond standing up to authority; his teenagers resist identities scripted for them by authority and society. I hope to show in discussions of Prince Hal and Anne Page that gossip helped teens disrupt existing ideas of what it meant to be young; gossip, even in the form of detraction, facilitated self-fashioning. These teenagers' manipulation of rumour and gossip moves them beyond the constructions of youth already firmly implanted in early modern English culture. Anne and Hal, read in terms of Spacks' notion of serious gossip—gossip that contributes to one's knowledge of self and other—use gossip to displace themselves from standard narratives of youth, so as, in effect, to render themselves unknowable by any conventional standard.

"Who hath got the right Anne?"

Inhabiting what seems a marginal space in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, possessing but a scant thirty or so of its lines, young Anne Page is yet much talked of in this play: Mistress Quickly insists, repeatedly (and erroneously), that she "know[s] Anne's mind" (1.4.99), while Anne's voice, hair color, finances, and sexual status are all subjects of interest in the play's opening scene. We could read gossip, which suffuses this play, in terms of its damaging tendency to speak for Anne as its subject, to construct for her a negative or a false identity; Spacks, writing on gossip's reputation, observes that from the Middle Ages on, "moralists

perceived clear dangers in talk about people. Malice (or 'detraction'), the betraying of secrets, idle curiosity, triviality" (27) were all potential perils associated with gossip. Ford, for example, worries about the "shrewd construction" supposedly made of his merry wife. A further danger might lie in the "imaginative possession" (Spacks 22) Anne's fellow characters take of her identity and desire; Anne risks being defined, limited, even silenced by gossip. "The self," notes Spacks, "can be damaged by being discussed" (33). Anne is, after all, sixteen, female, unmarried, and subject to parents' whims and suitors' greed—perhaps the least powerful character in the play. While women—Mistresses Ford, Page, and Quickly—dominate the play and its criticism, teenaged Anne hovers at the edge of voicelessness in both.[10]

Anne, though—neither married nor, quite yet, a woman—is at a stage of life where she still has choices to make and a self to construct. Parents and potential husbands essentialize Anne: she is the dutiful daughter; the smitten girl in love with a dashing young man; the pretty prop in the staging of a desirable marriage. But Anne rejects such absolutes. Not only does she rebel against her

[10] While there is rather a paucity of discussion about Anne, several analyses inform my own. Recently, Kiersten Honaker has discussed Anne's clever manipulation of betrothal contract law; though Anne is "arguably the least powerful of the group as an unmarried, female child," she grasps that her contracts to Slender and Caius are not binding, tricks both parents, and marries Fenton (43). Carol Thomas Neely calls Anne "remarkably cheeky and insubordinate" ("Constructing" 218), and her more recent *Distracted Subjects* offers a useful feminist framework for the play, as do Wendy Wall's *Staging Domesticity*, Rosemary Kegl's *The Rhetoric of Concealment*, and Ann Rosalind Jones' "Revenge Comedy." Jonathan Goldberg's recent article, "What Do Women Want?," provides insights I will make use of; but Goldberg takes issue with what he considers a recent critical trend toward 'domestic' readings of the play (he cites Wall's book, along with Korda, Shakespeare's *Domestic Economies*; Landreth, "Once More into the Preech;" and Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*). Such readings, he claims, desexualize female characters, deny their desire, and fail to offer a feminist critique. Goldberg's own queer reading of the play's "homoerotic logic of desire" (379), though, discounts, for the most part, a possible subjectivity for Anne by abandoning her to "the usual homosocial triangulation" (378). Earlier readings deposit Anne in the familiar arena of romantic love: perhaps, writes Sandra Clark of Anne in an essay on wit in the play, "women's wit and romantic love are not reconcilable" (263).

parents' wishes in the choice of a husband, but she also intervenes in and destabilizes the norms established for adolescent girls by her parents and community. In reading Anne as a character who intervenes in such constructions, I look at the predilection for gossip that so often occupies the plays' characters, and that, I think, opens an avenue of resistance, through self-fashioning, for Anne. The constant circulation of gossip, both as an oral form, and, when inscribed in letters, a literate one, destabilizes identity in Windsor: knowledge of self and other in Merry Wives is ever a precarious, uncertain matter. Falstaff, that "dissembling knight," works to persuade Mistress Ford that "there's something extraordinary in thee" (3.3.63-65); Ford mistakes himself for a cuckold; Shallow must woo on Slender's behalf; and Anne herself, only "seemingly obedient" to the parents who would dispose of her in marriage, is not what she appears to be. While gossip is itself a form of resistant behavior, constituting a "democratic voice" in Scott's terms (Weapons 282), I argue that Anne as its central subject reaps the benefits of its circulation. Holl points to the "mutability of social identity in the spoken words of the public sphere" (66); in Anne's case, where she does not speak for herself, other voices open a space for self-fashioning, since gossip disperses knowledge and eliminates the possibility of a single, defining narrative of Anne. "It is perhaps no coincidence," Holl writes of the early modern theatre, "that the plays that feature gossip so prominently are otherwise invested in the negotiation of a mutable social identity" (73).

It is the disruptive nature of gossip that has implications, I think, for the characters of Merry Wives and particularly for Anne, who, rather than being

injured by detraction, instead benefits from the *dis*traction engendered by serious gossip: gossip that, in Spacks' terms, contributes to one's knowledge of self and other. Such gossip, in this play, troubles more than it forges its characters' identities. Mistress Quickly, "a very simplicity 'oman," according to Evans, well known in Windsor for her 'tattlings' and 'prabbles,' (4.1.27, 23, 45), embodies the figure of the gossip as Capp describes her: going about her duties as "Shakespeare's most notorious housekeeper" (Wall, Staging 116), Quickly works too as conveyor of rumor, news, and messages. Since, according to Evans, Quickly is "altogethers acquaintance" with Anne, she is useful as a go-between; from Quickly's gossip, Anne's suitors learn that Anne is gentle, pretty, honest, a "good girl," an "honest maid as ever broke bread;" but "given too much to allicholy and musing" (1.4.143-44, 146). Quickly is happily entrenched, too, in Falstaff's scheme, and only too glad to indulge in a little gossip with him as well: Mistress Ford, she confides, "leads a very frampold life" with her husband; "he's a very jealousy man" (2.2.87-88). And as for Mistress Page, "let me tell you in your ear, she's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor" (2.2.93-95). Her ready supply of information—is Falstaff aware that "never a wife in Windsor leads a better life" than Mistress Page?—distracts Falstaff, and hints at the play's broader concern with unstable identities, or what Wall describes as "an ongoing game of pretense and deception" ("Merry Wives" 385). Mistress Quickly, derided for her prattling tongue and frequent malapropisms, looks very much like

the gossiping woman so deplored by early modern male commentators; at the same time, hers is clearly a disruptive role in Windsor.

Gossip, unsettling and distorting, circulates among the play's men, too:[11] Slender, Shallow, and Evans open the play with their talk of Anne Page, and the play's early lines, in referring to Falstaff's "abuse" in the form of "disparagements" against Shallow, and Shallow's intent to appeal to the Star Chamber, point up "the issue of defamation" (Fox 301).[12] Ford, too—called "gossip Ford" by Mistress Page—is implicated in interesting ways in the problematics of gossip. Disguised as Brook, Ford gossips about himself, asking Falstaff, "Do you know Ford, sir?" Falstaff replies, "Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not," but assures Brook that he, Brook, shall know Ford "for knave and cuckold" (2.2.253-55, 269-70). And indeed Ford does then perceive himself as such: "I shall not only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong" (2.2.277-79). This is a strange moment—echoed later in Shallow's wooing of Anne on Slender's behalf—in which the subject of gossip is also listener to and partner in

[11] Capp's study of court depositions reveals that men were as fond as women of "discussing the intimate details of their neighbours' lives" (273). Indeed, as Woodbridge points out, it was only in the 1560s, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that the term 'gossip' became associated, in a pejorative sense, with women. Its original meaning was 'godparent.' Despite the focus on women found in recent scholarship on gossip, Holl notes that "men are just as likely as women to gossip about their neighbors' goings-on in early modern drama" (62-63); she uses Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which I take up below, as an example.

[12] Fox notes the possible allusion here to "the legend of Shakespeare the poacher," particularly the punning on 'luces' and 'louses' in possible reference to Sir Thomas Lucy, but is mainly interested in the lines' highlighting of "the value of Star Chamber records as a source through which to investigate the issue of defamation, and in particular the contemporary proclivity for inventing libellous verse" (301).

that gossip, contributor to the distortion of his own identity: the end of Act Three finds Ford still trying, without success, to "proclaim myself what I am" (3.5.131).

"Even 'innocent' forms of gossip objectify the person considered; those talking communicate at the cost of another, whom they reduce to a kind of fiction" (34), writes Spacks, and clearly this is true of Ford, a man complicit in the production of his own fictive self. But I agree with Wall when she argues that "expansive" identities in this play "underscore the continuing delights of unreigned selves and immoderate passions" ("Merry Wives" 384). Concealment, of bodies and selves, preoccupies and entertains the play's characters: Roger Moss, writing on female disguise in the play, links the play's reliance on "the interior spaces of rooms and chambers, screens and hiding-places and doors" to its "intimate world of secrets, gossip, embarrassment, wifely conspiracies and henpecked husbands" (35-36). Anne, in particular, depends on disguise; for her, the condition of not being known comes in handy. Her world is populated by people who attempt to define her, decide for her, delimit the nature of her desire: her father, favoring Slender, tosses out the nonchalant command, "Love him, daughter Anne" (3.4.65), but Anne thinks Slender a "fool," a "world of vile ill-favoured faults" (3.4.33); her mother makes plans for a "better husband," Doctor Caius—but Anne would rather be "bowled to death with turnips" (3.4.85) than agree to this selection. Her suitors, meanwhile, well acquainted with Anne's financial situation, seem to know little of Anne herself: "She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman?" asks Slender, not even sure who she is, but prepared to marry her if "seven hundred pounds of moneys" (1.1.46) are at stake. If

Mistress Quickly indeed "know[s] Anne's mind as well as another does" (1.4.157), she must know but little of it, or nothing at all.

The gossip circulating around Anne, then, may well reduce her to a kind of fiction, to use Spacks' terms, but for a teenaged girl who would otherwise be powerless, a fictional identity serves as an important resource, a means of reconstituting the essentialized self. Gossip in *Merry Wives*, I have suggested, works in Anne's favor: in her case, other characters' gossiping voices, rather than her own, confer upon her the anonymity necessary to explore a sense of her own identity. Lynne Magnusson's fascinating essay on discourse production and reception in *Othello*, "Voice Potential," is illuminating here. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges," Magnusson argues that the value of characters' speech in the play depends on their past experiences with speech reception, and also on their expectations of being heard. Desdemona, clearly accustomed to having her speech recognized, addresses the Senate and the Duke with ease and grace; Othello's discourse production, on the other hand, is characterized by "some degree of tension" (219). As "a person of colour and an exotic outsider," he must "try harder" (220). Iago, meanwhile, employs the strategy of "voice mediation": he appropriates other voices when he knows his own will not be heard (221). For example, Iago uses Roderigo's voice along with his own to incite Brabantio's ire against Othello, since Roderigo's status as a gentleman "guarantees his credit" (221). Anne Page, a middle-class, adolescent girl, has likely not ever been heard, nor does she expect to be; however, through the speech of others she finds a path to resistant self-fashioning.

While Anne voices her distaste for her suitors in asides and even directly to her mother, the interactions between other characters prove most useful to her; Slender's effort to woo her is a case in point. In an echo of Ford / Brook's earlier scene with Falstaff, Slender witnesses gossip unfolding about himself: "Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you," (3.4.42), Shallow informs her, and goes on to list Slender's assets and virtues, as Slender stands by, unable to "speak for himself" as his uncle had hoped, yet concurring with Shallow's assessment. Shallow's surrogate wooing, operating as a kind of gossip about Slender, underscores the extent to which identity is fluid in the play. Slender is no more attracted to Anne than she is to him; the absurd exchange between the two male characters renders the scene parodic and removes Anne from a straightforward discourse of romantic desire. She is not the known quantity, the passive love interest, that she should be; the distracting conversation between the men displaces her from that role, and makes possible her pointed question, "What is your will?" and her clarification "What would you with me?" (3.4.55, 59) when dim Slender fails to grasp her meaning. Slender responds that he "would little or nothing with you," displacing his "desire" for Anne onto Page and Shallow, who "can tell you how things go better than I can" (3.4.60-63). Anne's "Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself" is the wry quip of a girl who knows very well she won't marry this fool; and reminds us that she is, after all, daughter to a witty, merry mother, Mistress Page.

Though Sandra Clark denies Anne any capacity for wit, finding her "quiet, self-effacing, apparently the passive recipient of what others choose to do and

give to her" (263)—or what Parson Evans calls "pretty virginity"—Anne seems more complex, rejecting the role of smitten teenager in ways Shakespeare's other adolescent girls do not. (Miranda gushes that Ferdinand is "a thing divine" [1.2.422], while Juliet frankly expresses her desire for Romeo: "Take all myself" [2.1.91].) Jonathan Goldberg is interesting on this point: he observes that we never do know what Anne wants. That she ends up with Fenton is not proof of her desire for him (380). Indeed, nowhere in the play does Anne say she loves Fenton—it is Fenton himself who claims that Anne returns his affections—and she's certainly suspicious of this broke aristocrat. Her father objects to Fenton on the quite reasonable grounds of his "riots past" and "wild societies," sure that the gentleman "is of no having" (3.2.63-64), and thus wants Anne only for her money. "Maybe," says Anne pointedly to Fenton, "he tells you true" (3.4.8.11). Fenton admits to Anne that her wealth first motivated his suit, but insists that "'tis the very riches of thyself / That now I aim at" (3.4.16-17), a dubious compliment that merely reproduces his initial conflation of wife and wealth. Even the qualities of this suitor, presumably Anne's own choice, are left open to question. Interestingly, Anne and Fenton are interrupted by Shallow and Slender ("Break their talk," Shallow instructs Quickly), the ostensibly genuine romantic narrative easily fractured by the parodic one.

Anne's letter, read by Fenton to the Host in Act Four, evidences her process of youthful self-fashioning. The letter is not, so far as we can tell from the text, a love letter, but rather an outline of her calculated plan to deceive her parents. Adam Fox, writing of the permeable boundaries between oral and

printed realms in early modern England, argues that stories could circulate through different media; oral gossip, for example, could begin as such, be taken up in text, and pass back again into oral circulation (40). Anne's letter, like other letters in the play, functions as gossip: it treats the jest involving Falstaff, Anne's parents' divergent intentions for their daughter's marriage, and Anne and Fenton's own plan to elope. Read aloud by Fenton to the Host, the letter verbally manifests Anne's literary inscription of gossip, and thus doubly mutes Anne's voice: she speaks through the letter, the contents of which are then mediated through the conversation of Fenton and the Host, reconstituting them as oral gossip. For Anne, readying herself to defy her parents' wishes, this process amounts to a tactic of veiled resistance: her plans for rebellion are indirect, yet completely effective. The folk ritual at the end sees the plan reach fruition: nobody, save Fenton, can identify Anne. Bemused Slender marries "a great lubberly boy" (5.5.182); enraged Caius also discovers he has married "un garçon, a boy: un paysan, by gar, a boy" (5.5.201). They are themselves to blame, says Page, for "did I not tell you how you should know my daughter by her garments?" (5.5.191-92). Of the play's concluding festivities, Wall writes that Anne "takes the opportunity afforded by her disguise to multiply herself so that she cannot be husbanded by her parents; that is, she extends her authorized roleplaying beyond the bounds of propriety" ("Merry Wives" 386).

The chaos of the night, the multiplicity of disguises, the carnivalesque qualities of the folk ritual—all reflect Merry Wives' interest in flexible, even counterfeit identities, and Anne's rather remarkable capacity for choice and self-

fashioning. The play does not exactly disclose "who hath got the right Anne" (5.5.205); Fenton has her, it would seem, though I have tried to show that evidence of her desire for him is lacking. We don't necessarily know that Fenton is what Anne wants, that in marrying him she adopts his recommendation that she "be thyself" (3.4.3). But we do know that Anne doesn't get what she doesn't want: a parentally ordained marriage to either Slender or Doctor Caius. Using gossip and disguise as cover, Anne, quietly but effectively, evades the parents and suitors who would determine the course of her life, and displaces herself from their defining narratives. For even if they search, as Ford does for Falstaff, in "impossible places," they will not find the girl they seek.

"Under the veil of wildness"

Anne resists the imposition of a prescribed self by calling into question the absolute. By the end of the play, neither her parents nor her audience have a clear sense of who she is, or with whom, if anyone, she belongs. Nor does Anne, for her own part, 'find herself' in any concrete, totalizing way. One might well ask, then, whether what amounts to no more than an ambiguous rendering of the teenaged self should really be dubbed 'self-fashioning'—does a process so attenuated still amount to identity formation? But for Shakespeare's teens, self-fashioning is never finished, and that absence of completion is not a failing. Indeed, there are moments throughout the plays where Shakespeare seems bothered by the notion of a character's search for self—Cleopatra and Lear come to mind—but at the same time the playwright does not proffer any simple remedy.

The trilogy of plays featuring Prince Hal/King Henry V stands as a major case in point: early on in this series, we come to know Hal not in an absolute way, but rather as an actor who presents several roles. The teenaged boy staging those roles remains a stranger. It seems likely that Shakespeare, an actor himself, was not so uncomfortable with that perfomative anonymity as audiences and critics so often seem to be.

In the Henry trilogy, as in *Merry Wives*, ubiquitous gossip has the effect of destabilizing the teenaged self. *1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V* all begin with gossip, and much of it paints Prince Hal/Henry V in unfavorable terms. The first scene of *I Henry IV* finds the king gossiping about his son and Hotspur with the Earl of Westmoreland: King Henry ruefully compares the two Harrys, complaining that "riot and dishonor stain the brow / Of my young Harry" (1.1.84-85). *2 Henry IV* foregrounds the role of gossip even more explicitly: it opens with a speech from Rumour, "painted full of tongues," in which detraction, against Hal, figures prominently: "My office is / To noise abroad that Harry Monmouth fell/Under the wrath of noble Hotspur's sword" (Induction 28-30). The men bringing news of Harry know nothing but rumours; thus "they bring smooth comforts false, worse than true wrongs" (Induction 37-40). Carol Marks Sicherman argues that slander and detraction dominate *2 Henry IV*, and so in this play Henry V must "banish Hal" in order to be seen for who he really is: "honorable, courageous, eloquent, modest, solitary yet liked by all" (510).

However, by the time we reach *Henry V*, we find that Hal's rejection of Falstaff and attempt to situate himself as the powerful leader of a well-ordered

realm hasn't yet been entirely successful: to the Dauphin Hal remains but a "vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth" (2.4.28), a fit recipient for a gift of tennis balls; and, like the first two plays in the trilogy, *Henry V* opens with gossip about Hal/Henry. The bishops of Canterbury and Ely discuss Henry's transformation from a young man inclined to "courses vain" to a "sudden scholar," a surprising reversal indeed, for "the courses of his youth promised it not" (1.1.55, 33, 25). Canterbury appears baffled by Henry's sudden facility in political discourse and debate, by his unforeseen rhetorical prowess. It is, Canterbury remarks, "a wonder how his grace should glean it" (1.1.54), for the new king has never been known to study, nor to undertake much more than revelry and drinking with his "unlettered, rude, and shallow companions" (1.1.56). Ely posits that the prince must have concealed his gifts "under the veil of wildness," and Canterbury concedes that "it must be so, for miracles are ceased" (1.1.65, 68). The sense of incredulity hovering about this exchange underscores the extent to which his fellow characters remain uncertain about Hal/Henry. Memories of the prince's misspent youth persist, despite his metamorphosis; Anthony Guy Patricia argues that such memories of Henry's adolescence will even come to influence national and international events in the world of *Henry V* (68).[13]

For Hal, such persistent memories of his former wildness serve a different purpose, generating the sense, palpable in the bishops' gossipy exchange, that even as king he still evades tidy classification. The madcap prince insists in the

[13] Patricia's essay on the trope of memory in *Henry V* suggests that Canterbury and Ely's remembering of Hal's wild youth hints at the possibility of blackmail; his youthful indiscretions could be used "against the king in the defense of their own interests" (65). The king himself, however, recalls his younger self "not as a negative, but as a deliberate prelude to his current, far more glorious and virtuous self" (68).

second play that he will "mock the expectation of the world" (*2 Henry IV* 5.2.125), and indeed he does: even as he plays the prodigal, he emerges from behind this typology, disordering the familiar narrative with a penchant for disguise, role-play, and linguistic sophistication that renders him essentially unknowable. "I know you all," he tells us in his famous soliloquy, but the most enduring and interesting trait of this character is that *we* cannot know *him*. Narratives spin around him, as they do around young Anne Page, but gossip and even detraction are beneficial to the teenaged prince: Hal the chameleon, the master user of language, who belongs everywhere, yet nowhere, is understood in nobody's terms but his own. Classified first as wild youth—"Never did I hear," says Hotspur, "Of any prince so wild a liberty" (*1 Henry IV* 5.2.70-71)— and later as contrite prodigal, Hal seems to suit both models, but finally conforms to neither.

Hal's story appears to emulate the sin-and-redemption pattern so entrenched in early modern didactic literature and encapsulated in the familiar narrative of the prodigal son. Indeed, to his father, Hal is simply "a figure in a morality play, not a person but an abstraction" (Sicherman 510). Henry IV's view of his son recalls the anonymous *Interlude of Youth*: Hal is Youth misled by Riot, and his father, on his death bed, frets on over what might happen to the boy "when his headstrong riot hath no curb,/ When rage and hot blood are his counselors,/ When means and lavish manners meet together" (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.62-64). Left in the care of "riot," his kingdom "wilt be a wilderness again,/ Peopled with wolves" (4.3.263-65). The king, berating his son for his youthful folly, is "too fixed on the figure of Riot

to observe the tearstained and humble Prince" (Sicherman 511). Similarly, in the chastisement scene of *1 Henry IV*, Hal's father informs his son that he has "lost thy princely privilege/ With vile participation" (3.2.86-87). Hal is contrite: "I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,/ Be more myself" (3.2.92-93). Evidently, to become more himself is to enact the standard early modern narrative of the prodigal son. Hal's answer to his father's tearful upbraiding is a promise to "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" (3.2.132-34). Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos explains that Puritan and Protestant writers of the period associated youth with "rashness, lack of restraint, and insubordination," a view of young people represented in the traditional theme of the prodigal son (17). The parable from St. Luke appeared in drama, ballads, pictures, tales of misspent youth, sermons, and spiritual autobiographies, notably those of John Bunyan, John Croker, and Richard Norwood (Ben-Amos 17). Such narratives depict young people indulging in reckless, riotous behavior, and then, ultimately, repenting to God and reconciling with their parents. The behavior of Shakespeare's Hal exhibits this well worn formula: his scenes of rueful apology to his father in both parts of *Henry IV*, his display of power at Shrewsbury and defeat of Hotspur, and later his rejection of Falstaff, all point to his conversion from riotous youth to contrite son, and ultimately to the King of England.[14]

"I have turned away my former self," Hal informs Falstaff following his coronation; "So will I those that kept me company" (*2 Henry IV* 5.5 56-57).

[14] For an early look at Shakespeare's interest in the parable, see Darryl Tippens, "Shakespeare and the Prodigal Son Tradition."

Interestingly, though, Hal's banishment of Falstaff, rather than cementing his new, kingly self, merely perpetuates the ambiguity surrounding his character. As Ben-Amos points out, there is something "in the sociology of conversion which defies simple assertions about the distinctiveness of the experience of youth and the generational conflicts that might ensue" (187). Hal's language in this exchange, in which he purportedly asserts a fundamental shift in character, instead betrays his own uncertainty about this conversion: he asks Falstaff to "*presume* not that I am the thing I was,/ For God doth know, so shall the world *perceive*,/ That I have turned away my former self" (5.5.55-57; emphasis added). Rather than insisting that he is not who he used to be, Hal asks that Falstaff *presume* that he is not; rather than staunchly avowing a belief in his own conversion, he displaces this belief onto God and public perception. Hal even imagines that future gossip will paint him as he was, not as he is, informing Falstaff,

> When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
> Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,
> The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
> Till then I banish thee, on pain of death . . . (5.5.58-61)

Perhaps Hal means what he says—that, because he will never again be what he was, Falstaff will never again feed his riots—but at the same time we sense Hal's awareness that gossip about his 'former self' will continue to circulate even now that he is king, and so it does. Falstaff is right to point out to Shallow that Hal must, in appropriating the role of powerful leader and rejecting his companions, "seem thus to the world" (5.5.75), right even to assert that Hal's speech was "but

a colour" (5.5.81); for while Hal's rejection of his old friend is permanent, his words at this juncture reveal his penchant for seeming, for role play, and for disguise.

Shakespeare's depiction of the teenaged prince thus intervenes in the understanding of 'youth' as it was constructed during the early modern period. Indeed, he writes Hal as a rebellious teen, and later as a prodigal son, but all the while shows Hal resisting such definitions.[15] Hal thrives on ambiguity, on not being known, and this is the nature of his resistance, a type of resistance different from and more complex than the wildness and rebelliousness of youth already much complained of in Shakespeare's England. Shakespeare presents Hal as a teen in the process of finding his way into a selfhood; Hal's "I know you all" soliloquy in *1 Henry IV* stands as a key, but still highly ambiguous, moment of self-fashioning. What is the audience supposed to learn about Hal at this moment? Are we meant to view the soliloquy, as David Bevington has asked, "as evidence of bloodless calculation, or as reassurance for the audience of good intent" (59)? Is Hal a young Machiavel, or a character in a morality play, on the verge of reformation? Can we uncover Hal's essential identity? Or does the trilogy indeed hold out any such possibility?

Marc Grossman, in "The Adolescent and the Strangest Fellow," posits that, given the "extraordinary implausibility" (172) of the strategy Hal claims in this speech to be following, a reading outside those usually offered of Hal is

[15] As Jonathan Crewe has argued, the prodigal son paradigm does not apply well to Hal. In *2 Henry IV*, Crewe argues, we see a resistance to the model of reform invoked in *1 Henry IV*. Henry IV's vision of a wild apocalypse brought on by Hal's succession "isn't wholly inconsistent with the expanded *potentiality* given in *2 Henry IV* to resistant wildness" (231).

necessary.[16] Grossman's reading directs us away from a view of Hal as "an essentially 'static,' aloof, and manipulative character" (182) and towards a view of him as a troubled teen who, in the soliloquy, rationalizes his decision to participate in the Gad's Hill caper with Poins: Hal, overcome with shame, needs to "explain away to himself the conduct in which he proposes to indulge" (175). Hal's promise to rid himself of his "loose behavior" is, Grossman writes, not a promise to reform, but a simple acknowledgement of "what he has always known will eventually be required of him" (177). Rather than attempting to privilege one part of himself (wild youth) over the other (serious prince), the prince must instead find a means to accommodate both (184). This struggle, this "semi-intoxicated soul-searching" (181), allows us to identify Hal—only about fifteen years old at the time of events in this play— as a young man caught in the "elemental predicament of adolescence" (186).

While Bevington finds an answer to his initial question about Hal in the final banishment of Falstaff, arguing that Hal's action here is one of self-rejection, of self-mutilation, since it forces him to turn away from his youthful self (65), I agree with Grossman that there is no discernible, singular version of Hal available to readers and audiences. Shakespeare, I think, frustrates attempts to fasten upon Hal a fixed and coherent identity; more broadly, this character participates in

[16] Grossman points to the critical tradition of accepting the soliloquy as Hal's revelation of his scheme—"to cultivate a reputation for irresponsibility for the sake of achieving future political advantage" (172)—citing Stephen Greenblatt (*Shakespearean Negotiations*), Northrop Frye (*Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*), Derek Traversi (*Shakespeare from* Richard II *to* Henry V), Harold C. Goddard (*The Meaning of Shakespeare*), John Masefield (*William Shakespeare*), and A. C. Bradley (*Oxford Lectures on Poetry*). Readings that work to essentialize Hal persist: for example, Marvin Krims' recent psychoanalytic analysis posits a basic trajectory: Hal rehearses behavior in the tavern that he will later use as King: "adolescent play helps him to tolerate previously unacceptable aspects of himself and contributes to his maturation" (27).

Shakespeare's disabling of discourses surrounding youth in the period. Hal, a teenager in the throes of growing up, troubles, through his own uncertainties, the notion of a singular teenaged identity. His insecurities echo through the soliloquy as he attempts to persuade himself that he can meet his father's expectations: he will cast off the part of himself that delights in cavorting with his friends in the tavern and plotting wild escapades, and embrace a more princely persona. Hal fails to convince his audience, however, for his speech sounds very much like the posturing of a diffident youth.[17] We have no reason to believe, for example, his preposterous claim that he doesn't enjoy his companions and views them merely as a necessary foil to set off his future greatness; as Grossman maintains, the prince's enjoyment of Falstaff and the tavern is "neither feigned nor alloyed with any ulterior motive but [is] wholly genuine and fully sincere" (174). Nor, for that matter, have we reason to believe that Hal has any idea, at this stage of his life, just how "to be himself" (1.2.188). He merely suggests that he will do what is expected of him, but the troubled sense of self so evident here resonates throughout the trilogy, and is kept perennially in view through gossip.

Teenaged Hal takes on the task of 'becoming;' in doing so he relies on what Capp refers to as "a network of friends or gossips" (58). Such a network, as discussed earlier, was usually associated with women, who frequently relied on a

[17] In finding Hal's soliloquy somewhat suspect, I recall that Shakespearean soliloquies are frequently deceitful rather than revelatory. James Hirsh, writing on dialogic self-address in the plays, demonstrates that soliloquies in late Renaissance drama, rather than representing a character's innermost thoughts, very often "depict characters engaged in self-deception" (314). A soliloquizing character works to convince himself of what he thinks and feels, sometimes attempting to talk himself into "thinking or doing something that some unvoiced part of him finds objectionable" (315). Hirsh points to the soliloquies of Goneril, Othello, Richard II, Hamlet, Richard III, Thersites, and Falstaff (in *2 Henry IV*) to suggest that characters use their rhetorical skill not only to manipulate others, but also themselves (321), and that one might continue to role play even with only oneself for an audience (318).

'gossip'—a close female friend—or a group of gossips as support in their daily lives. Members of close-knit groups like these also found a space to explore their social identity, beyond the norms and strictures of patriarchy. Such a gossip network thus had both its practical and its more personal functions: not only did it support women in their domestic lives, but it allowed for the kind of talk that Spacks calls 'serious gossip,' that is, gossip as a means of self-expression and a route to self-knowledge. I want to suggest, first, before looking at instances of Hal as the subject of gossip, that he finds the value of serious gossip in his own membership in a group of 'gossips.' For it is with his tavern friends, outside the compass of fatherly or courtly authority, that Hal tries to work out his idea of who he is, or might be becoming.

We have seen already Hal's attempts to navigate between the two personae expected of him—wild youth and responsible prince—at the beginning of *1 Henry IV*, in his soliloquy and his plans to join his friends at Gad's Hill. This early exploration of self—"once in my days I'll be a madcap," he says (1.2.127)—foregrounds Hal's subsequent forays, in the company of his dissolute companions, into the question of identity. Perhaps the most important example of such 'serious gossip' occurs in the first tavern scene of *1 Henry IV*, during which Hal and his friends gather following the Gad's Hill robbery, and Hal and Falstaff stage their 'play extempore': "Do thou stand for my father," says Hal to Falstaff, "and examine me upon the particulars of my life" (2.5.342-33). It is in the tavern, among friends, that Hal is able to talk about himself, and about his dad. In performing the play, Hal, at a remove both from himself and from his father, can,

urged on by Falstaff, "practice an answer" (2.5.341) to the chiding he is sure to endure from the king. Playing first himself and then his father, Hal in effect engages in gossip about *himself*, and in this respect the scene closely resembles the moment in *Merry Wives* when Ford, disguised as Brook, gossips about himself with Falstaff, asking, "Do you know Ford, sir?" (2.2.253). Ford, like Hal, seeks self-knowledge; but both characters, in these self-reflexive gossipy exchanges with Falstaff, merely sustain uncertainties rather than arriving at any definitive answer to the question of identity. For Hal, the play extempore amounts to a moment of self-fashioning, but one still fraught with ambiguity. As Falstaff, playing King Henry, puts it, "Shall the son of England prove a thief, and take purses?—A question to be asked" (373-75).

Questions, indeed, and a sense of instability, continue to circulate around Hal. He seems, during the play extempore, to see himself through his father's eyes, calling himself an "ungracious boy" who has been "violently carried away from grace" (2.5.406-07). And, evidently with the thought of making future reparations, he appears also to be rehearsing his later banishment of Falstaff: "I do; I will" (2.5.439). As Sicherman writes of the play extempore, it is "a study in authority and an exploration of Hal's emergent self" (506); Hal performs the play in order to practice rejecting Falstaff (507). His royal nature is beginning to emerge, though he is not yet ready to rule; "but it is as the future Henry V that he says, chillingly, 'I will'" (507). Hal's promise to 'redeem time' means that he will "replace an incorrect interpretation of himself with a correct one" (508). This reading bestows upon Hal an essential, if emergent, identity; I believe, though,

that with the play extempore the trilogy instead confronts its audience, once again, with the problem of Hal's 'seeming.' His sense of fellowship here with his 'gossips'—Falstaff, Peto, Poins, Gadshill, and Mistress Quickly—opens a space for a complex rethinking of self that encompasses more than the conventional, polarizing view of Hal as rebel or prodigal. Robert Shaughnessy reads the play extempore in *1 Henry IV* as much less stable than modern performances of the play would often have it be; usually, theatre understands "I do, I will" as Hal's moment of transition from actor to true self. However, in Shaughnessy's reading, the moment is instead one of indeterminacy. The play extempore "generates a plurality, and an instability, of meaning at a point where the modern tradition requires certainty, authority and singularity" (26). The symbolic banishing of Falstaff in this scene becomes a "crucial moment of self-fashioning," but it is merely illusory (28); Hal cannot be made into a coherent subject (29).

Hal works toward self-fashioning by remaining, in effect, in a state of incoherence. It's interesting to note that in the play extempore, Hal agrees to play himself as a character, but then, having bowed to Falstaff / King Henry, utters just a single line ("What manner of man, an it like your majesty?" [2.5.383]) before abandoning this enacted version of himself and switching places with Falstaff. Hal tries on roles as a means to self-discovery, preferring to distance himself from the recognizable role of prince. He is a consummate actor, a performer in a metadrama that continually points up its own status as artifice, through the sudden reversal of the actors' roles, and also through the interjections of Mistress Quickly ("O Jesu, this is excellent sport, i'faith" [2.5.356]) and Falstaff's address to Peto,

Poins, and Gadshill: "Stand aside, nobility" (2.5.355). Hal's insistence on role-play, and his bonding with his 'gossips' at the tavern more generally, creates a space for his experiments with identity. And in doing so he relies, like Anne Page, on disguise, through role-play, language, and actual dress, thwarting those who would define him. As Daniel L. Colvin argues in an analysis of clothing and identity in *1 Henry IV*, Hal's penchant for disguise prevents the audience from assigning him an essential identity: "The prince eventually cannot rid himself of the propensity for playing; he remains the actor, perhaps without script, but one whose identity is in question" (56).

Hal's unstable language functions as another form of disguise, and is closely related to this questionable identity. He is, as Sicherman notes, an imitator: "very early we see how Hal adopts, or adapts, the verbal patterns of his companions" (504). The trick of mimicry helps the Prince mask his emergent self, she argues, a self he protects with "a carapace of youthful acting-out" (509). I think, though, that the prince's habit of verbal mimicry is actually a manipulative tactic that, much like his acting in the play extempore, distances Hal from himself and makes possible the appropriation of other selves. Master of "quips," "quiddities," and "unsavoury similies" (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.39, 40, 70), Hal possesses a facility with language that lets him operate comfortably in the worlds of both his father and his peers, and take on the language of both; his parody of Hotspur—"he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work" (*1 Henry IV* 2.5.95-97)—exemplifies Hal's interest in his rival's style of speech, and

in the ways and words of other people. Warwick, in *2 Henry IV*, insists that the King misunderstands his son, for

> The Prince but studies his companions,
>
> Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,
>
> 'Tis needful that the most immodest word
>
> Be looked upon and learnt . . . (4.3.67-71)

P. K. Ayers writes that Hal tends to "acquire the voices of those whose language he is speaking . . . not only is he multilingual, he is polyvocal" (258). The result is that he becomes a "chameleon linguist" and in the process becomes "largely invisible" (258). In my reading, such invisibility impedes the facile labeling to which he would otherwise be subjected: that his father fails to understand him is mainly a consequence of Hal's unwillingness to be understood.

In *2 Henry IV*, as Jean Howard explores in her introduction to this play, language becomes a force for disorder, evident in the speech of Pistol, Falstaff, and Quickly. Verbal blunders, malapropisms, *double entendres* all destabilize: "the minor characters speak a wild farrago of tongues that defy the desire for linguistic order" (1326). Howard suggests that wildness, so crucial a feature of Hal's character, manifests in the play's language. The speech of the tavern characters, disorderly and lewd, distorts the narrative the King has constructed of himself "as a bulwark against disorder" (1329). Hal's own capacity for chameleon-like speech similarly suggests his ability to disrupt accepted, well regulated narratives: his language makes him a stranger to such definition, to his father, and even to himself. Hal does not mask an emergent self, as Sicherman

suggests; rather, he explores a range of possible selves. Hal does have an emergent adolescent self, but it is one he constructs rather than protects.

Hal's experimentation with language, disguise, and impersonation occurs largely in his scenes with his 'gossips;' it is his association with the tavern characters that Hal generates the ambiguity surrounding his character. It is not surprising, then, that just as an early modern husband feared his wife's talk and her association with neighborhood gossips, so does Hal's father fear what his son might be doing or saying with his "shallow companions" (*Henry V* 1.1.56). He frowns upon Hal's consorting with these 'gossips'—Hal is 'gadding about,' when he should be adhering to a code of behavior more suited to his station. For Hal, such gadding offers the freedom to exist in between or even quite beyond the approved 'selves' available to him. Hal's attraction to Falstaff, Grossman argues, has to do with Hal's ability to view himself from a comic perspective; that is, to step outside the role of prince, to achieve a "peculiar detachment" from himself (183). Hal, in departing form the princely script and fraternizing with unsavoury types in the tavern, is a teenager making a necessary move from parental control to a wider social circle. As Ben-Amos demonstrates in her discussion of the social ties of youth, connections with neighbors and friends became very important once young people departed from their families, not only for survival, but also as a means to obtain "a degree of choice and power" in their lives and relationships (181). In the tavern Hal forges such ties: he finds companions, a network, and a means of puzzling through the question of his own identity.

Hal, then, engages in serious talk with his gossips, but like Anne Page he is also frequently the subject of gossip, particularly in *2 Henry IV*. Preoccupied with slander and detraction, the play begins with Rumour: "Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,/ The which in every language I pronounce" (Induction 6-7). Rumour, speaking the Induction, picks up from the first play the problem of destabilized identity (for while Hal "publicly repudiates wildness, writes Howard, "the play does not" [1326]), and emphasizes the notion of harmful gossip—malicious talk that is "worse than true wrongs" (Induction 40). Detraction, we have seen, was widely feared during the period, a fear Hal appears to share in the long tavern scene of *2 Henry IV*, where he and Poins disguise themselves as drawers. Thus concealed, Hal listens to gossip about himself, uttered in his own presence: Falstaff describes Hal as "a good shallow young fellow. A would have made a good pantler; a would ha' chipped bread well" (2.4.211-12). Here is an echo of Hal's role in the play extempore of *1 Henry IV*, and of the moment in *Merry Wives* where Slender listens to Shallow wooing Anne on his behalf, listing his various virtues: Hal stands outside gossip as its subject, but is present to hear it unfold. Having revealed his identity to Falstaff, however, Hal chides him for engaging in malicious gossip only when prodded to do so by Poins: "My lord, he will drive you out of your revenge and turn all to merriment, if you take not the heat" (2.4.270-71). Hal ought to express outrage at once, Poins suggests, for soon Falstaff will show them the humour in the situation. But, as Grossman argues, Hal too has a great capacity for seeing himself comically. Urged on by Poins, Hal admonishes Falstaff, "You whoreson candlemine you, how vilely you did speak

of me now, before this honest, virtuous, civil gentlewoman!" (272-74). That Hal is merely teasing, that he finds the scenario more humorous than troubling, is evidenced by his ironic reference to the whore Doll Tearsheet and by a reprimand of Falstaff that is nothing more than good natured tavern banter.

Being the subject of gossip, even detraction, does not disturb Hal; on the contrary, it assists his self-fashioning. Falstaff offers the same defense of his detraction against Hal that Hal himself makes in his soliloquy in *1 Henry IV*: that misrepresenting the prince—making him appear more wicked than he is— will prevent people from defining him in a certain way. "I dispraised him before the wicked," Falstaff insists, "that the wicked might not fall in love with him" (2.4.290-92). Interested in resisting the identities already scripted for him—wild youth or contrite prodigal—Hal relies on 'loose talk' to disperse such narratives and continually call his identity into question. His conversation with Poins, earlier in the play, raises questions about the idea of true or singular identity: when Poins wonders at the prince's ability to "talk so idly" (2.2.22) with his father so sick, Hal points out that he must refrain from weeping, though his heart "bleeds inwardly" (2.2.36), because people would think him "a most princely hypocrite" (42), given his habit of "keeping such vile company" (37). Dispensing with "all ostentation of sorrow" (38-39) means that Hal need not publicly display any trace of an inner subjectivity. In his pursuit of ambiguity, Hal differs from Poins, who himself becomes the subject of gossip in a letter from Falstaff to Hal, which Poins reads aloud. Here is yet another instance, similar to Hal's self-referential gossip in the play extempore of *1 Henry IV*, of the subject of gossip

participating in gossip about himself. Detraction is a real concern for Poins; accused in the letter of desiring a marriage between his sister and Hal, Poins corrects the version of himself Falstaff has recounted: "I never said so" (118-19).

Hal, I think, resists the sort of arrival his audience expects: an arrival at a moment where he can be definitively defined, wholly understood. *Henry V* finds him still talked of, still disguising himself, and still appropriating the language of others; while he is now able to fulfill the role of King, his is still a character fraught with ambiguity. Hal does not suddenly adopt a true and consistent identity upon becoming King, contrary to Sicherman's view that "the King has reached complete and charming certitude," that the man and the role are "fully harmonious" (516). *Henry V* shows continual gossip about the new king as his subjects struggle to understand him; the gossip between the bishops at the play's opening, we have seen, points to a continued uncertainty about the king's character, as does the Dauphin's derisive gift of tennis balls. It would seem that Hal's attempts, in the first two plays, to remain unknown have met with resounding success: he is still the subject of gossip, still largely unknown to his subjects. On receiving the Dauphin's gift, King Harry responds that "we understand him well,/ How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,/ Not measuring what use we made of them" (1.2.266-68). Memories of his former wildness persist, useful to Harry in his continued efforts at 'becoming.' He remains a stranger to his subjects; even his careful job of self-fashioning in the long speech that serves as answer to the Dauphin's gift is less consistent than it appears; indeed it closely resembles his first soliloquy of *1 Henry IV*. Eloquent

and sweeping, the speech is still but a narrative of imagined endeavors; once again the young man envisions doing what is expected of him: "But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,/ Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness/ When I do rouse me in my throne of France" (1.2.273-75). His uncertainty about this new role—he claims his success as king lies "all within the will of God" (1.2.289) and public perception ("I will dazzle all the eyes of France" [279]) and not within himself—is nearly as prominent a feature of this speech as it was of his early soliloquy. And, importantly, the bold claims he makes about his transformed self do nothing to halt the gossip, disguise, and linguistic appropriation that are hallmarks of this play, as they are of the earlier two plays in the trilogy.

Unstable language is *Henry V* remains a key element of Harry's character.[18] Pistol's scene on the battlefield with a French soldier and Falstaff's boy exemplifies this instability: "What are his words?" Pistol demands of the boy, who must serve as translator. "Expound unto me, boy" (4.4.39, 52). The scene raises the issue of language failing to represent its user accurately; the boy is sometimes unable to translate ("I do not know the French for fer and ferret and firk" [28]) and offers an astute analysis of Pistol: "I did never know so full a voice issue from so empty a heart" (60). We recall Prince Hal's adeptness, in the earlier plays, at verbal mimicry and linguistic appropriation; for Hal, though, such tricks

[18] Philip Seargeant writes of language in *Henry V* as "emblematic of character" (34). Drawing on the work of Michael Silverstein, Seargeant outlines a theory of language ideology that suggests one's character is indexed in the language one uses; language use may reveal the speaker's origins, social status, and moral character (29). In *Henry V*, speech patterns construct several characters, with accent serving as a particular marker of identity (30).

did not indicate an "empty heart," but rather one in the making. As King, he continues to explore alternate ways of being and talking; his wooing scene with Princess Catherine, she who "cannot speak your England" (5.2.102-03), is a case in point. He claims that "plain soldier" is the only tongue he speaks, unlike "these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours" (5.2.146, 151-52); but Catherine is right to point out that "*les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies*" (115-16). For Harry, a great orator and a master linguist, is no plain speaker. What he really desires is more, not less, diversity in language—which is to say, in possible selves and ways of being in the world. As he tells his bride-to-be, "thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one" (180-82).

Like language, disguise remains a significant index to Harry's character in this final play of the trilogy. King Harry lectures his soldiers on the best way to prepare for battle: "Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,/ Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage" (3.1.7-8). For his own part, Harry, recalling his tavern days, takes on a more literal disguise at Agincourt, dressing as "a gentleman of a company" (4.1.40). "*Qui vous là*?" asks Pistol of the disguised Harry, and presses him, "art thou officer, / Or art thou base, common, and popular?" (4.1.38-39). In disguise, Harry once again distances himself from his current role in order to explore questions of identity; as Williams later points out, in his own defense, "Your majesty came not like yourself" (4.8.46). And again, Harry engages in gossip about himself while in disguise: "I think the King is but a man, as I am" (4.1.99), he says to Bates and Williams, an insight that provokes a lengthy

rumination on what it means to be king. Harry's soliloquy following this exchange is crowded with questions about his "hard condition":

> What infinite heartsease
>
> Must kings neglect that private men enjoy?
>
> And what have kings that privates have not too,
>
> Save ceremony, save general company?
>
> What kind of god are thou, that suffer'st more
>
> Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?
>
> What are thy rents? (4.1.215-25)

While Sicherman acknowledges that "traces of [Harry's] adolescent self remain" in his interaction with Williams (516), she emphasizes that "little remains of the 'ungracious boy' Falstaff and Harry thought they knew" (518). Hal/Harry's exploration of possible selves, though, as I have tried to show in this chapter, does not conclude with the triumph of one self over the other; the point, rather, is the very struggle itself.[19]

In both the Henry trilogy and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare represents for his audience well known narratives of youth: in Anne we see the dutiful, obedient daughter, in Hal, the wild rebel turned prodigal. Yet the playwright's characters intervene in those narratives; they exist outside such scripts, and remain beyond the comprehension of audience and fellow characters

[19] Hirsh argues that in this soliloquy Henry engages in self-deception; the speech is "riddled with self-contradictions" (322). Henry uses his rhetorical skill to convince himself of the preposterous idea that he would be better off as an impoverished commoner than as a king, even as he demeans the common man as a "wretch" and a "slave" (4.1.260, 263). Hirsh suggests that Henry, having lost the debate with his men, uses the soliloquy to regain his composure, since he need debate only himself (323). The King's confused sense of subjectivity here recalls that of his younger self, apparent in Hal's "I know you all" soliloquy of *1 Henry IV*.

alike. For teenaged self-fashioning in all four plays inheres in the condition of anonymity: Hal and Anne reject customary constructions of youth by exploring who they are, or are becoming, on their own terms. In doing so they are assisted by a constant circulation of destabilizing talk; Anne, as the subject of gossip, finds room to resist her parents' prescribed view of her, while Hal, as both subject of and participant in gossip, struggles to define himself. Their explorations into subjectivity do not conclude with the end of *Merry Wives* or the Henry trilogy, for Shakespeare does not suggest, in having Anne marry Fenton, that she achieves what she desires. And Harry, spinning a tale to motivate his troops on the battlefield, acknowledges that talk will continue, that they will all be remembered, constructed and continually reconstructed, through future gossip. For "he that outlives this day and comes safe home" will speak of them:

> Then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words—
> Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—
> Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.
> This story shall the good man teach his son. (*Henry V* 4.3.41, 51-56)

Chapter Three

Youth and Privacy: Romeo and Juliet

If Prince Hal's and Anne Page's questioning of absolutist narratives of youth relies to a considerable extent on the constant, destabilizing circulation of other people's talk, resistance to those same narratives in *Romeo and Juliet* emerges in the words of the protagonists themselves. Indeed, perhaps what strikes us most about Shakespeare's famous young lovers is the way they talk: beautiful and complex, dominated by wit and wordplay, their language is a thing to be wondered at, yet feels at the same time oddly familiar. "Did my heart love till now?" gushes Romeo on first glimpsing the fair Juliet. "Forswear it, sight,/ For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (1.5.49-50). What we hear when we listen to them talk is the language of the young; somehow they sound, in ways that Shakespeare's other adolescent characters do not, like teenagers. Attending to their language, we can easily link Romeo and Juliet with teens of our own time, and, as we do so, take from the play the sense that it was Shakespeare who produced this version of youth. Indeed, Marjorie Garber has proposed that Shakespeare "writes us," that he has scripted the very notions of culture and self that we supposed, somehow, to be natural: our ideas about character, self, government, gender, and age (*Shakespeare* xiii).[1]

[1] The ten chapters of Garber's *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* each address a single play, and for each play she offers a keyword, to exemplify her argument about Shakespeare's discursive and central role in modern life: to *Romeo and Juliet* Garber assigns the keyword 'youth.' Her provocative chapter on this play stops just short of stating that the play actually produced youth culture as we know it today, but argues convincingly that the play "anticipated, documented, and to a certain extent scripted the concept of 'youth culture'" (61). The book also treats *The Tempest* (Man); *Coriolanus* (Estrangement); *Macbeth* (Interpretation); *Richard III* (Fact); *The Merchant of*

Certainly, *Romeo* has had a tremendous influence on the way we view teenagers today. Garber's study of modern adaptations of the play stresses in particular the musical *West Side Story* as *Romeo*'s "most important intervention" (47) in modern culture; she argues that the sociology of the mid-fifties in America was, in Leonard Bernstein's words, the "right time" for a musical about rival gangs in New York: the conformist yet restless fifties foresaw the "sea change in youth culture and sensibility" (49) that would characterize the early sixties (young love, obstructed passion, drugs, peer pressure, parents who don't understand) and remains with us today. And as Simon Trussler points out, American psychologist George Stanley Hall's *Adolescence* (1904) identifies as youthful characteristics discord with parents, moodiness, and risk taking, "much the sort of behavior that Shakespeare had long ago recognized in the posturings of Mercutio, Benvolio, and Tybalt" (386). Sara Deats' interesting essay in *Youth Suicide Prevention: Lessons from Literature* claims that *Romeo* has a continuing relevance in terms of what it can teach us about teen suicide: Deats relates—with a frequent use of such phrases as "like so many parents today" (73) and "as so often happens today" (74)— the broken state of communication in the play, and the accompanying sense of profound isolation, to the experience of contemporary teenagers. Romeo, she points out, "presents an all-too-familiar portrait of a disturbed adolescent with suicidal tendencies" (75); Tybalt similarly represents a "familiar adolescent type" (81). To a contemporary audience, Romeo and Juliet do feel like familiar types; we view them as quintessential teenagers. This is an important idea, and one to

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Venice (Intention); *Othello* (Difference); *Henry V* (Exemplarity); *Hamlet* (Character); and *King Lear* (Sublimity).

which I will return. My main interest in this chapter, however, is not to ask if, or how, *Romeo* produced youth culture as we know it, but rather to ask how it took apart youth culture as Shakespeare knew it.

The play destabilizes oversimplified perceptions of youth extant in sixteenth-century England; in his new version of an old tale, Shakespeare depicts young people in the process of becoming something other than the received versions of youth familiar to his contemporaries. Like the other teenaged characters in my study, Romeo and Juliet are resistant figures: they oppose the will of their parents and the values of their community. As I discuss at greater length in relation to Marlowe's *Edward II*, there are important cultural contexts for their resistant behavior; Chris Fitter's topical analysis, for instance, considers the play in light of events occurring in London between 1594 and 1595, and particularly the Apprentice's Insurrection of 1595, suggesting that the play's essential narrative "pits passionate youthful rebellion against unfeeling authority" (164). In this chapter, however, I will look at the specific nature of youthful resistance in *Romeo*, whose young protagonists resist the identities and expectations foisted upon them by their parents, peers, place, and time, and find their way into a private, youthful subjectivity of their own making. Shakespeare sets their shared, private narrative against the dominant, public narratives of feud, patriarchy, and despotic parents. Secrets, lies, and confessions pervade this play, and it is through these forms of private and elliptical narrative, I will argue, that Romeo and Juliet constitute themselves as subjects. The lovers share, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, a "hidden reality, even a sacred truth" ("Introduction" 899).

In *Romeo*, privacy and resistance converge: the keeping of secrets reflects the incipient self-awareness of the play's teens.

A sense of a private, guarded interiority thus emerges in Shakespeare's treatment of the young lovers: he fashions them as people who not only possess, but also work to conceal, inner selves. In some ways, Romeo and Juliet are even more constrained, more scripted than the other youth in my study: not only do they bear the weight of a prescribed youthful identity, but they carry the additional burden of the feud narrative, which strictly identifies them in terms of family, name, and history, all of which are inescapable. To counter these narratives they attempt the construction of private selves: Juliet's wish that Romeo could shed his name reflects a desire to destabilize his identity, and thereby open it to new possibilities. Of course it is true that in this play, the sole tragedy I examine in my study of youth in the drama, the protagonists' efforts to achieve autonomy are contained by their early deaths. Still, this early construction of interiorized youthful selves resonates powerfully, both for the surviving characters at the end of the play, and for audiences through the centuries: witness, to return to Garber's thesis, the cultural influence Romeo and Juliet continue to exert today.

The reading I pursue here tries to account for the private subjectivity of both Romeo and Juliet; importantly, they grow into a sense of autonomous selfhood together. Of course the gendering of identity matters, perhaps especially so in this play, which tends to segregate the genders (Moisan 50), and whose characters routinely insist on what they see as the immutable differences between

men and women. Part of what Romeo and Juliet deny, though, as they move toward self-fashioning, is this very insistence: the gender binary, stressed so vigorously early in the play, becomes less important in the context of their secret love. Certainly their union stands as an early example of companionate marriage, a humanist model that stressed love and mutuality in marital relations. However, their relationship also rises above the deeply conflicted nature of companionate marriage ideology: equality and mutuality were ostensibly important, but, because marriage still required wives to erase themselves and mirror their husbands, it remained firmly patriarchal, failing to account for the nascent idea of selfhood—important to both men and women—stemming from the Protestant emphasis on interiority and individual conscience. In contrast, Romeo and Juliet's union both emphasizes this new idea of inwardness and reflects humanist ideals of mutuality in love; the private subjectivities of both characters are important. As Paul Kottman has recently argued, love in the play should be understood as a "struggle for freedom and self-realization" (5). This sense of freedom—the freedom to acknowledge one's individuality as a private subject, whether male or female—lies at the heart of Shakespeare's representation of youth in this play.

Privacy and subjectivity

It was during the early modern period, as Keith Thomas reminds us in *The Ends of Life*, that the idea that people had 'true' selves, discrete from the masked selves they presented in public, first took hold. Print and literacy allowed people to "internalize privately" others' words (Marshall 13); thus the spread of print and

private reading, as Cecile M. Jagodzinski argues in *Privacy and Print*, led early moderns to develop a sense of a private self. Private reading gave rise to a sense of personal autonomy and self-consciousness (Jagodzinski 6), the Reformation turned spirituality inward, and, in the economic sphere, personal consumption flourished (Marshall 13). Private space emerged as the embodiment of this newly interiorized sense of subjectivity; those who could afford it sought out such spaces, in houses with specialized rooms and locking doors, as well as in gardens, closets, and cupboards. Such areas "guarded private actions and personal secrets" (Thomas, *Ends* 188); people began to control access to interior spaces, both literal and psychological.

Scholars of the early modern period frequently qualify this critical commonplace that self-fashioning was a Renaissance innovation, looking much earlier for evidence of the interior self. David Aers, for example, finds evidence of an inward subjectivity in the "passages of extraordinarily subtle self-analysis" (182) in Augustine's *Confessions*, while Douglas Gray traces the backgrounds of self-fashioning in medieval literature and spiritual autobiographies. However, much of the work on nascent signs of interiority continues to evidence the particular emergence of the self in early modern literature and culture. Anthony Low, for example, examines the sense of interior subjectivity in the tenth-century Old English lyric *The Wanderer*, but he asserts that the wanderer's subjectivity lacks a sense of the autonomous self that would appear in early modernism (20). Similarly, Jagodzinski acknowledges that Greek philosophers, desert Fathers, and medieval nuns must have been acquainted with privacy; nevertheless, a change in

worldview was apparent among the early moderns. And as Charles Taylor explains, it is likely that every language has the capacity to invoke ideas of self-reference and reflexive thought, but to do so is not the same as making the 'self' into a noun: "the Greeks were notoriously capable of formulating the injunction *'gnothi seauton'*—'know thyself'—but they didn't normally speak of the human agent as *'ho autos'*, or use the term in a context which we would translate with the indefinite article" (113).

Like Aers, Taylor traces the roots of inwardness to the ancients: in Plato's privileging of self-conscious awareness in the moral doctrine of the *Republic* (119), and in Augustine's shift in focus from "the field of objects to be known to the activity itself of knowing; God is to be found here" (130). As Augustine writes in the *Confessions*, God is "the light of my heart, and the bread that nourishes my soul, and the power which weds my mind to my inmost thoughts" (qtd. in Taylor 140). Early in the modern era, Taylor explains, Descartes does draw on Augustinian inwardness, but revises it radically: while the ancient writers possessed a sense of inwardness, they still located the source of moral strength in a cosmic order, outside and beyond humans; Descartes, however, institutes a shift to an internalization of moral sources. We must disengage the soul from the material being: Cartesian dualism insists upon "objectifying the bodily" (Taylor 146). In England, the shift to an interior spirituality characterized the Protestant Reformation: unmediated access to spiritual writings, a personal relationship with God, and a dependence on faith and grace became paramount to Christian belief.

Another important marker of this move toward inwardness appears in the shifting nature of confession, and its eventual demise under Protestantism. Confession in late medieval Europe and England was mainly social, a face-to-face encounter, as John Bossy describes it, between the priest and his parishioners; the private confessional booth did not appear until the sixteenth century (Low 31; Thomas, *Ends* 184). The fourteenth century saw the beginnings of private, inward confession, but theologians continued to stress the importance of the public canonical rite of penance, which forged reconciliation, "not directly with God, but with the church; the effect of the sacrament is to restore a condition of peace [*pax*] between the sinner and the church" (Bossy 22).[2] Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the concept of sin as occurring in the mind gradually took hold (Bossy 27);[3] in the early sixteenth century, Luther carefully demarcated secret, interior sins from public transgressions, and was adamantly opposed to the formal confession of private sins. The emphasis shifted, during early Lutheranism, to a sinner's inner feelings of guilt, to sins felt within his own soul that he ought to confess only to God (Low 66-67).

Thus a complication arose alongside this growing sense of interiority, for a private self could be guarded or kept secret.[4] God alone could access a person's

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[2] Keith Thomas has also discussed the primarily social role of the parish clergyman, who functioned not only as confessor but also as "guide and mentor" to his parishioners; he also worked to resolve disputes among the laity (*Religion* 182).

[3] *The Fall of the Angels*, the first of York's biblical cycle plays (transcribed c. 1470), offers an interesting example of the idea of interior sin: Lucifer falls when he voices his private, sinful desire for glory, afterward complaining, "I said but a thought" (1.114).

[4] In his essay "Privacy: The Early Social History of a Word," Ronald Huebert discusses the sixteenth-century semantic relationship between privacy and secrecy, where 'privacy' could refer both to concealed items and to places of concealment.

innermost thoughts, an idea that generated much anxiety: the new private subjectivity was at once something to celebrate and to fear. Faith itself, writes Katharine Maus, "encourages a kind of mistrust: for what is most true about human beings in such a system is simultaneously least verifiable" (12). Linda Woodbridge links the new interiority to the period's concern with imposture: "that the unmasking of imposture, the shining of a bright light onto occulted identities and hidden practices, is a crucial trope in the period says much about subjectivity" ("Impostors" para. 2). In a similar vein, Jon R. Snyder has written of the early modern culture of dissimulation, arguing that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the mind was held to be impenetrable, its inner workings available to others only if its owner chose to make them known; secrecy was constitutive of self-representation (xiv-xv). To know a man, as Pierre Charron wrote in his early seventeenth century work *Of Wisdome*, "we must look into his inward part, his privy chamber . . . searching and creeping into every hole, corner, turning, closet, and secret place" (6-7). Early modern privacy is interesting in the way that it helped both to fix the idea of an interior self and made that idea troubling and suspicious, for it unsettled the truism of a coherent, stable self, readily definable in terms of social and economic hierarchies. The new interior self emerged as a real and valued entity, but also a cause for concern, for the 'true' self could be masked. Early moderns believed in a conflicting pair of what Maus calls "fantasies": that selves were "obscure, hidden, ineffable," and that they were "fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest" (28-29). This conflict prompted efforts to stabilize the new subjectivity by penetrating its dark recesses;

as Maus observes, Renaissance writers as various as William Perkins, John Foxe, Thomas Wright, and Walter Ralegh "all yearn for techniques of penetration, excavation, exposure, while at the same time proclaiming their mistrust of those techniques" (12).

"So secret and so close"

Theater in the period, Maus argues, exploits these conflicted responses to the idea of inwardness, for its "spectacles are understood to depend upon and indicate the shape of things unseen" (32). Inwardness performed is, unavoidably, inwardness destroyed; thus early modern anxieties about the hidden, interior self resonate with particular force on the stage. How authentic is the performed revelation of interiority?[5] An audience may be interested in witnessing a performance in which inner selves are on display, but may also question the veracity of what it sees. Such instability in representation is what Shakespeare extends, I believe, to his young characters: while the need to stabilize teenaged subjectivity seemed particularly strong in the period, the corresponding desire to penetrate or expose the truth of that subjectivity, as a means to assist stabilization, is not so apparent. Perhaps contemporaries feared a revelation of the hidden, interior teenaged self, or perhaps they never imagined such a thing at all. But Shakespeare's representations of youth, as I have been contending throughout this work, deliberately provoke questions about teen interiority, insinuating unstable ideas of youth into the milieu of cultural unease surrounding secret subjectivity.

[5] The inevitable problem with dramatizing or studying inwardness, Maus acknowledges, is that playwrights and critics, perforce, "annihilate the material" (33).

In the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, the play's preoccupation with darkness, night, and spaces of close interiority makes possible its young protagonists' resistance to "the glacial weight of the collective norms and ordinary interests" of their world (Greenblatt, "Introduction" 901). Paul A. Kottman observes that the bulk of criticism on the play, notwithstanding its variations in method, roots itself in a particular critical paradigm, a "dialectical tension between the lovers' desires and the demands of society or nature" (4). While my reading of Romeo and Juliet as self-fashioning teenagers participates in this interpretive paradigm, I agree with Kottman that the paradigm leaves some questions about the play unanswered, failing to provide a plausible account of the final outcome of events or the lovers' actions (4). I attempt in my own account to read the two young characters not only *against* the cultural forces impinging upon them, but also as people who find and express a selfhood *outside* the available, prevailing parameters of their culture; in other words, their resistance is more nuanced than what we think of today as uncomplicated teenaged rebellion against parents and social mores.

In performing their own sense of privacy, Romeo and Juliet not only publicize their guarded inner selves, but also put forward the idea that a private youthful subjectivity could exist at all. In *Performing Privacy*, Mary E. Trull examines overhearing, a key trope in early modern works "through which authors interrogate the meaning of privacy and its social, sexual, devotional, and political dimensions. Each performance of privacy through overheard lament conjures up a public with a distinctive style that evokes specific affects and establishes an ethics for relations between audiences and performers" (5). Examining Wroth's

Urania, Trull argues that the public/private boundary in the early modern period was flexible; it is common for texts of the period to exploit this flexibility, using the trope of overhearing to reveal a character's secret thoughts. Overhearing renders public that which is intended as private: Romeo's overhearing of Juliet during the balcony scene makes public her private desires, but because the lovers alone share this moment, within a private space, his overhearing also emphasizes the limited nature of the audience: if they create a public, it is their own (privately performed) public. This creation of a narrow public sphere contributes to a world of their own making—it is a public space that, like the theatre itself, yet insists upon its own privacy and secrecy.

A particular version of youthful male behavior, recognizable to an Elizabethan audience, is much in evidence in *Romeo*: such scenes as the play's opening exchange between Samson and Gregory, or Benvolio and Mercutio's discussion of their friend Romeo in the second act, inventory "all the things likely to happen when young men get together in unspecified outdoor sites in Verona" (Moisan 49). The play's youth endeavor, in "the public haunt of men" (3.1.45), to establish a specifically masculine identity: sexual puns ("Draw thy tool" [1.1.29]) and the drive to differentiate themselves from women ("therefore women, being the weaker vessel, are ever thrust to the wall" [1.1.14-15]) characterize their sense of masculinity. Violence and public unruliness are also required: "Draw, if you be men," instructs Samson (1.1.55). Like Hal and Edward, and unlike Juliet, Romeo's character is of uncertain age, though it is clear that he belongs to a teenaged peer group, one that would be understood as such by its original

audience. Bruce Young points out that Romeo is still a dependent member of the Montague household (465). Since dependency lasted until marriage, Romeo could be twenty-something years old, but this seems not to be the case, given Friar Lawrence's emphasis on Romeo's youth and his implication that Romeo is not mature enough for marriage. In Young's analysis, Shakespeare is intentionally showing us a couple at fault for marrying too young; the playwright issues a warning about the perils of young marriage. In this reading, it only makes sense for Romeo to be not very much older than Juliet. It might also be worth pointing out that in Brooke, Shakespeare's immediate source, the Romeo character is not yet able to grow a beard.

Jill Levenson, writing of Romeo's adolescent status, claims convincingly that the play "catches the lovers specifically in the early and middle phases of adolescence;" Shakespeare's portrayal of these phases "is animated by sexual energy" ("Introduction"17).[6] Levenson sees Romeo's adolescence expressed in his language; Romeo and his "young male peer group" speak with "self-conscious masculinity in adolescent patter" (18); there is much punning and wordplay. Also, the presence of the peer group itself suggests Romeo's status as teen: Levenson recalls Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which observes of adolescent experience that "young men are fonder of their friends, intimates, and companions than older

[6] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos claims that early modern youth (male and female) appear to have been "more promiscuous and less rigid" (201) in their attitudes to sex than married adults, and that adults themselves were both conscious and "quite tolerant" of the "sexual indulgences" (204) of the young.

men are, because they like spending their days in the company of others" (23).[7] Witness his scene of youthful banter with Benvolio and Mercutio, their witty exchanges construed by Mercutio as vastly superior to "groaning for love": "Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo" (2.3.77).

The play reflects its culture's normative expectations for adolescent girls as well: Juliet, rigidly subordinated to her parents, is instructed by her mother early in the play to "think of marriage now" (1.3.71), while her father, with his steadfast belief in his daughter's obedience, must have looked familiar to early modern audiences: "I think she will be ruled/ In all respects by me. Nay, more, I doubt it not" (3.4.13-14). Her refusal to marry Paris triggers not only consternation in her father—"How, will she none? Doth she not give us thanks? (3.5.142)—but rage, hatred, and threats: "Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!/ I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday,/ Or never after look me in the face" (3.5.160-62). In effect, as Coppélia Kahn has argued, girls in Verona are denied the adolescence that boys are allowed, in that girls have "no sanctioned period of experiment with adult identities or activities" (180). Juliet is to be married, against her will, at the age of thirteen.

Uses of private space

Romeo complicates, even as it performs, these received renderings of youth. The complexity of Romeo's character, particularly when Shakespeare juxtaposes him with his male peers, gathers some of its force from the

[7] Paul Griffiths writes of male youths' tendency to gather together: "It was in the male space of the street and the alehouse that young men distanced themselves from the cosy domestic world of childhood and their mother's care, and staked a claim for a place in the ranks of adult men" (207).

unanswered question of his age. Carefully situating him in a group of adolescents, Shakespeare then takes pains to dislocate Romeo from that same group, deliberately distinguishing him from his prototypical counterparts. As seems to be the case with Hal as well, and with Marlowe's Edward, the lack of a specific age helps generate a sense of instability in Romeo's character. He withdraws from the boys' social sphere: his friends complain that his interest in women has distracted him from the masculine pursuits celebrated in Verona ("Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead" laments Mercutio, "stabbed with a white wench's black eye, run through the ear with a love song" [2.3.12-14]) and Romeo worries that they are right: "O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate" (3.1.108-09). Juliet, meanwhile, evades her parents by feigning compliance to their wishes, her scheming and eloping bringing to mind Anne Page of *The Merry Wives*. Moreover, it is worth considering the possibility that the specific age the play attaches to Juliet might contribute to the destabilizing of her youthful persona, exerting a similar effect on her character as the *lack* of a specific age does on Romeo's. Lowering her age considerably from that in his source material (in Bandello Juliet is eighteen, in Brooke, sixteen), Shakespeare deliberately creates a character too young for marriage. This choice seems intentionally jarring: it provokes a shift in one's expectations for Juliet, and so makes room for an understanding of her character that stretches beyond a tidy narrative of young love.

At odds with parents and community, Romeo and Juliet seek to inhabit spaces— physical, psychological, and linguistic— outside the world they know:

they try to articulate a private teenaged subjectivity. Early in the play, Montague recognizes his son's inclination to conceal the source of his melancholic behavior:

> But he, his own affection's counsellor,
> Is to himself—I will not say how true,
> But to himself so secret and so close,
> So far from sounding and discovery,
> As is the bud bit with an envious worm
> Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air
> Or dedicate his beauty to the sun. (1.1.140-46)

Bent on hiding his feelings, Romeo conceals his physical body as well, as his father notes:

> Away from light steals home my heavy son,
> And private in his chamber pens himself,
> Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
> And makes himself an artificial night. (1.1.130-33)

As the play individuates its young protagonists, it situates them in private spaces, alone or with only one another (or the friar) for company, and emphasizes their secretive behavior.

Romeo's staging both reflects and reveals the guarded interiority of its title characters, establishing pockets of private space in which they explore a burgeoning subjectivity.[8] Shakespeare insists on a separation between his young characters and the forces that oppose them, and the territoriality of the staging, I

[8] I owe my understanding of certain principles of Shakespearean staging, particularly directionality and territoriality, to the late theatre historian and Shakespearean John Orrell, with whom I was privileged to study.

think, registers this breach. Romeo and Juliet make use of a spatial separation that forges protected interiors, claiming private spaces for their own. Friar Lawrence's cell is one such space; in Act Three, the Nurse's efforts to gain admission to this space underscore its concealed and private nature. The Friar's remarks indicate the spatializing of the scene:

> Hark, how they knock!—Who's there?—
>
> Romeo, arise.
>
> Thou wilt be taken.—Stay a while.—Stand up.
>
> [*Still] knock [within]*
>
> Run to my study.—By and by!—God's will,
>
> What simpleness is this?
>
> *Knock [within]* (3.3.73-77)

Secure cues in the dialogue here ("Hark, how they knock;" "Run to my study") divide the space outside the cell, occupied by the Nurse, from its interior, occupied by the Friar and Romeo. The continuous knocking characterizes the interior space as guarded and private (perhaps anticipating the porter scene in *Macbeth*, another play preoccupied with interior spaces and selves: "Knock, knock, knock. Who's there, I'th'name of Beelzebub?" [2.3.3]), while the dialogue also points to the presence of an internal door, leading to the Friar's study, a space set even further apart from the rest of the action. In Juliet's later scene with the Friar, the stage is again demarcated as private for her use; embedded in her dialogue is the important direction to the Friar to "shut the door" (4.1.44). When he does so, the stage transforms into a confidential space suitable

for his conversation with Juliet (Ichikawa 82): "O, shut the door, and when thou hast done so, / Come weep with me, past hope, past cure, past help!" (4.1.44-45).

In the private space of the Friar's cell, Romeo and Juliet speak freely and lay bare their interior selves; in a word, they confess. But confession here is not a matter of divulging sins and receiving absolution; indeed, Juliet lies outright to the Nurse about visiting the Friar's cell for this purpose (3.5.231-34). Rather, in his role as confessor, the Friar urges the young people to express, plainly, their innermost thoughts. In doing so he reflects the early modern shift from public to private confession: for Romeo and Juliet, the cell is a place to express thoughts they must conceal from their families and friends. Juliet, forsaken by the Nurse, renounces her once-closest confidante in favor of the Friar: "Go, counselor! / Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain. / I'll to the friar, to know his remedy" (3.5.239-41). The cell is one space in the play where Romeo and Juliet pursue the project of self-making: confession, writes Michel Foucault, is a "ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement . . . a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it" (61-62). While the agency in this mode of discourse rests with the interlocutor rather than the speaker, this "discourse of truth finally takes effect, not in the one who receives it, but in the one from whom it is wrested" (62). Just so do Romeo and Juliet begin to constitute themselves as subjects within the privacy of the Friar's cell; private 'confession,' uttered in the secret space of the cell, helps the teens perceive themselves as individuals.

Directionality, built into dialogue, again polarizes space in the balcony scene of Act Two: "I hear some noise within," says Juliet to Romeo, interrupting their farewell in order to acknowledge the Nurse's call. Shakespeare's emphatic spatializing of the scene takes hold as the protracted parting drags on:

NURSE (*within*) Madam!

JULIET I come, anon. [*To* Romeo] But if thou mean'st not well,

I do beseech thee—

NURSE (*within*) Madam!

JULIET By and by I come.—

To cease thy strife and leave me to my grief.

Tomorrow will I send. (2.1.191-97)

The Nurse's repeated, insistent calls, like her knocking later at the Friar's cell, detach the balcony space from the interior of the house, designating the house as an adult space at odds with the youthful space of balcony and garden, the lovers' private territory. Later, this same space remains the private domain of the newly married couple, prior to Romeo's departure. In this scene (3.5), there is an unusual shift—what Ichikawa calls a "remarkable transition" (119)— in locale: while the main stage represents Capulet's orchard until line 59, it transforms suddenly into the interior of his house at line 64. During the intervening lines, in which Juliet weeps and rails against the fickleness of fortune, two things occur, as stage directions indicate: she pulls up the ladder of cords Romeo has used to flee, and her mother enters below. This entrance bisects line 64, which belongs first to Juliet ("But send him back"), and then gives way to her mother's question: "Ho,

daughter, are you up?" In the midst of this exchange, the stage space transforms: the lovers' separation, followed closely by the mother's appearance, effects the sudden transition from garden to house. With the wrenching departure of Romeo ("Art thou gone so, love, lord, my husband, friend?" [3.5.43]) and the puncturing of the space by the adult figure, the lovers' private world dissolves.

There is a sense of opposition in the staging, then, that reflects youthful resistance to scripted subjectivity. Moments of isolation for Romeo and Juliet, when they inhabit spaces discrete from the world of adults or peers, are revelatory: hidden from fellow characters, their inner selves are on display. Once again, directionality carefully embedded in dialogue marks Romeo's physical detachment from his friends as he pursues a private conference with Juliet: "He ran this way, and leapt this orchard wall" (2.1.5), Benvolio informs Mercutio as they search for Romeo. Hidden by the "humorous night" (31), Romeo hears his friends' teasing—"Romeo! Humours! Madman! Passion! Love! (8)—but evinces little concern once they have gone: "He jests at scars that never felt a wound" (43). Together, he and Juliet now control the stage space, and the balcony scene marks the beginning of their private love story. Ready to dispense with Verona's expectations, Romeo interrupts Juliet's private musings with an offer to shed his name and all that it means: "Call me but love and I'll be new baptized. / Henceforth I never will be Romeo" (92-93). Juliet, too, is ready to defy family and custom, offering herself to Romeo frankly ("Take all myself" [91]), and with an ironic self-reflexivity that suggests an awareness of her own difference:

O gentle Romeo,

If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;

Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,

I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,

So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world. (135-39)

Moving toward self-realization, the young characters define themselves as lovers. In their union, Romeo and Juliet surpass a simple rebellion against parents and social mores, undertaking a process of becoming in which they rely on one another. They are "formed as subjects," writes Kottman, "through acts of mutual self-recognition . . . if they are to claim their lives as their own, they must somehow actualize their separateness for themselves, through one another" (5-6).

Indeed the play is full of moments where just such a self-recognition is made possible, moments where the young characters, "bescreened in night" (2.1.93), "untalked of and unseen" (3.2.5-7), try to make sense of who they are becoming. Private spaces in *Romeo* are disruptive, not due to their sometimes domestic, feminized quality (after all, Juliet's private scenes with her mother do nothing to challenge the masculinist imperative that drives Verona), but in the sense that they disorder the stable subjectivity the play otherwise attributes to its young characters. In *Romeo*, writes Naomi Liebler, "we hear much about walls—and about walls within walls": Verona's many small enclosures and little fortresses ("two households") subdivide and thus weaken the city, perverting the early modern ideal of the city as "self-contained and carefully managed" (Liebler). Verona, Liebler contends, implodes: "decreasing circles of enclosure and isolation progressively squeeze any vestigial sense of communal space to the

size of Queen Mab's 'empty hazelnut' (1.4.59)." In this analysis, Verona's walls signify separateness and divisiveness; violence and disorder underlie the very structure of the city, and Romeo and Juliet are fatally ensnared in that structure. It seems to me, though, that they make use of that very divisiveness, exploring a sense of interiority from within the segregated spaces the play carves out. Indeed it is precisely *because* "the structures of order and authority fail" (Liebler) that Romeo and Juliet find opportunities for self-fashioning. Juliet acknowledges that "the orchard walls are high and hard to climb," yet Romeo can and does "o'erperch" them, "For stony limits cannot hold love out / And what love can do, that dares love attempt" (2.1.105, 108-10). Freedom from family, feud, and fixed ideas of "who thou art" (2.1.106) lies in the private space beyond the orchard wall.

Perhaps the shared space of the mausoleum is the most disruptive of all: this scene, with its large tombs, displaces the discovery space to the rear of the stage used for the private scenes earlier in the play (Kinney 36). Moreover, parents and authorities must penetrate this space, and the revelation of what has happened causes chaos and confusion: the Prince must quickly silence the grieving parents, instructing them to "Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while,/ Till we can clear these ambiguities" (5.3.215-16). The moment resonates powerfully, because the teens' story, thanks to the Friar, is finally told, and their hidden selves laid bare: "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.308-09). Indeed, as Levenson writes, "if the younger generation has been eradicated, their narrative promises to revive" ("Echoes" 48).

The lovers' jarring tale is quickly contained, packaged carefully by the Friar ("I will be brief" [228]), and answered by the grieving parents with a hastily conceived solution: to turn their children into scapegoats ("sacrifices of our enmity" [303]) and erect elaborate statues in their memory. If life is to make sense again, they must superimpose a narrative of renewal on the dreadful scene before them. The suddenness of this resolution, though, while seemingly an effective act of containment and therefore an erasure of the sense of self the young people have pursued throughout the play, instead points up the extent to which the newly dead Romeo and Juliet, truly a "pitiful sight" (172), have rewritten a script well known to their parents, forcing them into a knowledge they would rather not possess: a radical reimagining of the children they thought they knew. That their deaths have ended the feud is at any rate merely a Pyrrhic victory, for Romeo and Juliet are only children; the future for both families has died with them. And even if, as Arthur Kinney writes, Romeo and Juliet's sense of love and justice fail to reach those left on stage, still "their bodies lie there as silent emblems of authority and responsibility" (35). The rest of the cast is now admitted to the private recesses that the audience has been privy to all along, and for them, as for us all, the final revelation proves far too much to bear.

A private language

Probably the most significant manifestation of a reimagined youthful subjectivity in *Romeo* appears in the language of its protagonists. Long forced to

bear the weight of the feud, Romeo and Juliet try, as they come of age, to shed this narrative, to replace it with one of their own: they resist what Friar Laurence calls a "certain text" (4.1.21). The Chorus foregrounds that text, opening the play with a sonnet that summarizes the story to come; as Kinney notes, the Chorus gives the play's opening "a static quality, a frozen sense of events," until one recognizes the contingency of the Chorus' judgments, and the possibility that its story is not complete, in line 14: "What here shall miss" (30). It falls to Romeo and Juliet, ultimately the play's "most reliable authority," to invalidate the determinism of the Chorus (Kinney 31).[9] In my reading, it is through the development of a private language—in narrative, dissimulation, and word play—that Romeo and Juliet rewrite the story that has scripted their lives, and constitute themselves as subjects.

They are eager, then, to establish a way of speaking that reflects their private experience, and that distinguishes them from the adult community around them. As Romeo informs Friar Laurence,

> Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel.
> Wert thou as young as I, Juliet thy love,
> An hour but married, Tybalt murderèd,
> Doting like me, and like me banishèd,
> Then mightst thou speak . . . (3.3.64-68)

[9] Jill Levenson also suggests that the play's opening sonnet is not so fixed a narrative as it might seem, arguing that it destabilizes the well known sequence of the Romeo and Juliet story, circulating throughout England, Italy, and France during the sixteenth century, by rearranging the sequence of events and introducing ambiguities through its unstable diction. The Chorus "emphasizes the passions which drive the narrative" and "invites the spectators to participate in making the play" ("Echoes" 42).

Similarly, Juliet bemoans the Nurse's sluggish pace in returning from a visit with Romeo:

> Had she affections and warm youthful blood
>
> She would be as swift in motion as a ball,
>
> My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
>
> And his to me. (2.4.12-15)

Were the Nurse young, Juliet fancifully imagines, rather than "unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead" (2.4.17), the lovers' youthful language could move her, sending her bouncing between them like a ball in a tennis volley.

Romeo and Juliet's language is striking to a modern ear because it sounds just as we expect teenaged voices to sound. Paul Jorgensen has argued that Shakespeare never raises their poetry above the level of their age; *Romeo* "shows pure, youthful, tragic love in a poetry consummately suited to that love" (27). Witness Romeo, in the throes of his passion for Rosaline: "Tut, I have lost myself. I am not here. / This is not Romeo; he's some other where" (1.1.190-91); or Juliet, as loath to part with Romeo on the balcony as a present day teen to hang up the telephone (or send the last text message): "Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow / That I shall say good night till it be morrow" (2.1.229-30). Their diction makes a contemporary audience smile, for in its youthful ebullience it seems just right for these very young characters, tragic heroes "less complex and less grand" than those Shakespeare would later create (Jorgensen 27), and because to us it feels familiar in the same way that their rashness and impetuosity does; yet of course we cannot necessarily attribute the same sense of familiarity to

our early modern counterparts. Indeed Shakespeare seems at pains to imagine a particular voice for his teen protagonists in this play, one that sets them apart from the prevailing and familiar discourse of their community. At the level of language, they are exiles, early examples of young people who set themselves in opposition to their parents, background, and community.[10] Low argues that a "separation from the community of discourse" is closely related to the condition of exile; since people draw a sense of self from their discourse community, "enforced silence" is the result of exile from that community (15). In the case of Romeo and Juliet, however, a detachment from the language of their parents and peers opens avenues for resistance.

In a play preoccupied with the telling of stories, the teenaged protagonists are eager to dispel the influence of the narratives that surround them. Levenson's analysis of the play's transformation of rhetoric demonstrates the extent to which the play makes possible the retelling of old stories. In its deliberately complex use of rhetoric (evident, for example, in the "elaborate array of rhetorical devices" Mercutio offers in his Queen Mab speech), *Romeo* "reopens a book which writers of the previous generation had apparently closed" ("Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 122). Destabilizing the familiar narrative from which it takes its story, the play introduces ambiguity, thus releasing "the old narrative to tell a new story" (136). Much of this retelling falls, I think, to the protagonists: Juliet, for example, is a wildly imaginative storyteller and an accomplished liar. In her private

[10] Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* traces our contemporary sense of autonomy to the Puritans, a group called by God but forced to rely on themselves as they "left wealth and comfort to set out in small ships" (55). It was this value of self-reliance that eventually gave rise to the tradition of the young person leaving home and parental support to find his own way.

conference with Friar Laurence in Act Four, she indulges in a series of immoderate images detailing circumstances preferable to marrying Paris:

> Chain me with roaring bears,
>
> Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,
>
> O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
>
> With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;
>
> Or bid me go into a new-made grave
>
> And hide me with a dead man in his tomb . . . (4.1.80-85)

What strikes the modern ear, writes Levenson, as "sheer flamboyance is probably a figure stretched beyond its usual range, performing a more complex function" ("Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 133). Juliet often employs a language that lets her imagine herself as something other than her community perceives her to be, opening her character to a range of interpretations. And while today we might feel dismissive of such language (the contemporary colloquialism 'drama queen' comes to mind), it seems important that the Friar receives her words seriously; indeed, his plan to help her will literalize the products of her imagination. Friar Laurence meets Romeo's theatrics—"In what vile part of this anatomy / Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack / The hateful mansion" (3.3.105-07)—with a similar seriousness and sense of urgency: "Wilt thou slay thyself, / And slay thy lady that in thy life lives / By doing damnèd hate upon thyself?" (3.3.115-17). That the Friar takes seriously what we would quickly dismiss gestures toward the novelty of the teens' language and behavior in Shakespeare's time.

To counter the entrenched narrative that has thus far dictated their lives and identities, Romeo and Juliet fashion their own publicly performed narrative: like Prince Hal and Anne Page, the young lovers show an aptitude for dissimulation. The balcony scene bears witness to Juliet's acting ability, for she knows how to play the part assigned to her when called on to do so. This ability appears again in her scene of false repentance, performed for the benefit of her parents. Kneeling before her father, she makes a convincing show of obedience, and lies to him with practiced ambiguity: "I met the youthful lord at Laurence's cell, / And gave him what becoming love I might, / Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty" (4.2.25-27). Gratified to hear what he believes to be a recitation of an appropriate script, Capulet approves of his daughter once again: "Why, I am glad on't. This is well. Stand up. / This is as't should be" (28-30). Juliet can even perform a version of her own death, a "dismal scene" that she must "act alone" (4.3.19), despite the Friar's worry that her "womanish fear" may "abate thy valour in the acting of it" (4.1.119, 120). Her feigned death succeeds in that it both cancels her parents' careful wedding plans for their daughter—"All things that we ordainèd festival / Turn from their office to black funeral," laments Capulet (4.4.112-12)—and reverses her father's earlier imposition of silence upon his daughter when she attempts to resist his plans for her marriage ("Speak not, reply not, do not answer me" [3.5.163]), robbing him of language: "Death, that hath ta'en her hence to make me wail./ Ties up my tongue, and will not let me speak" (4.4.58-59).

Juliet herself calls attention to Romeo's skills in dissimulation, wondering, as she grieves Tybalt's death, if her new husband has deceived her:

> 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!
> Despisèd substance of divinest show!
> Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st—
> A damnèd saint, an honourable villain. (3.2.73-81)

Carried away, as she so often is, by a frenzy of extravagant metaphors, Juliet yet strikes upon an important facet of Romeo's character, one that his family and friends note as well. While the Nurse is sure that "there's no trust, no faith, no honesty in men; / All perjured, all forsworn, all naught, dissemblers all" (3.2.86-87), other characters point to such dissembling as particular to Romeo. Benvolio, for example, assumes he will have to work hard to extract from Romeo the true cause of his "black and portentous" mood in Act One: "I'll know his grievance or be much denied," he assures Montague, who imagines Benvolio will be disappointed in his efforts: "I would thou wert so happy by thy stay / To hear true shrift" (1.1.134, 150-52). The Friar, in his first scene with Romeo in Act Two, grows similarly irritated with Romeo's oblique responses to his questions: "Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift. / Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift" (2.2.55-56). This penchant for the performative is a linguistic strategy, a form of narrative that divides Romeo and Juliet from the forces that oppose them,

because it amounts to a public posturing, a means of concealing an emergent subjectivity.

The lovers develop what we might term a language of evasion; their language, that is, reflects their efforts to actualize a sense of private subjectivity outside the norms imposed by parents and society, and to live a private life of their own making. Deats has noted Juliet's desire to dispense with the "shopworn clichés that were *au courant* at the time" (79); she urges Romeo, during the balcony scene, to "swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon" (2.1.151). Later, before they exchange vows, she informs him, "Conceit, more rich in matter than in words, / Brags of his substance, not of ornament" (2.5.30-31). From Juliet, Romeo will learn that "true love speaks simply" (Deats 79). Together, they look for a way of speaking that reflects their sense of themselves as individuals, and that might disentangle them from the web of signification that constitutes language in Verona. The lovers are interested in playing on, and thus stripping the power of, words—and especially names—freighted with the expectations and mores of their culture: as Juliet cries out on the balcony, "O, be some other name! / What's in a name?" (2.1.84-85). Convinced that her enemy is not a man but a mere word signifying an old and meaningless feud, Juliet divides Romeo from his name: "Thou are thyself, though not a Montague" (81). Romeo, overhearing her, concurs: he declines to utter 'Montague,' informing Juliet instead, "I know not how to tell thee who I am" (96).

The teens try elsewhere to strip words of their significance: in Act Three, following Romeo's slaying of Tybalt, both are tortured by the words 'banishèd'

and ‘banishment.’ “Some word there was,” says Juliet, “worser than Tybalt’s death, / That murdered me. I would forget it fain, / But O, it presses to my memory . . .” (3.2.108-10). Just as she severs Romeo’s self from the word Montague, here Juliet divides the word ‘banishèd’ from what it signifies—her own profound sense of grief and loss— arguing that the word itself cannot name what she feels: “No words can that woe sound” (126). Romeo, meanwhile, in conversation with Friar Laurence, attempts a similar deconstruction: ‘Banishèd,’ he insists, is actually “death mistermed”: “Calling death ‘banishèd’ / Thou cutt’st my head off with a golden axe, / And smil’st upon the stroke that murders me” (3.3.21-23). Thus he implores the friar, “Do not say ‘banishment’” (14), and demands to know how he has the heart, “being a divine, a ghostly confessor, / A sin-absolver and my friend professed, / To mangle me with that word ‘banishèd’? (3.3.49-51). Friar Laurence, interestingly, offers Romeo “philosophy” as “armour to keep off that word” (54-55). But Romeo, notwithstanding his own frequent philosophizing, rejects the offer forthwith: “Yet ‘banishèd’? Hang up philosophy!” (57). The horror of banishment derives not so much from the loss of community, for, contrary to Romeo’s belief, there is a world outside Verona’s walls; but rather from the loss of the lovers’ private community, the loss of their newly forged private life. The word ‘banishment’ does not signify to Romeo and Juliet the Prince’s act of mercy, commuting what would otherwise be Romeo’s death sentence; rather, like ‘Montague’ and ‘Capulet,’ it bears the heavy imposition of cultural authority. As Romeo puts it, “’Tis torture, and not mercy. Heaven is here / Where Juliet lives” (3.3.29-30).

It is part of their development of a youthful subjectivity, I believe, to attempt this loosening of the referent from its signifier: Romeo and Juliet's refusal to reify names and words that carry such weight in their community contributes to the play's destabilizing of youthful identity. When words cease to signify, the feud and its fallout lose their power. Thus, while Juliet, for example, favors a straightforward style of communication with Romeo, she prefers evasion when dealing with her parents: Capulet, irritated and baffled by her wordplay, accuses his daughter of sophistry—"chopped logic" (3.5.149)—when she plays on the word 'proud' in response to his demand that she be 'proud' (or gratified) to take Paris as her husband: "Not proud you have, but thankful that you have. / Proud can I never be of what I hate" (146-47). Woodbridge has argued for the presence of a 'magical grammar' in Shakespeare, and particularly in *Macbeth*, comprised of euphemisms, pronouns, passive verbs, and other "substitutive devices," that causes "unpleasant things to disappear" ("Shakespeare" 86-87). Sometimes the ambiguities created by such language are, she argues, "very calculated indeed" (95) and serve a particular function: to protect characters from their own self-scrutiny (94). Thus Lady Macbeth's use of a deliberately evasive diction as she proposes that her husband murder the king[11] underscores the fact that she "does not much want to be understood, even by herself" (89). While Romeo and Juliet are interested (like Prince Hal and Anne Page) in deploying just such a calculated

[11] Woodbridge cites this passage as evidence of "the magical work of noun-vanishing" (88) in Lady Macbeth's speeches:

> Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, 'Thus thou must do,' if thou have it,
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone. (1.5.21-25)

ambiguity, they use it instead to protect themselves from the external assumptions and expectations that press upon them, and therefore to open a space *for* self-scrutiny.

The degree to which the lovers succeed in their efforts to speak their way into a private subjectivity is debatable. Pierre Iselin's account of language in *Romeo* suggests that, rather than stripping signifiers of their meaning, Romeo and Juliet—perhaps unwittingly— instead reify them, so that these signifiers appear to behave autonomously: 'banish' can kill or mangle; "the mere phoneme [ai] is endowed with lethal efficacy: 'Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but 'Ay', / And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more / Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice' [3.2.45-47]" (264). Their names, in particular, are impossible to shed; Romeo and Juliet, writes Jacques Derrida, "will not be able to get free from their name, they know this without knowing it [*sans le savoir*]" (177). Juliet tries to call Romeo "beyond his name," and yet she knows that "aphoristic though it may be, his name is his essence. Inseparable from his being" (Derrida 176, 178). It may also be the case, as Liebler points out, that the lovers' evasive language actually causes the tragedy, for *Romeo* is a play about "things that *don't* happen. Potentially life-saving words are not said . . . important words about to be spoken are not heard." In the end, Romeo and Juliet's participation in this 'not saying' seals their fates. And yet, for the young lovers, the attempt itself, the effort to evade the meanings and significations that surround and restrict them, matters; for the sense these young people inaugurate of a private teenaged subjectivity far outlives them, its originators. Even if, in Derrida's terms, the aphoristic nature of

both Romeo and Juliet and *Romeo and Juliet* at once precedes (owing to the play's numerous source tales) and supersedes the lovers' attempts to reinvent themselves, it is also through aphorism that they "will have lived, and live on" (171). Their manner of speaking echoes still, to the point where it has now become familiar to audiences as that particular, peculiar language of the teenager.

Yet it is not that sense of familiarity alone that makes *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare's premier representation of youth. More particularly, it is that Romeo and Juliet make possible the interiorized young self by exposing, quite candidly, that very inwardness. *Romeo* destabilizes youthful subjectivity by staging the unsettling idea that young people might have inner selves at all, and, more troubling still, the possibility that they might conceal those same selves. The play does not stop at the mere provoking of questions: reading Prince Hal, we can acknowledge his self-imposed anonymity and wonder (all the while accepting the futility of the question) about the validity of the interior self seemingly on display, a questioning that itself creates a productive instability. But in *Romeo*, audiences witness the intelligible exposure of that self, are admitted into its private recesses, and are asked both to believe in it and to grasp that it likely reaches beyond their expected range of possibilities for youth. For contemporary readers, viewers, and critics, there is *less* anxiety around teen characters in this play than there is in *I Henry IV* or *Edward II*, because we feel, unquestioningly, that we know them. Romeo and Juliet are instantly recognizable as the teenagers of our own time. But *Romeo*'s version of youth, one that we claim now for our

own, belongs instead to Shakespeare; and for his own viewers and readers, I think, his portrait of the young must have been a very unsettling one indeed.

Chapter Four

Youth and Oral Narrative: Teenaged Girls of the Late Romances

> O, rejoice
> Beyond a common joy, and set it down
> With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand her brother found a wife
> Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
> When no man was his own. (*The Tempest* 5.1.206-13)

At the conclusion of *The Tempest*, Gonzalo both narrates and imagines a future narrative rendering of his island adventure. For Gonzalo there is joy in the comic resolution: the promise of marriage, the restoration of a dukedom, and the finding of lost selves are cause enough indeed for celebration. However, Gonzalo's compressed and simplified version of events—echoing his utopic vision of the island in Act 2, Scene 1—betrays his quixotic world view and fails to account for the play's complex situations and relationships: Claribel was married against her will; Prospero gains a dukedom but loses all but mere human strength, "which is most faint" (Epilogue 3); and the selves ostensibly 'found' remain instead ambiguous. Importantly, Miranda, mentioned in Gonzalo's summary only as "a wife," participates in the construction of a much more complex narrative as she delves into questions of personal identity and self-fashioning. The story ultimately 'set down' about Miranda is at least partly of her own devising, and works to invalidate certain of the play's controlling narratives.

Here, I group Miranda with her counterparts in *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*, Perdita and Marina, for each female teenaged character is heavily invested in oral narrative. Each girl both serves as a narrator and reconstitutes narratives spun about her; each is also implicated in the larger narrative strategy of her play. In these three romances, Shakespeare draws for his plots on oral culture, adapting elements of well-known folktales and situating his teenaged girls within those tales. Importantly, though, I find that these young characters fail to settle into customary folktale roles for adolescent girls. Instead, they deploy narrative as a means of resisting the imposition of such roles; they intervene in dominant narratives (cultural and theatrical), destabilizing tales told about themselves with tales they themselves tell. This tactic creates space for a process of youthful self-fashioning, a claim I make with the help of John D. Niles' contention in *Homo Narrans* that it is chiefly through oral narrative that people have moved beyond mere survival and learned to "create themselves as human beings" (3). It is just such a project of self-making that seems to me apparent in Shakespeare's girls; and I will argue in this chapter that, by way of the playwright's self-conscious, metatheatrical strategy in each romance, his teenaged characters rework old tales by recasting their own roles within them: no longer static princesses awaiting rescue, all three participate in and shape stories told about themselves.

Youth and Oral Narrative

Several of Shakespeare's plays, and particularly the three I have elected to examine in this chapter, bind together the oral and the literate by drawing heavily on oral narrative—specifically folktale—in their plots. In discussing Shakespeare's adaptation of the oral, I rely on Niles' definition of 'oral narrative' as the use of "the elements of speech to evoke action in a temporal sequence" (2), a capacious definition that encompasses myths, epic songs, folktales, legends, and dinner table jokes (2). Niles, whose study begins with Anglo-Saxon England, maintains that the earliest English literature was grounded in the oral (9). This foundation remained a felt presence in early modern England, argues Adam Fox in *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700*, for although the spread of print and the Protestant Reformation assisted the shift to literacy and expanded written texts and formal learning under the Tudors and Stuarts, there yet existed a strong reciprocity between oral and literate culture; they were by no means antithetical. Rather, speech, script, and print "infused and interacted" with each other (5). Moreover, some aspects of daily life remained purely oral, such as seasonal cycles of work, local custom, neighborhood gossip, and nursery tales; the unlettered continued to store and share information through rhymes, songs, and proverbial lore. Oral tradition continued to thrive, and to feed into print. At the same time, printed texts were often disseminated orally. Fox points out, for example, that Christian heads of households read aloud to their families, and written broadside ballads were often sung.

Despite this reciprocity, however, the growth of print and literacy began to underpin social hierarchy: illiteracy came to be associated with vulgarity, and literacy with wealth and status. The enormous growth and enrichment of English with new words and phrases from other languages, together with its increasing standardization into 'the King's English,' "had the effect of throwing into relief the idiom of the majority" (Fox 53). By the later sixteenth century, alternative, subordinate forms of English were known as 'dialects', and educationalists like Sir Thomas Elyot and William Kempe worried about unlearned, 'ill-bred' nurses teaching children poor habits of speech. The expansion of grammar schools in this period helped to homogenize the language and heighten class distinctions (62). A growing emphasis on the propriety of speech reflected Tudor and Stuart concerns with order; nobility and gentry were expected to speak in "the pure and proper way befitting their condition" (102).

Exclusionary and divisive, 'the King's English' served an elitist, hierarchical society that overpowered and excluded those of the lower orders, among whom we may include women, children, and youth; indeed, Fox finds that the "majority" still existed within a "residual oral culture" (406).[1] Women and the young remained closely linked to oral culture and tradition, and the newly standardized English failed to register their dialect languages and lived experience. Importantly, even their presence in oral culture is indistinct for scholars today, since most oral culture recovered from the sixteenth and

[1] David Cressy's study, *Literacy and the Social Order*, finds that England remained "massively illiterate" in the seventeenth century: "more than two-thirds of the men and nine-tenths of the women were so illiterate at the time of the civil war that they could not even write their own names" (2).

seventeenth centuries centers on adult males as the voice of the public sphere. Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold*, which works to situate female figures in the rhetorical tradition, argues that during the English Renaissance, eloquence was "the crucial characteristic of any ambitious man . . . rhetorical expertise enhanced one's ability to overpower, gain power, or gain control by using language" (136). Successful Renaissance men, operating in politics, law, education, the Church, and the court, and bolstered by Ciceronian belief, cultivated eloquent speech as their greatest achievement (137). Women's intellectual accomplishments, on the other hand, were of course private and contained, since public articulation, in writing and especially in speech, would have been indecorous. Glenn emphasizes the distance between men's public rhetorical prowess and women's marginalized, silent learning; however, in working toward a regendering of the rhetorical tradition, she examines the rhetorical undertakings, written and spoken, of Margaret More Roper, Anne Askew, and Elizabeth I.

But such women—privileged, intellectually accomplished, supported in their efforts by Christian humanism, early reformists, and the literary rhetoric of the late sixteenth century—were, Glenn acknowledges, "relatively few" (143-44). What of those—the majority—who neither spoke publicly nor wrote at all? Fox's work on "those who by virtue of their sex and age rarely expressed themselves in writing" (173-74) is useful for its investigation of the traces of oral culture among these lower orders. He foregrounds the resilience and importance of female oral culture through a focus on its private, domestic aspects; he looks, in particular, at old wives' tales and nursery lore, demonstrating that by the Tudor period, the

phrase 'old wives' tale' had been in common use for generations; during the Reformation, the phrase was used, as it is now, to derogate "any story, tradition, or belief which was thought to be inconsequential or false" (175). Richard Levin discusses the gendering of storytelling, pointing to the difference between male, professional tale tellers of the Middle Ages and the 'old wives' of early modern times: male storytellers cited one another as "authorial authorities" to guarantee the authenticity of a tale, but "the story of an old wife could never serve this purpose" owing to its strictly oral provenance (65). Mary Ellen Lamb has argued convincingly that the pedagogy of early modern grammar schools developed as a response to the female-dominated early years of children's lives: little boys, immersed in the world of women and their tales until the age of seven, were hardened into masculinity through the acquisition of Latin and classical narratives in rigorous and often punitive classroom environments (*Popular* 52-53).

Nevertheless, such tales, though dismissed by Protestants during the Reformation as pagan superstition (Buccola 85) and actively resisted by the elite, remained important to the educative role of women, and linked them firmly to children and youth: female storytellers were the repositories of family history and responsible for its dissemination to the young.[2] Antiquarian John Aubrey (1626-1697) is notable for his early recognition of the inherent value of these tales; importantly, he saw the cultural significance of transmitting folklore to impressionable young people (Fox 179). Aubrey's interest—unique among his

[2] While my interest in women of the period centers on their role as disseminators of oral culture to the young, scholars focus, too, on other aspects of gendered orality: Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford's *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts* looks beyond women's educative role to investigate their "fashioning of oral traditions to serve their own purposes rather than the nurturing of others" (xxi).

contemporaries—lay in the rhymes, songs, and stories women relayed to children, and the way these oral forms were then circulated by the children themselves. Aubrey noted in the seventeenth century "how marvellously scrupulous and tenacious children are in preserving and perpetuating these ancient practices and oral traditions" (Fox 205); in the twentieth century, Iona and Peter Opie confirmed, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* and *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren,* children's exceptional ability to maintain and recirculate oral tradition.

Importantly, the experience of telling and listening to stories transcended class; children of all classes were exposed to popular lore, often through stories narrated by female servants and nurses. Thus it was "at the juvenile level where the repertoire of unlearned village women coincided for a brief but significant period with that of the educated male elite" (Fox 192); 'old tales' were "stereotypically told by old women before a winter's fire but shared among all social factions" (Lamb, "Virtual" 123). Oral culture, then, fed directly into youth culture at every social level; tales were passed down the generations, "running as a stream beneath the surface of literary discourse, scarcely recorded at the time, scarcely recoverable by posterity. A fundamental reason for this, no doubt, was their particular possession by women and children, their particular inhabitance of the domestic and private sphere" (Fox 202).

Such tales, the province of women, the young, and the domestic world, did find their way into print. Both Fox and Henk Dragstra have pointed to the role of texts in the transmission of oral stories: as Dragstra posits, Aubrey's

carefully defined demarcation of oral and literate—"the divine art of Printing and Gunpowder have frighted away Robin-good-fellow and the Fayries" (qtd. in Dragstra 43)—is likely inaccurate: "we must seriously consider the possibility that cheap print insinuated itself into the process of oral transmission" (45). Fox notes that traces of oral tales exist in references in the period's drama and other texts (199);[3] earlier work by Walter J. Ong claims that literature of the Tudor period bears the mark of an earlier oral culture, with its style of expression deriving from the oral ("Oral Residue" 146). Ong picks up this line of argument again in Orality and Literacy: "whereas we feel reading as a visual activity cueing in sounds for us, the early age of print still felt it as primarily a listening process, simply set in motion by sight" (119). This 'oral residue' is apparent in Shakespeare's frequent use of folktales, most of them not transcribed from oral tradition until the nineteenth century. Linda Woodbridge has argued that the Shakespearean canon exhibits "hallmarks of oral tradition" ("Patchwork" 11): "when the greatest, most sophisticated writer in the annals of English literature wanted to steal a plot, he typically dusted off a musty old folktale" (6). Shakespeare drew on folktales, Woodbridge points out, for dramatic effect: he knew his audiences would recognize these stories.[4] Such tales circulated and survived, for centuries, by word of mouth; nursery rhymes, too, are much older

[3] Roger Chartier, whose *Inscription and Erasure* examines the ways in which "writing was made literature" in certain early texts, observes of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* that the text bears the stamp of oral practice; in this novel, the narration "with its multiple digressions, parentheses, and free association of words, themes, and ideas, was composed not according to the principles of literary rhetoric but according to the codes that govern conversation and oral exchanges" (34).

[4] See also Kenneth Muir, "Folklore and Shakespeare." Muir points to the "amalgam of literary and folklore elements" in such plays as *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

than their first print existence (Fox 202). Prominent English Renaissance writers who appropriated these tales in print, argues Woodbridge, colonized for their own use the stories of the common people; such colonization "has analogues in land enclosures and other early modern capitalist appropriations" (13). Diane Purkiss echoes this argument in her recent discussion of *The Winter's Tale*: "in Shakespeare's late romances, the culturally rich—Shakespeare—is poaching from the culturally poor and unheard—old wives" ("Fractious" 57). Lamb's *Popular Culture* further explores the implications of such appropriation, arguing that the educated male elite, the middling sort, and the Stuart aristocracy all worked to define themselves "against and through" the lower orders, producing literature steeped in the cultural narratives of 'old wives' (3); indeed, "the telling of old wives' tales, and the memory of the women who told them, left a lasting impression on the subjectivities of many early moderns" (45).[5]

Oral culture runs beneath the period's literary discourse, underpinning the plays, stealing quietly in and out. In some plays of Shakespeare's that lay claim to oral forms, I will suggest in this chapter, a merging of the oral and the literate has implications for their female teenaged characters: youthful circulation and adaptation of oral tales figures prominently. Purkiss writes of the marginality of teenagers, and especially teenaged girls, to their own culture—a disenfranchisement "far truer" in early modern times than it is now—but stresses that "they did have a culture, and its fugitive traces can be glimpsed in unlikely

[5] Regina Buccola suggests that Shakespeare's knowledge of folklore derived not from Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Supposed Witchcraft*, as Diane Purkiss has argued in *At the Bottom of the Garden*, but rather from the place that Scot himself learned it: "'children, fooles, women, cowards, sick, or blacke, melancholicke, discomposed wits'" (Buccola 87).

places; in folktales and in the literary texts that expropriate them" (58). In the three romances I discuss below, female teens feature prominently as narrators of their own tales: in performing these roles they reclaim oral narrative and deploy it in the search for self that is a hallmark of all three plays.

Regina Buccola, writing of fairy lore, convincingly links fairies in early modern drama to the stage's unruly women, suggesting that fairies, occupying a liminal, ambiguous space, served as "the guardians of many varieties of social dissent and resistance to hegemony in early modern Britain" (48). I suggest that Shakespeare's girls frequently occupy this same liminal space, blurring the binary between female and male narrative: the playwright's literary appropriation is far from absolute and does not disavow women's tales.[6] Jack Zipes explains that the earliest literary collections of folktales, such as Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* (1697) and Mme. Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Contes des fées* (1697), shifted the narrative perspective of the oral tales[7]: the literary fairy tale reflected changing values during the transition from feudalism to capitalism (10), and so adopted the viewpoint of the aristocratic or the bourgeois. Moreover, the fairy tale, as a printed text, "did not encourage live interaction and performance but individual readings" (15). In the work of Shakespeare, conversely, folktale resonates *as folktale* more than as literary fairy tale: folklore, as Zipes maintains, "thrives on the collective, active participation of the people

[6] As Lamb argues, Shakespeare's production of popular culture in such plays as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* often reveals his ability to mix "diverse ideologies," demonstrating a "fluidity of identification" (*Popular* 91).

[7] The fairy tale emerged as a distinct genre over the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries as a result of appropriation of folktale by aristocratic and bourgeois writers, according to Zipes (9-10).

who control their own expressions" (14), and such participation certainly characterizes the circulation and manipulation of story in Shakespeare. In the late romances I detect more than just an oral residue; oral culture exerts a continual pressure on the text, a pressure that manifests specifically in the narrative faculties of teenaged girls.

"I see the play so lies/ That I must bear a part"

The Winter's Tale, as Levin points out, takes its title from the proverbial phrase applied to the type of story also known as an 'old wives' tale,' the type of story we recognize now as a fairy tale or folk tale (65). The title acknowledges the "low and female domain" of the old wives' tale, writes Lamb, and thus "brings to visibility the centrality of these low oral narratives to its own production" ("Virtual" 127). The play draws on the folk tale motif of the abandoned princess, raised by country folk and eventually returned to her real family with the help of the inevitable prince. Folk tale motifs similarly pervade *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*: the play begins with the fatal riddle as Pericles seeks to marry Antiochus' daughter; later, he competes in a bride's tournament and wins the hand of his princess, Thaisa. We meet Dionyza, who will play the wicked stepmother, plotting her step-daughter's murder (Woodbridge, "Patchwork" 8). Like Cinderella, fourteen-year-old princess Marina has a step-mother who despises her for her beauty, superior as it is to her own daughter's; like Snow White, Marina is therefore dispatched from court with an executioner. In both plays, however, Shakespeare exploits such motifs (Flower 30), deliberately

focusing attention on them and calling them into question. *The Winter's Tale,* writes Maggie Malone, "insists on reminding the audience how 'like an old tale' it is" (137), while *Pericles*, argues Walter Cohen, teems with metatheatrical strategies: Shakespeare's use of the choric Gower, with his moralizing monologues and dumb shows, undermines "the naturalistic illusion of the play" (2724). Even—perhaps especially—the textual and authorial ambiguities plaguing *Pericles* distance readers from the events of the play and emphasize its status as a work of art.[8]

The metatheatrical undercurrent of both plays, I think, has the effect of destabilizing the very tales on which the plays draw, and in doing so denaturalizes the familiar figure of the folk tale princess. Both plays feature teenaged girls, both princesses, who operate outside the normative roles one might expect of them. As Purkiss argues, such female characters risk estrangement from their own tales; they are all too easily occluded from stories told about themselves, like Miranda in Gonzalos's summary, who is mentioned only as a wife. Yet Purkiss also stresses that "teenage girls in the early modern period did have a storyteller's stake in the tale of the lost girl, because it was a story they told about themselves, a story that could be a tale of rebellion and subversion of all that being a teenage girl meant" (57). Shakespeare, pointedly drawing attention to the old tales themselves, makes room for decidedly unstable representations of his teenaged

[8] I use Walter Cohen's reconstructed text of *Pericles* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, which follows the Oxford edition in drawing on Shakespeare's co-author George Wilkins' prose version of the play, *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* (1608), to emend difficulties in language and meter in Wilkins' section of the drama (Scenes 1-9). I also concur with Claire Preston's assessment that, despite its textual troubles, *Pericles* "is still more worthy of literary than bibliographical attention" (21).

characters, both girls who, through their own use of narrative, recast their roles in these old stories. In effect, the metatheatrical nature of these romances extracts their female teens from folk tale convention, a destabilizing move that allows for a process of youthful individuation.

Early on, *The Winter's Tale* interlaces the tradition of oral narrative with an idealized and static version of childhood. Note Polixenes' description of his young son:

> He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter;
> Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;
> My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.
> He makes a July's day short as December,
> And with his varying childness cures in me
> Thoughts that would thick my blood. (1.2.167-72)

Polixenes' fond report of his son parallels the memories he shares with Leontes of their boyhood: together they made innocent mischief, played like lambs that did "frisk i'the'sun" (1.2.69), and believed "there was no more behind/But such a day tomorrow as today,/And to be boy eternal" (64-66). Polixenes' idealized memories evoke his desire to find something similar in his son: he renders the boy in absolute and polarizing terms (he is sometimes friend, sometimes enemy, at once parasite and soldier), and holds him up as an emblem of hope, an antidote to adult despair; the boy's "varying childness"—his youthful ways—cure the father of melancholy. Leontes, too, looking at his own son, Mamillius, recalls himself as a child, "unbreeched,/In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzled" (1.2.157-

58). Archidamus and Camillo call the king's five-year-old son "a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh" (1.2.33-35).

Like Polixenes' boy, Mamillius is depicted in fixed terms, as a child who occupies precisely the space established for him. Mamillius delights his parents and the courtiers, particularly with his penchant for storytelling; the child's mother asks him to narrate a winter's tale, for he's "powerful at it" (2.1.30). Importantly, though, his tale telling is confined to the world of children and women; as his name (derived from the Latin for 'breasts') suggests, Mamillius is closely associated with the play's women. Not yet 'breeched,' he spends his days with his mother and her ladies, and his tale telling is part of that female realm. As Lamb writes, Mamillius composes "not only a story but a self defined in terms of an intimate and very physical bond with his visibly pregnant mother as well as her surrounding ladies, who care for him" ("Engendering" 532). Mamillius' storytelling traps him in the static world of childhood; it exposes winter's tales as objects of derision, their narration a mere laughable facet of women's lives. While the child is associated with telling stories, his is not the story we will hear. Indeed, there is only a very limited audience for the little boy's tale, as he opts to tell it privately to his mother; and all we hear of his story is "There was a man— . . . Dwelt by a churchyard—" (2.1.31-32). At this point he presumably begins to whisper the tale to Hermione, who has asked that he "give't me in my ear" (2.1.34), but the pair is immediately interrupted by the arrival of the irate Leontes, convinced he has been cuckolded. Fearing her feminine influence on his son, his first words to his wife, before accusing her, are "Give me the boy. I am glad you

did not nurse him" (2.1.57). Leontes puts a stop to the tale, and indeed, the child's fragment of a narrative concludes his speaking role in the play, for he is soon to fall ill and die. The play thus fails to flesh out either the child's role or the tale—a sad tale of "sprites and goblins"—that he sets out to tell. It is a mere winter's tale, of a sort gendered female for its lack of "serious purpose" (Lamb, "Engendering" 531).

The story we hear instead is Shakespeare's own, a complexly rendered appropriation of women's oral narratives. Piecing together a fantastical story from fragments of oral tradition, Shakespeare, however, goes beyond simply poaching material from earlier sources; in the case of *The Winter's Tale*, he not only self-consciously employs folktale tradition, but also intervenes in that tradition. What strikes me as key about this intervention is Shakespeare's use of the young princess figure, Perdita. If the early part of the play yokes oral narrative and the simplicity of childhood, its later part reinvents such tales and connects them to the complexity of youth. Mamillius' tale gives way to Perdita's; the young boy's stunted story works as a kind of foil to the more interesting one that follows. As Jennifer Higginbotham argues, in staging the infant Perdita, *The Winter's Tale* "consciously supersedes the story of boyhood with the story of girlhood" (118); the tale of the female child thus disrupts what began as a teleological, male-centered narrative.[9] In the context of folktale, Perdita (as her name suggests) ought simply to be the lost princess, awaiting rescue. Shakespeare, however, will use Perdita to turn a winter's tale into something more

[9] See also Gina Bloom, "Boy Eternal." Bloom contends that the play both produces and questions the notion of a linear male development (332).

nuanced than the customary, and much maligned, folk narrative. Indeed Perdita matches Shakespeare's own sense of the metatheatrical; her awareness of herself as an actor fractures the folk tale and allows her to resist the pull of defining narratives, much as Anne Page of *The Merry Wives* absents herself from a prevailing discourse of romantic desire.

For Perdita, youthful self-fashioning is tied to self-conscious performativity. She herself, in her first scene of the play, takes up the ancient debate between art and nature, contending in her set piece with Polixenes that crossbred or grafted flowers are "nature's bastards" (4.4.83) and have no place in her garden. Polixenes counters her argument: "This is an art/ Which does mend nature—change it rather; but/ The art itself is nature" (4.4.95-97). "At the heart of this debate," writes Jean Howard,

> lay the question of artifice. Was it a good thing? Did it distort or enhance nature? . . . . For Perdita, product of the pastoral landscape, art is a bad thing. She wants no grafted or hybrid flowers in her garden. Yet even as she speaks her condemnation of art, Perdita is reluctantly dressed as Queen of the sheepshearing feast, a bit of artifice that reveals a truth she herself cannot know: namely, that she is a Queen's daughter. (2888)

For Perdita, it is artifice—the roles she plays as Queen of the feast and as Florizel's Libyan princess—that ultimately reveals her 'natural' role as royalty, suggesting the power of art to reimagine that which is considered natural (Howard 2888). In Perdita's case, it is the naturalized female teenaged self—particularly as it exists in folk tale—that comes under scrutiny through Shakespeare's own

reworking of old tales. Perdita's growing awareness of herself as an actor lets her step outside her role as lost princess and contributes to Shakespeare's reworking of youth.

Perdita, product of the playwright's imagination, is herself a work of art, but that art is unstable, malleable, constantly called into question. Indeed, as she takes the stage in Act Four, disguise is the paramount concern. Florizel's first words negate Perdita's identity as shepherdess and assign a different one: "These your unusual weeds to each part of you/ Does give a life; no shepherdess, but Flora/ Peering in April's front" (4.4.1-3). For Perdita, as for Hal and Anne, disguise becomes a means through which to explore the possibility of multiple selves. The idea of performing an unexpected self in "unusual weeds," as Florizel says, is exciting, and her mind plays with possible scenarios. "I should blush," she says, "To see you so attired; swoon, I think,/ To show myself a glass" (4.4.12-14), and she wonders how Florizel's father would respond to their disguises: "What would he say? Or how/ Should I, in these my borrowed flaunts, behold/ The sternness of his presence?" (22-24). Preoccupied by this new version of herself, she, a "poor lowly maid,/ Most goddess-like pranked up" (9-10), is invited by her adopted father to "present yourself/ That which you are, mistress o'th'feast" (67-68). Having made the appropriate display of reticence, Perdita eagerly seizes the role. Indeed, she is sure "this robe of mine/ Does change my disposition" (134-35). She has even been imagining, we discover, during Polixenes' denunciation of her relationship with Florizel, a vision of herself delivering a blunt retort:

I was not much afeard, for once or twice

I was about to speak, and tell him plainly

The selfsame sun that shines upon his court

Hides not his visage from our cottage, but

Looks on alike. (430-34)

Youthful 'seeming' typifies Perdita as it does Prince Hal, and sets her apart from the usual folk tale princess; disguise and role play render unknowable these young characters who ought to be straightforward, transparent. As Polixenes notes to Camillo of Perdita, "Nothing she does or seems/ But smacks of something greater than herself, /Too noble for this place" (4.4.157-59). Camillo, hatching a plot (what he calls a "scene" [582]) to present Perdita as royalty in Sicilia, instructs her to "disliken/ The truth of your own seeming" (635-36). While she fulfilled her role as Queen of the Feast with some initial (performed) reluctance, Perdita now fully embraces the opportunity to inhabit a different self, and does so with an acute self-consciousness: "I see the play so lies/ That I must bear a part" (638-39). Perdita, not merely the lost princess passively awaiting rescue, literally plays a part in her own return to court. Moreover, Perdita's self-conscious performativity (a lord of Leontes' court will call her a "seeming lady" [5.1.190]), her sense of having a role to play in this tale as it unfolds, gives her space to explore questions of identity; the same is true of Hal, play acting in the tavern, and of Anne, quietly reinventing herself under the cover of folk ritual. Perdita's Bohemia indeed recalls Hal's tavern and Anne's Windsor Park at the end of *Merry Wives*, for Bohemia too is a freeing space: a space at a remove from

court, nobility, and parental influence; one of festival, feasting, role play, and disguise.

The reunion between Perdita and Leontes, and the revelation of her noble status, unfolds as a narrative of a narrative and so sustains the distance between the audience and the tale: three gentlemen describe for the audience "a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of" (5.2.39-40). Yet they do speak of it, and stress, repeatedly, the similarity it bears to an old wives' tale: "This news which is called true is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (25-26). It is perhaps surprising that this reunion, a quintessentially dramatic scene, is narrated rather than dramatized; that he would make this choice, at such a crucial juncture, suggests Shakespeare's commitment to narrative. He once again draws our attention to the tale as a tale, and to the self-consciously role-playing characters who populate it; of Perdita's reunion with her noble family, the third gentleman notes, "The dignity of this act was worth the audience of kings and princes, for by such was it acted" (72-73). Shakespeare's elaborate layering of narrative—actors in a play narrate a narrative borrowed from earlier narratives—exposes the old tale, with which he began, as artifice. But *The Winter's Tale* ultimately brings together artistry and the natural: as Leontes says of Hermione's statue, "The fixture of her eye has motion in't,/As we are mocked with art" (5.3.67-68). He believes the work of art to be alive, and so it is. Art first denaturalizes, and then *re*naturalizes, in the sense that it alters and reimagines the essentialized subject: both Hermione and Perdita inhabit, but then alter and finally escape the narratives—Hermione as adulterous wife, Perdita as stock

figure in a folktale—imposed upon them.

"Thy speech hath altered it"

Pericles' Marina shares Perdita's ability to participate, on her own terms, in a tale told about herself. Another clear case of folktale appropriation, *Pericles* draws on well known motifs, yet, like *The Winter's Tale*, displays a strong metatheatrical awareness. As Kenneth Muir writes of the play, "Shakespeare is aware that his story is too good to be true, but such fables are a criticism of life as it is" (qtd. in Ewbank 129). Held up for particular scrutiny in the play is fourteen-year-old Marina, who uses her narrative skill to save her life, preserve her chastity, and tell her story. Like Perdita, Marina is a princess lost and miraculously found, and her story bears strong affinities to the tales of Cinderella and Snow White; importantly, though, the play calls its sources, and the role of their heroine, into question. A reappraisal of teenaged Marina is made possible through Shakespeare's appropriation of narrative, and, within that appropriation, his specific use of Marina as narrator.[10]

The style of the play is inherently metatheatrical. Claire Preston notes that *Pericles* is characterized "by a great deal of telling, retelling, and reporting in the place of direct action" (21). This diegetic method of presentation (telling), Preston argues, exists alongside a mimetic method (showing), apparent, for example, in the dumbshows and the recognition scenes. Interestingly, both stage

[10] Thomas Roebuck and Laurie Macguire write of *Pericles* that "in crises, characters' instincts or instructions are to narrate (Cleon gives accounts of famine, Diana instructs Pericles to tell his story at Ephesus, Marina tells her life story to Pericles);" thus the play "dramatizes the recuperative potential of storytelling" (30n.34).

pictures (mimesis) and word-pictures (diegesis) "are accompanied by corresponding interpretive glosses . . . *Pericles* is full of narration" (22-23); or, as Gower puts it, "What's dumb in show, I'll plain with speech" (10.14). Such strategies encourage the audience "to view events from a certain distance, to attend to the larger pattern that unfolds rather than becoming emotionally engaged" (Cohen 2724). Bringing to a close his long account of Pericles' marriage and departure for Tyre, Gower instructs the audience, "In your imagination hold/ This stage the ship, upon whose deck/ The sea-tossed Pericles appears to speke" (10.58-60). Like *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* insists on reminding its audience of its status as art, and of its reliance on what Cohen calls "fairy-tale logic" (2727); and like Perdita, Marina is heavily invested in this metatheatrical strategy.

A prominent narrator in the play, Marina successfully undoes narrativized versions of herself. The roots of her character lie in folktale renditions of victimized princesses, but Marina's status as narrator brings into focus and unsettles that foundation. Left in the care of Dionyza and Cleon at Tarsus, Marina grows into a beautiful girl who "gets/ All praises" (15.33-34), inciting the envy of her adoptive mother, whose own daughter pales in comparison; Dionyza therefore instructs Leonine to take the girl for a walk along the seashore and murder her. Marina begins as a stock folk tale character, and as Gower puts it, she is "absolute Marina": lovely to look at, chaste, gifted with needle, thread, and lute, ripe for marriage, and utterly helpless. It is in her response to her would-be killer's threats, however, that Marina first startles the reader. The girl answers Leonine's

order that she say her prayers not with tearful pleas for her life, but with a string of questions: "What mean you?" she inquires reasonably. "Why would you kill me?" "Why would she have me killed?" "How have I offended / Wherein my death might yield her any profit/ Or my life imply her danger?" (15.117, 121, 122, 129-31). "My commission / Is not to reason of the deed, but do't," Leonine informs her (131-32). Yet, having complicated the matter with her questions, Marina turns to narrative in a bid to save her life. First, she constructs a version of herself, designed to engender his pity: "I never once killed a mouse nor hurt a fly./ I trod once on a worm against my will,/ But I wept for it" (127-29). Next, she works to narrativize her assailant: "You have a gentle heart. I saw you lately/ When you caught hurt in parting two that fought./ Good sooth, it showed well in you" (135-37).

The play's metatheatrical method echoes in Marina's voice: like Gower's, her speech and stories shape and propel the action, while they help her take control of her fate. Kidnapped by pirates and sold to a brothel in Mytilene, Marina finds herself at the mercy of the Bawd, the Pander, and their servant Boult, who plan to market their teenaged captive: "Boult, take you the marks of her, the colour of her hair, complexion, height, her age, with warrant of her virginity, and cry 'He that will give most shall have her first" (16.50-52). Boult, having "drawn her picture with my voice" (83) calls her a "sign" (16.100): she is meant to inhabit the pictorial representation of herself that he has "cried through the market" (82). Bawd tries to subjugate Marina to this version of herself, and to her will: "Come, you're a young foolish sapling, and must be bowed as I would

have you" (76-77). What Marina resists here is a certain representation of herself: the brothel owners, trying to reduce her to a body, place her corporeality on display, but again Marina relies on narrative to shift this view of her, and her speech supersedes her physical body. Preaching to brothel visitors rather than entertaining them, her words are so effective that Bawd complains, "she's able to freeze the god Priapus and undo the whole of generation" (19.12-13). Marina's strategy, used first with Leonine, is to concoct alternate versions of both herself and her persecutors: in her lengthy speech to Lysimachus, governor of Mytliene and brothel customer, Marina paints a convincing picture of both herself ("My life is yet unspotted" [19.102]) and of him ("I hear say you're of honourable blood,/ And are the governor of this whole province" [19.76-77]). Deeply moved, Lysimachus responds, "I did not think/Thou couldst have spoke so well, ne'er dreamt thou couldst./Though I brought hither a corrupted mind,/Thy speech hath altered it . . . " (19.119-22). She uses the same trick yet again to save herself from Boult: reversing his earlier advertisement of her, Marina projects a particular vision of Boult, suggesting ways he could live, any of which would be preferable to his current employment: "Do anything but this thou dost. Empty/Old receptacles or common sew'rs of filth,/ Serve by indenture to the public hangman—/ Any of these are yet better than this" (19.188-91).

Intended to enact certain roles—helpless young girl, victimized folk tale princess, pitiful prostitute ("you must seem to do that fearfully which you commit willingly," Bawd urges [16.102-03])—Marina instead recasts herself into different roles. Rather than earn money for the brothel with her body, for

example, she reinvents herself as a teacher, and finds she can reduce learned men to silence with her wisdom: "Deep clerks she dumbs," says Gower (20.5). This girl, meant to be silent, instead inflicts silence on others, which is to say, in broader terms, that she resists those identities imposed upon her, and struggles, as Hermione and Perdita do, against false narratives. Her capacity to redefine herself culminates in the recognition scene with her father at the end of the play. This key moment of youthful individuation inheres in oral narrative as Marina takes charge of her life story, rewriting the tale Pericles thought he knew. Importantly, Marina manipulates the tale and its audience, narrating in fits and starts, withholding and delaying the communication of vital details: having briefly sketched her lineage, she says in an aside, "I will desist./ But there is something glows upon my cheek,/ And whispers in mine ear 'Stay till he speak'" (21.82-84). Pericles must wait some thirty lines more, and issue plea after plea—"Where do you live?" "Prithee speak." "Tell thy story." (21.101, 107, 122)—before his daughter will state, "My name, sir, is Marina" (130). Slicing through false narrative and correcting Pericles' version of events, she is, argues Inga-Stina Ewbank, "capable of working through words on people's minds" (117), for she is possessed of a "therapeutic literalness of speech" (116). The dialogue of the recognition scene indeed "*creates* character . . . it enables us to share in the interaction of two minds" (Ewbank 115).[11] Here, indeed, is Marina, the living, breathing answer to her father's questions: "But are you flesh and blood?/ Have

[11] Ewbank notes that the lengthy dialogue between father and daughter in Shakespeare's play does not exist in either of his sources (Gower's *Confessio Amatis* and Twine's *Patterne of Painefull Adventures*), and that Marina's source character is "defensive and pathetic" (116). The eloquence and wit of *Pericles'* Marina seems to be Shakespeare's own invention.

you a working pulse and are no fairy?" (21.140-41).

Narrative, then, constitutes self in a text marked by fragmentation, dislocation, and disunity. A play of split, contested authorship, requiring substantial reconstruction, *Pericles* takes up corresponding thematic concerns: characters lack a sense of belonging, and their identity and whereabouts are frequently in question. Geographically, the play is expansive, its characters regularly traversing the seas and its action occurring in multiple locales: Antioch, Tyre, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Ephesus, Mytilene, and the sea itself.[12] The plight of many characters is to wander, or to be homeless, or lost. T.S. Eliot's poem "Marina," based on Shakespeare's character, takes as its epigraph a line from Seneca: "*Quis hic locus, quai region, quaie mundi plaga?*"—What place is this, what kingdom, what part of the world? Marina is perhaps the most dislocated character in a play that offers no consistent, reliable, believable space into which its audience can settle; the constantly shifting setting underlies the play's metatheatrical quality and assists Shakespeare's destabilizing of his princess character. "A more blust'rous birth had never babe," says Pericles of his daughter (11.28), and indeed travel, tempests, and homelessness have been hallmarks of her short life. But the sense of fragmentation that pervades the drama releases its heroine from the hold of prescribed identity, and lets her take the lead in rebuilding the world of the play: to Marina falls the final reconstruction of the story. In Niles' terms, oral narrative confers upon Marina a "world-making ability" (3) as she pieces the tale together, reconstituting narrative disunities,

[12] Edward Gieskes notes that this quality of "geographic and temporal mobility" is common in the later plays, including *The Winter's Tale*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Hamlet*, and *Troilus and Cressida* (94).

fragmented selves, and lost characters. Looking at Shakespeare's use of the medieval author Gower as chorus and source, Edward Gieskes argues that the play's chaotic structure is at once produced, retained, and validated by its incorporation of capacious medieval narrative, with its tolerance for asides and interruptions (94, 104). I suggest that Marina as narrator performs a similar function: she both frustrates expectations and authorizes the newly constructed narrative with which the play concludes. Pericles, a wretched wanderer at sea since the false news of Marina's death, and his queen Thaisa now make plans to live and reign in Pentapolis; Marina and Lysimachus will settle in Tyre: the future is decided, and the past correctly reconstructed. *Pericles*' ending, though, like that of *The Winter's Tale*, does more than offer a tidy, comic resolution to the play. For the sense of coherence and stability with which the play concludes occurs on Marina's terms, reflects her capabilities as a narrator, and is made possible only by the play's dissolution of the formulaic female teen.

A "bootless inquisition"?

As he does in both *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*, the playwright lays claim in *The Tempest* to folktale: Duke Pesta points to the play's "fairy-tale conventions," including monsters, fairies, magic, enchantment, and moral tests (50, 53). And, like Perdita and Marina, the play's fifteen-year-old Miranda purportedly supplies the role of the lost fairy-tale princess. Victim of foul play, daughter of an ousted Duke, Miranda inhabits an enchanted island, awaiting rescue by a prince and the revelation of her true identity: Prospero's daughter,

Ferdinand's wife, and eventual queen of Naples. The world of the play is both "'once upon a time' and situated in a land 'far, far away'" (Pesta 50). Shakespeare, male and culturally authoritative, again appropriates elements of his tale from a history of women's oral narratives; importantly, though, the tale's origins continue to exert themselves on his story in the shape of Miranda, a character profoundly invested in the play's narrative strategy, and a key narrator herself. Once again we find that Shakespeare, in deploying an old tale, does so while keeping important traces of its female provenance clearly in view.

Narrative, as Niles contends, can articulate "an individual's and a group's sense of identity, including the consciousness of a past" (31). Considered in the light of her capacity for narrative and her insistence on hearing her father's story in the play's long expository scene, Miranda emerges as a resistant character, bent on self-fashioning—a reading that otherwise proves difficult. Miranda, most often viewed either as a woman about to be married or as a child under her father's thumb, creates problems for critics: they notice her spirited, even defiant nature, but at the same time find it hard to ignore her subordinate status on the island as foot to Prospero's head. Indeed, major readings by feminist and postcolonial critics have consigned Miranda to the same margins inhabited by Sycorax or Claribel: trying to work around Miranda, critics displace her, silence her, indeed trap her within the very structures they seek to investigate.[13] More

[13] Lorie Jerrell Leininger's influential essay "The Miranda Trap," for example, evokes Miranda's subordinate position: "Miranda, admired and sheltered, has no way out of the cycle of being a dependent foot in need of protection;" she is the "dependent, innocent, feminine extension of Prospero" (226). Ania Loomba insists that Miranda "obeys in silence and has been taught not to question why;" Prospero has "schooled her to obedience" (154). Marilyn Williamson is sure that Miranda "remains an object of exchange between Prospero and Ferdinand. Her basic relationship

recently, Jessica Slights published "Rape and the Romanticization of Shakespeare's Miranda," which challenges Miranda's "exclusion from critical discourse" (357) and seeks to rewrite her agency back into the play. Slights is correct, I believe, to read Miranda as "an imaginative and headstrong young woman" (367), but her argument is troubling in its focus on Miranda's marriage: Miranda derives "a sense of herself as an agent in the world" (364) through her relationship to Ferdinand. Miranda's moments of defiance against her father are, Slights says, "domestic;" in this reading, "heterosexual desire and marriage entail a measure of resistance rather than simple capitulation to patriarchy" (367).[14] This analysis becomes particularly questionable when we recall that Miranda is just fifteen years old.[15] I want to suggest that Miranda's age offers a more

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to men is to wonder at them" (156). Ann Thompson points, more generally, to the absence of female characters in the play, and asks what feminist criticism can do "in the face of a male-authored canonical text which seems to exclude women to this extent" (339). Thompson resolves to depart from a reading of the character herself and explore instead the "patterns of exploitation" (347) that make Miranda the foot to Prospero's head. These critics thus suggest that no form of resistance is possible for this character, entrenched as she is in the structures of patriarchal domination and control. In effect they erase Miranda from a feminist consideration of the play.

[14] Slights employs a "rehabilitated notion of character" (357), pointedly pursuing that which Ann Thompson carefully avoids: retrieving Miranda from postcolonial and feminist readings which largely discount her requires a particular focus on subjectivity, an understanding of Miranda as a "material girl" (362). Concluding her article with an analysis of Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda, Slights demonstrates how such critics as Leininger, Paul Brown, Kim F. Hall, and Jyotsna Singh have displaced Miranda even from this act of violence against her, "substituting an acknowledgment of Caliban as 'desiring subject' for a humane reading of Miranda" (374). Slights works, again, to reposition Miranda in the play, acknowledging her furious response to her victimization; but still, the solution is marriage: Miranda "actively chooses to be Ferdinand's wife so that she may play an active role in her own self-definition" (374). While her marriage proposal is certainly unconventional, it's still problematic, in a feminist reading, to situate Miranda's assertiveness and authority within the context of an entirely conventional, unsurprising romantic involvement, initiated and largely controlled by her father.

[15] Here I point to the increase in marriage ages in the early seventeenth century to over 25 for women and 27 for men in England (De Moor and Van Zanden 17; Ben-Amos 227), and to at least 19 for Italian women (De Moor and Van Zanden 18). Miranda is very young to be married, even considering that an aristocratic girl might marry somewhat earlier than others.

productive lens through which to view this character: I read her neither as a young woman at the threshold of marriage nor as child, but as a teenaged girl in the throes of self-fashioning.

Following Slights' focus on subjectivity, then, but leaving aside heterosexual desire and marriage, I suggest that Miranda's agency in the play derives from her efforts to define herself against Prospero's enforced norms of conduct and education for teenaged girls. Miranda resists her father, but this resistance does not inhere in straightforward teenaged rebelliousness; rather, she resists his view of her, and his attempts to define her. A teenager grappling with questions of identity, Miranda intervenes in Prospero's idea of just what a teenaged girl should be. The exposition in Act 1, Scene 2 becomes the site of a compelling struggle between father and child. Miranda, who has spent much of her life begging her father to relate the story of her early history, faces particular challenges in her efforts to understand herself. The daughter of an exiled Duke, who also happens to be a repressive and fearful parent, she has but little idea of her origins, or how she came to live on the island. Her tone is nearly accusatory as she reminds Prospero,

> You have often
> Begun to tell me what I am, but stopped,
> And left me to a bootless inquisition,
> Concluding, 'Stay, not yet.' (1.2.33-36).

He finally obliges with the tale of their exile, but as she listens to the story, Miranda works to take control of it and thus script an identity for herself, beyond

her father's instruction, and having seen no woman's face, "save, from my glass, mine own . . ." (3.1.48-50). A sense of self for this teenager turns not only on finally hearing Prospero's exposition, but on her own role as a listener. Miranda is, I believe, successful in her efforts to manipulate the narrative: in resisting Prospero's control of her history, she resists the terms on which he defines her. Finally, Miranda mirrors nobody but herself.

Prospero wishes to attach to Miranda an identity suited to her gender and status; thus he seeks to control the narrative of her origins. Complacently, Prospero informs his daughter that she is "ignorant of what thou art" (1.2.18); Ania Loomba senses his pride in having withheld Miranda's history for so long (154). When he finally does concede that "the hour's now come" (1.2.36), Prospero admonishes Miranda to "obey, and be attentive" (1.2.38), and then splinters his narrative with repeated assertions of authority: "Dost thou attend me?" "Thou attend'st not!" "Dost thou hear?" "Now I arise. Sit still" (1.2.78, 87, 106, 170-71). Anxiety permeates the scene: his fear of losing control of his teenaged daughter is palpable. That no assurance of Miranda's can suffice—she is listening "most heedfully"—points up Prospero's uncertainty about her obedience. His unease is sharp, for to tell the story is to risk a loss of authority; he must relinquish some of his power. Indeed, he disrobes before he begins, and Miranda herself will help "pluck [his] magic garment" from her father (1.2.25). As Günter Walch explains, Prospero "cannot rely on his magic powers in this particular situation . . . but has to rely on 'natural memory' like a common mortal. . . . the text also seems to show him labouring over (re)constructing the past"

(229-30).

Miranda takes advantage of Prospero in his 'mortal' state as storyteller: she plays a role in the reconstruction. She will not surrender this story to her father: it belongs to her—her own "worthily purchased" acquisition, as it were—and her frequent interruptions and perceptive questions give it shape. Narrative theory holds that "narrative discourse is infinitely malleable" (Abbott 17): while a story comprises a fixed sequence of events, its teller may manipulate the discourse he uses to relate that story. Before narrative, there is story, but stories are latent until narrative "leaves its mark" (Abbott 37). Miranda's is one such latent story until her father finally supplies a narrative; yet her involvement in the tale surpasses the deferential attentiveness he had in mind. While she does listen, she also interrupts: "Sir, are not you my father?" she inquires, and, later, "Wherefore did they not / That hour destroy us? (1.2.55, 38-39). Her questions propel his discourse, but, in an attempt to maintain control, Prospero insists on taking credit for them: "Well demanded, wench. / My tale provokes that question" (1.2.139-40). He nags her incessantly to pay attention, provoking her ironic response: "Your tale, sir, would cure deafness" (1.2.106). Miranda vies with her father to construct a narrative discourse for a story they hold in common. Her "More to know/ Did never meddle with my thoughts" (1.2.21-22) is clearly disingenuous; I cannot concur with Loomba's claim that Miranda has been "well prepared to accept [Prospero's] version of the past" (154). Rather, Miranda actively pursues a sense of her own subjectivity within that past.

As he recalls the circumstances of their exile, Prospero offers Miranda a

vision of herself: " . . . i'th' dead of darkness / The ministers for th' purpose hurried thence / Me and thy crying self" (1.2.130-32). Much struck, she seizes on the image: "Alack, for pity! / I not rememb'ring how I cried out then / Will cry it o'er again" (1.2.132-34); a few lines later, she continues, "Alack, what trouble / Was I then to you!" (1.2.151-52). Clearly interested in details of her early childhood, Miranda absorbs and analyzes Prospero's information. As Slights puts it, Miranda has a "strong sense of her own worth" (368); in this scene, Miranda uses her father's story to understand herself on her own terms. She paradoxically demonstrates her headstrong nature in her frequent tears: as Prospero figures her as a "crying self," so does she cry in response to this image; the scene also opens with her crying over the shipwreck—this despite his commands: "Be collected. / No more amazement. . . . Wipe thou thine eyes" (1.2.13-14, 25). Miranda's is a "piteous heart" that "bleeds," and this is a "self" she will sustain in the face of her father's objections. One of her interjections, as Prospero tries to quiet her, bisects his line:

> Prospero: There's no harm done.
> Miranda: O, woe the day!
> Prospero: No harm. (1.2.15)

Prospero's iterative "no harm" closes the argument, but not for long. Soon, we witness Miranda pained by the sight of Ferdinand bearing logs: "Alas, now pray you/ Work not so hard" (3.1.15-16). This compassionate girl is sure that even the logs he carries will "weep." She pleads for him to her father, hanging on Prospero's garments, even at the risk of engendering his hatred: "What, I say-- / My foot my tutor?" (1.2.469-70). She will weep yet again at Ferdinand's

declaration of love.

I suggest, then, that Miranda structures a sense of her own history and self by finding her way into this story. Drawing on the work of Gérard Genette,[16] we might think of Miranda as a kind of extradiegetic narrator: while Prospero, a character inside the diegesis, is our homodiegetic narrator, Miranda exists on its margins. In Genette's configuration, an extradiegetic narrator is not a character in the diegesis at all; while Miranda is a character, she cannot fully realize her position as such until she has appropriated the tale according to her own understanding. Prospero's tale is an example of what Genette calls a "metadiegetic narrative": it occurs within the larger diegesis, or second narrative (the play), and confers upon this second narrative "an *explanatory* function" (*Narrative Discourse* 232). Such a metadiegetic narrator most often recounts his own story, and he tells it to an "intradiegetic listener" who is usually "only a pretext for replying to the curiosity of the reader" (232). Since Prospero's narrative functions as an expository device, a way to bring the audience up to speed, Miranda, his listener, could operate in the scene as no more than a dramatic ploy. Yet Shakespeare does not position Miranda merely as a passive intradiegetic listener, present only to serve the exposition. In *The Tempest*'s expository scene, it is Miranda, the listener, who transforms story into narrative. Rawdon Wilson, in *Shakespearean Narrative*, maintains that "to be actual a narrative must be heard" (29); in Shakespeare's plays, "the importance of the

[16] In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette discusses narrative 'levels,' positing that a homodiegetic narrator "tells his own story" (84), while an extradiegetic narrator "is situated outside of the diegesis" (85).

auditor, whose ears must ultimately grant life to the tale, is repeatedly stressed" (26). We sense the playwright's awareness, Wilson writes, "that a narrative's prosperity lies in the ear of the hearer, not upon the tongue of the narrator" (27).[17] Shakespeare emphasizes Miranda's developing voice: she works her way back into the tale from its margins, vying with her father for narrative authority.

Prospero's attempts to control the story echo the play's concern with memory: indeed, Walch finds it "hard to think of any other play so haunted by the past" (228). Prospero retains power by withholding Miranda's history, but he then faces a new problem: she does not share his memories, and so does not fully understand her European heritage. In a play preoccupied with the non-European 'other,' Miranda herself may be read as one such other: culturally, she and Prospero are not as similar as he would like them to be. Though willing to recognize Caliban as his own—"this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275-76)—Prospero is strangely reluctant to provide a straight answer to Miranda's simple question: "Sir, are not you my father?" (1.2.55). He must sense the breach between them: she is, after all, an islander, "the recipient of a private aristocratic education, but ignorant of the past" (Walch 229). So Prospero seeks to erase Miranda's cultural difference by implanting a history, a heritage, of his choosing; as Walch writes, "We witness the magus equipping his daughter with a new identity by building a surrogate memory into her" (229). But Miranda can

[17] Wilson's examples of Shakespeare's attention to auditors, in addition to the Miranda's "Your tale, sir, would cure deafness," include Antony's "Lend me your ears" (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.73), Grumio's "Lend thine ear" (*Taming of the Shrew* 4.1.60), Desdemona's "greedy ear" (*Othello* 1.2.149), and the Prologue's command to the audience to attend "with patient ears" in *Romeo and Juliet*. A recent book on this subject is Laury Magnus and Walter W. Cannon's *Who Hears in Shakespeare? Auditory Worlds on Stage and Screen*.

work with this history; importantly, she is not totally devoid of memory. Prospero decides for himself that she will not remember "a time before we came unto this cell," but she surprises him: "Certainly, sir, I can" (1.2.39,41). Preempting the narrative thus, Miranda unsettles her father's easy assumption that she possesses no sense of her history. Evelyn B. Tribble is right to say that Miranda's memory, "shadowy and dim . . . stands as a mark of difference between the originary, monadic account about to be delivered and a barely registered female alternative" (157). And yet, while it may "barely register" with Prospero, Miranda's invocation of her memory is powerful: she may now emerge from its shadows and work to position herself within the heritage Prospero supplies.

Closely related to memory and story in the play is the question of Miranda's education on the island, which similarly serves Prospero's need to erase cultural difference. Prospero himself has been her "schoolmaster": he has made her "more profit / Than other princes can that have more time/ For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (1.2.172-74). But what has he taught his daughter? In her article "Single Parenting, Homeschooling: Prospero, Caliban, Miranda," Hiewon Shin points to Prospero's unorthodox educational methods. While Prospero feminizes Caliban by assigning him domestic tasks, he takes the opposite approach with Miranda, cultivating in her conventionally 'masculine' qualities: he encourages her to speak up rather than remain silent; he manages the household himself rather than instruct her in domestic life; he fails to inform her of the "gendered dichotomy of labor" (385); he teaches her to play chess. The result is an assertive, "rather modern" young woman. While I too read Miranda

as an unconventional early modern female figure, I give Prospero less credit than Shin does. Shin, for example, reads Prospero's repeated demands for Miranda's attention during his expository narrative as an objection to her silence, but surely Prospero is more interested in commanding her attention than in encouraging her participation in his tale. While certain aspects of Miranda's education are unusual—even radical, perhaps—Prospero still abides by the tenets of early modern thinking about the education of girls: his daughter should be silent, obedient, and, certainly, chaste. He must instill in Miranda traits befitting her sex and station; that is, he must reduce or eliminate her inherent cultural alterity.

Prospero's ideas on how a daughter should be educated appear more to emulate than depart from precepts established by Renaissance humanists. Valerie Wayne, writing on Juan Luis Vives' *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1585), explains that women were encouraged to read only religious texts which might "increase their virtue" (19); they could practice handwriting by "writing some sad, prudent, and chaste saying from the Bible or a philosophical treatise" (21) over and over, but to engage in any other writing, particularly secular writing, was "to be less, and more, than simply a good, chaste woman" (27). The educated Renaissance woman, Wayne states, "copies the words of another, who is surely of another sex, and she is to make his words a part of her mind and memory" (21). Just so does Prospero expect to inscribe memory and understanding onto the *tabula rasa* that is his daughter; for her part, Miranda need only "obey, and be attentive" (1.2.38). Indeed Miranda owes a kind of double obedience, for to her Prospero is both teacher and father; as Robert Cleaver insists

in *A Godly Forme of Houshold Government* (1621), children must know "that they are not at their owne libertie, to do as they list, so long as they haue a father and mother to rule them" (3) and that "they are their parents goods and possessions; and that they owe to them, euen their owne selues, and all that they are able to do; yea, and more then they are able" (2). And Prospero demands his daughter's silence as much as her obedience—"Silence! One word more/ Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee" (1.2.476-77)—recalling the frequent injunctions against women's speech in the period; as Vives quotes Paul, "Let a woman lerne in silence with al subjection" (25). Thomas Salter's popular conduct book for women, *The Mirrhor of Modestie* (1579), requires a woman not "to be a babbler or greate talker, but to consider that alwaies muche babbling and speaking is occasion of many faultes" (10). Miranda is certainly a "greate talker;" so her father, worn out from her questions, simply puts her to sleep.

When humanist conduct books discuss the education and deportment of women and girls, the central concern is, always, their chastity; as Wayne writes, "All of Vives' restrictions on the lives of women are given in the name of chastity" (24). "Take from a woman her beautie," writes Vives, "take from her kyndrede, riches, comelynes, eloquence, sharpenes of wytte, counnynge in her crafte, gyve her chastite, and thou hast gyven her al thynges" (27). Salter worries that education outside religious or domestic purposes is not only unnecessary for women, but may imperil their virtue; certainly there is "no Manne of reason and vnderstanding, but had rather loue a Mayden vnlearned and chast, theu one suspected of dishonest life, though neuer so famous and well learned in

Philosophie" (6). Prospero's insistence on, and fear for, Miranda's chastity aligns him with contemporary thinking; no doubt he has devoted a significant portion of his "tutoring" to the inculcation of this particular value. Well versed in the importance of her virginal status, Miranda is quick to respond to Ferdinand's query—nearly his first words to her, long before he even asks her name—if she "be maid or no": "No wonder, sir,/ But certainly a maid" (1.2.428-29). Having seen just three men and no women at all, Miranda yet fully understands this particular aspect of relations between them. "How features are abroad," she confesses to Ferdinand, "I am skilless of; but by my modesty, / The jewel in my dower, I would not wish / Any companion in the world but you" (3.1.52-55). Miranda's language evidences what she has learned from her father: that for females, chastity is all. And Prospero's concern for her virtue does not end with their betrothal; he qualifies the ratification of his "rich gift" to Ferdinand with an overt threat:

> If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
> All sanctimonious ceremonies may
> With full and holy rite be ministered,
> No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
> To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
> Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew
> The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
> That you shall hate it both. (4.1.15-22)

Prospero evinces an entirely conventional obsession with female chastity; in

insisting upon it as part of his daughter's education, he works to standardize her: she is not an islander, but an aristocratic Renaissance daughter/wife.

It makes sense, then, for Prospero to hand over the teaching of Caliban to his daughter, notwithstanding the editorial debate,[18] and in spite of Vives' invocation of Pauline doctrine: "Therfore a woman shulde nat teache, leste whan she hath taken a false opinion and beleve of any thyng, she spred hit in to the herars" (25). Miranda does teach Caliban, giving him words:

> I pitied thee,
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
> One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble likes
> A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
> With words that made them known. (1.2.354-57)

Why would Prospero, insistent as he is on Miranda's silence and obedience, allow her to teach Caliban language? Prospero himself has otherwise been Caliban's "schoolmaster," teaching him how "to name the bigger light and how the less, / That burn by day and night" (1.2.335-36). I believe that Miranda's instruction of Caliban furthers Prospero's pedagogical objective: Prospero fears that Miranda

[18] Though these words belong to Miranda in the 1623 Folio, editors have persisted in giving them to Prospero since John Dryden's 1667 revision of the play. And Stephen Orgel points out that "even in modern productions . . . the speech is often, still, not Miranda's but Prospero's" (17). Editors and directors who give this speech to Prospero perhaps disregard the attribute of pity, which is much more consistent with Miranda's character than Prospero's.

doesn't know herself either, in the sense that she should, and teaching her fellow 'other' will produce in *her* the correct "meaning" and "purposes." Without them, she would herself be "a thing most brutish," or, as Caliban imagines Prospero without his books, a "sot." As Caliban's teacher, she will reproduce the words her father has taught her, regurgitating a sense of European propriety and thus eradicating all signs of cultural difference in both her pupil and herself.

Yet the production of meaning we witness in both 'siblings' distorts Prospero's ideal. Miranda's speech to Caliban is a narrative of her own; recounting her history with Caliban allows her to reconstruct an aspect of her past as she herself remembers it. She does not exist on the margins of this story; she need not struggle to find her place in it. Narrating a story herself, about herself, Miranda leaves her father outside the diegesis and demonstrates the characteristics we saw emerging during Prospero's expository narrative. Her compassion features prominently: "I pitied thee" recalls the "piteous heart" that "suffered / With those I saw suffer" (1.2.5-6) during the shipwreck, and prefigures more tearful moments to come. The speech also substantiates Miranda's bold, outspoken nature: she's addressing her would-be rapist, after all, a "villain" she does "not love to look on" (1.2.308-09), yet she shows more anger than fear. There is no sign, in these lines, of the silence or subjection that would render her culturally appropriate. Instead Miranda claims the authority belonging to a teacher—and not just any teacher, but (like Marina) a good teacher, one who has succeeded with such a student as Caliban:

> But thy vile race—

Though thou didst learn—had that in't which good natures

Could not abide to be with . . . (1.2.357-59)

However vile he might be, he still "didst learn." Caliban, for his part, appropriates English in much the same way Miranda appropriates Prospero's expository tale. The transmission of European culture, originating with Prospero and filtered through Miranda, meets with limited success in Caliban: "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.362-63). Here is another child of Prospero's who possesses memory and a sense of his own history: "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother," he reminds Prospero, and goes on to recall that he "first was mine own king" (1.2.331, 342). Together, Caliban and Miranda undermine the European vision that "obliterates cultural alterity, reducing it almost to invisibility" (Maquerlot and Willems 7).

Miranda's assertiveness, then, is not a product of her father's educational practices, nor of her desire for, or impending marriage to, Ferdinand. Rather, Miranda defines herself in opposition to the normative standards of teenaged behavior espoused by her father, and that she does so through narrative manipulation. Miranda, even when contained within the promise of marriage, remains resolutely 'other,' in the sense that she resists enacting a homogenized, culturally suitable version of herself. Her final lines suggest not merely innocence, but possibility:

O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in't! (5.1.181-84)

Miranda herself—her name means 'to be wondered at'—is one such person, a member of this "brave new world." The island setting permits its European inhabitants an alternate view of themselves and their homeland; Peter Holland writes of journey plays that they "make particularly acute the sense of the originating culture, using the concept of the journey's end, the other place, as a means of redefining the journey's origin" (162). *The Tempest* particularly enables an atypical view of the early modern teenager; surely this "other place," in isolating Miranda from aristocratic European society, opens a space for her to develop in ways that must have been closed to her otherwise.

Prospero travels as a representative of his own culture, carrying it with him to the island; but for Miranda, the island is a world of possibility. Displaced from Milan, Miranda gains much, for the island is a freeing space that permits a comic testing of boundaries between old and new orders. Northrop Frye's concept of the drama of the green world, or second world, is pertinent here:

> Thus the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world. (*Anatomy of Criticism* 182)

The journey from normal world to green world is key for Miranda, not because she meets her husband and thus carries out her political purpose of restoring Prospero's dukedom, but because she encounters a space conducive to self-definition. Frye explains that "the entire cast follows Prospero into his retreat,

and is shaped into a new social order there" (185), and it is true that the social reconstruction, the comic resolution, turns Miranda into a wife; but it is also true that the space of the green world helps her resist seeing herself as Prospero sees her: as obedient daughter and wife only. She forges her own new order, refashioning existing ideas of what it should mean to be young. The 'normal world,' represented to Miranda in the form of Alonso and company near the end of the play, is, as her father acknowledges, "new to thee" (5.1.184).

Miranda, in a play populated with resistant figures, reimagines resistance as youthful self-fashioning. More successful in her efforts than her fellow islanders—Ariel will be "correspondent to command" (1.2.297) and Caliban will "seek for grace"— (5.1.295), Miranda deflects Prospero's imposition of will by forging a youthful identity outside and beyond his expectations, and the corresponding normative expectations of Shakespeare's England. Such resistant behavior, I have argued, typifies Perdita and Marina as well: both navigate around prescriptive roles. All three girls' assertiveness and capacity for self-definition emerges in the context of narrative. The metatheatrical style of both *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles* has the effect of destabilizing the roles of their teenaged characters: the lost princesses find new ways to recast themselves in old stories. And in Shakespeare's final romance, a journey play, we find that Prospero's story too is a traveller, and must adapt to new contexts and new tellers; Miranda claims the tale and establishes herself within it. Prospero is unwise to assume that the tale belongs only to him, or to a certain place, or to a certain time. He has brought it to the island, and given it to his daughter. She adapts it, and adopts it, in the

liberating context of this “brave new world,” where, as Frye writes, “there is no sovereignty, and yet where all of us are kings” (*On Shakespeare* 186).

Conclusion

"As young as I am," says Falstaff's page in his soliloquy in *Henry V*, "I have observed these three swashers. I am boy to them all three, but all they three, though they should serve me, could not be man to me, for indeed three such antics do not amount to a man" (3.2.27-30). In this surprising speech, the boy pointedly questions both his subordinate status as youth and the ostensible manhood of the rogues he serves. Deconstructing their masculinity with a detailed report of their petty crimes and cowardice, the page redefines his masters as 'antics,' or buffoons, and himself as a man: even in the first line of his monologue the boy qualifies his identity as youth, and by its end he has dispensed with it entirely and elected to leave his current service: "They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves of their handkerchiefs—which makes much against my manhood" (43-45).

The page's role is short but significant: Mark Lawhorn notes that while he speaks just twenty-nine lines, he is on stage for seven of the play's seventeen scenes, a notable presence (149). In terms of the argument I have been sketching in this project, the boy's importance inheres in his complexity: Shakespeare's portrayal of the page signals his interest in a more than merely formulaic youthful subjectivity. This boy exemplifies the possibility of an individuated, even a private youthful self, an idea that occasioned anxiety and fear among early moderns: bearer of his masters' secrets, the page could at any time divulge the villainy of the three 'swashers' (Bardolph, Pistol, and Nim), and is therefore suggestive of the much feared figure of the gossiping young servant. And he is

mobile, unfettered: disenchanted with his current position, he states simply that he will leave and find a better one. Indeed, Lawhorn suggests that the page's presence in the play "prompted dramatic tension associated with societal concerns regarding youth and vagrancy" (150). This boy, "sometimes witty, sometimes wise, often silent and yet very present" (Lawhorn 157), points to the problem of unstable youthful subjectivity in the period, a problem early moderns were only too willing to conceal behind moralizing sermons and the stock figures of early drama.

But like Falstaff's boy, many young characters in Shakespeare exist outside the straightforward didacticism of early modern morality plays and conduct literature. These characters perhaps issue from Marlowe's innovative representation of a precocious Prince Edward, who, raised to believe in a narrative of his own vulnerability, proves capable of resisting both this rendition of himself and the tyrants who would rob him of his kingdom. Marlowe insistently queers young Edward, generating a troubling instability in his character that makes possible the boy's self-fashioning. Marlowe insists on producing a profoundly ambiguous subjectivity for the prince; while we might expect the boy to function as a corrective to his father's queerness—a lens through which both historical sources and critics of the play have sought to read him—Edward instead remains resolutely strange.

In Shakespeare's rendering of Prince Hal, we hear echoes of Marlowe's prince: seemingly the uncomplicated embodiment of familiar cultural narratives of youth, including prodigality and recklessness, Hal instead retreats into a

condition of anonymity. Perhaps he is the ideal filial prince, or perhaps a young Machiavel; critics continue to seek the truth of Hal's identity. I have argued, however, that no such truth is to be found in the trilogy; rather, in Hal Shakespeare creates an unknowable figure. Hal shares with Anne Page of *The Merry Wives* a predilection for disguise; both characters navigate around imposed, absolutist versions of youthful identity. Rejecting essentialized, oversimplified constructions of self, both characters are assisted by the constant circulation of gossip in their worlds. In both plays, gossip effectively disperses knowledge and eliminates defining narratives of the two teenaged characters.

Destabilizing talk is at work in *Romeo and Juliet* as well, but in this play such language belongs to the protagonists themselves. While Romeo and Juliet feel familiar to us today—we tend to think of them as quintessential teenagers—I have argued that they likely struck Shakespeare's original audiences as troubling, unsettling figures, for the play dramatizes a private teenaged subjectivity. Indeed, the individuation of youth in *Romeo* inheres in privacy: both private language—secrets, lies, and confessions—and private spaces, set carefully in opposition to the public spaces of the adult world.

Finally, this project has examined the self-fashioning of teenaged girls in the late romances. Miranda, Marina, and Perdita all have parts to play in Shakespeare's adaptation of familiar folktales and folktale motifs; rather than settle into established folktale princess roles, however, these girls constitute themselves as subjects by intervening in hegemonic narratives, and by seizing narrative authority for themselves. The playwright's metatheatrical strategy in

each play supports his reimagining of female teenaged identity, his questioning of standard depictions of this age group.

What do we stand to lose if we think about these characters, and all the characters in my study, as children, or as women and men, instead of as teenagers? To be a teenager is to exist in a liminal state; it is a stage of life where identity is fluid, unformed, replete with possibility. Miranda the child is no more than Prospero's foot; Miranda the woman is merely Ferdinand's wife. But if we read her as a teenager, we broaden our interpretive scope. The categories of 'child,' 'woman,' and 'man'—while perhaps always to some degree negotiable in Marlowe and Shakespeare—offer nothing like the flexibility of youth. And so, if we overlook the age of youth, we lose the possibility of multiplicity, of nuance; we lose the opportunity to recognize, in their intensely rendered young characters, Marlowe's and Shakespeare's keen interest in individuals, their disdain for types. And we lose the chance to see where, perhaps, it originated, this notion we carry with us today of the ambiguous, the unfathomable, the inexplicable teen. Teenaged characters in the Marlovian and Shakespearean drama intervene, forcefully, in their culture's ideas of who they are, or ought to become; they make their presence felt, they speak their way into being, even as young as they are.

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