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By

Cody Ganger

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**“I Have Suffered With Those That I Saw Suffer”:
Proximity, Trauma, and Shakespeare’s Tragic Women**

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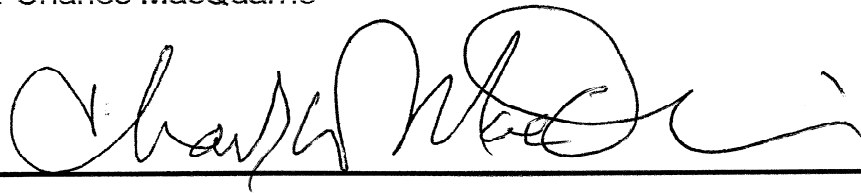
**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English
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Shakespeare's Tragic Women**

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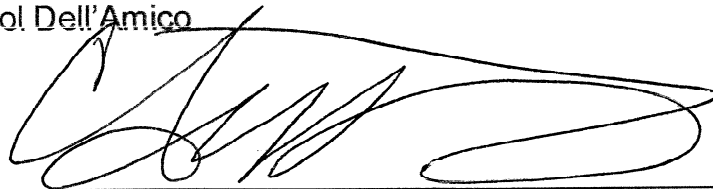


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Prologue

In the summer of 2009, I played Regan in a production of *King Lear* and as I worked on and rehearsed this character, I felt a great deal of heartbreak, desperation, and empathy for her. I was captivated by the character and the play as a whole. When I began the English Graduate program in Winter 2014 and was asked to choose one classic work of literature to focus on in English 500, I quickly chose *King Lear* with the intention of researching scholarly material on the three women in the play. What I quickly realized was that there is a wealth of scholarship focused on Cordelia, but very little focused on Goneril and Regan. Any mention of Lear's elder daughters are always as one-dimensional foils to Cordelia, and always occur off-handedly, almost as a footnote to what the author finds actually interesting—Cordelia. Douglas Parker's article, "The Third Suitor in *King Lear* Act 1, Scene 1" gets close to providing some true insight into Goneril and Regan when he describes how similar they are to their father (140). However, before he can analyze them with any real depth, he states that he agrees with traditional scholars who believe "Goneril and Regan are untrustworthy in general and insensitive to human needs and feelings" (144). This kind of surface-level glossing over of the elder daughters made me interested in doing further research into their characters.

There seems to be a general resistance to humanizing or analyzing the motivations and inner lives of these "evil" women. In my opinion, if Shakespeare wrote such a fully developed character in Cordelia, who only appears alive in four scenes of the play, surely he did not intend the major characters of Goneril and Regan, characters who drive so much of the action, to be viewed in such a shallow light. The scholarship generally points to the

assumption that Goneril and Regan are, at the outset of the play (and presumably from birth), evil. I began to ask myself, how much are they also victims?

Because I had approached the play as an actor, seeking to bring reality to the character I played, it seemed obvious to me that Goneril and Regan have experienced a traumatic emotional wound before the play begins, by being raised with the knowledge that their father loves their youngest sister best. How does this trauma impact and shape them, without excusing them from the horrendous deeds they commit? Reflecting on other women in Shakespeare's tragedies, I began to see a trend in traumatic experiences. It seemed like "good" women (i.e. Cordelia, Ophelia, Lavinia) experience their trauma onstage, in front of the audience, and then process it in a sympathetic way, as a victim. On the other hand, "evil" women (i.e. Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, Tamora) experience their trauma offstage or before the play has begun, with apparently devastating consequences to their moral character. I became interested in the extent to which one can humanize, justify, or otherwise analyze the inner lives of Shakespeare's "evil" women, and how the nature of a character's trauma informs their portrayal as victim or villain.

Furthermore, I became interested in whether the field of study changes the way these characters are interpreted. Was my view as an actor so different from the general scholarly consensus because of a fundamentally different training and philosophy of approaching the text? Certainly, the fields of Shakespeare as literature and Shakespeare in performance should not be so far removed that their approaches and conclusions cannot supplement one another. Scholarly readings of Shakespeare may enhance performances and performances may inform and guide scholarly readings.

This question has since clarified after a year of further meditation and research. Here, I intend to separate Shakespeare's female characters into two archetypes—the victim and the villain. Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *King Lear* are ideal subjects for this analysis because they are all plays in which both archetypes exist side-by-side, whose traumas can be easily compared. Through an exploration of modern trauma and performance theory, I propose a new reading of the plays' female characters, wherein the audience's proximity to the characters' traumas affects their empathy for the characters, re-affirming these archetypes.

Act 1

Laying A Foundation: Background and Theory

Cathy Caruth's groundbreaking 1996 work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* sets the precedent for trauma theory as it is known today. Although more current scholars¹ have updated and corrected aspects of her theories to account for more current psychological research, *Unclaimed Experience* remains seminal to the literary study of trauma.

The term "trauma," from the Greek, originally referred to a physical injury or wound, although Freud's work re-defined the term as "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth 3). Caruth uses Freud to establish her premise that a traumatic event that occurs in isolation is processed in such a way that causes prolonged psychological suffering different than that which does not occur in isolation. The following excerpt explains how Caruth came to this conclusion:

In the third chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud describes a pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals. Perplexed by terrifyingly literal nightmares of battlefield survivors and the repetitive reenactments of people who have experienced painful events, Freud wonders at the peculiar and sometimes uncanny way in which catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those who have passed through them. (1)

¹ Harvard University professor of psychology Richard McNally attacks Caruth's claims of traumatic amnesia (a topic that I am not working with in this paper), but his emphasis is in real-world psychology, whereas Caruth writes about literary characters. Boston University lecturer in the humanities Joshua Pederson's revised theory is a more valuable resource for updating *Unclaimed Experience*, but his article merely expands upon Caruth's work without attempting to discredit it.

Caruth interprets Freud's "repetitive reenactments" as "a human voice that cries out from the wound" (3). As the subtitle of her book suggests, Caruth emphasizes personal narrative—each "wound" is a story that needs to be told by the person who experiences it. Of course, this also implies that the sufferer needs a listener, a witness, an audience to hear his or her story. Her theory asserts that hidden trauma needs to be expressed in order for the sufferer to be able to heal and not replay the vicious cycle. For Shakespeare's characters, performances provide a physical, literal outlet for this theory to play out. Characters' traumatic experiences either occur onstage or offstage, either hidden from the audience or shared with the audience. Those characters whose traumas are hidden from the audience cry out from the wound through their actions, without ever being heard, whereas those characters whose traumas are shared with the audience escape the fate of repeating them, and usually find some form of healing or veneration.

There may be some question as to whether modern trauma theory can, in good conscience, be applied to classical characters. Menachem Ben-Ezra, professor at the School of Social Work at the Ariel University Center of Samaria, in his review of literary trauma, identifies the validity of applying modern theory to ancient texts, finding substantial evidence for psychological trauma dating back to antiquity. He even points to sleep disorders in Shakespeare as a symptom of PTSD (235). This is a direct example from one of the plays under analysis in this paper—Lady Macbeth's famous sleepwalking scene. Ben-Ezra's article focuses on classic literature more as proof that post-traumatic stress is a condition that has existed since antiquity, and less as a study of the literary characters themselves.

Applying these theories to Shakespeare's characters requires a certain amount of psychoanalysis, or at least the admission that fictional characters have sufficient psychological complexity to read as trauma sufferers. Scholars have been divided on the answer to this question since the early 20th century.

L.C. Knights, a Shakespeare scholar writing in the 1930s, reacted strongly against what he considered the then-popular trend of over-emphasizing Shakespeare's psychological realism, neglecting what Knights considered far more important—Shakespeare's poetry. His famous essay "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth" directly argues against the criticism that concerns itself with Shakespeare's characters, and especially against those that work under the premise that Shakespeare's characters are "real people." His assertion:

The only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems, of his use of language to obtain a total complex emotional response. Yet the bulk of Shakespeare criticism is concerned with his characters, his heroines, his love of Nature, or his 'philosophy'—with everything in short, except the words on the page, which it is the main business of the critic to examine. (11)

His essay criticizes his contemporaries, especially Ellen Terry, an actress and scholar who, in her lectures, "exercises extensive 'anterior speculation' by asking questions like, 'whether Portia or Bellario thought of the famous quibble' or 'how did the Boy in Henry V learn to speak French?'" (Knights 3). E.C. Pettet nicely defines this term, "anterior speculation" as the "critical game of constructing a world outside the given material of the play" (192). Pettet was writing thirty years after Knights, and yet his book *Shakespeare and*

the Romance Tradition holds firmly to Knights's authority in how to approach a Shakespearean text.

Knights marks a vital rift in the field of Shakespeare studies. His influence should not be underestimated. Leonard F. Dean's 1958 article "*Macbeth* and Modern Criticism" describes Knights's article as a major movement in Shakespearean criticism and Norman Holland's book *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* calls Knights's essay the "*locus classicus*" of Shakespeare studies (296). Today, critics like Pascale Aebischer in *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance*, continue to use Knights's framework to dismiss performers' tendencies to treat the characters as real people. Aebischer observes, "As recent productions of *King Lear* show, the type of reading that in academia was discredited by L.C. Knights as long ago as 1933 seems to thrive in today's mainstream theatre that generally seems to be centered on 'truthful' character rather than plot" (176). I don't understand why the two are mutually exclusive, but it appears that there is a rift in how we think about Shakespeare—one that, if Aebischer's comments are any indication, are rife with condescension for the opposing opinion. Knights's essay, heavy with condescension itself, may have been the divisive work that drew a sharp line between Shakespeare-as-Literature and Shakespeare-as-Performance, a line that still exists today. His legacy haunts performers and other Shakespearean scholars whose often more humanized, three-dimensional interpretations of Shakespeare's characters are dismissed as childish imagination.

Though Knights would certainly balk at my questions about trauma and Shakespeare's characters, Ellen Terry and the critics that also view Shakespeare through the lens of performance would likely agree that Shakespeare's characters are valid

candidates for psychoanalysis. Some of these critics writing throughout the last century include John Russel Brown and Arthur Colby Sprague, who were both writing in the 1960s, contemporaries to Dean and Pettet, and argued that Shakespeare cannot be separated from performance, and insisted that his real, human characters were the most important aspect of his plays on the Elizabethan stage.

Perhaps the most well-known critic in this tradition, polarizing as his extreme views may be, is Harold Bloom, author of *Shakespeare: Invention of the Human*. As his title suggests, Bloom argues that Shakespeare invented character, personality, and Western identity as it is understood today. Bloom's main argument is that Shakespeare should be studied primarily as a poet. Though Bloom admits Shakespeare's linguistic superiority, he holds that Shakespeare's poetry is not what has made his lasting impact. It's the *people* in his plays—his characters—that have affected civilization and shaped Western culture. Bloom justifies his priority of character by explaining that “[Shakespeare's] few peers—Homer, the Yahwist, Dante, Chaucer, Cervantes, Tolstoy, perhaps Dickens—remind us that the representation of human character and personality remains always the supreme literary value, whether in drama, lyric, or narrative” (3-4). In other words, the element that makes a work of literature endure through the centuries, that makes an impact on history, is primarily the portrayal of humanity and character. How could Bloom disapprove of applying trauma theory to Shakespeare's characters when he views them as such complete and real people?

Unfortunately, the divide between literature and performance persists even with Bloom. In his study of Shakespeare's plays, he forgets or ignores that the medium of performance is as important a way of experiencing and studying Shakespeare as is reading

from the page. Of *King Lear*, Bloom says, "I emphasize reading, more than ever, because I have attended many stagings of *King Lear* and invariably have regretted being there. Our directors and actors are defeated by this play, and I begin sadly to agree... that we ought to keep rereading *King Lear* and avoid its staged travesties" (476). This argument is patently illogical. Simply because one has never seen a performance that meets his or her expectations does not justify divorcing the historical reality that Shakespeare's works were originally performed. *King Lear*, or even far more difficult plays to stage in today's world, like the *Henry VI* trilogy, should still be approached with the mindset that performance was necessary to the play's origin and is therefore necessary to its interpretation.

This is not to say that actors and directors are not often guilty of leaning too far to the opposite side of the spectrum. Especially in today's theatrical climate where "traditional" is a dirty word, directors' interpretations and actors' choices based too much on their "gut" often result in productions that lack the focus and depth that Shakespeare's words deserve. Ideally, actors would respect Shakespeare's plays as literature and scholars would respect them as performance.

Demonstrating this balance by including performative perspective in Shakespearean analysis is contemporary scholar Carol Chillington Rutter, who, in her book *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage*, discusses the actor as real, living body and especially focuses on plays or scenes in which able-bodied actors portray disabled or dead characters: "A real body fakes the role of bogus corpse" (2). This analysis has broader implications for Shakespeare studies. Clearly, it is important to look at Shakespeare's

characters as “real”² because of Shakespeare’s understanding of human nature or complexity in his portrayal (both of which are certainly *part* of the reason Shakespeare’s characters should be considered real people) but because they are living bodies. Real people embody the characters, and therefore, in some sense they are *real* in a physical, literal way. As Ellen Terry states, “[An actress’s] task is to learn how to translate this character into herself, how to make its thoughts her thoughts, its words her words” (80). Living, physical actor must absorb Shakespeare’s language to present the living, physical character.

If one considers these concepts only hypothetically, without training in performance, “translating [a] character into” oneself may sound highly subjective and emotional in nature, with little method or reasoning required. This assumption may account for some of the animosity between performers of Shakespeare and scholars of Shakespeare. Pragmatically, any solid actor training includes training in how to methodically ground a performance in the text of the work being performed. This training, at least in Western theatre, where Shakespeare is still held as the cornerstone of the dramatic canon, will inevitably be based in the works of the seminal director and actor trainer Konstantin Stanislavski. Acclaimed actor (and grandson of Ellen Terry) John Gielgud declares Stanislavski the “authority” in acting method (ix). Indeed, it would not be too extreme to claim that Stanislavski is to actor training what Shakespeare is to the genre of drama.

Although he worked in the early 1900s, Stanislavski’s methods are appropriate for actors

² I wish that there was a clearer term for what I want to communicate when I discuss Shakespeare’s characters as “real people.” Of course, Shakespeare’s characters are fictional. They are certainly effective representations of real people, and real readers and audience members throughout history have identified themselves in them. The important point of this “realness” is that they also have full, though fictional, lives beyond the words on the page, just as if one day of my life were recorded, I would still have a full life before and after that one day.

of any genre or period, and Gielgud even specifically insists that they are suited to Shakespeare (xiii).

Stanislavski's method, by which almost every other "method" has sprung, is based on a thorough study and preparation of the given text. Stanislavski calls the first step of a rehearsal process "Mining the Text," which is "the kind of analysis [an actor] might apply to a script, either collectively with the director or independently as part of [his or her] own detective work." Although mining the text is "essentially head-led work... its reverberations are profoundly psycho-physical" (Merlin 55). This *mining the text* is essentially close-reading, requiring an actor to discover every possible clue a playwright has left for him or her about a character, from which to then develop and embody. The term "given circumstances" applies to the events of the play, or the specific words on the page. In order to truthfully develop a character, Stanislavski instructs that it is "necessary to find out what underlies [the given circumstances of a play], gave rise to them, is hidden behind them" (18). The idea of anterior speculation, as Knights would say, as a concept removed from the script—merely the fanciful imaginings of a wishful actor—contradicts the very foundation of any actor training. Any life that an actor imagines for his or her character that has occurred offstage, of which there are no written words, must necessarily be derived and supported fully by the text.

I will provide a brief example of the thought process an actor might go through in mining the text, which comes from Harvey Rovine's book, *Silence in Shakespeare: Drama, Power, and Gender*. It is largely a linguistic analysis, as the book focuses on how Shakespeare uses meter to direct his actors (another concept any trained Shakespearean actor would be familiar with). Shakespeare's meter is one of the many aspects of the script

scene, but the working-through of the characters' thoughts is a clear example of a Stanislavskian process.

Using the text to support lives outside of the play is essential to this thesis because my central claim argues that some of Shakespeare's characters have experienced a trauma offstage, away from the audience. There are no written words that show the trauma occurring, only clues that Shakespeare has left that it occurred before, at some previous time. These clues alone suggest that Shakespeare knew that his characters had lives before the play began, and the implications made by these clues are as valuable of evidence as the text of the clues themselves.

The final ingredient to the theory connecting proximity, trauma, and Shakespeare's characters is the *proximity*. The proximity of living audience to living actor, sharing a performance space, influences the empathy of the audience toward a particular character. Shakespeare's plays first occurred as performances, and the audience, "groundlings" far more vocally and physically involved in the action of the plays than modern audiences would ever dare to be, actively participated in their own theatrical experience. Today, the role of the audience remains a real component in Shakespeare's plays. Rob Conkie's "Red Button Shakespeare" addresses and refutes claims that performance is impenetrable to criticism because of the variable nature of live performance³. He uses a method he terms

³ Personally, I questioned whether I could discuss live performances for this paper. Everyone who studies *King Lear* as a work of literature works from the same words on a page, that document providing a foundation for scholarly conversation about the play. If someone were reading an article about the text of *King Lear*, all they need is to look to the script for reference and they would be on roughly the same page as the writer. Live performance, however, is an entirely different beast. Each performance of *King Lear* will be different—different actors giving a different look and voice to the characters, different directors giving different staging to the scenes, different budgets and venues providing varying degrees of reality to technical elements, etc. Furthermore, each performance exists only for a moment for the particular audience present,

“Red Button” to provide detailed, play-by-play action of a scene from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, performed at the Globe in 2008, from multiple perspectives as recorded by him as an audience member sitting in various places in the theatre, reactions of other specific audience members, along with other recorded reviews of the production and screenshots from the Globe archives. His documentation of this live theatre experience confirms the value of the position of an audience member. As a groundling, standing at the edge of the stage, he records, “Here, front and centre, and so often directly appealed to, this position foregrounded the notion of empathy, sympathy, and identification with the dispossessed or those suffering within the play” (134). The further back in the audience Conkie sits (the further he physically moves from the action), the more distanced he feels from the characters’ experiences. His recorded observations and screenshots of fellow audience members’ reactions seem to indicate the same trend. Those standing at the foot of the stage displayed the most horror at the play’s violence and the most emotion to the play’s tragic ending. Proximity clearly influences empathy. The distance only grows as the characters’ experiences are removed offstage or before the action of the play begins.

Of course, my theory of audience proximity to a character’s trauma is not contingent upon the audience members at the front of a theatre compared to those at the back of a theatre. However, evidence suggesting that a closer physical distance to events enhances empathy supports the overall claim, because how much less empathy must an audience feel for a character whose trauma occurred off-stage, out of sight, and distanced by time as well as space? In a review of empathy literature, Jakob Eklund defines the contemporary

and then is gone. Text is permanent; performance is temporary. Reading how other scholars had approached live performances in their writing provided good examples for me to work from and gave me confidence that I could, in good conscience, use live performances for my arguments.

understanding of *empathy* as “feelings similar to those of the other person, a special feeling of compassion, understanding, or care” (29). As audience members, we weep in Act 5 of *King Lear* because we feel his pain. We care deeply that Cordelia has been killed, and understand his confusion and despair.

Shakespeare himself invokes the imagination of his audience in the text of his plays. In *King Henry V*, the Chorus speaks directly to the audience throughout the play, asking them to buy into the reality presented by the acting company. The Chorus, in the opening lines of the play, declares:

O, for a muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention!
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars, and at his heels,
Leashed in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire
Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,
The flat, unraised spirits that hath dar'd
On this unworthy scaffold, to bring forth
So great an object: Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram,
Within this wooden O, the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?

O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
 Attest, in little place, a million;
 And let us, cyphers to this great accompt,
 On your imaginary forces work.
 Suppose within the girdle of these walls
 Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies,
 Whose high, upreared, and abutting fronts
 The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
 Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
 Into a thousand parts divide one man,
 And make imaginary puissance;
 Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
 Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
 Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
 Turning th' accomplishment of many years
 Into an hour-glass: for the which supply,
 Admit me Chorus to this history,
 Who, prologue-like, your humble patience pray,
 Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play. (1.Prologue)

Shakespeare, as a playwright and actor, laments his inability to truly capture history. He admits his own and his acting company's shortcomings in imitating some of the greatest events in England's history. His first invocation is to a greater muse than he who could, like

magic, make the events really appear before an audience. If “Harry,” King Henry himself, could appear before the audience, it would be a greater spectacle than a mere performance (ln. 1-8). Instead, actors, “flat, unraised spirits” and a stage, “this unworthy scaffold” are the only tools at Shakespeare’s disposal to retell “so great an object” (9, 10, 11). This prologue asks, how can this play possibly work? And in asking how *King Henry V* works, he asks how the entire premise of theatre works, and has always worked since its first creation. How does a playwright and a group of actors (although today there is a much larger team involved) create a meaningful work of art and an entertaining experience for an audience? He answers this question: “On your imaginary forces work” (18). The rest of the Chorus’s prologue invites the audience to join them, to “piece out [the actors’] imperfections with [their] thoughts,” to agree that while in this shared space, for this shared time, they really are all in a tavern in East-cheap, or on a battlefield in France, or in King Henry’s throne room (23). The prologue is a powerful view into Shakespeare’s own perception of the audience—how truly involved they are. Shakespeare gives his audience a responsibility to be more than merely spectators, but also participants in the act of creation. The audience must play a role in the creation of Shakespeare’s characters, as either villain or victim. If a character is to be a villain, she must be hated by the audience, and she cannot be so without the audience’s hatred. Likewise, if a character is to be a victim or martyr, she must be loved by the audience and it must empathize with her pain.

Shakespeare’s own Miranda, in *The Tempest*, is one of the many characters who act as audience themselves. Miranda witnesses a horrifying shipwreck, and Shakespeare’s understanding of proximity and trauma can be summed up in her powerful line, “O, I have suffered/ With those that I saw suffer!” (1.2.5-6). The audience, like Miranda, only suffers

with those it sees suffer, most evident in the plays in which Shakespeare pairs his female archetypes side by side, leaving those characters with hidden traumas with no witness, no empathizer to stop the cycle of cruelty and violence.

Shakespeare anticipates the insights of modern trauma scholars—the absence of an audience witness leaves the character never having had the opportunity to speak her painful experience. The lack of a witness is instrumental in Shakespeare’s creation of villainous characters and compelling works of theatre. On the one hand, the “villain” replays her own personal tragedy in the same way that Freud reflected upon the nightmares of traumatized individuals, causing further destruction to herself and others, whereas the “victim” escapes this cycle entirely, the audience’s witness creating a path to process her sufferings in a healthy, redemptive way. At the same time, this pattern serves Shakespeare’s work as a playwright because in order for a villain to be interesting, she must have some depth and weakness to create drama and conflict. This interest is precisely the result of deep-seated trauma. Of course, there might be other ways to create interesting villains. This particular choice, then—the unwitnessed pain of Shakespeare’s female villains—shows his uncanny insight into what would later become modern trauma theory.

For the practical portion of this paper, I will perform primarily a close-reading of three plays in which both an “evil” and a “good” woman play prominent roles—*Titus Andronicus*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Naming archetypes for Shakespeare’s women is difficult and I have struggled with titles since the beginning of this project’s conception. Ellen Terry categorized women in the comedies as “Triumphant” and women in the

tragedies as “Pathetic,” but also found that labeling Shakespeare’s women felt too simplistic: “Shakespeare’s characters are far too idiosyncratic to fit this or that mould” (80). I agree wholeheartedly, but have nevertheless decided on terms to facilitate my argument. The *villain* archetype seems simple enough for the “evil” women, but for the “good” women, sometimes *victim* feels appropriate, sometimes *martyr*, and sometimes these titles will have to suffice where really the character is neither truly a victim or martyr. In essence, the audience reviles the villain archetype and sympathizes with the victim archetype.

Act 2

The Women and Wounds of *Titus Andronicus*

In my first phase of analysis, I will discuss *Titus Andronicus*, which features two women who embody Shakespeare's opposing archetypes—Tamora, the villain and Lavinia, the martyr. Lavinia, who loses her ability to communicate early in the play, has still drawn far more scholarly attention than Tamora⁴, who controls most of the plot of the play. In several scenes, which I will discuss in more detail, Shakespeare pits the two women directly against one another as predator and prey. Tamora ascends as empress of Rome, while orchestrating a systematic assault on Titus's family, leaving several children killed, several others exiled, Titus himself mutilated, and ordering the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, who ends the play triumphant and vindicated, albeit dead, through her father's revenge on Tamora.

The plot of the play alone is enough to identify Tamora as a villain and Lavinia as an innocent victim, but nowhere is it more clear that Shakespeare has placed these two as archetypal binaries as in the classic allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Shakespeare generously borrows from Ovid's story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomel throughout the play, depicting Lavinia as the violated Philomel and Tamora as the wicked Tereus. In Act 2, Scene 2, Bassianus and Lavinia have discovered Tamora and Aaron in the forest. Chiron and Demetrius, directed earlier by Aaron, appear under the guise of defending their mother,

⁴ Although Lavinia garners the majority of scholarly interest, Jane Grogan provides an interesting historical observation about Tamora, which attempts to treat her with some sympathy. She discusses Tamora's similarity to the Persian queen Tomyris, a legendary queen who forced Cyrus to eat his children in revenge. Unfortunately, the similarities between Tamora and Tomyris end at their names. If Shakespeare borrows from this story at all, he has subverted the Tomyris story, making Tamora the Cyrus, forced to eat her children, and Titus the justified Tomyris.

murder Bassianus, and drag Lavinia off, announcing their intention to rape her. Despite the fact that Chiron and Demetrius are the real physical threats, Lavinia begs Tamora for mercy: "O Tamora, be called a gentle queen,/ And with thine own hands kill me in this place.../ O, keep me from their worse-than-killing lust,/ And tumble me into some loathsome pit/ Where never man's eye may behold my body./ Do this, and be a charitable murderer" (Shakespeare 2.2.168-169, 175-178). Her pleas are reminiscent of Philomel's pleas to Tereus in *Metamorphoses*: "You traitor, why not take, to crown your crimes,/ My life as well? Would God you'd taken it/ Before you wreaked your wickedness: my ghost/ Had then been free from guilt" (138). By comparing Tamora to Tereus, with Chiron and Demetrius merely playing puppet to their mother's desires, Shakespeare colludes Tamora in Lavinia's rape, to the point that she carries equal or more blame than her sons who commit the physical act. If Lavinia is Philomel, the violated, Tamora is Tereus, the violator.

The *Metamorphoses's* allusions center on a sexual encounter, and the characters' sexual identities are highly suggestive of their archetypal roles, further highlighted in Shakespeare's use of other classical allusions. Shakespeare compares Lavinia to mythical figures Lucrece and Virginia (Shakespeare 4.1.63-64; 5.3.49). These characters, along with the aforementioned Philomel, are sexual innocents who are raped; Lucrece commits suicide and Virginia's father kills her to save her from her shame. Titus follows this tradition by killing Lavinia, explaining, "Killed her for who my tears have been made blind./ I am as woeful as Virginius was,/ And have a thousand times more cause than he/ To do this outrage, and it now is done" (5.3.48-51). Killed as a sacrifice for the sins committed against her, Lavinia's death is a martyrdom. In sharp contrast to Lavinia's innocence, Tamora is depicted as highly sexual, explicitly having an affair with Aaron, by whom she

bears a child out of wedlock. Shakespeare draws another classical allusion by comparing Tamora to the unfaithful wife of Actaeon (2.2.66-71). His allusions would have been apparent to the educated, upper-class Elizabethan audiences, and certainly should draw readers' attentions to the ways his characters are pitted against one another on a nearly mythical scale.

In order to oppose Lavinia and Tamora's archetypal characters in the realm of performance, Shakespeare utilizes his audience. The relationship between living actor and living audience manipulates these otherwise straightforward characters, and allows Shakespeare to write *real* people without losing his archetypes, which otherwise could potentially be flat and arid. The proximity of the audience to the character's trauma manipulates its relationship to that character. Lavinia experiences two horrific events within quick succession, both exposed onstage, physically close to the audience. First, in Act 2, Scene 2, Lavinia's husband, Bassianus, is murdered before her eyes. The audience's experience of this event is identical to that of Lavinia. We see it alongside her. Lavinia describes the depth of this experience as "Poor I was slain when Bassianus died" (Shakespeare 2.2.171). The far more violent trauma, which I have already mentioned, follows shortly. Chiron states his intention with Lavinia by saying, "Drag hence her husband to some secret hole/ And make his dead trunk pillow to our lust.../ Come, mistress, now perforce we will enjoy/ That nice-preserved honesty of yours" (2.2.129-130, 134-135).

Although the actual act of rape occurs offstage, the initial act of violation occurs onstage. Harvey Rovine's method of reading Shakespeare, subscribing to the belief that Shakespeare's language directs the actors' actions, may be applied to this scene with great effect. The scansion of Act 2, Scene 2 is important in interpreting the characters' actions:

LAVINIA. No grace? No womanhood? Ah, beastly creature,
 The blot and enemy to our general name,
 Confusion fall—

CHIRON. Nay then, I will stop your mouth.
 Bring thou her husband:

This is the hole where Aaron bid us hide him (182-186).

It is unclear what Chiron does to stop her mouth, but what is clear is that the action must occupy a full half verse line. Whether he merely covers her mouth with his hand, kisses her, or violates her in some more graphic way is unclear. It is even possible that Chiron cuts out her tongue in this space, considering Lavinia never speaks again after this moment. During this exchange, in a 1988 Royal Shakespeare Company production, “Chiron additionally put his hand under Lavinia’s dress and seemed to lift her up with his hand inside her, tossing her up and down to the accompaniment of her frightful cries” (Aebischer 42). Surely there are a number of options for the actor and director to choose from, but the first violation occurs here. The audience is witness to this traumatic event at the moment it begins.

Along with most scholars who, between the two women, focus on Lavinia, Bethany Packard calls Lavinia’s rape “an utterly debilitating event” and cites Heather Dubrow, who “associates early modern anxiety about the external replication of one mistake with original sin” (281, 284). Essentially, Packard argues that the repetition of rape narratives gives evidence that the “original sin” is Lavinia’s rape. Instead, Tamora, though she has been characterized as a villain, has indisputably experienced life-altering traumas as well and the “original sins” of the play are the war before the play has begun and the murder of Tamora’s son, Alarbus. The play is so filled with violence as to present a war onstage.

Characters are viciously murdered, executed, tortured, dismembered, cannibalized and raped—all of which are the ugly crimes of war. Furthermore, Lavinia's rape and the repetition of rape narratives are less pervasive than the repetition of dismemberment (Lavinia and Titus lose their hands and Quintus and Martius lose their heads), which is first seen in the sacrifice of Tamora's eldest son, Alarbus. In Act 1, Scene 1, Lucius takes Alarbus to "hew his limbs till they be clean consumed," despite Tamora's pleas for mercy (Shakespeare 1.1.132). In Tamora's first monologue, Shakespeare gives the audience a moment in which they may empathize with her. This empathy is cut short in the removal of Alarbus from the stage. Both the audience and Tamora lose the effect of witnessing Alarbus's death, and the distance from the actual event limits the audience's participation and relation to it.

It is possible to argue that Alarbus's dismemberment would have been too difficult to stage. I question this position, though, because in *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare already stages many acts of violence that would seem impossible to stage—Titus's hand lopped off, Chiron and Demetrius's throats slit, Lavinia sans tongue and hands, not to mention the many times throughout his body of work where seemingly un-stageable events are realized—Gloucester's blinding, Antony's disembowelment, Antigonus's death by bear (*King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Winter's Tale*). This does not seem to be a case of theatrical practicality. Shakespeare removes Alarbus for the dramatic purpose of removing his death from the gaze of the audience, in order to lessen its empathy for him, which in turn reduces empathy for his mother.

Within the first scene of the play, Tamora has already seen her country defeated, been taken captive by the enemy, and had her son taken from her to be killed. When she

plots her revenge on Titus, she vows “I’ll find a day to massacre them all,/ And raze their faction and their family,/ The cruel father and his traitorous sons/ To whom I sued for my dear son’s life,/ And make them know what ‘tis to let a queen/ Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain” (Shakespeare 1.1.455-460). This line, directed as an aside to either Saturninus or the audience, clarifies that both the events of being taken as a prisoner of war and losing her son are equally profound for her. She highlights “queen” as an indication of how deeply humiliated she is, and so her vengeance throughout the play is as much motivated by her own capture as it is by her son’s murder. Tamora is a victim of both of these events, and yet, because the war occurred offstage before the events of the play, the audience is too removed to experience the same amount of empathy as it experiences when it witnesses Lavinia’s trauma. Furthermore, where Shakespeare could have allowed the audience to see Alarbus’s mutilation onstage and allowed them to experience Tamora’s horror alongside her, he distances the event by removing Alarbus.

The crux of Caruth’s theory is the damage done by a hidden, unspoken trauma and the healing that occurs when a trauma is shared. Lavinia’s violation that occurs onstage is not hidden; the audience bears witness to it. Caruth repeatedly refers to the healing salve of being heard, of claiming the “unclaimed experience” as a “bearing witness” to the event. The difference between Lavinia and Tamora’s traumas are that the audience has borne witness to Lavinia, whereas Tamora’s pain remains interior and hidden. In fact, the further the audience is removed from the event, the less empathy they feel. The audience may feel some empathy at the moment that Alarbus is carried away, but without being witnessed, the event is quickly forgotten. Tamora’s capture and experience of war is utterly removed from the audience and hardly enters the audience’s consciousness. Tamora is left to

process these events alone, hence, the repetition of Tamora's traumas throughout the play—violence, war, dismemberment. From each act of violence or revenge is the voice of a woman crying out in pain. The cycle continues. Tamora's devastation from the war and death of her son is experienced in isolation, which limits the audience's sympathy, and this lack of a witness causes the pain to fester and eventually manifest in violence, making her a villain. The audience will then inevitably feel even less sympathy for her, and the cycle continues to repeat itself. Tamora is one example of a Shakespearean villain showing just how devastating and destructive a force unwitnessed trauma is in the world, and how necessary it is to share one's suffering.

Actors provide unique perspective to the analysis of Shakespearean characters. Katy Stephens, who played Tamora in the 2013 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Titus Andronicus*, says in an interview: "The audience hate me. Obviously, I don't think Tamora's a baddie—I can't afford to think she's a baddie—but the audiences hate her, there's no doubt about that. I mean, they're so close to hissing me; it's unbelievable. Audiences love to hate, and there's a lot of fun to be had in that regard." In *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage*, Carol Chillington Rutter insists the audience not forget that living bodies are playing these fictional characters. Physicalizing the character, motivating the choices of the characters, and breathing life into a character to make it compelling for an audience requires getting into the mind of the character as a real person. As the physical embodiment of Tamora, Katy Stephens feels compelled to find empathy for her, recognizing her inexcusable behavior as the product of pain. Is it possible for the audience to feel such empathy as well?

Aebischer raises an additional important point about *Titus Andronicus* in performance. By only reading the text, Lavinia is distanced from the audience because of her absence of language. A *reader* might easily forget that she is present. This is why proximity in performance is so vital. Aebischer writes:

As the off-stage rape acquires a central importance and symbolic presence, the elision of the rape in the play-text and the subsequent textual silence of the rape victim is made up for, in performance, by the actor... in the theatre, the mutilated rape victim is insistently kept before the audience's eyes for six scenes. The actor's body *represents* the absence of words. Watching *Titus Andronicus* therefore means watching Lavinia (26).

Aebischer's observation highlights how fundamentally different an audience's experience is when watching a production as opposed to reading the script. This proximity theory is far weaker looking at the text alone; only performance renders Shakespeare's device of distance fully effective.

In one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, he relies heavily upon allusion and tradition to supplement his theatrical choices. However, where Shakespeare's sources identify the archetypes that Tamora and Lavinia occupy in their stories of Philomel, Actaeon, Virginia, and the myriad other historical and classical references Shakespeare uses, they all fail to humanize these female characters. Using allusion, Shakespeare cleverly sets Tamora and Lavinia on a grand stage to be villain and victim, but in his text provides the audience hints of Tamora's motivation and real human nature that are absent in any of her source material. Shakespeare also guides the audience in their feelings for the characters by strategically locating the characters' traumatic experiences. As Stephens points out,

audiences love to hate. Shakespeare gives the audience a villain to hiss, without compromising his insight into true human nature. Tamora becomes a fully realized character and manages to also elicit utter hatred from the audience, partly because she is shown in contrast to Lavinia, whose wounds are open for the audience to despair over.

Act 3

One Man, Two Fathers:
Psychological Trauma and the Sisters of *King Lear*

Perhaps the most undervalued of Shakespeare's "evil" women, Goneril and Regan, the eldest daughters in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, seem to repel scholarly respect and analysis. In a thorough investigation into the women of *King Lear*, the most compelling insight into Goneril and Regan's characters comes from Douglas H. Parker, who, in one line of his article "The Third Suitor in *King Lear* Act I Scene 1," implies that Goneril and Regan's "evil" personalities are inherited from their father when he says, "Properly understood, Lear's scheming in this scene demonstrates how Goneril and Regan come by their own scheming quite honestly. It is not hard to see that they are indeed Lear's daughters once we understand the cunning that Lear manifests in this opening scene" (140). Unfortunately, the analysis ends here. Parker mentions the sisters once again, agreeing with the scholarly consensus that "Goneril and Regan are untrustworthy in general and insensitive to human needs and feelings" (144). If the research were to be believed, Goneril and Regan are, presumably from birth, scheming, greedy, violent, and wicked women, waiting for the perfect moment to turn on their elderly father. The notable exception to this rule is Tina Packer, who will be discussed shortly.

The comparisons between "good" and "evil" women are indisputable when looking at the actions of Lear's three daughters. In the plot of the play, Cordelia returns to the country from which she has been banished to forgive and save the father that forsook her, while Goneril and Regan abandon their father to a wild heath in the middle of a violent storm, then begin a rampage of torture, adultery, and murder, leaving strewn a path of

mutilated and dead bodies, including their own. Cordelia is the good, martyr archetype in *Lear*, and Goneril and Regan both are the villain archetype. Again, scholarship is practically unanimous in this basic understanding. Such comparisons as Lagretta Tallent Lenker's, in her book *Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare and Shaw*, expressly draw on the martyr/villain archetypes, calling Cordelia a sacrifice offered up on behalf of her father's salvation and enlightenment, while Goneril and Regan "devour the kingdom"—Goneril and Regan the lions, Cordelia the lamb (56, 92). However, these simplistic readings depend wholly on the characters in their final incarnations and ignore the lifetime before the play begins, and how these women became the people they are by Act 5 when their capacities for either unimaginable evil or transcendent good have been revealed.

Tina Packer, in her 2015 study which focuses on Shakespeare's women, asks an important question about the play. In her chapter on *King Lear*, she writes,

The three daughters of Lear are a conundrum. Why do two of them become so cruel and one so forgiving? Why do Goneril and Regan commit acts of violence upon others, whereas Cordelia returns to rescue her father and then share his fate? Did they have different mothers? Were they brought up in different times? Is it just the genes Mother Nature gave them? Or did Lear treat them very differently as they were growing up? (240).

Packer poses these questions, but never attempts to answer them. Her questioning process is exactly the process an actor must go through while mining the text, because Shakespeare truly leaves these questions unanswered. In an interview, the actors Melinda Pfundstein, Saren Nofs-Snyder, and Kelly Rogers, who played Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia in the 2015 production of *King Lear* at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, were able to tell me the

particular backstory that they developed as a cast. Nofs-Snyder describes the process of backstory development for Shakespeare's plays by explaining that because there is no explicit textual information given, the group of actors must imagine what might have occurred before the action of the play. Pfundstein and Nofs-Snyder agreed that playing a character requires seeing her as a rounded person and ignoring stereotypes that already exist about the character. Nofs-Snyder insisted that "any actor cannot dislike a character they play" and pointed out that "nobody sets out to say 'today I'm going to be a villain,'" meaning that Regan certainly doesn't see herself as a villain, so Nofs-Snyder, as the actor playing her, must find the motivations for her actions and why she must feel her actions are justified. Pfundstein also noted the importance of building backstory supported by the text, and included that in her preparation to play Goneril, she had to "ignore everyone that says she's 'evil,'" and instead focus on the text without preconceived beliefs about the character.

This particular cast imagines that Lear was married in a political marriage that resulted in the births of Goneril and Regan. Their mother died, presumably in childbirth with Regan. Lear later married a woman whom he truly loved, and this marriage resulted in Cordelia's birth. Cordelia's mother must have also died because she is never mentioned, and it is easy to assume she also died in childbirth with Cordelia. Lear was, by the time Cordelia was born, an older and more mature father, and had an added emotional attachment to her because of the connection to his beloved wife. The result of this backstory, as Rogers puts it, is "One man. Two different fathers."

Before I move on, I must clarify that this is only one of many possible interpretations of these sisters' backstories, and surely many casts have arrived at different conclusions. This example should not be taken as my conclusive interpretation of *King Lear's* women's

lives before the play. It is merely an example of the end result of a cast's long process of textual analysis and discussion.

Many of these details are impossible to prove, and L.C. Knights would probably reject such inventions. However, the conclusion of this backstory came after a period of mining the text, grounding the actors in Shakespeare's text first and foremost and only after using their collaborative imaginations to fill in the missing pieces. Stanislavki explains the necessity of this process, which must rely on the actors' imaginations gleaned from what they can find in the text and then logically expanding and filling in whatever gaps remain, by writing, "the purpose of analysis should be to study in detail and prepare given circumstances for a play or part so that through them, later on in the creative process, the actor's emotions will instinctively be sincere and his feelings true to life" (9). Considering Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed (albeit far before Stanislavki had developed his acting process)—and considering the discussion we have already had about the validity of treating Shakespeare's characters as "real" people—academics should assume the same freedom to mine the text for information that actors have from their early days of training.

Judging by the language in the text, Goneril and Regan have suffered the emotional childhood trauma of being blatantly disregarded in favor of their youngest sister. In Act 1, Scene 1, Lear conducts a "love contest," in which he asks his daughters to each proclaim their love for him, in order to divide the kingdom among them. Goneril and Regan respond in lengthy and overwrought proclamations of their love, while Cordelia refuses to participate, and in turn is rejected by Lear and exiled. At the beginning of the scene, Lear calls Cordelia "Our joy,/ Although our last"—"last" referring to birth order— and tells Kent "I loved her most" (82-82, 123). Shortly after, the King of France, one of the suitors to

Cordelia, asks Lear why he has disinherited her, stunned because of Lear's past praise of his youngest daughter: "She who even but now was your best object,/ The argument of your praise, balm of your age,/ The best, the dearest" (215-217). France's lines show that Lear often and openly tells other people how much more he favors Cordelia. All of these statements are made not only in front of Goneril and Regan, but in front of some kind of public assembly as well. The public descriptors of Cordelia as Lear's most loved child indicates that this is not the first time any of the characters have heard that Lear favors Cordelia. Goneril and Regan have been raised knowing that they were not as valued as their youngest sister, and Cordelia has been raised knowing that she was the most valued and the most loved. Furthermore, it is not merely suspicion or Lear's actions that show favoritism; Goneril and Regan have suffered the humiliation of their father proclaiming his favoritism in public. If nothing else, this difference must dictate a very different relationship between Lear and Goneril and Regan, and Lear and Cordelia.

At the end of Act 1, Scene 1, Cordelia, suspecting Goneril and Regan's false proclamations of love, speaks harshly to her sisters as she exits. She says, "I know you what you are,/ And like a sister am most loath to call/ Your faults as they are named" (271-273). If Cordelia were an outside, objective observer, this line might be used to support the popular opinion that Goneril and Regan have always been "evil." However, because of the difference in Lear's treatment and upbringing of the three sisters, this line more clearly defines how his relationships with his daughters differ than provides a reliable reading of Goneril and Regan. Cordelia judges their lack of authenticity from the perspective of a daughter, but Goneril and Regan have acted as subjects to their king. Their responses in the "love contest," which are assuredly overwrought and exaggerated in their proclamations,

reflect their obedience to their king. When Lear presents his plan, “Tell me, my daughters-- / Since now we will divest us both of rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state-- / Which of you shall we say doth love us most,” Goneril speaks in the interest of her family’s elevation of wealth and position, a move of political security (1.1.48-51). When she responds, “Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter, / Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty, / Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare...” she is attempting to win the challenge her king has presented, as any noble with unstable political standing would do (1.1.55-57). Regan’s response is equally formal and obedient to Lear’s request: “In my true heart / I find [Goneril] names my very deed of love: / Only she comes too short, that I profess / Myself an enemy to all other joys...” (1.1.70-73). Truly, both of these responses do not sound like loving daughters affectionately addressing a father; however, they sound exactly like loyal subjects vying for political position and attempting not to displease a king. Of course, Regan’s response to Cordelia’s rebukes is, “Prescribe not us our duty,” because she knows that Cordelia is ignorant of the duties required by a subject, while “duty” is the driving force in hers and Goneril’s relationship with their father (1.1.278). Cordelia’s fault in refusing to play Lear’s “love contest,” and responding “Nothing” reveals that she sees him as a father, unlike her sisters, who see him as a king (1.1.87). Their responses in this love contest further reinforce what was already apparent in Lear’s statements about Cordelia; he has only been a loving father to one of his daughters. Goneril and Regan must have essentially been raised seeing their youngest sister receive the love and attention of a father from the man that they only knew as their ruler and king.

More than mere neglect, the text implies that Goneril and Regan have suffered real verbal abuse from Lear. During Lear’s time living at Goneril’s estate, as is the arrangement

at the end of Act 1 Scene 1, Goneril approaches Lear about the conduct of Lear's retinue. She describes the situation as "Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,/ Men so disordered, so debauched and bold,/ That this our court, infected with their manners,/ Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust/ Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel/ Than a graced palace" (1.4.232-237). Making some adjustment to this arrangement seems like a rational request, and Goneril approaches Lear in the spirit of cooperation. She says, "I had thought by making this well known unto you/ To have found a safe redress," hoping to democratically come to a reformation of the company's behavior (1.4.195-196). Lear ignores her complaint, and along with his Fool, rebuffs each attempt at reconciliation. Eventually, after Lear has repeatedly ignored her complaints, Goneril suggests that he dismiss a portion of his train. It is after this suggestion that Lear verbally explodes. Among other insults, he invokes the gods to punish Goneril: "Hear, Nature... Into her womb convey sterility,/ Dry up in her the organs of increase,/ And from her derogate body never spring/ A babe to honour her. If she must teem,/ Create her child of spleen, that it may live /And be a thwart disnatured torment to her" (1.4. 267, 270-275). His reaction is so extreme and so sudden, and so consistent with his previous reaction to Cordelia's act of disobedience, that it is unlikely that this type of verbal abuse has never occurred before. In fact, Goneril's total lack of response—the absence of a reaction—implies that she is not surprised by Lear's vitriolic outburst; in fact, she may even be numb to it. Unlike Cordelia, who felt Lear's wrath for the first time in Act 1 Scene 1, Goneril has clearly been the victim of Lear's wrath before. When Lear brings his entire retinue to Gloucester's home, where Regan is staying, Regan defends her sister's character, citing her "duty" and "obligation," again reinforcing that the nature of these two sisters' relationship with their father is not filial, but political (2.2.329,

331). Lear continues to berate Goneril, and Regan fears “So you will wish on me when the rash mood is on” (2.2.358). Her paranoia that she is about to also be attacked provides further evidence that Lear’s “moods” have led to the verbal abuse of his elder daughters in the past.

Lear’s outburst acts as a turning point in the action of the play and the fates of the characters. Goneril and Regan’s childhood abuse and neglect hit a breaking point in the face of this public verbal abuse—a turning point between reasonable, subdued behavior and the downward spiral of violence that follows. The particular choice of curses that Lear wishes upon Goneril—sterility and stillborn or deformed children—are particularly vicious when one considers that Goneril does not, in fact, have any children. In a play about parents and children, these two childless marriages (Goneril and Albany, and Regan and Cornwall) are significant. Children would surely be desirable, even if only for political reasons, and there is never any indication that the marriages had occurred so recently that they would not yet have conceived, nor is there any indication that either woman is pregnant during the course of the play. This begs the question of fertility. Why do Goneril and Albany have no children? The natural assumption is that they are unable to have children, or have had children who have died. As their father and king, Lear would undoubtedly be aware of any of these issues, making his curse of sterility and stillbirth particularly cruel—cruel and painful enough to incite the anger that has been brewing within Goneril and Regan for many years.

In Act 1, Scene 1, when Lear renounces and completely disinherits Cordelia, the audience witnesses the defining traumatic moment in this young woman’s life. The surrounding characters who witness the event act as surrogate audience members,

informing the audience how it should understand the event—shocking and unjust to the innocent Cordelia. Kent, a loyal follower of Lear, interrupts Lear’s tirade against Cordelia to plead, “Reserve thy state,/ And in thy best consideration check/ This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement,/ Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,/ Nor are those empty-hearted, whose low sounds/ Reverb no hollowness” (150-155). So firm is he in his stance that Kent accepts banishment as well, rather than stepping aside from Cordelia’s defense. However, in Act 1, Scene 4 and in Act 2, Scene 2, when Lear curses Goneril and Regan for asking him to control his retinue in their homes, neither Kent nor any other witness comes to their defense. Each of these events is a case of verbal assault from a father to his adult daughter. The difference between the event in Act 1 Scene 1 and the following two scenes is that Cordelia is experiencing this abuse for the first time, in front of the audience, sharing with them in her pain and calling on them for compassion, whereas Goneril and Regan have experienced this abuse many times in the past. Their defining traumas have already long been processed away from the audience, and unlike Cordelia, they have lost their chance to have their trauma be seen and heard. The audience sees Cordelia’s first trauma, and it sees Goneril and Regan’s last; having received their land and political power, they finally revolt against their father, throwing him out into the storm and refusing to be abused again.

The villains of *King Lear* experience the same cycle of trauma that Tamora does in *Titus Andronicus*. Abandoning Lear to the heath, subjecting him to the elements, and ignoring Gloucester’s pleas to grant him sanctuary are repetitions of the abuse and neglect that Goneril and Regan suffered throughout their lives, aimed against the very man who abused and neglected them. Once again, here are Shakespeare’s villains processing their

pain in isolation. Without a witness, after simmering beneath the surface for so long, this pain emerges in escalating violence and destruction.

Shakespeare continues to craft the way these characters experience their traumas from the beginning to the end of the play, continuing to mold his archetypes to influence the audience's response. In Act 5, Scene 3, the play's final scene, both Goneril and Regan are brought onto stage dead—Goneril having poisoned Regan and then killed herself—and the characters onstage—Kent, Edmund, Albany, and Edgar—muse over their fateful end. In his dying moments, Edmund realizes the wickedness of his ways and attempts to undo Goneril, Regan, and his worst deed yet, the order to hang Cordelia. Too late, Lear enters carrying Cordelia's dead body. In the Folio stage directions, Goneril and Regan's bodies are removed immediately before Lear enters. It reads, "Gonerill and Regans bodies brought out. Enter Lear with Cordelia in his arms." This stage direction is Shakespeare's final great contrast of the sisters. The audience is even further separated from Goneril and Regan's traumas and the possibility of feeling any empathy for them by their dead bodies being removed to center the audience's focus on Cordelia. Shakespeare grants his audience their catharsis in truly one of the most heartbreaking scenes in all of literature and drama by making them witness to the martyr's death, and helping them ignore the villains entirely by removing them from the stage.

All three of these sisters are victims of great wrongdoing. Mining the text objectively allows the reader to see that there is nothing innately different in their moral characters. Goneril and Regan were not *born* evil, greedy, or conniving, although they have certainly become these things by the end of the play. Each daughter is a product of her upbringing. The offstage abuse of the elder sisters has created the monsters they become, providing

another example of modern trauma theory's claim that suffering left in isolation is doomed to repeat itself. If the audience was made fully aware of the sisters' past abuse, it might still empathize with them, even without excusing their behavior in the latter half of the play. Shakespeare untangles what could become complicated feelings for the audience by guiding it in who to sympathize with and who to blame, not by making any one character less human or less fully realized than another, but by locating Cordelia's defining traumas onstage for the audience to witness and by locating Goneril and Regan's traumas offstage far before the action of the play begins. He also creates a far more impactful cathartic experience for the audience in his final scene by building the audience's empathy for Cordelia from the beginning.

Act 4

What's Done *Can* Be Undone:
Lady Macbeth's Transformation from Villain to Victim

Lady Macbeth might be the most famous of Shakespeare's evil women. Her fierce ambition and cunning that persuades her morally conflicted husband to murder his king in order to secure the crown, along with the sheer popularity of the play itself, has secured Lady Macbeth as one of the most iconic evil women in Western culture. She also occupies a very interesting place amongst Shakespeare's women—she exists in both archetypes, as the villain at the beginning of the play and the martyr by the end. *Macbeth* may not have multiple characters to compare these archetypes, but Lady Macbeth offers yet another perspective for the theory presented in this thesis because she transforms throughout the play from an unsympathetic villain to a sympathetic victim. At the beginning of the play, she has already experienced a defining traumatic event that is distanced from the audience, and at the end, she experiences a second traumatic event, which the audience is witness to. Because of this second event, the audience is able to empathize with her in a way it has been unable to with Shakespeare's other evil women.

Early in the play, Lady Macbeth refers to her own child, when it is made explicitly clear that the couple has no children at the time the action of the play begins. This indicates that Lady Macbeth's defining traumatic event, which occurred far before the play begins, is the loss of a child. While convincing Macbeth to murder the king, she says, "I have given suck, and know/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me" (1.7.54-55). The topic is raised and then passed over quickly, but the topic of children arises later in the play, after Macbeth has become king. The reason Macbeth fears Banquo is because Banquo has

children and he has none himself, leaving him without an heir. He soliloquizes, ““Prophet-like,/ They hail’d him father to a line of kings:/ Upon my head they plac’d a fruitless crown,/ And put a barren scepter in my gripe,/ Thence to be wrench’d with an unlineal hand,/ No son of mine succeeding” (3.1.58-63). Shakespeare makes this childless marriage and reign a pivotal plot point, clearly telling the audience that this marriage has produced no living children. Further evidence that children and fertility are sensitive subjects for Lady Macbeth is her invocation to evil spirits asking that they give her resolve to follow through with her murderous plan. She pleads, “Unsex me here” and “Come to my woman’s breasts,/ And take my milk for gall” (1.5.41, 47-48). Knowing that she has lost a child earlier in her life and has failed to produce any other children gives these lines new meaning. By “unsex[ing]” herself, or removing her womanhood and asking that her milk be changed to “gall,” thereby removing the capacity to feed and nourish a child, it is as if the central ambition of her life changes in a moment—she is replacing the desire for a child with a desire for the crown. Here, the nature of Lady Macbeth’s suffering repeats itself in the nature of her villainy. The pain of losing a child and being unable to produce an heir, experienced and processed offstage before the play begins, reemerges in this invocation of evil spirits, specifically asking them to remove motherhood from her and replace it with evil. She is another villain who is a slave to the same cycle as the villains previously outlined in this paper. Shakespeare predates trauma theory in showing the danger of unwitnessed trauma. Furthermore, because the actual event of the child’s death is so far removed from the action of the play, and because any allusions to the event are so opaque, the audience is never able to truly empathize with Lady Macbeth and understand the complex motivations behind her actions.

Actors playing Lady Macbeth have arrived at this conclusion as well. Carol Chillington Rutter compiles a collection of interviews from professional actors playing Shakespeare's women, in *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today*. She includes an interview with actor Sinead Cusack, who played Lady Macbeth for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1986. Cusack describes the process of developing Lady Macbeth for the stage:

Lady Macbeth says, 'I have given suck...' So where is that baby? What happened to their child? I'm not certain who asked the question first or whether we all had the idea simultaneously, but as we explored it in rehearsal, we decided that the Macbeths had had a child and that the child had died. The line can be interpreted differently, but that's the interpretation we chose, and as the idea grew it seemed to have a beautiful logic... That sort of loss, the loss of a child, is so huge, so massive... (56)

Although Cusack admits that other actors might come to a different interpretation of the line, this interpretation is what has always made the most sense to me, especially looking at the other text that supports such a conclusion. I experienced almost exactly the same revelatory moment when I played Lady Macbeth at UC Davis in 2009, when my director, fellow actor, and I agreed that our Macbeths must have lost a child.

In Lady Macbeth's final scene of the play, the audience witnesses her second defining traumatic event—the loss of her sanity. In Act 5, Scene 1, the famous sleep-walking scene, Lady Macbeth speaks without realizing that her Gentlewoman and Doctor are present, she continuously attempts to wash blood off of her hands, and seems to have no concept of time or space, speaking to people who are not present and about events that have occurred at various past points of the play. When she weeps and her Doctor says, "What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charg'd," the actor is directed to play the scene

with the depth of grief that must motivate this line from the Doctor. The audience must follow the Doctor's lead and feel empathy and compassion for this character, despite her past actions, and when that happens, Lady Macbeth completes her transformation into the victim archetype. An audience cannot cheer for Lady Macbeth's death the way it cheers for Tamora's.

Directors and performers can make choices that make this transformation even clearer. In the classic 1976 Royal Shakespeare Company performance of *Macbeth*, Judi Dench's Act 5 performance is notably understated. She has tears in her eyes throughout the scene, and she plays the scene largely stationary, the continuous wiping of her hands the only action from the time she enters to her exit. She whimpers her lines like a frightened child—an enormous difference from the aggressive character at the beginning of the play. In another production, the 2012 experimental concept-piece *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, an all-male cast presented a traditional *Macbeth*. Christopher Liam Moore, playing Lady Macbeth, was costumed throughout the production in a vibrant green gown and a long auburn wig. In the tradition of Elizabethan theatre, Moore played Lady Macbeth as a woman, with costume, hair, and makeup supporting his portrayal of a character of a different gender. In Act 5, Scene 1, Moore entered as Lady Macbeth, but without any of the costuming, hair, or makeup. He entered in black pants and a black t-shirt, with his natural, short hair, and without any makeup. For the first time, the audience saw his real face, as a man. This choice created a shocking rawness and vulnerability, mirroring the nakedness of Lady Macbeth's mental and psychological state. The performance was haunting and heartbreaking to witness. Performances like these

emphasize the devastation and trauma of insanity, as well as the possibilities of how an audience can connect to a character it may have previously hated.

To approach Lady Macbeth from a different perspective, I will address L.C. Knights's argument once again. Knights chose Lady Macbeth's exact scenario—her implied children—as his title example of anterior speculation. His main argument is that the scholar must remain entirely within the text and avoid imagining any outside circumstances for Shakespeare's characters—essentially, Shakespeare is poetry and literature first. In an effort to operate within his ground rules, I argue that the text alone reveals the same conclusions that can be made by psychoanalysis or other methods more common to performers. I will perform a deep linguistic analysis of the text of the play to prove that even within only the text itself, Lady Macbeth begins the play as an unsympathetic villain and ends the play as a sympathetic victim.

Act 1, Scene 7 is a fitting representative for Lady Macbeth's character at the beginning of the play. This scene portrays Lady Macbeth convincing Macbeth to murder Duncan, and she employs persuasive techniques—rhetoric—to great effect. She asks eleven questions throughout the scene, some of which are rhetorical with no answer, and some of which she answers herself. After Macbeth expresses reluctance to go through with their plan to kill Duncan, she responds, with “Was the hope drunk/Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?” both of which are rhetorical questions, personifying ambition, or “hope” (1.7.35-36). She continues with, “And wakes it now, to look so green and pale/At what it did so freely? From this time/ Such I account thy love,” in which she answers her own question, by insulting his masculinity and role as husband, equating his lack of ambition with lack of love (1.7.37-39). At no point after Macbeth's first admission that he has

decided against regicide does Lady Macbeth allow him to answer her questions. This passage becomes a brutal interrogation with no pause to allow him to answer, shown in the enjambment on the verse lines:

And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely? From this time
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
 To be the same in thine own act and valour
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,
 Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
 Like the poor cat i' the adage? (1.7.37-44).

No end-stop punctuation occurs until Macbeth interrupts her with "Prithee, peace!" a plea to stop the interrogation (1.7.45). This overloading of questions is characteristic of a general profusion of words throughout Lady Macbeth's dialogue. After her attack of questions, she uses an especially shocking and vivid description to persuade Macbeth with her own commitment to their plan, by referring to their deceased child: "I have given suck, and know/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:/ I would, while it was smiling in my face,/ Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,/ And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you/ Have done to this" (1.7.54-59). This disturbing image is made all the more disturbing by how she plays on Macbeth's expectations. She reminds him of a positive memory, the sweet moments with their baby and, exactly halfway through the line, contrasts this image with the horrifying image of breaking the baby's skull. These rhetorical

strategies that Lady Macbeth uses to persuade Macbeth have the very clear impact of overwhelming him. Throughout Lady Macbeth’s rhetorical attack, Macbeth’s lines become progressively shorter. At the beginning of the scene, Macbeth has the upper hand—if their exchange were a sports match, the score would be Lady Macbeth with one line and Macbeth with five lines, but as Lady Macbeth goes on, his responses shrink to three lines, and then one line. She has beaten him into linguistic submission. The following chart shows the progression of Macbeth’s lines:

<p>“We will proceed no further in this business: He hath honour’d me of late; and I have bought Golden opinions from all sorts of people, Which would be worn now in their newest gloss, Not cast aside so soon” (1.7.31-34)</p>	<p>“Prithee, peace. I dare do all that may become a man Who dares do more, is none” (1.7.45-47)</p>	<p>“If we should fail?” (1.7.59)</p>
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Although at this point in the scene Lady Macbeth has not fully convinced Macbeth to kill Duncan, she has broken him of the conviction he felt at the beginning, and she is in a position to make her next rhetorical move. She describes her plan for the murder with a shameless abundance of alliteration:

“When Duncan is asleep—
 Whereto the rather shall his day’s hard journey
 Soundly invite him—his two chamberlains
 Will I with wine and wassail so convince
 That memory, the warder of the brain,
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
 A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
 What cannot you and I perform upon
 The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
 His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
 Of our great quell?” (1.7.62-73)

The above color-coding of the passage shows the variety of alliteration that Lady Macbeth uses. Each of these sounds, especially the use of “w”s, not only in the words that begin with “w” but in the words that include a “w” as the second sound, like “swinish” and “quell,” force the mouth to slow and pronounce the words carefully and articulately. The effect of this slowing is a seductive drawl as Lady Macbeth punches each sound and savors the words in her mouth. Judging by Macbeth’s language for the rest of the scene, this seduction has succeeded in persuading him. He agrees to kill Duncan: “I am settled, and bend up/
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat./ Away, and mock the time with fairest show:/
 False face must hide what false heart doth know” (1.7.80-83). This final line articulates the truth about Lady Macbeth’s character—he calls her a “false face” and “false heart.” In this one phrase, Macbeth reveals what makes Lady Macbeth so unsympathetic to the audience.

She is manipulative and conniving, and her highly effective, but also highly contrived, rhetoric is artificial and completely inauthentic, a quality accented by the fact that she speaks entirely in verse, which further gives the impression of stylized, well thought-out dialogue. Verse is far easier to manipulate and shape than prose and sounds far less natural. In the beginning of the play, she is so artificial in her word play that she appears as an empty shell—all words and no substance.

When Lady Macbeth returns in Act 5 after an entire act offstage, she has become unhinged and driven mad by her guilt. The scene is doubly effective in the way that Shakespeare uses it to break expectations of the character, drawing from foreshadowing from previous scenes of the play. It will, therefore, be necessary to draw on other scenes in which Lady Macbeth appears, in order to lay the groundwork for her reappearance in Act 5.

In Act 2 Scene 2, the audience sees Macbeth and Lady Macbeth immediately after Duncan has been murdered. Macbeth is plagued by guilt immediately, and Shakespeare has already provided many instances where it appears that Macbeth is heading toward madness—he has already seen the “dagger of the mind,” and in this scene he hears the cries of the princes and guards echo in his mind, as well as an unknown voice which repeats, “Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder Sleep.” (2.1.38, 2.2.34-35). Therefore, when Lady Macbeth tells him, “These deeds must not be thought/ After these ways: so, it will make us mad,” the obvious assumption is that Macbeth will be driven mad by dwelling on these thoughts (2.2.32-33). The further the play progresses, though, the more that Lady Macbeth and Macbeth switch their roles, and by the time that Lady Macbeth reappears in Act 5, Macbeth has hardened toward his many violent deeds, and Lady Macbeth is the one who has gone mad. Another instance of foreshadowing is Lady Macbeth’s direction to Macbeth,

“Go, get some water, and wash this filthy witness from your hand,” echoed in her hand-washing pantomime at the beginning of Act 5, narrated by the Gentlewoman, who says, “It is an accustom’d action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour” (2.2.45-56, 5.1.25-29). Shakespeare creates a kind of Sisyphean punishment for Lady Macbeth, eternally doomed to repeat the same action with which she commanded Macbeth, caused by the same guilt, which she insulted as a sign of weakness. Finally, Lady Macbeth, in another attempt to dissuade Macbeth from his guilt, insists, “The sleeping, and the dead, are but as pictures” (2.2.53). Lady Macbeth’s final lines in Act 5 are a repetition of “To bed, to bed, to bed” (5.1.64). She leaves the stage repeating this instruction to herself, and shortly after throws herself from the tower to her death. The line “To bed” ties “the sleeping” and “the dead,” from her earlier line. She has actually predicted her insomnia if on an unconscious level she equates sleep with death. In order to finally find peaceful sleep, suicide becomes her only option. The effect of these many instances of foreshadowing in the scene after Duncan’s death is a tragic irony. Lady Macbeth has predicted her own fate, and insulted the very guilt she comes to be plagued by, making the fate itself all the more painful to watch.

In her final scene, Lady Macbeth’s language also becomes far less articulate. Unlike all of her previous scenes, in Act 5 Scene 1, Lady Macbeth speaks in prose, which sounds natural and unrehearsed. The rhythm of the language becomes choppy, with extremely short sentences and frequent punctuation, especially dashes:

LADY MACBETH. Out, damned spot! out, I say!—One; two: why, then, ‘tis time to

do't.—Hell is murky.—Fie, my Lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?—What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to accompt?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? (5.1.33-38)

The dashes separate lines in which Lady Macbeth recalls previous events from the play and lines in which she reveals the effects of those events upon her psyche. It is an interplay between the exterior and the interior. The first, “Out, damned spot! out, I say!” is an interior moment, in which, in the present, she desperately pleas with the blood that only stains her hands in her mind. The second, “One; two: why, then, 'tis time to do't” is exterior, relating to the agreed time Macbeth was to kill Duncan: “I go, and it is done: the bell invites me” (2.1.62). The third, “Hell is murky,” is perhaps the most ambiguous line of the scene, and is, again, interior. In her madness, she may be seeing through the veil into “hell,” the afterlife, and witnessing the many souls that she has had a hand in killing, so many that it is difficult to decipher among them all, making the vision “murky.” The line may also refer to Lady Macbeth seeing into “hell” itself, witnessing evil spirits or devils, so many torturing her that again, “hell is murky.” The murkiness may even refer to her inability to tell the difference between what is real and what is in her own mind, madness becoming her “hell.” The depth of her torture, however the line is interpreted, cannot be emphasized enough. Her line continues in this pattern—interior, exterior, interior, exterior. The exposure of her inner life, her psyche, removes the artifice that she covers herself with at the beginning of the play. She becomes vulnerable and exposed to the audience—for the first time, we see her as she truly is—making her accessible and sympathetic.

Another effect of Lady Macbeth's madness is a reversion to a second childhood. In Act 5, Lady Macbeth has lost all of her former control. The many questions and demands

she makes of Macbeth in Act 1 Scene 7 have real authority, but in Act 5 Scene 1, when she demands “Out, damned spot!” she sounds helpless—the blood isn’t even physically on her hands, and therefore it will never be washed away. She demands something that can never be achieved and her power has been completely removed, like the tantrum of a petulant child. In lamenting her own powerlessness, she says, “All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand,” referring to what used to be an instrument of murder as a “little hand.” Her madness has, in some ways, restored her innocence, as a child who has done something bad without realizing the consequences. Further evidence of this return to childhood comes in the foreshadowing of the line, “Tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil” (2.2.54-55). By Act 5, Lady Macbeth *does* fear a devil, which we know from her line, “Hell is murky.” Once again, Lady Macbeth has tragically foreshadowed her own fate, a return to childhood and fear of eternal damnation, which, in her sanity, she believed she had grown out of fearing.

Lady Macbeth’s own language is not the only aspect of the scene that affects the audience’s response to her character; the characters she shares her scenes with impact the audience’s response as well. In Act 5 Scene 1, the Doctor and Gentlewoman narrate all of Lady Macbeth’s action:

DOCTOR. How came she by that light?

GENTLEWOMAN. Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; ‘tis her command.

DOCTOR. You see, her eyes are open.

GENTLEWOMAN. Ay, but their sense are shut.

DOCTOR. What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

GENTLEWOMAN. It is an accustom'd action with her, to seem thus washing her hands.

I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour (5.1.20-29)

Especially in the context of performance, the actor playing Lady Macbeth loses most of her freedom, constrained by the actions dictated by the Doctor and Gentlewoman. Audience members will never see Act 5 Scene 1 from different productions that vary wildly from one another—certain aspects of the scene will necessarily always be the same. Alternatively, there is complete freedom of staging in Act 1 Scene 7, or any of Lady Macbeth's other previous scenes, because no characters narrate any of her actions, and Shakespeare has provided no stage directions. The Doctor and Gentlewoman's descriptions of her actions remove all physical agency from Lady Macbeth, her powerlessness victimizing her.

The Doctor and Gentlewoman also act as the audience to Lady Macbeth's actions and therefore become a lens through which the audience can watch the scene. They often even explicitly tell the audience how to respond. The Doctor's lines, "Observe her: stand close," "Do you mark that?" and "Even so?" direct the audience to stay focused on Lady Macbeth, building their suspense in the scene (5.1.19, 39, 61). When Lady Macbeth ends one of her lines with "Oh! oh! oh!" the Doctor's and Gentlewoman's responding lines dictate that Lady Macbeth must be sobbing through the entire following exchange:

DOCTOR. What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charg'd.

GENTLEWOMAN. I would not have such a heart in my bosom, for the dignity of the whole body.

DOCTOR. Well, well, well.

GENTLEWOMAN. Pray God it be, sir.

DOCTOR. This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have known those which have walk'd in their sleep, who have died holily in their beds (5.1.50-57).

Lady Macbeth's cry of "Oh! Oh! Oh!" is met with incredible sympathy from her witnesses. They refer twice to Lady Macbeth's "heart," meaning that Lady Macbeth's cries must be the sounds of deep despair, coming from the heart. The Gentlewoman expresses empathy for Lady Macbeth, essentially saying that she would not want to be queen if it meant experiencing so much guilt and sadness. They pray for her, and they express a desire for her to be saved in death, even after hearing her confess her guilt. The Doctor and Gentlewoman act as fellow audience members, leading the audience to respond to Lady Macbeth in a similarly sympathetic way.

The role of the audience itself is vital to Lady Macbeth's transformation from villain to victim. Throughout her early scenes, Lady Macbeth welcomes the audience into the action of the play. At the beginning of Act 2 Scene 2, Lady Macbeth enters speaking directly to the audience:

"That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold:
 What hath quenched them hath given me fire.—Hark!—Peace!
 It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,
 Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.
 The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms
 Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their possets,
 That Death and Nature do contend about them,
 Whether they live, or die...
 Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,

And 'tis not done:—th'attempt and not the deed
 Confounds us.—Hark!—I laid their daggers ready;
 He could not miss 'em.—Had he not resembled
 My father as he slept, I had done't.—My husband!" (2.2.1-13)

First, she makes the audience complicit in Duncan's murder by describing the actions that are currently occurring offstage. Entering in an alcohol-induced mania, she puts the audience in a position in which they are unable to stop the actions of Macbeth. She also makes several excuses and justifications for her own actions in this passage. She hears a sound that she believes is a scream, to which she instinctively and fearfully responds, "Hark!—Peace!" and then immediately justifies her reaction by explaining to the audience that all she heard was an owl. This implies that she would not have had the same reaction if the sound had, in fact, been a scream, as if such a response would be cowardly, and she would never show such weakness. She goes on to describe the preparations that have been made for the murder, and then explains why she is not committing the murder herself. She says that the king resembled her father, but this is a thinly veiled justification for the fact that she is not brave enough to murder the king. All of this amounts to Lady Macbeth manipulating the audience in the same way she has manipulated Macbeth. However, unlike Macbeth, the audience sees through Lady Macbeth's artifice; Lady Macbeth acts villainously toward not only her fellow characters, but also toward the audience itself. In Act 5 Scene 1, Lady Macbeth has become so lost in her own mind that she has no awareness of the audience's presence. She has engaged so often with the audience before this point (she speaks directly to the audience in all but one scene in which she appears before Act 5) that her total ignorance of their presence is striking. This puts the audience into the position of

voyeurs, a far more uncomfortable position. Being as vulnerable as she is in Act 5, Lady Macbeth becomes the victim of a deep violation of privacy by being watched without her consent. There is a clear contrast between the way that Lady Macbeth interacts with the audience at the beginning and at the end of the play, and this contrast reverses her roles from villain at the beginning to victim at the end.

This rhetorical analysis leads to a simple conclusion for what makes Lady Macbeth different between the beginning and end of *Macbeth*. Her transformation from unrepentant to repentant marks her transformation from villain to victim. In her final line, Lady Macbeth says, "To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed" (5.1.62-65). The hurried repetition of "To bed" and "Come" provides an urgency and desperation to her exit, which we realize shortly after leads to her suicide. She speaks her motivation—the cause of her suicide is the fact that "What's done cannot be undone." She essentially dies of guilt. Regret and guilt are feelings that are universal, but in Lady Macbeth they are magnified, which allows for identification and empathy from the audience. The unforgiveable villains are those who die with no remorse, but an audience member cannot help but feel sympathy for a woman who is so tortured by her own actions that she feels she has no option other than suicide. Realizing that she has actually killed herself long ago, as soon as they murdered Duncan, allows the audience to understand the punishment she has suffered and she becomes a truly sympathetic character. Unlike the death of her child, which Lady Macbeth experienced alone with no audience witness, this trauma of insanity is witnessed and empathized by the audience.

Lady Macbeth, by occupying both archetypes, proves that Shakespeare's "evil" characters do not have innately compromised morals. Instead, their deep-seated sufferings are processed in a way that provokes villainy. The same woman, when the audience witnesses her trauma, does not continue to act in the same ambitious and selfish way that she acted in the beginning of the play, but rather retreats into childlike innocence. Lady Macbeth demonstrates how crucial the sharing of trauma is—how dramatically a person can be changed depending on whether their painful experiences are hidden or shared.

Act 5

Final Thoughts and Future Research

After investigating *Titus Andronicus*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, some final thoughts are necessary to probe the relevance of this theory. Even if it is true that “evil” women experience a trauma offstage in their past and “good” women experience a trauma onstage in front of an audience, the question remains whether this observation provides any larger significant meaning. I believe the theory provides important new insight into Shakespeare as a playwright.

At the core of this theory is *empathy*. The audience experiences a “special feeling of compassion, understanding, and care” for those characters that it witnesses in their tragic moments (Eklund 29). A manufactured empathy can manipulate the audience into a particular experience. For example, just as both Tamora and Lavinia are victims of a traumatic experience, they both die a violent death onstage (Shakespeare 5.3). However, where the audience weeps for Lavinia’s death, it cheers for Tamora’s. Some may argue that this is purely because Lavinia does not commit the kinds of violent deeds that Tamora commits. However, this presumption requires the audience to forget Lavinia’s involvement in the gruesome kidnapping and murder of Tamora’s sons, Chiron and Demetrius. Titus and Lavinia feel that they are justified in murdering the boys and feeding them to Tamora in a pie because they raped and mutilated Lavinia. However, Tamora also feels justified in ordering Lavinia’s rape as retribution for her son’s death. One is considered evil and the other just, despite both being violent deeds in the name of vengeance. The audience’s empathy must manipulate how it becomes the judge and jury to these characters—one’s death elicits despair and the other’s celebration. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare’s

bloodiest play, the impact is made even greater. As actress Katy Stephens points out, the audience actually seemed thrilled by the anticipation of seeing her eat her children. By manipulating a bond of empathy between the audience and character, Shakespeare predicts and creates the catharsis in the play's finale. Of course the audience feels catharsis at the death of a character in whom it feels invested; thus, Lavinia is a sacrificial martyr for the audience's theatrical experience, while Tamora is the convict at the guillotine, killed for the audience's enjoyment. The same can be said of *King Lear*. Shakespeare manipulates the audience's experiences by removing Goneril and Regan's bodies and allowing Cordelia's corpse to take center stage, which produces a greater catharsis.

Shakespeare's characters are written as if they are real people, and in fact they are "real," if only physically—they are at least embodied by real people. He has written wicked characters for whom an audience perhaps might still feel sympathy. By providing enough clues about what has wounded these evil women in their past, Shakespeare maintains three-dimensional, nuanced characters, rather than uninteresting caricatures. Trained actors probe the text to mine compelling and supported backstories, which unlock these three-dimensional characters. Remembering that Shakespeare's plays were first performed is invaluable to the study of his plays, and students of Shakespeare should assume the role of actor to a degree, feeling free to imaginatively fill in the gaps of his characters' lives.

He has also unlocked an understanding of his audience—that seeing a traumatic event deepens the audience's empathy for a character, which promotes greater catharsis and entertainment. Therefore, it isn't that the audience creates "evil" characters in its perception (that is a dangerous claim, since Tamora's, Goneril's, Regan's, and Lady Macbeth's actions are heinous and inexcusable). Rather, Shakespeare, in another display of

his understanding of human nature, uses the tension of space and distance to create characters the audience would empathize with at different levels—villain characters, very little, and victim characters, very much. Each of these factors contributes to the theatrical experience. He was in the business of creating good theatre—three-dimensional villains make for better theatre than flat caricatures, and enhancing catharsis creates a more intense, and therefore more engrossing and more enjoyable, theatre experience for the audience. Furthermore, Shakespeare displays an uncanny understanding of how traumatic experiences must be witnessed and shared in order to be resolved, instinctively demonstrating what has only recently been put into words by modern trauma scholars. Shakespeare's device of hiding events and experiences offstage serves as a replication of the real world situation of real people needing a witness.

The question of whether gender plays a part in this theory requires further comment as well. There is something to be said for female agency in any early modern work. Critics often discuss the martyr archetypes as gaining agency in their deaths. Caroline Lamb specifically points to Lavinia's agency in her death. I question why critics have given such little attention to the villains. The villain archetypes do not gain agency in their deaths because they have demonstrated agency in their lives. Tamora propels the plot forward more than almost any other character. The same can be said of Goneril and Regan, and Macbeth would never have murdered the king if not for Lady Macbeth's agency. For example, I feel further compelled to note the centrality of Lavinia's role in Paschal Aebischer's evaluation of the play. She cites "Titus' verbal and Lavinia's physical prominence," claiming that Lavinia is as important to the play as Titus (37). This ignores

Tamora as the catalyst for most of the action throughout. I would argue that if there were any parallel character to Titus, if the play was as much about any one character as it is about Titus, it must be Tamora. The evil women are far from submissive; they act on their own compulsion, often contrary to the men surrounding them. Yes, these characters are not nice characters, but they certainly have agency. Diane Elizabeth Dreher describes these tragic women as “[attempting] to outdo their men in aggression” (168). There seems to be an unconscious critical tendency to want women to have agency, but not too much, or not as much as men.

Ellen Terry believes that Shakespeare was essentially a feminist, when she discusses the women from his comedies:

Have you ever thought how much we all, and women especially, owe to Shakespeare for his vindication of women in these fearless, high-spirited, resolute, and intelligent heroines? Don't believe the anti-feminists if they tell you, as I was once told, that Shakespeare had to endow his women with virile qualities because in his theatre they were always impersonated by men! This may account for the frequency with which they masquerade as boys, but I am convinced that it had little influence on Shakespeare's studies of women. They owe far more to the liberal ideas about the sex which were fermenting in Shakespeare's age. The assumption that 'the woman's movement' is of very recent date—something peculiarly modern—is not warranted by history. There is evidence of its existence in the fifteenth century (81).

To credit Shakespeare with too progressive a view might be a mistake, because certainly not all of his plays portray fully strong and independent women. Even Terry admits that Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* and Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* are “doormats”

(151). However, most of his women are as fully developed and cared for as most of his men (I believe there are examples of both genders that still prove to be fairly shallow, but that may also be because I have not spent enough time mining those texts), and that is certainly noteworthy. If we separate the women into our archetypes, Shakespeare definitely gives evil women as much agency and personality as their good counterparts, something that even Ellen Terry neglects. In her analysis of *King Lear*, once again Cordelia is the subject of in-depth analysis and Goneril and Regan are totally ignored (Terry 153-157). Regardless of his political or social goals (of which Terry seems to be referring when she claims that he is a feminist), the women in *Titus Andronicus*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* are individuals; they are three-dimensional, complex people with a great deal of agency.

Finally, there is the issue that men simply are never *victims* in the same way that women are— not only Cordelia and Lavinia, but also many of Shakespeare's other women, like Ophelia, Juliet, Desdemona, Cressida, and Hermione. Why are the only outright victims in Shakespeare's plays women? Is Shakespeare commenting upon women's inherent weakness? His evil women prove certainly not! Why then are the only women who resist victimization the evil ones? On one hand, it may be that Shakespeare is criticizing strong women and punishing his characters that display agency. However, this has already been disproven by how much sympathy one may feel for the evil women when a reader or actor realizes the depth of suffering they may have experienced themselves. Another possibility is that Shakespeare is merely observing a truth about the world—strong women are vilified, and women on the whole are often the victims of abuse to a degree that historically men have not been.

There are several directions this research might lead in the future. Of course, far more characters could be studied than just the ones presented here. I see the same parallel in *Romeo and Juliet*, where Juliet experiences a trauma onstage and Lady Capulet has experienced a trauma offstage, but it would be extreme to call Lady Capulet a villain in the same way that Tamora or Goneril are. The same relationship might be seen between Ophelia and Gertrude in *Hamlet*, but again, while Gertrude is vilified to a certain extent, she is hardly a parallel to Lady Macbeth. Using the theory of proximity and trauma, but moving away from strict archetypes would make for a more nuanced individual analysis of other Shakespearean women.

Another possibility is the question of whether the theory is true of the male characters as well. Richard III, Edmund, and Aaron are villains who explicitly discuss their past mistreatment as justification for their wicked deeds. Could the same be said for Iago though, enigmatic and baffling in his hatred of Othello, or men like Macbeth or Angelo, who become villains through the course of the play? Then there are male characters who are far more morally ambiguous, like Shylock, Leontes, or Othello, all of whom would make for fascinating studies of trauma. Of course, the fact that men are not victims in the same way that women are is another reason to reconsider the character archetypes presented here, and instead to study proximity and trauma as a new way to think about individual characters in Shakespeare's plays.

A final area of study that may open even more insights into the theory of proximity and trauma, as well as how gender plays into the theory, is *genre*. So far, only Shakespeare's tragedies have been discussed, but the theory may be suitable for the study of comedies as

well. Some of Shakespeare's most researched and most loved women come from his comedies, and interestingly, many of them can fall into the two categories of either experiencing a trauma before the play has begun or experiencing a trauma onstage. Beatrice and Hero, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, fall to the two sides of the spectrum. Beatrice was spurned by Benedick, with whom she has had a relationship in the past, before the action of the play begins. Hero is spurned by Claudio onstage in front of the audience. More strong comedic female characters have experienced some kind of painful event before the play has begun, like Rosalind, Katharina, and Helena (*Midsummer*), though admittedly the event is always less violent than those seen in the tragedies. The definition of *trauma* may need to be re-assessed. Katharina, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, may have experienced paternal neglect to a similar degree as Goneril and Regan, and as a result she is by far the most violent of Shakespeare's comedic women. However, can a romantic rejection, a broken heart, the most common type of offstage suffering in Shakespeare's comedies, be classified in the same category as the suffering seen in the tragedies—war, rape, the death of a child? The real comparability of these characters would need to be addressed if the theory of proximity and trauma was extended to Shakespeare's comedies.

When Harold Bloom wrote that Shakespeare had invented the human, he meant that Shakespeare demonstrated an unparalleled understanding of human nature through the creation of his characters. However, he seems to display this understanding equally in the creation of his audience. By their distance from a character's traumatic event, Shakespeare manipulates an audience's empathy and emotional investment in the lives of the characters onstage. An audience's reactions to Shakespeare's plays are not truly its own—they have

been predetermined by the playwright. He also appears to be ahead of his time in his instinctive understanding of the effect of trauma upon the psyche. Not only might trauma theory be helpful in future studies of Shakespeare, but exploring Shakespeare might provide further insight into literary trauma theory.

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