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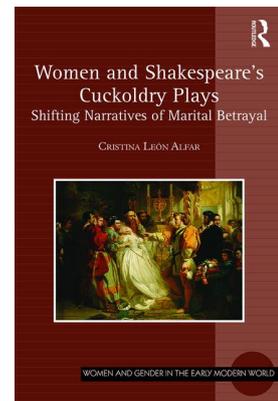
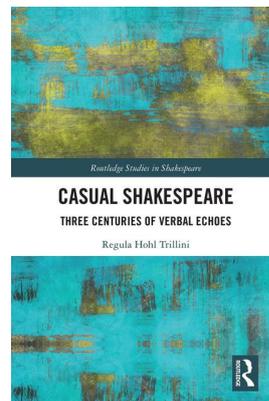
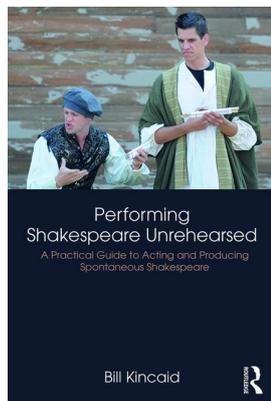
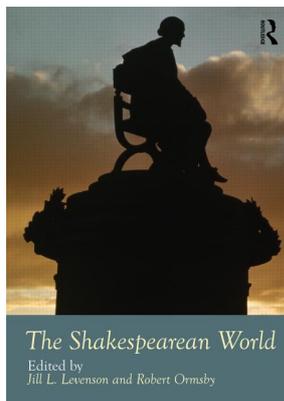
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CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

“WITHIN THIS WOODEN [2.]O” Shakespeare and new media in the digital age



Brett Greatley-Hirsch and Michael Best

NEW MEDIA, OLD PROBLEMS

Between April and September 2013, a series of graffiti artworks appeared on the streets of Glasgow. Headed by pixelated emoticons (the typographical representations of facial expressions used to convey emotion or tone in electronic correspondence), the anthropomorphic graffiti-figures bemoan their existence through selective quotation from *Hamlet* (Figure 25.1), posing questions to passers-by about “the fragmentation of complex emotions as they pass through technology” (Drew 2013). As illegal street art, Peter Drew’s *Hamlet Emoticons* are constantly under threat of defacement and removal; this transient status poignantly reflects the instability of the Shakespearean text that is both inspiration for the graffiti and their cultural reference.

One of the most contested of all textual problems in Shakespeare is Hamlet’s reference to his flesh in the opening lines of his first soliloquy, rendered by the Oxford editors as: “O that this too too solid flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew” (1.2.129–30). Since the text of the play survives in three significantly different early versions, modern editors must decide between the readings of the 1623 First Folio, which gives “solid,” and that of the First and Second Quartos of 1603 and 1604, both of which give “sallied” (a variant form of the word “sullied”). Does Hamlet wish his “solid” flesh, like ice, would melt; or does he imagine himself like trodden snow, “sallied” or “sullied” and tainted, capable of purification only if his flesh undergoes the cycle of thawing, evaporating, and condensing into dew? Is Hamlet’s metaphor physical or spiritual?

Although editors record this moment of textual ambiguity in different ways, conventional practice since the eighteenth century has been to report such variants in the form of collation formulae underneath the text of the play itself. The syntax for textual notes in print editions can be off-putting, with critics branding them a “band of terror” or “barbed wire,” alienated from the text and reader alike. With the emergence of digital publishing, editors have experimented with interface design to solve the problem of displaying textual variation, using colour, in-line visual tags or typographical markers, and customizable, reader-selected levels of annotation (see Alan Galey’s *Visualizing Variation* project, 2012–). Another possible solution is to “take

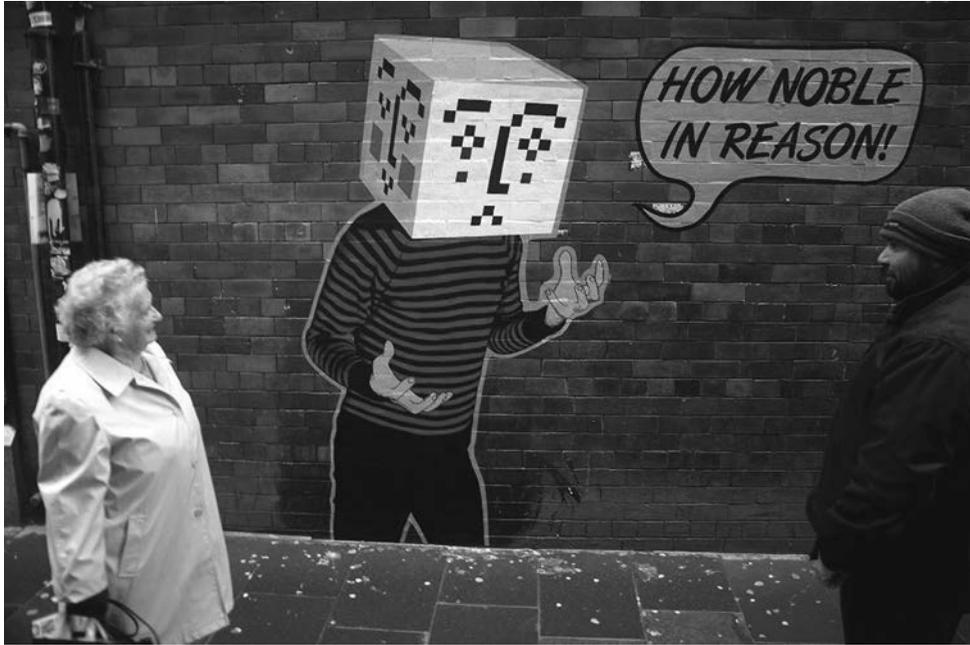


Figure 25.1 *Hamlet Emoticon*, Glasgow, 2013.
© Peter Drew

advantage of the capacity of the medium for animation by recreating a semantic field where the text dances between variant readings,” rendering the text “visibly variant, teasingly slippery, as it makes manifest its actual instability,” otherwise all-too-frequently tucked away and “hidden by our meticulously edited print texts” (Best 2009: 34). Unlike print, in which content is static – and, in the case of the book, literally bound – electronic texts are able to embrace the plasticity of the digital medium through animation, customization, and dynamic interaction with the reader-as-user. Electronic editions, such as the ones described by Best and Galey, allow Hamlet’s flesh to be at once “solid,” “sallied,” and “sullied.”

WHAT IS YOUR TEXT?

Digital media have become insistently multimedia in content. Commercial Web pages are crowded with images; newspapers lead each article with a video or colour photograph; and lists of faculty at universities are routinely accompanied by mugshots. In a world where every smartphone is a potential multimedia platform for publication, it is a salutary reminder that early digital representations of Shakespeare’s texts were necessarily far more limited than their print counterparts. Only now are we beginning to take advantage of the additional tools and ways of viewing data that the digital environment enables. Alan Galey has recently reminded us that many of the features we think of as innovations in the digital display of complex texts were anticipated in print. As an example he highlights the remarkable inventiveness of Teena Rochfort-Smith’s *Four-Text-Hamlet*, created in 1883. This experiment displayed, in

parallel columns, the three original texts (Q₁, Q₂, and F₁), with a “Revized” text in the fourth. Each version further used multiple font faces to indicate types of variant (Galey 2014: 23–29; see also Thompson 1998). More recent (and more successful) experiments in print include Bernice W. Kliman’s *Three-Text Hamlet* (2003) and Michael Warren’s inventive boxed volume, *The Parallel King Lear* (1989).

The first machine-readable texts of Shakespeare were recorded on mainframe computers using what would now be considered arcane, command-line driven software to generate them. They were limited to upper- and lower-case letters, numbers from 0 to 9, and basic punctuation marks. During the 1960s, Trevor Howard-Hill entered all the canonical plays in this format in order to use the computer to prepare single-volume concordances to Shakespeare. Even in its early years, the computer provided two powerful functions unavailable in print: automated searching (in this instance resulting in lists of words for the concordance); and the capacity for modification and correction after the initial data entry. To provide information beyond the limited character-set available to him, Howard-Hill used a mark-up scheme (COCOA) to indicate paratextual entities (page signatures), conceptual differences (stage directions), and bibliographical information (compositor attributions). For many years the only machine that could read these texts was the mainframe computer for which they were created; eventually they were released on floppy disks when personal computers (PCs) became sufficiently widespread.

The PC made possible two new ways of accessing digital data: the disk drive and direct connection to exterior repositories through the Internet. The technology of the CD-ROM attracted the first commercial use of digital scholarly Shakespeare, not only because it made large files and multimedia available on the desktop, but also because the disk was an object that could have a price attached to it in much the same way as a published book. In contrast, networks – in due course the World Wide Web (WWW) – encouraged access to free materials, often generated or collected by enthusiastic generalists rather than scholars. Both technologies faced a major challenge in keeping up with rapid changes in both software and hardware that continually threatened to make their work obsolete by the time it was released (Hirsch and Craig 2014: 4–6).

The large storage capacity of LaserDisc and CD-ROM for the first time made genuine multimedia accessible to the personal computer. At the same time it raised the very knotty problem of copyright limitation on the distribution of graphics, music, and video. Two early projects solved the problem by providing software that accessed LaserDisc performances that the user would have to purchase or license in order to see the end result. Larry Friedlander’s *Shakespeare Project* (1984–91) combined LaserDisc with Apple Macintosh’s HyperCard to develop an interactive workspace that interlinked film segments of selected plays with the text and with other resources (Saltz 2007: 337). Peter S. Donaldson pushed the concept farther at the head of a team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the development of the *Shakespeare Electronic Archive* (1992–). The project made possible full multimedia links between the text, digital facsimiles from the Folger Shakespeare Library, and sound and video performances on LaserDisc (see Donaldson 2008). Some sense of the scope of the project can be gleaned from its *Hamlet on the Ramparts* website.

The technology of LaserDiscs did not last: the CD-ROM was more promising, as CD drives rapidly became associated with the personal computer. Three fine scholarly

publications on CD-ROM exemplify a period of experiment and inventiveness that followed; they also illustrate the limitations of the medium. Although the CD-ROM had the advantage for publishers that it fitted well with their established infrastructure for sale and distribution, it brought with it a significant disadvantage, since neither the scholarship nor the software displaying it could be updated. As a result, none of these works can be accessed on modern computers. The most traditional CD-ROM of the group was *The Arden Shakespeare CD-ROM* (Bate 1997). Three years in development, it was based on digital versions of the second Arden series, together with some useful additional resources – facsimiles, sources, glossary, and so on – and it permitted extensive searching of the texts. Although impressive in its comprehensiveness, the texts themselves were already becoming dated by the time of publication, as the third Arden series was already underway.

The earliest of the three was in many ways the most adventurous. The *Voyager Macbeth* (1994) was aimed at a student audience. It used the New Cambridge Shakespeare text edited by A.R. Braunmuller; its interface was inventive and attractive; it included extensive supporting materials; and it encouraged creative interaction with the text, even having a karaoke feature that allowed a user to speak one of the parts of the play. The developers' initial intention was to provide a full video performance (the Royal Shakespeare Company production with Ian McKellen and Judi Dench), but they were able to secure the rights only to the audio track, supported by limited video footage. A later CD-ROM devoted to a single play aimed at a more scholarly audience: *The Cambridge King Lear CD-ROM* (2001), edited by Jacky Bratton and Christie Carson. The subtitle of this work, *Text and Performance Archive*, proclaimed that its scope went beyond a traditional edition. It included an impressive library of textual materials: three modern texts edited by Jay L. Halio (Quarto, Folio, and conflated), together with major adaptations, and an extensive gallery of graphics of performance.

The flurry of adventurous programming and scholarship that resulted in these CD-ROMs has been rendered obsolete over time as operating systems have changed, and as an increasing number of computers lack a built-in CD drive. Digital Shakespeare has migrated to the Web; and it is being read by a multitude of different devices, from computers to tablets, smartphones, and e-readers. It is perhaps ironical that the first generally available digital text of Shakespeare's plays made accessible on the Internet appears to have been derived from a CD-ROM. The Moby Shakespeare, still almost ubiquitous on the Web, appears to have been extracted by Grady Ward from a CD-ROM that claimed to use the Stratford Town modern-spelling edition of 1911, edited by Arthur Bullen. However, it is more likely to be a transcription – not wholly accurate – of the Globe text published in the 1860s, or from one of a number of editions that used this popular text (Lancashire 1992). In 1993, very soon after the Web was established, two sites, both created by computer scientists, took advantage of the Moby text to format Shakespeare's canon in HTML for the first browsers: Matty Farrow's *The Works of the Bard* (University of Sydney) and Jeremy Hylton's *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (MIT). To their credit – and to the credit of their supporting institutions – both sites are still available.

It is no surprise that the Moby text became so prevalent. It was free, and it was a text that had pretty much what a general reader would expect from Shakespeare. All the important quotations were there. Michael Hart anticipated, and perhaps helped

— *Shakespeare and new media: the digital age* —

create, the expectation that digital information should be free. In 1971, well before the creation of the Web – yes, Virginia, there was a world before the Web – Hart founded Project Gutenberg, designed to make plain-text versions of books freely available to all. Hart’s aim to make simple texts, of reasonable quality, available by open access anticipated both the strength and weakness of Shakespeare on the Web:

We do not write for the reader who cares whether a certain phrase in Shakespeare has a “:” or a “;” between its clauses. We put our sights on a goal to release etexts that are 99.9% accurate in the eyes of the general reader.

(Hart 1992)

This philosophy is still followed by modern sites like Eric Johnson’s *Open Source Shakespeare* (2003–), although his texts have been carefully proof-read to follow the Globe edition more accurately. The site is effectively designed for a general reader or student to use for downloading a text, and the tools the site offers for searching the texts are sophisticated. Martin Mueller has similarly generated a “good enough” Shakespeare for use with the textual-analysis programme *WordHoard*. His approach moves beyond the Globe text by consulting modern editions. Nonetheless, his rationale is very similar to Hart’s:

These texts are in virtually complete agreement with each other and with the Globe Shakespeare on the copy text used for each play, and, if one stands a few feet away from the passionately contested minutiae of Shakespearean editing, they do not differ a great deal in their treatment of cruxes or choice of variants.

(Mueller 2005: 63)

For those cranky readers who *do* care about minutiae, there are fewer choices. From the time of their earlier CD-ROM, the Arden team have done their best to provide digital versions of the Arden editions, with additional supporting material. Their first foray into the field, the website *ArdenOnline* (1997–98), failed for lack of subscribers; the Arden 2 and 3 texts were made available to subscribing institutions through *The Shakespeare Collection* (2005–) (see Holland and Onorato 2008) until August 2015, when changes in licensing agreements required its publisher, Gale, to remove them. The Arden 2 and 3 editions are now available from *Drama Online*, a subscription-based digital platform developed by Bloomsbury, the current publisher of the Arden Shakespeare, in partnership with Faber & Faber.

All these websites have adapted works previously created for print to the digital medium. One open-access scholarly site, the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* (ISE), has chosen to create editions that are born digital. Founded by Michael Best in 1996, the site has grown to include accurate old-spelling texts of the complete works, with individual plays in the process of being edited by a team of scholars (see Best 2008). Eighteen plays are currently complete with modern texts. The site includes an extensive database of Shakespeare in performance and a much-visited section on Shakespeare’s life and times. As an online digital resource, it is able to take advantage of the medium by regularly updating the site in terms both of its content and of the tools it offers those who access it. In response to changes in technology and the needs of a growing demographic of viewers, it has recently been made available in a format suitable for viewing on the small screens of smartphones.

Smart devices such as smartphones and tablets are bringing Shakespeare to an ever-widening audience; but they remain only as smart as the content they access, content that is still severely limited by copyright restrictions. As the prevalent use of the Globe text on the Web indicates, cutting-edge technology is no guarantee of editorial sophistication. One recent publication specifically for the iPad, Luminary Digital Media's *Shakespeare's The Tempest* (2012), has been described by one reviewer as "a curious throwback to Victorian sensibilities" and "an ironic instance of twenty-first-century technology taking us backward to eighteenth-century editorial practices" (Rasmussen 2014: 161, 163). In many ways, the digital medium is still catching up to the *Voyager Macbeth* of 1994.

THE WORLD TOGETHER JOINS

In contrast with "older notions of passive media spectatorship," late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century new media enable – and are enabled by – active participation, collaboration, and interaction: media producers and consumers, previously occupying separate roles, might now be conceived "as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules none of us fully understands" (Jenkins 2006: 3). This blurring of the roles of consumer and producer is reflected in the expectation that digital Shakespeare editions move beyond simply remediating the features and functions of the printed book (such as producing a text and allowing users to "highlight" or "bookmark" it) and providing relevant multimedia (such as digital images, audio and video clips) to supporting user interaction and sharing of user-generated content. No longer satisfied with basic customization options, users increasingly demand the ability to create, store, and share their own annotations and commentary; to link, share, and embed content between other new media platforms and devices; and to contribute multimedia content created by themselves, whether original or a remix of existing material. For example, the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* allows users to create, save, and share annotations; to submit multimedia to its Shakespeare in Performance database; to publish film and theatre reviews on its *ISE Performance Chronicle*; and to link and embed all content on social networking platforms. Similarly, Luminary Digital Media's *Shakespeare's The Tempest* for the iPad provides a "mashable" text, allowing users to create their own custom scripts as well as annotations, and to share these on social media platforms or export them to other apps.

By 1995, still the early days of the Internet, Shakespeare's online presence was already prolific enough to require the creation of "gateway" sites to collate and link to others, such as Terry A. Gray's meticulously curated *Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet* (1995–2011). After the paradigm shift to "Web 2.0," participatory culture stimulating and stimulated by the emergence of social media and networking platforms, sites such as Gray's could no longer be feasible: there is now simply too much online Shakespeare content to catalogue by hand, and the rate of growth is exponential. At the time of writing, there are over 200 Shakespeare "groups" on Facebook, ranging from academic discussion groups (e.g., "Shakespeare Friends"), clubs and festivals (e.g., "Shakespeare Readers Society" and "Texas Shakespeare Festival"); to amateur and semi-professional theatre companies (e.g., "Shakespeare Institute Players"); specific Shakespeare projects and productions (e.g., "Shakespeare's

Star Wars”); and a dizzying array of school and college Shakespeare courses (e.g., “Shakespeare 412 – Fall 2014”) – not to mention groups with only a coincidental or tangential relationship to the author (e.g., “Shakespeare Spiritualist Church,” so named because it is located at 95 Shakespeare Street, Glasgow). As Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan report (2014: 249), Twitter “indiscriminately includes hundreds of profiles” for Shakespeare, with descriptions ranging from the serious (e.g., “Actor and playwright based in Renaissance England”) to the puzzling (e.g., “Poet, play-write [*sic*] and member of the assassin order”) and the farcical (e.g., “I acquire [*sic*] all the wenches. I raise thy hands into the atmosphere and flail them about [*sic*] as if there were no repercussions”). Although these explicitly Shakespearean avatars and discussion groups are easily located, it is impossible in practical terms to track and measure comprehensively the mass of Shakespearean adaptations, allusions, pastiches, and quotations published online in various new media formats.

Despite the immense difficulty of the task, there have been attempts to catalogue Shakespeare’s presence selectively on certain social media platforms, such as Luke McKernan’s *BardBox*. According to the project’s “About” page, *BardBox* curated some 150 of “the best and most interesting of original Shakespeare-related videos on YouTube, Vimeo and other video hosting sites,” including “animations, parodies, recitations, auditions, promos for theatre productions, amateur records of stage productions, student work, school productions, [and] mashups,” from its launch in May 2008 until its retirement in September 2012. Content such as this participates in the ongoing debate over what constitutes “fair use” in the creation of multimedia remixes, parodies, and mashups, as Hollywood studios zealously police their intellectual property and Actors’ Equity limits the distribution of filmed stage productions. To work around these limitations, a number of projects have partnered with theatre companies and independent filmmakers to make their Shakespeare video content freely available online. For example, the *MIT Global Shakespeares Video & Performance Archive* (directed by Peter S. Donaldson and Alexa Huang, 2010–) has provided streaming videos, in whole or part, of recorded stage and screen Shakespeare performances from around the globe since its launch, alongside essays, interviews, scripts, subtitles for foreign-language productions, and other metadata. The *Internet Shakespeare Editions* has brokered similar partnerships with theatre companies from around the world to contribute multimedia materials to its *Shakespeare in Performance* database. These projects and others like them are making it possible to study and appreciate Shakespeare performance and adaptation as a global phenomenon, extending beyond the commercial Hollywood movies and canonical productions by a select group of professional Anglo-American theatre companies that have dominated performance criticism in the past.

As well as providing a vehicle for the distribution of Shakespeare content, social media and networking platforms also offer a mode of performance in their own right. Co-produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and Mudlark, *Such Tweet Sorrow* marked the first modernized adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* performed entirely on Twitter and other social media and networking platforms, in real time, between 10 April and 13 May 2010. Actors brought *Such Tweet Sorrow* to life with their own Twitter profiles – Romeo (@romeo_mo), Juliet (@julietcap16), Mercutio (@mercuteio), Tybalt (@Tybalt_Cap), Friar Laurence (@LaurenceFriar), and Jess, Juliet’s older sister, a non-Shakespearean addition who assumes the role of

Nurse (@Jess_Nurse) – improvising on daily instructions provided to drive the central narrative, responding to current events (such as the London Marathon), and freely interacting with one another as well as with a public audience of Twitter followers. Elsewhere on the Web, Lady Capulet (reimagined as a dietician) updated her blog, “Balanced Adult: Food, Nutrition and Exercise,” while an additional (and uncredited) non-Shakespearean character, Jago Mosca (@jago_klepto), tweeted and blogged an outsider’s perspective as Juliet’s envious and angst-ridden classmate. Exemplifying Jenkins’s notion of “media convergence” (2006: 2), characters “engaged with, and incorporated, the whole gamut of Web 2.0 social [media and] networking platforms, including YouTube, AudioBoo, Yfrog, Twitpics, Tumblr, Spotify, Facebook, [Blogger,] and even Skype” (Calbi 2013: 138).

Such Tweet Sorrow provoked audience participation that far exceeded expectations. Within the first week, the actors’ Twitter feeds had over 30,000 followers, with members of the public tweeting, retweeting, and interacting with the characters. Over the course of the production, fans could also play *Call of Duty* against Romeo on Xbox Live; and audience members posted over 400 images of their own “masks” to the Facebook invitation page for Juliet’s “Sweet Sixteen Masked Ball.” In addition to numerous fan sites and blogs, a public campaign was launched to “save Mercutio” in the lead-up to his death – much to the delight and amazement of the production team, who had not instigated it – followed by a fan-arranged online “wake” for him.

As professional theatre companies continue to explore the possibilities of incorporating social media and networking platforms in performance, Shakespeare has become a focus for online creativity by young users of new media. Leia Yen’s “Hamlet Gone Viral” (2012), published on YouTube as a senior English project to “Create a Modern Interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*,” ingeniously adapts the play into a first-person narrative “seen” primarily through the eyes of Hamlet as he negotiates changing personal relationships over Facebook, Twitter, and Gmail; maintains a private journal on Tumblr; visualizes his travels using Google Maps; and reads news stories published on MSN.com and Yahoo! News. Yen’s Hamlet also queries Internet search engines for information, using Google to find out “how to cope with grief and depression” and “ways to make someone feel guilty”; and he submits the question “What do you do if your father’s ghost tells you that your uncle murdered him???” to Ask.com.

Ophelia is another popular Shakespearean candidate for new media adaptation, particularly by girls and young women who, “through their identification with and critique of Shakespeare’s doomed maiden,” are inspired to use Facebook and YouTube to fill the gaps in *Hamlet* imaginatively via creative revision, revivification, and memorialization of her character (Iyengar and Desmet 2012: 59). In their survey of YouTube remediations, Sujata Iyengar and Christy Desmet identify three main categories: “Ophelia Elegies,” which “focus obsessively on Ophelia’s body and poetic signification”; “Ophelia as Tragic Lover,” in which *Hamlet* is rewritten to become “Ophelia’s story”; and “Drowning Ophelia,” which offers “both sentimental and witty reworkings of the death scene available in Shakespeare only through Gertrude’s eulogy” (2012: 68). These new media adaptations “reveal and extend *Hamlet*’s own rhetorical approach to her character,” providing “a more complex biography than Shakespeare could ever have imagined for her,” as Ophelia becomes a “social

paralogue” and “posthuman avatar” with “new adventures [and] new sorrows” (Iyengar and Desmet 2012: 67, 72–73; see also O’Neill 2014: 95–119).

In Shakespeare’s time, the “supreme device of the early modern stage,” providing “audiences access to a character’s motivations and thoughts,” was the soliloquy (O’Neill 2014: 86). At the turn of the twenty-first century, personal video emerged as “*the* technology of interiority” for Shakespearean performance, exemplified by Michael Almereyda’s *Hamlet* (2000), in which “all but one of Hamlet’s soliloquies [were] framed as video sequences that he has composed” (Rowe 2003: 46). With the capacity to adapt, converge, and manipulate audio, image, text, and video, and through the provision of new communicative forms (comments, posts, and tweets; shares and retweets; social gestures such as “like” and “favourite,” etc.), social media and networking platforms have since overtaken personal video as the technology of interiority. Viewers of Yen’s “Hamlet Gone Viral,” for example, experience the play through Hamlet’s eyes and his computer screen: with music in the background, we watch his exchange with Ophelia in act 3, scene 1 rendered as an email correspondence in which his initial response to her (“I do love you”) is typed, deleted, and rewritten (“I did love you,” and then “I don’t love you”) before, in frustration, he settles on “Go to a nunnery!!!!” and clicks “Send.”

INFINITE SPACE

Shakespeare’s geographies, as Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr suggests, “are at once poetic and historical, archetypal and particular” (2003: 196). Thus, the Venice of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* is simultaneously an historical maritime city-state famed for its political independence and international trade, and a mythical projection of contemporary English anxieties, fears, and desires associated with cosmopolitanism, capitalism, and Catholicism, a mirror reflecting the vices and virtues – real and imagined – of London and England. Shakespearean plays set in the city of London and its surrounds offer even finer geographical detail, “replete with references to streets, buildings, neighbourhoods, wards, parishes, landmarks, and the natural landscape” (Jenstad 2011: 117). Much of the action in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, for example, takes place in various locations in and around London: Baynard’s Castle, Crosby House/Place, Ely House, Guildhall, St Paul’s Cathedral, the Tower, Westminster, and Whitefriars.

Whereas early modern London audiences were readily familiar with these geographical references, modern readers rely on scholars to explain the historical and cultural significance of such sites. (Modern editions of Shakespeare, even those produced for a British readership, typically gloss all place-names for this reason.) However, local knowledge of early modern London also included an appreciation of its spatial contexts: the proximity of one location to another and their relationships to other built and natural structures; their accessibility by various modes of transport by land or water; and the time taken to traverse these distances. To recover these lost spatial contexts, the *Map of Early Modern London* (MoEML) offers a digital map and gazetteer (based on a high-resolution scan of the Agas woodcut map of London, executed in the 1560s), linked to an encyclopaedia of London people, places, topics, and terms, as well as transcriptions of John Stow’s *Survey of London* and other primary texts rich in London toponyms (see Figure 25.2).

MoEML allows modern readers of *Richard III*, for example, to visualize the movements of the titular character around London, and to piece together the geographical components to his shrewd political manoeuvres and social transgressions. Tudor mythology ensured an “inescapable association of Richard with the Tower” in the early modern English imagination. The site is mentioned more than twenty times in Shakespeare’s play, and “characters orient themselves in physical and symbolic relation to the Tower” (Schwyzer 2013: 153–54). Similarly, the three references to Crosby House/Place in the play, always “in conjunction with the development or fruition of one or another of Richard’s vicious schemes,” suffuse the site with “a sinister significance, like the centre of a spider’s web” (Schwyzer 2013: 155).

Although the vast majority of early modern London theatrical venues no longer exist, many of the sites where they once stood have been positively identified and can still be visited. In 2013, the *Shakespearean London Theatres* (ShaLT) project – a partnership between De Montfort University and the Victoria and Albert Museum – was launched, producing a London walking map; a forty-eight-page colour *Guide to Shakespearean London Theatres*; an interactive website and smart-device app; recorded lectures by leading experts; and short films of performances, all made freely available to download and designed to enable the public “to travel to the modern London locations of these theatres and learn about them” (Egan and Gurr 2013). The ShaLT smart-device app interactively directs users to thirty-seven locations in modern London, including indoor and outdoor professional theatres, inns used for plays, Inns of Court, royal performance venues, churches where actors and theatre personnel are buried, the Revels Office, and Shakespeare’s residences. It provides in-depth information about the sites and their history, as well as visual representations of how they looked, or might have looked, 400 years ago, with images from the vast collections of the V&A complementing the entries (Figure 25.2).

In the absence of surviving material structures, Shakespeare scholars have sought to reconstruct early modern performance spaces digitally, creating 3D scale models



Figure 25.2 Left: Screenshot of the *Map of Early Modern London* Agas map interface. CC-BY-SA Map of Early Modern London. Right: Interface screens for the *Shakespearean London Theatres* smart-device app. CC-BY Shakespearean London Theatres.

with which to explore spatial relationships, simulate staging practices, and experiment with different performance conditions (see Ravelhofer 2002, and articles in Egan 2004). For example, Joanne Tompkins and the team at Ortelia Interactive Spaces (2009–) have built interactive 3D virtual models of the Boar’s Head and Rose playhouses, using archaeological records of the sites’ foundations and the work of theatre historians and architects to ensure that the models are as accurate as possible. Tompkins has recently shown how the Ortelia virtual environment can provide valuable insights into theatre history, with the performance of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* at the Rose playhouse as a case-study. One “significant revelation” has been the model’s illustration of “just how intimate the Rose was,” and how this intimacy of scale challenges the historical records we have about lighting outdoor theatres (Tompkins 2014: 164). The virtual model similarly allowed Tompkins to experiment with the function and design of a hell-mouth, a large property used to stage Faustus’s climactic damnation (Figure 25.3). Traditionally thought to work in conjunction with a trapdoor, the Ortelia model demonstrates that the limited size of the Rose’s tiring-house and stage suggests that a trapdoor would not accommodate it. Instead, the hell-mouth would be designed to “collapse easily so it wouldn’t occupy too much room backstage,” a mobility requirement that also “would have contributed to its appearance,” rendering it “somewhat ragged after many performances” (Tompkins 2014: 169).

Like Ortelia, the Simulated Environment for Theatre (SET) is another project to create accurate 3D scale models of performance spaces. As a “virtual environment for exploring the relationships between theatrical text and performance” built on the Unity 3D game engine, SET “accommodates visualizations of text, performance, performance records, and annotations in two and three spatial dimensions, as well as in time” (Roberts-Smith *et al.* 2014: 70). As an editorial experiment, Jennifer Roberts-Smith and the SET Project team produced an electronic edition of *Richard III*, taking as its copy-text an excerpt from the anonymous Queen’s Men play *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (see Figure 25.3) in which “the gaze” of the user “is directed through the Queen’s Men play to Shakespeare’s by means of the layout of our editorial interface” (Roberts-Smith *et al.* 2014: 72). For Roberts-Smith and her team, the “impotence of linear textual source study” to grant *The True Tragedy* agency as a source or analogue “because its provenance cannot be sequenced” is overcome by the “performance-oriented reimagining of English Renaissance theatre culture” accomplished through the software (Roberts-Smith *et al.* 2014: 74–75). In the spirit of participation that characterizes new media culture, users are invited to “download and play” the edition, to alter the “blocking and text at will,” and to test the team’s findings in a process that “empower[s] users as creators” and “dissolv[es] the researcher–audience binary even more completely than performance can” (Roberts-Smith *et al.* 2014: 75, 78, 91).

While projects such as Ortelia and SET allow users to record blocked simulations, other 3D virtual environments can support real-time Shakespeare performances. On 26 April 1998, Stephen N. Matsuba and Bernie Roehl streamed a live performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* over the Internet, using imaginative 3D sets, characters, and props modelled through the Virtual Reality Modelling Language (VRML), with actors providing the voices and puppeteers animating the characters in real time (Matsuba and Roehl 1999: 45). More recently, the Second Life Shakespeare



Figure 25.3 Top: Ortelia simulation of *Doctor Faustus* in the Rose playhouse. © Ortelia Interactive Spaces. Bottom: SET visualization of *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*. © SET Project

Company (after February 2010, the Metaverse Shakespeare Company) presented live productions of Shakespeare’s plays in the online virtual world of Second Life using a 3D scale model of the Globe Theatre relying on C. Walter Hodges’s conjectural reconstruction. Founded in 2007 under the artistic direction of Ina Centaur (the “in-world” avatar of Yosun Chang), the Second Life Shakespeare Company made “live Shakespearean theatre available to anyone anywhere with a computer,” and developed “new technology for virtual theatre on Second Life” and “new possibilities in entertainment, culture, and commerce for residents of a diverse, unbounded

geosphere” – all “*to make Shakespeare cool again*” (Centaur 2009). The Second Life Shakespeare Company mounted live productions of selected scenes from *Hamlet* (act 1, scene 1 in February 2008; act 3, scene 2 in April 2008) and the entire first act of *Twelfth Night* (February 2009). Despite sponsorship campaigns and various efforts to raise funds to meet costs, the company deactivated in October 2009 before dissolving completely in 2011 for lack of funding, with the virtual Globe Theatre deleted from the Second Life servers.

THE [GAME]PLAY’S THE THING

In 2006, a year prior to the inauguration of the Second Life Shakespeare Company, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded Edward Castronova and the Synthetic Worlds Initiative at Indiana University US\$240,000 to develop *Arden: The World of William Shakespeare*, an ambitious, massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) set in a 3D virtual world framed by Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Built as a module extending *Neverwinter Nights* (a popular Dungeons & Dragons game developed by BioWare in 2002), *Arden* allowed players to roam the city of Ilminster, interact with (and complete tasks for) characters from Shakespeare’s plays, or visit the local tavern to gamble at cards with other players. After the first year, the MacArthur Foundation refused to renew its funding, and active development on the game ceased. Incompatibility between the developers’ goals and the expectations of different target audiences was an acute problem. Scholars could appreciate *Arden*’s adaptation of Shakespearean content, but found the gameplay baffling (see e.g., Holland 2009; Osborne 2010). Gamers familiar with MMORPGs could easily navigate through Ilminster, but found the “quests” boring – helping Mistress Quickly mend Falstaff’s torn breeches is hardly the stuff of adventures – and the extensive dialogue tedious (see e.g., Baker 2008). As with the Second Life Globe Theatre, only faint digital traces of the project remain.

The failure of *Arden* points to another problem facing all appropriations of Shakespeare, whether in old media or new: fidelity to the original. “Popular appropriations are controversial,” Douglas Lanier remarks, “because they often extend what counts as ‘Shakespeare’ beyond the limits of where many are willing to go” – that is, towards a Shakespeare “relatively unburdened with worries about historical accuracy, interpretive precision, or faithfulness to the letter of Shakespeare’s scripts” (Lanier 2002: 9). A further complication arises in the case of game adaptations, since there exists an inverse relationship between the level of conformity to Shakespeare’s text and the autonomy granted to players. According to Kurt Squire and Henry Jenkins, simply to “retell Shakespeare via a game” is to “detract from the agency of players who want more open-ended structures and who want to see the outcome emerge from their own choices and actions” (2003: 19–20). At the other end of this spectrum are games with tenuous links to Shakespeare’s text, such as *’Speare*, an arcade-style game loosely based on *Romeo and Juliet*, developed in 2007 by Daniel Fischlin and the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project. Amidst war between the planets Capulon and Montagor, players of *’Speare* construct a spaceship and shoot their way through an invading army to recover stolen text fragments from Shakespeare’s play, thus restoring peace to the Verona system (Fischlin 2007).

Squire and Jenkins propose a compromise between the two extremes: construct a game that allows players “to explore and have their own adventures in the richly detailed worlds where [Shakespeare’s] stories unfold,” to move beyond a “literal-minded adaptation” that “simply play[s] out the plot[s] with limited roles for player intervention,” offering instead “a deconstruction or interpretation” of the plays (2003: 20). They have been working on just such a game: *Prospero’s Island*, a single-player computer game based on *The Tempest*, developed by the RSC in collaboration with MIT Comparative Media Studies. The “immersive world” of *Prospero’s Island* is “a space of dreams and magic” in which “students are encouraged to decipher symbols, manipulate language, and uncover secrets,” that is, “to perform literary analysis” (2003: 21). For Squire and Jenkins, the “nonlinear, more open-ended medium” of the computer game, “where no two players will have exactly the same experience,” not only exemplifies the ephemeral and dynamic nature of Shakespearean performance, but also invites users to experience the plays more actively (2003: 21). *Prospero’s Island* has been in development since 2003; whether it will ever be released, or if it lives up to such high expectations, remains to be seen.

As one might expect, the most popular Shakespeare game adaptations to date have by design not been educational. Shakespeare Country, a not-for-profit partnership between Stratford and Warwick District Councils and local businesses, commissioned Koko Digital to develop *Romeo: Wherefore Art Thou?* for their website in 2009. In the game, Shakespeare meets the classic *Super Mario Bros.* when players run and jump through ten levels of “Shakespeare Country” as Romeo – collecting roses and “chapters from Shakespeare’s plays” while avoiding wild boars, reanimated skeletons, spikes, pits, vines, and other nasty surprises – finally “rescue[s] Juliet from the balcony” (Koko Digital 2009). With simple but addictive gameplay enticing users



Figure 25.4 *The Typing of the Dead: Overkill.*
© SEGA Corporation

to browse the Shakespeare Country website, *Romeo: Wherefore Art Thou?* marked Shakespeare's first foray into the world of so-called "viral" games. Unsurprisingly, it quickly became an Internet hit, attracting 1 million players world-wide in its first week – a figure that rose to over 22 million ten months later – and international press attention. Another notable example is the Shakespeare downloadable content (DLC) available for *The Typing of the Dead: Overkill* (developed by Modern Dream Ltd and published by SEGA in 2013), a popular horror-slash-comedy PC game in which players shoot marauding zombies by typing words and phrases as they appear on screen with accuracy and speed. The Shakespeare DLC replaces the game's default dictionary with lines randomly drawn from Shakespeare's complete works, often with ironic and grimly amusing results (Figure 25.4). While the arbitrary selection of lines means the game cannot function as an unorthodox reading interface for Shakespeare's works, it may at least familiarize players with his words – and lend a sense of urgency to the process.

IS'T REAL THAT I SEE?

"Not only is our access to Shakespearean drama mediated by digital technology," W.B. Worthen aptly observes, but "our imagination of Shakespearean drama is shaped by the forms and moods of digital culture" (2007: 228). This relationship of mutual influence between Shakespeare and digital new media is exemplified in intermedial theatre, that is, reflexive "inter-exchanges" and "interactions" between "mediatised (digital) and live elements" in performance (Mancewicz 2014: 3). The nature and extent of such interactions vary from production to production, but each shares an element of reflexivity that sets it apart from so-called "multimedial" performances. Whereas new media and digital technologies form "an integral and reflexive part of staging" in twenty-first-century intermedial performances, *multimedial* productions simply employ them in a conventional manner, such as "projections in the background, set apart from the action, with which the actors do not engage in the course of performance" (Mancewicz 2014: 5).

One of the earliest intermedial Shakespeare performances was a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* mounted at the University of Kent's Lumley Studio Theatre from 29 June to 1 July 2000. Variouslly dubbed *Y2K Dream* or *A Midcyber Night's Dream*, the production brought together experts from the University of Kansas's Institute for the Exploration of Virtual Realities and the Kent Interactive Digital Design Studio to develop a "digital scenography" (Reaney 2000). *Y2K Dream* was set in a "computer-based world inhabited and controlled by fairies," with the grove relocated to a "computer chess game"; Titania's bower "constructed in a word processor motif, with words from the play-text wafting as the fronds of an enormous willow tree"; and "an arena where the fighting lovers could battle in the midst of violent computer games" (Reaney 2000: 195, 197–201). In an interview with *The Guardian*, Mark Reaney described how, unlike a "pre-set video" or "special effects in film," the production was "a true live theatrical experience," with "technicians sitting in front of the stage" to control the virtual scenery "in real time" and "react immediately to the actors' movements," a process that "change[d] every night, just as proper live theatre does," with "no performance . . . the same as the next" (Gibbons 2000).

Virtual scenery, “television screens, digital projections and live electronic sound mixing” – as well as the actors interacting with them – are now “regular presences in mainstream theatre productions” of Shakespeare (Purcell 2014: 218), but intermediality may also function on a deeper, structural level. Intermediality, Jürgen Müller reminds us, does not simply mean “the addition of different media concepts, nor the act of placing discrete works in relation to particular forms of media,” but extends to “the integration of aesthetic concepts from different media into a new context” (quoted in Pavis 2003: 49). A pertinent example is Punchdrunk’s theatrical re-creation of the aesthetic idioms of first-person role-playing computer games (RPGs) like *BioShock* and *Skyrim* – immersion in the game-world, narratives driven by exploration and direct interaction – in their *Sleep No More*, a controversial, dialogue-less and non-linear adaptation of *Macbeth* produced in London (2003) and New York (2011). As with other Punchdrunk productions, *Sleep No More* “allows its audiences to wander freely around specially adapted sites,” exploring the claustrophobic world of the fictional McKittrick Hotel set in the 1930s, “encountering actors and installations as they happen to chance upon them” (Purcell 2014: 220). As an “interactive maze that owes more to video games . . . than Shakespeare” (Grant 2011), *Sleep No More*’s immersive, site-specific production marks a “new era of theatre” that is “borrowing conventions from video games, making invigorating performances in which the viewer becomes a player” (McMullan 2014).

SINGLED FORTH TO TRY EXPERIMENTS

Since the 1960s, when Trevor Howard-Hill painstakingly transcribed the First Folio texts on a mainframe computer, the digital world of Shakespeare has exploded in volume and variety through a period of constant experimentation and flux. There are some signs that the pace of change may be slowing: computers are only marginally faster, smaller, and/or lighter in each new model; and operating systems are moving more towards integration than innovation. Nevertheless, challenges remain. Restrictions on rights to the use of multimedia materials mean that there is little opportunity for the development of truly comprehensive performance editions or multimedia critical works (Carson 2006). Moreover, while major publishers have had some success with websites that are funded through a “paywall” subscription model, open-access projects, dependent on grant funding, are continually in danger of losing momentum and becoming subject to “bit rot” as their sites become dated. Yet some websites have been successful through steady maintenance and innovation (e.g., the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, the *Open Source Shakespeare*, the *Map of Early Modern London*), while other digital experiments have taken advantage more of Shakespeare’s author-function rather than engaging with the works themselves, embracing the evanescence of the medium with no expectation of permanence in what become, in effect, performances.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT
SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE
An eventful afterlife

—♦—
Keith Johnson

BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio contains a eulogy on Shakespeare written by Ben Jonson. In it, Jonson speaks of the poet's "well turned, and true filed lines" (line 68). Since that time, praise for Shakespeare's language has not always been so fulsome. Admiration there has always been, but also much criticism. This chapter plots the afterlife of Shakespeare's language: what people have said about it over time; and how Shakespeare language studies have developed, to the point that today there are very few Shakespearean linguistic stones which remain unturned. Those that do are the subject of a final section that looks to the future.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

It was not long after Jonson wrote his lines that views on language had changed sufficiently for some of Shakespeare's linguistic practices to have become unfashionable. The seventeenth century was a time of scientific advancement, and major efforts were made to develop a linguistic idiom suitable for the expression of scientific thought. In 1664 the Royal Society set up a committee to investigate ways of improving the English language. Writers like John Dryden were involved, too, as were philosophers like John Locke, whose 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* contained many prescriptions on how to make the language suitable for scientific endeavour.

The favoured style was a simple, unadorned one. "We generally love," Thomas Sprat said, "to have reason set out in plain, undeceiving expressions" (1734: 40). It was also important to avoid coarseness, and to be polite. Figurative speech was seen as particularly damaging to scientific endeavour, and Sprat wrote angrily about writers who used "vicious abundance of phrase" and "trick of metaphors" (112). Puns, too, which depend on multiple levels of interpretation, were regarded as damaging to scientific discourse, which requires unambiguity. Simplicity, lack of adornment, and unambiguity were good. Extravagance, figurativeness, and multiple levels of interpretation were bad.

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Gary Taylor, an invaluable source of information about Shakespeare's various afterlives, including the linguistic, writes that "anyone who disliked puns, metaphors . . . fanciful schemes of speech could not care much for Shakespeare" (1989: 37). Indeed, many Restoration linguistic vices were Elizabethan linguistic virtues. Puns provide an example. They were Shakespeare's "fatal Cleopatra," and he revelled in them precisely because they provided multi-levels of meanings – the very characteristic that damages scientific discourse.

One of Shakespeare's most persistent seventeenth-century critics was Thomas Rymer. He particularly disliked verbosity. In *Othello*, Iago encourages Roderigo to wake up Brabantio noisily: "Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell/ As when, by night and negligence, the fire/ Is spied in populous cities" (1.1.75–77). In his 1693 *Short View of Tragedy*, Rymer is scathing, asking: "Would not a rap at the door better express Iago's meaning?" (1693: 5).

Adaptations of an author's work can reveal much about linguistic attitudes, and a number of seventeenth-century Shakespeare adaptations contain interesting alterations. William Davenant's 1673 version of *Macbeth*, for example, attempts to dispense with metaphorical language. Thus, in Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech (5.5.18–27), "the last syllable of recorded time" becomes "the last minute of recorded time" and metaphorical "dusty death" becomes "eternal night." Coarseness was also avoided. Duncan's "What bloody man is that?" (1.2.1) becomes "What aged man is that?" – *bloody* as a swear-word came from the mid-seventeenth century.

Jonson – a grammarian as well as a dramatist – was sensitive to grammatical infelicities in Shakespeare. In his 1640 *English Grammar*, he objects to "the pronoun *his* joining with a noun betokening a possessor" – as *the prince his house*, for *the prince's house*. This is found in Shakespeare, for example, in 1 *Henry VI*, where we find *Charles his gleeks* (gibes) (3.6.9). Jonson – he whose First Folio eulogy praises Shakespeare so effusively – is quite intemperate on the topic, describing it as "monstrous syntax" (Waite 1909: xi). This mixture of linguistic criticism and overall reverence is very common. Dryden too criticizes Shakespeare's grammar and finds that "his whole style is . . . pestered with figurative expressions" (Scott 1808: 239). But "I love Shakespeare," he confesses in his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. Despite "his serious swelling into bombast . . . he is always great" (Mitford 1836: 241).

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

This mixture of reverence and linguistic criticism continued in the eighteenth century. Alexander Pope has Shakespeare in mind when he says in *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) that "Great wits may gloriously offend" (line 152), and some of the glorious offences he has in mind are linguistic. Samuel Johnson is the same. "The stile of Shakespeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure," he admits in his 1765 *Preface to Shakespeare* (Raleigh 1908: 42). But in his *Dictionary*, where he is looking for quotations from "writers of the first reputation," he takes much from Shakespeare (Johnson 1747: 31).

The eighteenth century also liked plain, simple expression. Steele particularly admired Macduff's reaction (in Davenant's adaptation of *Macbeth*) to the murder

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of his children: “What, both children! Both, both my children gone” (cited in Archer and Lowe 1888/89: 237). The linguistic dislikes of the two centuries were also similar, with verbosity high on the list. Thus when in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1.1.77) Berowne says, “Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile,” Johnson’s editorial comment is “The whole sense of this . . . is . . . that ‘a man by too close study may read himself blind,’ which might have been told . . . in fewer words” (Raleigh 1908: 86). Profanity was another issue in an age which valued politeness. Thus, Johnson’s judgement on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: “The great fault of this play is the frequency of expressions so profane, that no necessity of preserving character can justify them” (Raleigh 1908: 95).

Eighteenth-century Shakespeare editions often pick up on grammatical offences. Hence, Mark Antony’s double superlative in “This was the most unkindest cut of all” (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.181) becomes in Pope, “This, this was the unkindest cut of all.” When the Chorus at the beginning of *Henry V* proclaims, “let us . . . / On your imaginary forces work” (1.1.17–18), Johnson comments, “*imaginary* for *imaginative*, . . . Active and passive words are by this author frequently confounded” (Raleigh 1908: 126).

A particular eighteenth-century obsession was poetic diction, and Shakespeare sometimes offends. In *The Rambler*, Johnson takes exception to this Lady Macbeth passage, today often admired:

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry, “Hold, hold!”

(1.5.49–53)

First there is *dun* (meaning “dingy brown”), which Johnson said was “an epithet now seldom heard but in the stable.” Then he complained that a knife was “an instrument used by butchers and cooks in the meanest employments.” As for that highly imaginative phrase *peep through the blanket*, Johnson can only ask, “who, without some relaxation of his gravity, can hear of the avengers of guilt peeping through a blanket?” (Raleigh 1908: 204).

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had truly become part of the cultural fabric of England. As one of Jane Austen’s characters puts it in *Mansfield Park* (published in 1814), “[Shakespeare] is a part of an Englishman’s constitution. . . . His celebrated passages are quoted by every body” (Chapman 1934: 338). It is said that William Hazlitt quotes Shakespeare no fewer than 2,400 times; and in a letter Charles Dickens admits to falling into iambic pentameters in his prose, partly due to the influence of Shakespeare. Shakespeare also played his part in pedagogy, with speeches given as practice texts for budding orators in America as well as England (Taylor 1989: 197).

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Shakespeare's nineteenth-century standing was high, but the linguistic criticism continued. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, like Samuel Johnson, objected to Lady Macbeth's *blanket*, suggesting *blank height* instead. William Cobbett complained about the "bombast and puns and smut" (1815: 192). Meanwhile Shakespeare editors expurgated tirelessly; it was the age of Thomas Bowdler and bowdlerization.

At the same time, the dramatically increasing numbers of Shakespeare editions were becoming more scholarly and more linguistically aware, heralding a more systematic approach towards Shakespearean language studies. A Shakespeare Society was founded in 1840, followed in 1873 by the New Shakspeare Society (NSS). The societies attempted to apply the scientific methods of the natural sciences to language study. As Frederick Fleay, one of the NSS's principal scholars put it in 1874: "if you cannot weigh, measure, number your results, . . . you are merely a guesser." Not unsurprisingly, the use of such scientific methods applied to literature attracted controversy, and the debates became personally abusive. Thus, Frederick Furnivall (pro-scientific methods) referred to Algernon Swinburne (anti-scientific methods) as *Pigsbrook* (*swine* + *burn*). Swinburne responded by calling Furnivall *Brothelsdyke* (*fornix* in Latin is "brothel") (Gosse 1917: 249).

The scientific methods were often put to a thoroughly Victorian purpose, to identify evolutionary processes in the development of Shakespeare's language. This involved establishing the chronology of the plays. Fleay found linguistic methods "very valuable" here, counting such items as "the number of lines with double endings" and "the number of lines with more or less than five measures."

Another figure closely involved with the NSS was Edwin Abbott, whose highly popular 1869 *Shakespearian Grammar* was a milestone in Shakespeare language studies. The book has a characteristically Darwinian evolutionary element to it, showing progression in the way the language developed. But to Abbott's credit his conclusions are not wholly in favour of the present. Thus, he argues that "for freedom . . . and for vigour . . . Elizabethan is superior to modern English." It is true that Abbott finds "every variety of grammatical inaccuracy" in Shakespeare; but he happily puts this down to an excess of "vigour" (16).

The *Grammar's* title-page proclaims that it is "for the use of schools," and Abbott has a final section containing linguistic questions for students, all based on act 3 of *Macbeth*. For example, of the line "So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune" (3.1.113) he asks: "parse and explain *tugged*. How does the meaning differ from the modern meaning? Compare" (442). The questions are worthy of modern-day linguistics students, and indeed the section indicates the extent to which the study of Shakespeare's language was making inroads into the nation's education.

Abbott's *Grammar* illustrates the nineteenth century's passion for scholastic categorizing. So too do the period's lexicons, glossaries, and concordances. These include Alexander Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexicon: A Complete Dictionary of All the English Words, Phrases and Constructions in the Works of the Poet* (1875). This is also the era of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), important to Shakespearean language studies because citations from him are massively used. In 1846, Mary Cowden Clarke published her *Complete Concordance to Shakspeare*. It was a very thorough piece of work, in many details substantially similar to modern concordances produced with the benefit of electronic technology.

Another major concordance appeared in 1894, John Bartlett's *New and Complete Concordance*. By the time the century turned, Shakespearean language studies had truly arrived.

THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

A full account of Shakespeare's linguistic reputation and of the growth of Shakespearean language studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would be a lengthy undertaking. Here we can provide only a general picture in relation to the various linguistics areas.

Lexis

Given Shakespeare's canonical status, there is a natural desire to see him as a prolific linguistic inventor. Here is English journalist Bernard Levin writing in 1983:

If you cannot understand my argument, and declare "It's Greek to me," you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare.

(Levin 1983: 167–68)

His long list of Shakespeare inventions includes *tongue-tied*, *hoodwink* (as a verb), *eyesore*, and *bloody-minded*.

The Elizabethan period was indeed one of great lexical invention. David Crystal (2008) calculates that Shakespeare was responsible for some 1,700 of these, a very high number for a single author. But there have been many exaggerated claims, including some of Levin's. It turns out that *tongue-tied*, *hoodwink*, *eyesore*, and *bloody-minded* were all in use before Shakespeare's day. They are not his inventions at all.

One reason for the exaggerations is Shakespeare's over-representation in the *OED*. Charlotte Brewer (2007) and Giles Goodland (2011) provide useful recent accounts of this much discussed issue. Several levels of over-representation are in fact involved. One is of celebrated authors. An important characteristic of the dictionary is that it contains quotations, contextualized examples of words in use. Part of the *OED*'s stated aim was to be a "treasure-house" of the English language, and hence "all the great English writers of all ages" were the first port of call for the quotation-seeking lexicographer (Brewer 2007: 126). Shakespeare is at the very top of the *OED*'s quotations sources. The large number of Shakespearean concordances and glossaries help make him particularly attractive in this respect. A consequence of this treasure-house aspiration is that lesser-known authors tend to be ignored. Jürgen Schäfer (1980) compares the *OED*'s representations of Shakespeare with Thomas Nashe, a lesser-known contemporary. The conclusion is that Nashe is under-represented; and the under-representation of some authors doubtless led to the exaggerated attribution of neologisms to the better-known.

The poetic genre is also over-represented, and there is an additional bias towards written as opposed to spoken language. These emphases alone must place a huge

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question mark over many neologism claims. Thus Shakespeare may have been the first to use the word *lip* as a verb (meaning “to kiss”) in *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, but it may well be that someone else spoke it before he wrote it. Over-representation of Elizabethan literature, coupled with under-representation of earlier ages, is yet another major issue. Many Shakespearean firsts lose that status when earlier texts are given more scrutiny.

Scholarship in the last few decades has made many more texts available for scrutiny, and the resulting evidence has helped rectify some of the exaggerations. There is no doubt that the availability of digital texts and the development of electronic search methods are two of the major advances in Shakespeare studies in recent years. A healthy number of corpora and concordances are now available, including *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, the *Toronto Lexicons of Early Modern English*, and *Early English Books Online*. The OED has itself taken on board the need for more evenly distributed representation, and one consequence is that words which were given first citations by Shakespeare as late as 1989 no longer have this status in the 2012 online edition. For example, in his stage performance *Being Shakespeare*, the British actor Simon Callow cites the word *mewl* as a Shakespearean neologism: in Jaques’s “Seven Ages” speech from *As You Like It* (2.7.144), where the infant is described as “Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.” Callow can be forgiven for this error, since this is indeed the first citation in the 1989 OED. But in the 2012 online edition the first citation is antedated to 1425. Shakespeare’s new words are diminishing by the year.

The nature, as well as the number, of Shakespearean neologisms has been the subject of scholastic attention. Terttu Nevalainen, along with others, considers three word-formation strategies. One which Shakespeare uses a lot is compounding, a process natural to Germanic languages. Nevalainen mentions one way of classifying compounds, in terms of the parts of speech involved: noun + *-ed* verb participle is a particularly common Shakespearean one (as in *heart-struck* and *wind-shaken*). Vivian Salmon (1970) classifies compounds according to function. Many describe the natural world, as in *lazy-passing clouds* (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.1.73). They are also common expressions of personal abuse, as when Lysander in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is described as a *lack-love* and a *kill-courtesy* (2.2.83). The second strategy Nevalainen discusses is functional shift, also called conversion. This occurs where a new part of speech is added, as when (to repeat an earlier example) *lip* is changed from a noun into a verb. In an interesting neurolinguistic experiment reported by Philip Davis (2006), the effects of Shakespearean-style functional shifts on the brain activity of readers are measured by electroencephalography (EEG), and these effects are found to be “distinct and unique.” Nevalainen also looks at a third strategy, affixation, and her 2001 work includes a useful list of common Elizabethan prefixes and suffixes. Shakespeare, she notes, has his favourites among these, and for some she proposes reasons for his preferences. She also shows the extent of linguistic choices which the Elizabethan spirit of innovation made available. She considers, for example, Shakespeare’s apparent invention of the noun *insultment* in *Cymbeline* (3.5.141); the OED definition is “the action of insulting.” She also points out various other options open to him: *insult*, *insultation*, *insultance* (in use in Shakespeare’s lifetime), or just *insulting*.

The overall size of Shakespeare's vocabulary has also been the subject of much discussion, and again there has been considerable exaggeration. As with neologism estimates, what counts as a word is a major issue here. Crystal (2008) illustrates this point with the word *nation* and associated forms like *national*, *nationally*, *nationhood*, *nationalize*, and *nationalization*. Do these count as separate words or as different realizations of one underlying form? One word or six? Semantic concerns are also relevant. Thus Shakespeare uses the word *carbuncle* to refer to a "boil" or to a "precious stone." One word or two?

Otto Jespersen (1905) was a voice of moderation among the exaggerations. He argued that vocabulary estimates often under-represent the vocabularies of other writers. This conclusion is also reached by Ward Elliott and Robert Valenza. Using a variety of statistical tests, they conclude that "if anyone's vocabulary dwarfed others in size, it was John Milton's, and maybe Edmund Spenser's, not Shakespeare's" (Elliott and Valenza 2011: 45). To appreciate the extent of Shakespeare's lexical achievement, we must do more than count words. Whitney F. Bolton uses a type/token analysis of lexis in the history plays. He concludes that "the real versatility of Shakespeare's vocabulary lies in the variety of his diction" (1992: 89). In comparison with other authors, Shakespeare uses a very large proportion of his words a few times only.

Among the growing number of linguistic resources now available are several Shakespeare dictionaries, including those of Charles T. Onions (1986, first published 1911), and David and Ben Crystal (2002). Jonathan Culpeper (2011b) reviews those available and argues for "a new kind of dictionary for Shakespeare's plays" (his chapter's title). Among the characteristics he would like the new dictionary to possess is inclusion beyond hard words, or even content words: he recommends coverage of all items. He notes, for example, that the word *Ab* is often not covered in dictionaries, although it is a common word in Shakespeare, with various uses. His dictionary would also describe meanings in terms of contextual usage, rather than in etymological terms.

Starting in the first half of the twentieth century, there have been numerous imagery studies, such as those of Wolfgang H. Clemen (1951) and Caroline F.E. Spurgeon (1935); more recently, there have been studies in Shakespearean metaphor, like those of Ann and John O. Thompson (1987) and Maria F. Fahey (2011). There have also been very many studies of particular lexical fields in Shakespeare, including the legal (B.J. and Mary Sokol 2000) and particularly the sexual. José Oncins-Martinez (2011) refers to a number of metaphor studies based on Cognitive Metaphor Theory, and he includes a fascinating account of Shakespeare's war-sex metaphors.

With the recent increased availability of digital texts, it has become possible to make computationally supported statements on authorship attribution issues. Lexis is the main focus of such studies, although other areas like spelling and metre can also provide authorship evidence. Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (2009) are representative of the stage that attribution studies have now reached. The methods of analysis are sophisticated, involving much more than simple word-frequency counts. Nevertheless, it does remain of interest to hear that Shakespeare seems fond of the words *gentle* and *beseech*, and that his characters tend to use *hath* rather than *has*.

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This last example shows that attribution studies are now as interested in common, function words as they are in semantically fuller ones.

Grammar

With few exceptions, no comprehensive Shakespearean grammar was produced between 1869, when Abbott's appeared, and 2002. But since 1990 there have been a number of grammars of early modern English (or EModE), the name given to that period of the language from about 1500 until 1700. These include the work of Manfred Görlach (1991), Charles Barber (1997), Terttu Nevalainen (2006), and Matti Rissanen (1999). In the early twenty-first century, two Shakespeare grammars appeared almost together: those of Jonathan Hope (2003) and Norman F. Blake (2002).

Hope's *Shakespeare's Grammar* was commissioned by the Arden Shakespeare to replace Abbott's book, which, as Hope points out, consists of discrete sections dealing alphabetically with grammatical categories and not really adding up to a coherent account. Hope aims to rectify this omission, and he is more detailed and explanatory throughout. He also has stylistic-overview sections preceding the main parts of his grammar. These give an account of the stylistic and literary effects associated with the structures covered. Thus, the overview of the Noun Phrase (NP) section illustrates the stylistic range of NPs in EModE, and how Shakespeare uses them to literary effect.

There is one feature of Abbott which Hope retains: a pedagogic dimension. As we saw earlier, Abbott has a final section asking linguistic questions. As well as providing useful information to editors and linguistic specialists, Hope also aims to inform the non-linguist. The NP section mentioned above, for example, goes into some detail about the linguistics of the structure, explaining what heads, pre-heads, and post-heads are.

Blake's *Grammar* is wider in scope than Hope's, having chapters on "Discourse and Register" and "Pragmatics." For example, in a fascinating and lengthy consideration of *King Lear's* opening scene, Blake focuses on forms of address. His treatment of traditional grammatical concerns is similarly detailed. Thus, he lists fifty-six prepositions used by Shakespeare, enumerating uses at length (for instance, fourteen uses of *for* and thirteen of *to*).

As well as these full grammars, there have been numerous studies dealing with specific areas. An influential collection of papers – Vivian Salmon and Edwina Burness (1987) – contains a section devoted to grammar studies. More recently there have been studies dealing with grammatical variation in EModE. These include the work of Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg (2003). They focus on fourteen areas, including the use of *do* in affirmative statements; replacement of *ye* by *you*; and the *-th* versus *-s* verbal suffixes. Their studies have a clear socio-linguistic dimension, taking account of such variables as geographical region, social order, and gender. It illustrates their approach: both *-th* and *-s* verbal endings were in use at the time; hence Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* says that "The quality of mercy is not strained./It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven [. . .] It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes" (4.1.181–84). The *-s* form spread southwards from the north, and Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg plot this geographical spread.

They also show how women were quicker to adopt the new *-s* form, a tendency they found in relation to more than half the areas considered. Incidentally, their work underlines the central role of corpora in recent historical linguistic studies. They use the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), a 2.7 million-word collection of 6,000 letters written between 1417 and 1681.

While such work views grammatical forms from a socio-linguistic perspective, with Hope the perspective is often rhetorical and literary. He argues, for example, that “Shakespeare is generally interested in activating inanimate things, rather than de-animating them” (2010: 143), and he links this *inter alia* to a preference for *-ing* participles in certain contexts. His detailed example relates to lines in the Prologue of *Henry V* (27), where, among other things, the phrase *receiving earth* tends to present the earth as an active agent, which an alternative like “pierced earth” would not do.

In his grammar, Blake shows why grammatical studies are important for today’s editors and readers. He gives an example from *Macbeth*, where the Witches together chant: “Fair is foul, and foul is fair,/ Hover through the fog and filthy air” (1.1.10–11). “No edition which I have consulted,” Blake says, “comments on the word ‘hover’ or how it is to be understood” (2002: 11). It might be a verb or a noun; if the former, it could be an imperative or a present tense with the subject *we* missing; or is the subject “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”? Blake runs through the possibilities, illustrating convincingly how the study of grammar is important to the understanding of Shakespeare.

Pragmatics

Because interest in pragmatics as a linguistic area is rather recent, there have been relatively few pragmatic studies of EModE, but the number is increasing rapidly. Jonathan Culpeper and Merja Kytö (2010) analyse spoken interaction of the time, and the focus is often on pragmatics. For example, they discuss the use of *why* as a pragmatic marker, to signal (among other things) a self-evident conclusion. Thus when, in *Julius Caesar*, Cassius says of Caesar “Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world/ Like a Colossus” (1.2.136–37), *why* adds support to what Brutus has just said about Caesar’s overweening ambition. The use of *why* as a pragmatic marker is surprisingly common in Shakespeare. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for example, there are forty-eight instances of *why*. The majority (70 per cent) are not interrogative adverbs or relatives (as one might predict), but pragmatic markers.

A particularly well-trodden area for pragmatic attention is the *thou* versus *you* distinction, both in EModE and in Shakespeare. A number of factors have been studied in relation to this distinction, a major one being status or class. Joan Mulholland (1967) concludes that the upper classes generally use *you* to each other, and inferiors use *you* to superiors. Charles Barber (1981) focuses on act 1, scene 4 of *Richard III* to illustrate the use of *thou* to express emotions like anger or contempt. He also talks of the “intimate or affectionate *thou*,” the “sardonic or contemptuous *thou*,” and the “mock-polite or ironical *you*.” Some of these emotions are transitory, and thus one might expect a speaker to use *thou* at one moment and *you* the next. This fluidity is something that tends not to happen in languages like French

and German, where switches from their equivalents of *you* to *thou* incline to mark major relationship shifts which, once made, remain relatively impervious to change. In Shakespearean situations involving stormy love-relations it is interesting to plot frequent *thou/you* switches, for example in act 2, scene 1 of *The Taming of the Shrew*, where marriage is being discussed.

Though it is possible to identify conditions under which characters are likely to use *thou* or *you*, Katie M. Wales shows that in EModE shifts often “occur within the same sentence, so that contextual changes are often hard to justify” (1983: 114). Among her conclusions are that temporary shifts from *you* to *thou* are more frequent than shifts from *thou* to *you*, and that *thou* forms are far outnumbered by *you* forms.

The term “conversational implicature” is used to describe what George Yule calls the “additional unstated meaning that has to be assumed” if a conversation is to progress (1996: 128). A major concern of pragmatics is to study how speakers and hearers attach meanings to sentences which go beyond what is actually said. Malcolm Coulthard (1985) considers the implicatures at work in a truly remarkable scene in *Othello* (act 3, scene 3) where Iago manages over the space of a few lines to persuade Othello that his wife, Desdemona, is being unfaithful to him with his trusted lieutenant, Cassio. Part of Iago’s strategy is to answer – or fail to answer – questions in such a way as to suggest he is being evasive: “As if there were some monster in thy thought too hideous to be shown!” (3.3.111–12). This evasiveness leads Othello to seek implicatures.

A further area of interest to pragmatics is politeness. There have been studies like that of Carol Replogle (1973) which have focused on specific areas in Shakespeare (in Replogle’s case, honorifics). Roger Brown and Albert Gilman (1989) look at the politeness strategies of characters in Shakespearean tragedies, in particular exploring three factors considered important by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987): the power relationship holding between speaker and hearer (P); the distance relationship between them (D); and what they call “ranked extremity” (R), the magnitude of what is being considered. Their study confirms the importance of (P) and (R). Regarding (D), Brown and Levinson’s theory predicts that more distant interactants will be more polite to each other. But Brown and Gilman find that “the more the speaker likes the hearer . . . the more polite the speech; the less the liking, the less the concern and also the politeness” (1989: 193). Pragmatics, incidentally, is also interested in the phenomenon of impoliteness, another area in which Shakespeare excels. Culpeper (2011a) explores this topic at length. Although his focus is not on Shakespeare, he does provide some interesting examples of Shakespearean rudeness, as when Prince Hal addresses Falstaff: “Why, thou clay-brained guts, thou knotty-pated fool, thou whoreson, obscene, greasy tallow-catch” (*I Henry IV*, 2.4.230–32). Incidentally, there are examples here of compounds used for abuse, and *why* acting as a pragmatic marker.

Pronunciation

In the 1950s there were two large-scale studies of pronunciation, one focusing just on Shakespeare alone (Kökeritz 1953) and the other covering a broader historical period (Dobson 1957). Of particular recent interest is the performance of Shakespeare using

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Original Pronunciation (OP). The guiding linguistic spirit here is David Crystal, who was involved in a 2004 Globe Theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet*, a project he describes in 2005. There are two websites – <<http://originalpronunciation.com/>> and <<http://www.pronouncingshakespeare.com/>> – which discuss OP and provide examples. Among its possible values for today’s listeners is that OP may reveal puns which have been lost by changes in pronunciation since Shakespeare’s time. For instance, we may wonder how Touchstone in *As You Like It* makes the melancholic Jaques laugh for an hour. Perhaps the effect results from Touchstone’s line: “And then from hour to hour we rot and rot” (2.7.27). In EModE, but not today, *hour* and *whore* were homophones.

Spelling and punctuation

The general tendency of editors over the centuries has been to modernize Shakespearean spelling. A major attempt to halt this practice was made in Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor’s (1986) *Original-Spelling Edition* of the complete works. Among their justifications for a return to original spelling is the fact that the modernizing process “requires an act of interpretation” (xxxvi). In *The Tempest*, for example, characters are described as being *oppress’d with trauaile* (3.3.15). Many modern editors have *travel* for *trauaile*, but Elizabethan spelling would also make *travail* possible, an interpretation of which, Wells and Taylor feel, modern readers should be aware. They also provide examples of puns and rhymes which reveal themselves if original spelling is used.

Today, a major function of punctuation is grammatical, marking off grammatical units. But another, more common in the Renaissance, was rhetorical, indicating pause length and providing actors with signals relevant to the recitation of lines. Anthony Graham-White (1982) has explored the punctuation of a drama written in the 1550s, *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, concluding that the marks did indeed help actors pace their speeches. David Crystal suggests that some present-day directors see punctuation in the same way. He relates how in 2005 he attended rehearsals of *Troilus and Cressida*. “I can affirm,” he writes, “that there were many discussions between director and actors over precisely how much value to attach to a comma” (2008: 69).

To show how punctuation has been altered over time, Donald F. McKenzie (1959) has looked at differences between one Quarto and the First Folio of *The Merchant of Venice*. He finds no fewer than 715 punctuation changes. Commas were added, semicolons changed into full stops, question marks into commas. In another study, Michael J. Warren (1977) considered three Shakespeare soliloquies – from *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Tempest* – comparing First Folio and five modern editions. The trend has been to increase the amount of punctuation. Wells and Taylor provide examples of how this increase may impede the natural flow of the text. Other recent accounts of punctuation include Vivian Salmon (1986) and Crystal (2008).

Metre

Metre is another field which has been subjected to detailed scrutiny in the past half-century. George T. Wright (1988) provides comprehensive coverage of the area,

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looking at Shakespeare's work in the light of contemporary practices, and showing his use of metre to express meanings.

It has long been recognized that Shakespeare's work is full of metrical irregularities, and past editors (like Pope in the eighteenth century) have tended to regard these as mistakes to be corrected. Recent scholars often regard irregularities as deliberate attempts to achieve particular effects. Peter Groves, for example, looks at the shortened pentameter in a line from *Richard II*: "Stay, the King hath thrown his warder down" (1.3.118). Past editors were inclined to correct this abbreviation by adding a word like *but* at the beginning to make the line a regular pentameter. Groves argues that the irregularity may be a deliberate attempt to surprise. It is, he says, "a little like treading in the dark on a step that isn't there" (2011: 120). He considers a variety of other types of surprise that verse irregularities can produce. He has also suggested that metre (like punctuation) can be an indicator to actors about performance. His 2013 book is subtitled "A Guide for Readers and Actors," suggesting that the interest in such work is more than just academic; it can be relevant to how plays are acted and appreciated. Although iambic pentameters are Shakespeare's major mode of expression, he also of course uses rhymed verse and prose. Brian Vickers (1968) provides a detailed account of his use of the latter.

Rhetoric

The past fifty years have seen a number of studies of rhetoric, like those of Brian Vickers (1970) and Sylvia Adamson (1999), with some focusing specifically on Shakespeare (for example Stanley Hussey 1982; Russ McDonald 2001). The rhetorical traditions in which Shakespeare was writing – particularly the Ciceronian and the Senecan – have all received attention. Particularly interesting are attempts (like McDonald 2006) to characterize the distinctive style of the later plays.

There are clear signs that many celebrated public speakers have used Shakespeare as a rhetorical model, but unfortunately there is little documentation. Churchill is a case in point. His wartime comments about British airmen – "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few" – have clear resonances with the Agincourt speech of Henry V about how "We few, we happy few" (4.3.60) fight for the nation against overwhelming odds. The Folger Shakespeare Library has a website (<<http://www.shakespeareinamericanlife.org>>) which looks at the influences of Shakespeare on American life, including the rhetoric of politicians.

An understanding of the significance to the Renaissance of rhetorical notions like copiousness and artifice is particularly useful for today's reader, since some of these notions now have negative connotations. For example, for us artifice often means artificiality and lack of true feeling. But in the Renaissance, as McDonald says, it was "not a term of opprobrium . . . but of praise. . . . Readers and playgoers were expected to notice and to admire the skill with which artistic materials were arranged and presented" (2001: 24).

THE FUTURE

For this section, a number of specialists were approached and asked what they felt the future held for Shakespeare/EModE language studies. The following comments are

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based on the responses received from David Crystal, Jonathan Culpeper, Jonathan Hope, and Terttu Nevalainen.

Nearly all agree that the most likely major development will be an increase in the availability of digitalized texts from the period. As Hope puts it: “Over the next few years . . . we can look forward to having effectively the full corpus of print from the period freely available to all.” This availability will affect many areas of Shakespearean language research. It will increase our ability to distinguish general characteristics of the period from specifically Shakespearean ones. It is also likely to lead to a greater understanding of genre development and paths of language change (points made by Hope and Nevalainen). Another result will be a very considerable increase in antedatings (Crystal, Hope). More attention is likely to be given to Shakespearean word-formation strategies (Nevalainen), and these may well necessitate the development of “more robust methods of lexical enquiry” (Crystal). Culpeper expresses the view that in many areas more attention will be placed on larger units of meaning, along the lines of recent work (mentioned earlier) by Hope (2010), and Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (2009). Regarding pronunciation, Crystal points out that the vast majority of plays have not yet been considered in OP terms. By the 2023 anniversary of the First Folio, he anticipates that all Shakespeare’s plays and poetry will have been explored in this way. Crystal is at present involved in producing an OP dictionary. Hopefully, within a few years this will see the light of day, together with the new kind of dictionary which Culpeper proposed in his 2011 paper.

In some areas of study, the more that is done, the more there is revealed to do. So perhaps it is with Shakespearean language studies. The past century has seen huge advances. But the future still promises what Hope calls “exciting times.”

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1

WHY UNREHEARSED?

Shakespeare's greatness is a cultural article of faith. His presence is felt today in our advertising, in our idioms, and in our high school classrooms, as well as on stages everywhere from universities to parks to regional theatre and Broadway. In the minds of many aspiring actors his plays remain both the ultimate mountain to be climbed and a fearsome, unattainable summit they are secretly terrified to attempt reaching. The monolith of his canon of work casts a shadow they cannot escape, but their prior experience with the plays has often brought them more anxiety than joy. Some audience members (notably family and friends of young actors cast in Shakespeare's plays) dutifully attend performances, either with a forced smile or rolled eyes, and wonder why the supposed greatness does not transport or transform them.

The lofty goal of Unrehearsed Shakespeare performance is to bring the plays to actors and to audiences with an immediacy that jolts them out of their ingrained responses of confusion, intimidation, or apathy. This ambition is not unique to Unrehearsed Shakespeare, and perhaps it sets the bar too high. But this is a book for actors, and striving for unachievable perfection, it could be said, is what all actors of real integrity do any time they set foot on a stage. No one learns to climb mountains by walking up and down hills. Any attempt to bridge gaps between the great writer and those who secretly question his greatness is worthwhile, even if its success cannot be empirically proven.

Before theatre evolved into the complex collaborative art form it is today, it was about the actor, the words, and the audience. Unrehearsed Shakespeare puts primary responsibility for the event of performance into the hands of the actors, who use the writer's words to tell a story to an audience whose presence they openly acknowledge. Unrehearsed Shakespeare connects us to a legacy of rowdy, raw performance from past ages; it connects us to the sense of spontaneity we

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yearn for in all our acting work; and it connects us (we fervently hope) more closely to the greatest dramatist of all time—by helping us look at his words in a fresh way.

None of this is intended to alienate or alarm directors, who are omitted from the Unrehearsed Shakespeare equation. Unrehearsed performing will never supersede modern production methods, which place the director (and rehearsal) squarely at the center of the theatrical process, nor will actors with Unrehearsed experience become less capable of bringing strong work to rehearsals. Most directors seek out self-motivated, well-informed actors who bring insight and understanding to the rehearsal process. They celebrate actors who respond readily to unexpected stimuli in the moment, actors who examine complex language minutely because they believe it is their job to investigate all aspects of a character's personality and motivations. Unrehearsed Shakespeare demands and develops these traits in actors. Actors who successfully perform Unrehearsed Shakespeare know how to shoulder their share of the load in a rehearsed production, and they bring something real and detailed to the collaboration table.

Performing Shakespeare without rehearsal is widely misunderstood. Some see it as an extension of improvisation, or dismiss it as an elaborate parlor game for actors. Even actors who dabble in it without diving in fully can walk away with such misapprehensions—misapprehensions only possible if you have never studied the mechanics behind it, seen the deep love for the complexity of language it can stir in actors, or witnessed the great joy it can bring to audiences. As for the misconception that actors in Unrehearsed Shakespeare are improvising, or merely doing whatever feels right in the moment: if that is what they are doing, they are contradicting the spirit of the technique. Unrehearsed does not mean unprepared. Incomplete preparation results in halting, uncertain, self-indulgent chaos; thorough preparation results in jubilant, if messy, spontaneity. Successful Unrehearsed Shakespeare performers are following a specific set of guidelines developed by actors/scholars who believe passionately in reclaiming a theatre of actors, words, and audience.

Terminology

It is important to note that many variations exist within what has become colloquially known as Unrehearsed Shakespeare. This book advocates a specific approach that is similar, though not identical, to what is practiced by other companies who choose to produce in this distinctive and exhilarating fashion. The following is a thumbnail sketch of how our brand (so to speak) of Unrehearsed Shakespeare works.

To begin the process, someone we will refer to as the **production coordinator** decides on a Shakespeare play to present without rehearsal. That person assembles a group of actors, who may not even know one another, but who all have been (or will be) trained in the Unrehearsed Shakespeare **guidelines** that comprise

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Chapters 3 through 8. The production coordinator casts the actors in specific roles, and provides each of them not with a full script, but with only the text they will speak in performance—plus a few syllables before each line that will serve as their cues. These abbreviated scripts, resembling what some theatre people might call “sides,” are known as **cue scripts**. Equipped with these, each actor then meets individually with the production coordinator to go over details of the cue scripts in what we call a **text session**.¹

Either before or after the text session, actors construct performance scrolls with the pages of their cue scripts; they will carry these scrolls, which are modeled after a surviving cue script from the Elizabethan era, onstage with them during the show. On the day of the performance, a short period of time is set aside beforehand for going over **rehearsed segments**: moments the production coordinator considers to be impossible or dangerous to perform without prior planning.²

Reading the Cue Script

Until the performance, cast members do not know how their lines, and often even their characters, fit into the play. As mentioned above, they have only their own lines and their cues, as well as the occasional stage direction, which means they work from a page that looks like this:

..... too late, Amen

Ross
[II.1]

Enter John of Gaunt sick, with the Duke of York, &c.

..... Lancaster is dead.
And living too, for now his son is Duke.

..... justice had her right.
My heart is great: but it must break with silence,
Ere't be disburdened with a liberal tongue.

..... of good towards him.
No good at all that I can do for him,
Unless you call it good to pity him,
Bereft and gelded of his patrimony.

..... children, and our heirs.
The commons hath he pilled with grievous taxes
And quite lost their hearts: the nobles hath he fined,
For ancient quarrels, and quite lost their hearts.

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.....than they in wars.
The Earl of Wiltshire hath the realm in farm.

.....hangeth over him.
He hath not money for these Irish wars:
(His burdensome taxations notwithstanding)
But by the robbing of the banished Duke.

.....securely perish.
We see the very wrack that we must suffer,
And unavoyded is the danger now
For suffering so the causes of our wrack.

.....as thou dost ours.
Be confident to speak Northumberland,
We three, are but thyself, and speaking so,
Thy words are but as thoughts, therefore be bold.

.....myself will go.
To horse, to horse, urge doubts to them that fear.

.....will first be there.

Exeunt.

The cue script excerpt is from *Richard II*. As you can see, each cue is set to the right margin and preceded by a series of dots. The actor, who plays multiple roles in this production, changes into his Ross costume for this scene, as indicated by the centered name above the scene number, and enters (as part of the “&c.”) on the cue “and come too late, Amen.” He first speaks when he hears “Lancaster is dead,” and because he has only his cue script he is unaware that more than 200 lines will pass before anyone says it. He continues to listen for cues and answer them with his lines until “will first be there,” at which point he exits. Throughout the scene it is his job to follow the guidelines enumerated in later chapters.

Other Sources

This book is about how to perform Shakespeare without traditional rehearsal. Many excellent books have covered other topics in the area of acting Shakespeare, and actors can bring what they learn from those books into their Unrehearsed performance work as well; knowledge accumulates and inevitably pushes the overall level of performance up. Readers who want to immerse themselves in an exploration of how Shakespeare’s active poetry can inspire actors should read Cicely Berry’s *The Actor and the Text*. Readers who are looking for claims that

performing without traditional rehearsal conforms to Shakespeare's original intention will want to refer to Patrick Tucker's *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*. Readers interested in the history behind the still-developing theories and approaches of Original Practice can learn about it from Don Weingust's *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio*. This book, however, will barely scratch the surface of any of those topics.

Patrick Tucker's book, along with workshops he conducted, laid the groundwork for and inspired all the Unrehearsed work being done today. Over time, various schools of thought as to what might be called "best practices" have inevitably developed, as practitioners made discoveries, experimented with new theories, and adapted their approaches to the tastes and needs of their acting companies and their audiences. For example, Tucker's company worked with seasoned, high-profile professional actors, which naturally led to different methods and discoveries than working with groups of eager, often brilliant, but less experienced student actors. Evolution of the technique is a natural and healthy process, and the differences between how the various groups work are gaps rather than fissures. The groups share common commitments to the most important objectives: precise attention to text, freedom from the impositions of a stage director, and communion with the audience. What binds all the groups together is much stronger and more extensive than the details that separate them.

When we imagine what it would be like to own a large share in a theatre company, and moreover imagine what it would be like to depend on it for our entire income, we quickly identify every performance as an asset that generates revenue and every rehearsal as a liability that occupies our actors' time when they could be performing. On top of that, unless there is a second space designated and reserved for them, rehearsals necessitate the closing of the space, once again cutting off potential ticket sales. In order to mitigate these problems, rehearsal periods in professional environments (where actors are paid for their rehearsal time) are never as lengthy as they typically are in academia (where the student actors are not compensated), and every continually operating professional theatre has a space for rehearsing the next production while the current one keeps bringing in customers.

Taking into account the above facts, we can imagine a system of playwriting that makes rehearsal unnecessary, making it possible for a theatre to show a different play every day. In this imagined system, overhead costs are low and income generated is high. Even if performing Unrehearsed were not invigorating, rewarding, fun, and educational for actors, we can see that it might be an attractive option for producers, or for playwrights who are part owners of their companies.

Some believe that Shakespeare, playwright and shareholder in his company, filled his plays with performance instructions specific enough that rehearsal was not needed. This is speculation, but frankly, so are a staggering number of the claims made, often with absolute and confident words, about Shakespeare's life and even his identity. The fact is, we have little hard evidence about the man and

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his life, but we do have the words he left behind. This book is concerned with the words of his plays.

And if Shakespeare did not invent a money-saving way to mount popular plays quickly and without rehearsal, energizing actors, thrilling audiences, and generating income, he is now wishing, from beyond the grave, that he had.

Notes

- 1 Patrick Tucker, author of *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*, refers to these meetings as “verse-nursing.”
- 2 The rehearsal for these segments is roughly analogous to Patrick Tucker’s “Burbadge time.”

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1 To Quote or Not to Quote

'To be or not to be! that is the question'
Says Shakespeare, who just now is much in fashion.
LORD BYRON (1823)

To say that 'to be or not to be' is the most frequent literary quotation ever is trite. To investigate how it came to be so famous is interesting because the success story of these Anglo-Saxon monosyllables involves significant aspects of Shakespeare's intertextual creativity and the creativity that he stimulated in others. 'To be or not to be' is typical because it is in transit: It came from somewhere and went everywhere after Shakespeare had used it. Long before Shakespeare conceived of *Hamlet*, the phrase existed in many shapes and discursive contexts, and it continued to be used independently of the play for decades after the first performance. Shakespeare's use of these words, however, proved so memorable that 'to be or not to be' was increasingly perceived as his. He detached 'to be or not to be' from its possible sources and made it so much his own that it could not but develop into a quotation over the course of the seventeenth century. Eighteenth-century bardolatry boosted this process to the tipping point where the line became unbearably banal. Today, it has the ambiguous status that is characteristic of Shakespeare quotations in the twentieth and twenty-first century. For many, it is and will remain always already quoted so that they can use it only self-consciously; for others, it is an anonymous ready-made formula; and yet other people, who know it as Hamlet's, use the phrase with studied or genuine indifference to the original context. Sayre Greenfield, who has studied the phrase's fortunes in the seventeenth century with a focus on the topics of texts that quote it, finds that 'many of the "borrowings" are not explicit or even implied references to *Hamlet*' ('Early Seventeenth' 512). 'To be or not to be' is unobtrusive. Unencumbered by rare words or tell-tale archaisms that would give away a line like 'get thee to a nunnery', it can blend smoothly into English surroundings from any century; it only stands out from its surroundings if a writer goes to the trouble of adding quotation marks or other signals to the reader. This means that 'to be or not to be'

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can illustrate a wider range of quotation modes than is available to more salient lines; its rise to fame is more significant because we can observe it starting from and returning to complete obscurity. For this phrase, the somewhat embarrassing title of this chapter is a real question: we can never take for granted whether the aim was to quote or not to quote.

An available structure: To verb or not to verb

The pre- and outside-*Hamlet* life of ‘To be or not to be’ did not start with a phrase. It started with a phrase *structure*: ‘to verb or not to verb’. This construction was frequently used for talking about decisions, for foregrounding, postponing and questioning binary choices in the simplest possible way: not even as ‘one or zero’, just as ‘one or not one’. Long before *Hamlet*, its contexts ranged from existential to trivial. In 1582, a school primer used it to set out the spelling issue of ‘where **to write or not to write** the qualifying, e, in the end of simple words’ (Mulcaster sig. T4^{recto} [150]). More dramatically, a Euphuistic romance insisted on an unhappy lover’s responsibility for his own death in 1583:

AURELIA: But hath not he free choice, **to loue or not to loue**?

PHILOTIMUS: He hath.

AURELIA: Then he killes himself that loues (Melbancke sig. G2^{recto} [50]).

The psychological complications in this passage are typical. Successfully achieved decisions are rarely expressed with ‘to verb or not to verb’, which is most effective for dilemma, indecision and struggle. A young woman may lose the will ‘**to doe, or not to doe** any thing whatsoever’ (Brome sig. G1^{recto}, 1632) because of love melancholy, while other girls have their choice taken away by a father who ‘*hath power of his own will to give or not to give* his child in marriage, as he shall see occasion’ (Perkins *God’s Free Grace* 728, 1616). In both instances, true choice is denied. In the anonymous play *Tom o’Lincoln*, Angellica reflects on her lot as the captive of a powerful king: ‘well then inforcte I yeld, though not inforcte / for tis in me **to yeld or not to yeld**’ (Anon. *Tom o’Lincoln* 5). This beleaguered heroine has no outward choice; instead, she takes comfort in the residual agency of deciding whether to yield *deliberately*.

The concept of deliberate choice in temptation, which we have just seen deployed in fiction, also interested Protestant theologians, who frequently use ‘to verb or not to verb’ for moral decisions. Richard Hooker explains in *Ecclesiastical Politie* that Joseph’s choice ‘**to yield or not to yield** to the impotent desire of his lewd mistress’ (1:171, 1594), Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39) is a question of ‘absolutely good or evil’. In smaller matters, Christians are free and may choose, for instance, ‘**to follow, or not to follow** a certaine text of Scripture’ in writing sermons or ‘**to come or not to come**’ to a prayer gathering (Perkins *Exposition* 141, 1616).

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‘Christ having purchased [our] liberty in all those things indifferent’, every Christian is free ‘**to do or not to do, to use or not to use them**’ and Catholics betray this freedom ‘through superstitious feares and want of faith’ (Downname *Christian Warfare* 38, 1634). Such unnecessary additional regulations range from fasting in Lent to more fundamental theological questions such as the value of praying for the dead or transubstantiation. Belief in the latter should not be asked of the faithful, given that Christians had been ‘free **to believe or not to believe**’ in it for ‘at the least eight hundred years after Christ’ (Bradford 250, 1555). Apparently trivial decisions, such as ‘**to use or not to use the means whereby to attend or not to attend to reading, to pray or not to pray**’, may test obedience just as well, and a Christian must not consider it ‘a matter indifferent either **to yield or not to yield obedience**’ (Hooker 1:171 and 1:239). To yield obedience is a form of Christian behaviour that can be actively chosen, and this is made quite clear by the use of the double *to*-infinitive.

If Christian obedience is to be worth anything, it must be yielded by subjects who can exercise free will. Enforced obedience is of no interest, as John Milton put it in *Paradise Lost*: ‘Not free [...] what praise could they receive?’¹ Conversely, ‘no man is to be punished for his sins’ without the ‘free-will **to sin or not to sin**’ (Perkins *Reformed Catholic* 561, 1611). Many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century uses of ‘to verb or not to verb’ focus on the far-reaching consequences of human free will. The most frequently cited examples are Adam, Judas and Christ. Adam, who would have ‘had power **to keepe or not to keepe the commandment**’ (Perkins *Exposition* 160, 1616) freely chose to be disobedient. Judas’ betrayal was, similarly, not preordained since ‘in him it was / **To do, or not to do that damn’d dispight**’ (Davies *Yehovah* sig. I1^{recto}, 1607); in contrast, Christ used his ‘power **to die or not to die**’ (Perkins *Exposition* 215, 1616) for the good of all mankind. Even those theologians who regard faith rather than works as decisive for salvation think in terms of binary choice, assuming that ‘there is given unto men a free will either **to believe or not to believe**’ (Perkins *Christian Treatise* 624, 1617).² This phrasing turns faith itself into an act of obedience that we can choose to perform or not, highlighting the ever-present risk of disobedience, of making the wrong binary choice. Consequently, many believers ask to be protected from their own fallible faculty of will in pious variations on the Lord’s Prayer’s ‘Thy will be done’³ and say things like: ‘giue me no pow’r **to will or not to will / But as thou wilt**’ (Davies *Muses’ Sacrifice* 25, 1612). The phrase ‘to will or not to will’ perfectly sums up Christian submission because it represents the possibility of handing one’s will back to God volition both grammatically (*to*-infinitive) and lexically (‘will’). George Wither’s poem ‘Wither’s Motto’ takes this abdication of human will to its logical conclusion:

I have not of my selfe the power or grace,
To be, or not to be; one minute-space. [...]

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Or thinke out halfe a thought, before my death,
But by the leave of him that gave me breath (367, 1621).

In this frame of mind, the human inability ‘to will’ what is right equals the impossibility of existing independently of God. For pious Christians, ‘to will’ is not desirable without God and ‘to be’ without Him is impossible. This does sound ‘*Hamlet*-like in its sense of uncertainty, but [...] the real subject [is] religious’ (Greenfield ‘Early Seventeenth’ 527): as choice is rendered up for Christian certainty, Hamlet’s doubts become irrelevant.

While devout believers offer up their will and existence to God, secular-minded seventeenth-century heroes in drama focus, more energetically than Hamlet, on the capacities and limits of the purely human will. Their frame of reference is the involuntary, mathematically determined motion of clocks and stars. ‘It is not in the power and possibility of the sun **to move or not to move**’ (Hooker 2:39) and the tragic protagonists assert or refute free will in contrast or in alignment with this rigidity. The ‘heroicke’ pirate captain John Ward, a convert to Islam, completely denies free will in Robert Daborne’s *Christian Turned Turk* (1612):

JOHN WARD: [...] we haue no will **to act,**
Or not to act more, then those orbes we see,
And planetary bodies (sig. B4^{verso}).

Another non-Christian, Eleazar in William Heminges’ *The Jews’ Tragedy* (1662), is similarly pessimistic:

ELEAZER: We know the weakness of our State to be
Vnable to resist, yet know not how
To yeeld, or not
to yeeld, or what to do (13).

There are characters, though, who do use ‘to verb or not to verb’ to affirm that the human will is governed by reason *in contrast* to heavenly bodies. George Chapman’s Byron says in 1608:

BYRON: I haue a will, and faculties of choise,
To do, or not to do: and reason why
I doe, or not doe this; the starres haue none (315).

God is nowhere, the sky is filled with mechanically orbiting stars and human will stands alone. This situation is more in line with Arthur Hugh Clough’s Victorian vision of a manly, decisive Elizabethan age, whose individuals stand ‘as on the mount of vision’, considering ‘all the possible varieties of which were delivered into [their] power, “**to be or not to be**”’ (Clough 340). The most insistent celebration of the human option ‘to do or not to do’ came in *An Essay Concerning Human*

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Understanding in 1689). In his chapter on ‘Power’, John Locke uses the ‘or not to’ structure at least fourteen times to define ‘Human liberty’ as ‘a power **to act or not to act** according as the Mind directs’ (1:367 (2.21.73)). The ability to face a dilemma defines freedom and humanity: ‘as far as a Man has a power **to think, or not to think: to move, or not to move**, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a man *free*’ (1:315 (2.21.8)). Locke’s argument culminates with ‘**to will or not to will**’; while devotional contexts use this phrase to represent the subordination of human desires to God, Locke turns it to stark paradox: ‘This then is evident, That a Man is not at liberty **to will, or not to will**’ because ‘he has not a power to forbear willing’. ‘To will or not to will’ is the only choice that is denied to a creature with free will, and so the phrase is an oxymoron for Locke: the phrase structure expresses choice, the infinitive expresses intention and both are make little sense with this particular verb.

Only one double infinitive is even stranger than ‘to will or not to will’ as a choice between two courses of action: ‘to be or not to be’. Indeed, this version was never used before *Hamlet* to express moral or psychological alternatives; it was reserved exclusively for logical statements, as in a treatise on logic from 1584 and a convoluted passage from *The Testament of Love* in an edition from the 1540s:

An Axiome or sentence is that ordering of one reason with another, whereby a thing is saide **to bee or not to be** (Fenner sig. C1^{recto}).

wherefor whā I sey yt god toforne wot any thyng, thow necessitie is thilke thyng to be cōmyng, al is one if I sey if it shalbe: but this necessitie neither cōstrayneth ne defēdeth any thing **to be or not to be** Therefore sothly yf loue is put **to be**, it is said of necessitie **to be**, or els for it is put **not to be** it is affirmed **not to be** of necessite: not for ye necessite cōstraineth or defēdeth loue **to be or not to be** (Usk n. p.).

In this kind of context, ‘to be or not to be’ remains unaffected by *Hamlet* because it does not describe decision-making. A theological treatise argued in 1631 that past actions cannot be ‘said to be possible **to be or not to be**’ because not even God is able to ‘make that the works of men and Angels should not be possible **to be or not to be**’ (Twisse 290).⁴ In 1678, Ralph Cudworth writes in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* that things ‘Caused by Something else’ are ‘Contingently Possible **to Be or not to be**’, whereas God exists ‘*Absolutely* and without any *Ifs* and *Ands*’. He is a ‘Perfect Being’, which is not ‘Contingent **to Be or not to Be**; but that it Certainly Is, and Cannot but **Be**; or that it is Impossible it should **not Be**’ (723). Unless we want to read Cudworth’s preference for ‘be’ without ‘to’ as a sign of studied avoidance, the formal logic in these passages carries no hint of *Hamlet*, even at a time when writers in

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other genres were beginning to show an awareness of this possible context. In John Norris' *An Idea of Happiness* of 1683, 'the phrase comes close to the philosophical meaning it has in the soliloquy' (Greenfield 'Early Seventeenth' 526):

For if the Good and the Evil be equal-balanc'd, it must needs be indifferent to that man either **to be or not to be**, there being not the least *Grain* of good to determine his Choice (sig. A2^{verso}).

This is indeed quite Hamletian, especially as Norris concludes after further deliberation: 'I am very well satisfied, that 'tis **better not to be than to be**' (A3^{recto}).

A quotable phrase: **To be or not to be**

Before turning to the first texts that can definitely be said to present 'to be or not to be' as a quotation, I want to consider what made this phrase so useful to Shakespeare and how he made it quotable in a way that earlier and contemporary texts could not hope to match. The structure of the formula, its history and the way in which it is framed in *Hamlet* all contributed to this success. To begin with, 'To be or not to be' has excellent formal prerequisites. Its Anglo-Saxon monosyllables are natural to native speakers and understandable to anybody with the most basic knowledge of English. Its effortless iambs fit into colloquial prose or T-shirt slogans just as well as into verse, and the charm of alliteration⁵ further adds to its appeal. Moreover, the phrase is extremely economical: the question is not 'to live or to kill yourself', 'to be or to stop being' but 'to be or not to be'. Choice is dramatized with an almost algebraic simplicity, which makes the phrase memorable and self-contained and encourages repetition out of context. The second formal advantage are 'to'-particles, which underline the element of active choice. 'To be' is a more archetypally verbal form than 'being'; unlike the noun-like gerund 'being', the infinitive 'to be' implies intention and planned action. The infinitive looks forward, the gerund is static. The difference is beautifully obvious in Coleridge's description of Hamlet as a person who is 'continually resolving *to do*, yet *doing* nothing but resolve' ('Shakespeare and Milton' 390, emphasis mine). Intriguingly, Coleridge substitutes 'do' for Shakespeare's 'be'. Familiarity has made it easy to overlook just how oddly the drive of the 'to'-infinitive sits with the meaning 'exist', how strange it is for a man to decide 'to be' rather than 'to act, to do, to perform', as the First Gravedigger says (*Hamlet* 5.1.12). Hamlet himself longs to *do*: 'I do not know / Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do"' (4.4.46–47). His tragic paralysis is underscored by his failure to use any of these verbs in the soliloquy (cf. Bruster *To Be Or Not To Be* 50). Infinitives like 'to die', 'to sleep'

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and ‘to be’ embody Hamlet’s deplorable loss of ‘the name of action’; they conserve just the shadow of action in the little word ‘to’. The subjectless construction of ‘to be or not to be’, which shifts agency away from the speaker, further underscores this paralysis. To use the double infinitive ‘to be or not to be’ for an urgent yet impossible personal choice: that is Shakespeare’s oxymoronic stroke of genius. He makes Hamlet communicate his indecision with the axiomatic stringency of formal logic, which makes his situation so vividly memorable although it is not clear what the problem is. Is he worried about the advisability of suicide, the probability of an afterlife or something completely different? ‘General to the point of emptiness’ (Hohl Trillini and Langlotz 157), ‘to be or not to be’ preserves the secret of Hamlet’s problem while communicating its urgency. This is one more reason for its success.

The semantic openness of ‘to be or not to be’, which is so effective on stage, makes it hard to decide which earlier version Shakespeare may have had in mind, a question to which we will return again and again. The most securely established candidate is a passage in Cicero’s *Tusculanae Quaestiones*,⁶ which recounts Plato’s description of the death of Socrates and focuses on the idea of death as sleep. Plato’s account was often quoted and paraphrased⁷ and Cicero’s version itself was available to Shakespeare in three versions: the original, John Dolman’s translation and Thomas Bedingfield’s *Cardan’s Comfort*. All three versions contain phrases that may have inspired the soliloquy’s wording, such as the following:

B7^{verso} istuc ipsum, **non esse, cum fueris**, miserrimum puto (Cicero *Tusculanae* 1:12) [n]ot to be when you have bene, I thinke is the greatest misery (Dolman *Five Questions* sig.

B7^{verso}) quicquid isto modo pronunties, id **aut esse aut non esse** (Cicero *Tusculanae*, 1:14) ‘lwhatsoeuer you do so pronounce must not either **be or not be** (Dolman *Fyve Questions* sig.

The second Latin phrase has the doubling of two words (‘esse’/‘aut’), which makes Shakespeare’s double *to*-infinitive so effective but this feature is missing in the translation so maybe Shakespeare took his inspiration from Cicero here. Maybe he was ‘attempting to render [Cicero’s] original ideas’ independently of Dolman. Or maybe he never saw this ‘expression of the preferableness of death to life’ in a Latin context (Baldwin *Small Latine* 2:604). Thomas Baldwin was certain that the phrase ‘that is the question’ pointed to Dolman’s Cicero translation, whose full title runs: *Those fyve Questions, which Marke Tullye Cicero disputed in his Manor of Tusculanum*. The word ‘question’ would remind every theatregoer who had been to grammar school of *Tusculanae* and prompt them to recognize the soliloquy as a ‘grammar school exercise on the original passage’. The author of this particular ‘exercise’ may have been ‘Shakespeare himself; it may have been someone else,

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whom he is following' (2:605). On the other hand, the expression 'that is the question' also appeared 'consistently amid theological and legal disputations' (Greenfield 'Early Seventeenth' 528), as, for example, in John Whitgift's *Admonition to the Parliament*: 'you should rather have proued, that women may not in time of necessitie administer baptisme, for **that is the question** and not the other' (sig. CC2^{recto}, 1573). Both parts of the opening line of Hamlet's soliloquy can be related to multiple earlier texts, which may have echoed in the minds of Elizabethan *Hamlet* audiences as they did for William Shakespeare.

The third USP of 'to be or not to be', in addition to an adaptable structure and familiar antecedents, is the way in which it is framed in *Hamlet*. The phrase 'that is the question' is more than just a marker for derivation pointing to Cicero's *Quaestiones*; it is a metatextual phrase which takes up 'to be or not to be' with the pronoun 'that'. This turns 'to be or not to be' into a single item, into a noun phrase that functions as the grammatical subject of a sentence (What is the question? To or not to be is the question). This syntactic device is called nominalization. It can foreground any phrase as a distinct item which stands out from its context; we could say that nominalization puts invisible quotation marks around the nominalized item. In fact, nominalization is considered 'the "classic" anomalous feature of quotations' (Quaßdorf 91), and is an extremely useful feature for identifying casual quotations in documents where punctuation is not standardized or unreliably transmitted by printers. Shakespeare's wording in the second half of Hamlet's famous line makes it clear, independently of any typographical efforts, that the first half is spoken in invisible quotation marks, singled out as a memorable saying that will bear repetition. With 'that is the question', Hamlet's utterance turns itself into a quotable *sententia*. The move was so effective that even the second half, the marking for quotation, became quotable, as can be seen from the Karl Marx' passage mentioned in the introduction: 'Souveränität des Monarchen **oder** des Volkes, **das ist die question**' ('Staatsrechts' 230). The metatextual effect is reinforced by the French layer of the English vocabulary which the word 'question' adds to the Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, a feature which recurs in other early versions of the line. The *First Quarto* has 'To be, or not to be – I, there's the point' (sig. D4^{verso}) and in the first adaptation of the soliloquy the line runs: 'To be, or not to be, I there's the doubt' (Heminge *Jews' Tragedy* 37).

To compound the self-framing of 'to be or not to be', the complete soliloquy is made conspicuous on stage. Heralded by Polonius, who announces Hamlet's entrance to Claudius, this speech is Hamlet's first utterance after his ominous decision to 'catch the conscience of the king' (2.2.634).

POLONIUS: I heare him coming; withdraw, my lord.

[*They withdraw. Enter Hamlet.*]

HAMLET: To be, or not to be: that is the question (3.1.63–64).

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Claudius, Polonius and Ophelia, who have just withdrawn when Hamlet starts to speak, remain within earshot so that

the most famous of all soliloquies is not, strictly speaking, a soliloquy at all: three other characters are present although Hamlet speaks as if he is alone (Thompson and Taylor *Hamlet 1603 and 1623* 284, note to line 54).

These witnesses on stage, who complement the theatre audience, lend additional weight to Hamlet's words. Moreover, at least in the First Quarto, he enters 'poring vppon a booke' (*First Quarto* sig. D4^{verso}), a marker of quotation which may indicate that the soliloquy is read from a printed page. All in all, the quotability of 'to be or not to be' is overdetermined. Later versions, which still use one or more of its salient features, can afford to be more diffuse because of the association with the forceful original. Although its bland components are completely inconspicuous, the form and internal tension of 'to be or not to be' make it visible as a pre-existing, imported item in most texts – even in *Hamlet* itself.

A quotation?

The semantic and structural characteristics of 'to be or not to be', combined with Shakespeare's presentation in *Hamlet*, enabled this simple string of words to emerge from the general phrase stock of English as a recognizable quotation. The process was more gradual than with other lines – 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse' was a joke by 1598 (cf. pp. 90–91) – and therefore interesting to observe. Long before tags like 'as Hamlet says' accompanied it by default, we can trace a slowly growing awareness of a noteworthy linguistic item. The first signs that the phrase might be quoted (rather than simply used) are subtle and often equivocal: any suspicion of a *Hamlet* echo must be supported by further evidence such as the more general intertextual habits of certain writers. John Davies of Hereford, for one, produced a vast and stylistically varied *œuvre* that evinces a distinct imitative capacity. The number of verbal overlaps between his writings and *A Lover's Complaint* even led Brian Vickers to re-attribute the latter to Davies rather than to Shakespeare (cf. Vickers *Shakespeare and John Davies*). Whatever the validity of this controversial claim, Davies' propensity for borrowing does make it more probable that certain verb patterns in his poems are *Hamlet* echoes.⁸ The following passage was published in 1602, and so could have come on the heels of a *Hamlet* performance.

And which of both (thinkst thou) would Reason choose?
To be made capable of endlesse blisse,

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With possibility the same to loose,
 And winne a Hell, where all is quite amisse;
 Or not to **Bee** at all, both those to misse:
 Sure, Reaz'n the first would choose,
 because the last is lowest hell, where highest horror is;
 For in **Not-beeings** bottome, being fast,
 Ought would to worse then nought, vnworen wast (Davies *Mirum*
 sig. L1^{recto}).

'To be' and 'not to be' are here treated as separate units and nominalized separately. The two new nouns are framed by an introductory 'which of both' and the verb 'choose'. Davies repeats the syntactic oddity three lines further on, giving the noun 'being' a negative prefix and a genitive ending: 'Not-beeings bottome'. This may be a random gag or the trace of an exciting afternoon at the theatre; the latter hypothesis is supported by the topic of death, which is developed from life-versus-death to eternal-existence-versus-annihilation. Any claim that Davies was thinking of *Hamlet* – which he could not yet have read in print when he was writing – can be supported only by the co-occurrence of these weak markers of intertextuality; Davies is not out to signal a quotation; his writing gives readers a chance to distinguish something that could be one.

Davies' experience as a professional letter writer may account additional intertextual echo in Davies' poem may be inspired by his. The sequence 'or not to be at all' is a cliché from literary love letters, part of the recurring formula 'Wholly yours, or not to be at all' which was recommended by samples in anthologies like the following:

[I] pray you to haue pitie on him, who (attending the rest and final sentence of his death or life) doth humbly kisse your white and delicate hands, beseeching god to giue to you like ioy as his is, who desireth **to be**, Wholy yours, **or not to be** at all. Philiberto of Uirle (Painter sig. ZZZZ^{verso}).

[M]y good desyres [...] greatly couet **to be** accoumpted. Wholy yours, **or not to be** at all. Finis (Chettle *Forest of Fancy* sig. R^{verso} [lines 3681–3689]).

Such courtly, ardent contexts add a cruel, mocking twist to the choice that John Caryl's villainous Richard III offers to Princess Elizabeth: 'Prepare for marriage, or a Funeral / **To be my Wife, or not to be at all**' (*English Princess* 26). In Dryden and Lee's *Duke of Guise*, there may be a *Hamlet* hint when Charles IX of France attempts to rouse himself with this phrase: "'Tis time to push my slack'nd vengeance home, / **To be a King, or not to be at all**' (287).

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Over the seventeenth century, more distinct if still not unequivocal markers for quotation appear. Thomas Heywood's 1635 emblem book *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* makes the possible *Hamlet* phrase more conspicuous in an address to an 'Atheist':

Tell me, (ô thou of Mankind most accurst)
 Whether **to be, or not to be**, was first?
 Whether **to vnderstand, or not to know**?
To reason, or not reason? (well bee't so,
 I make that proposition:) all agree,
 That our our **Not-being**, was before **To be**
 For we that **are now, were not** in Times past:
 Our parents too, ev'n when our moulds were cast,
 Had their progenitors: **their fathers, theirs**:
 So to the first. By which it plaine appears,
 And by this demonstration 't is most cleare,
 That all of vs **were not**, before we were (sig. A6^{recto} [11]).

Again 'to be or not to be' is turned into a noun and spelled with a capital initial. Even if Heywood's topic is different from Hamlet's, this subtle foregrounding can be taken as evidence that Heywood is conscious of using an established phrase. The repetition and the playful modifications – 'not being' rather than 'not to be', 'to do or not to do' – confirm this. Finally, there may even be an echo of Claudius' bathetic consolation to Hamlet: 'you must know, your father lost a father; / **That father lost, lost his**' (1.2.93–94), completing a group of markers that is more salient than that in Davies' poems. A similar number of weak signals can be found in Abraham Cowley's powerful 'Life and Fame':

Oh Life, thou Nothings younger Brother!
 So like, that one might take One for the other!
 What's Some Body, or No Body?
 In all the Cobwebs of the Schoolmens trade,
 We no such nice Distinction woven see,
As 'tis To be, or not to Be.
Dream of a Shadow! a Reflection made
 From the false glories of the gay reflected Bow,
 Is a more solid thing then Thou (*Works* 2:201–202).

Like Heywood, Cowley nominalizes 'to be or not to be' and emphasizes this by capital letters. The phrase 'dream of a shadow' may echo Hamlet's 'A dream itself is but a shadow' (2.2.279). Individually, nominalization, capitalization, variation, typography and positioning may mean nothing more than the 'scare quotes' or 'shudder quotes' that

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have come to indicate emphasis or ironical distance from a string of words. When they occur all together and are supported by a nihilistic mood similar to Hamlet's, these devices provide quite credible evidence of quotation.

Quite a few of the passages discussed so far modify 'to be or not to be' in ways that sound not so much like quotations as like the kind of wordplay we like to make on common phrases. Is there such a big difference between a *Guardian* headline that runs 'To beard or not to beard' and one that introduces flatbread recipes with 'Flat's the Way to Do It'? Technically, the two puns are distinguishable only by the derivation of the phrase that is played with. Both 'To be or not to be' and 'That's the way to do it' have a form which is implicitly recognized as basic and which is distorted in punning; in both cases, the comic effect lies in the difference between the 'original' and the modified form. Whether the author of the 'original' is non-existent (in the case of idioms) and merely irrelevant (in the case of casual quotations), playful modifications confirm that we are thinking of a pre-existing unit with an original form (cf. Langlotz *Idiomatic Creativity*). Modification can even be used to identify casual quotations, as in Philip Ayres' poem 'Love's New Philosophy' from 1687, which could be read as playing around with a recognizable item:

Whilst in this Torment I remain,
It is no Mystery To be, and not to be;
 I dye to Joy, and live to Pain.
 So that, my Fair, I may be justly sed,
to be, and not to be, Alive and Dead (Ayres 66, emphasis mine).

If this is a quotation, it modifies *Hamlet* in new ways. The two halves of the dilemma are forced together by substituting 'and' for 'or' in the second line; the last line extends the stark infinitives 'to be' and 'not to be' into the more bathetic 'to be alive' and 'to be dead'; and '*Alive and Dead*' paraphrases 'to be or not to be' with the new 'and'. These somewhat heavy-handed games may indicate that something familiar is being handled. However, there is no *Hamlet* context; the lines' position in the penultimate stanza of a 70-line poem may also evoke the standardized closing formula for love letters that I mentioned before. Twelve years later, John Mason's 'Dives and Lazarus' treated 'to be or not to be' more lightly, just with a telling nominalization:

Nothing's a Barren Womb. If that could breed,
To be and not to be were well agreed (Mason 16).

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Mason turns Hamlet's dilemma into two nouns that might be reunited ('agreed'); this split refers to Hamlet's difficulty of choosing between the components of a single noun phrase. Both poems support the conclusion that something 'like a general recognition of the unsurpassable quotableness of Shakespeare's lines' (Bentley 75) had been established by the 1690s.

A quotation!

As Shakespeare's quotability established itself in the early eighteenth century, a new kind of evidence for quotations being meant as quotations becomes available: the habits of individual writers who are particularly apt to quote Shakespeare. If a writer's work contains several undoubted references, quotation can be more plausibly assumed in more ambiguous passages. Daniel Defoe, for example, quotes Shakespeare at least 30 times, although he only started after 1700, at the age of 40 (cf. Moore 72). These quotations include the striking couplet that is mentioned in the Introduction: 'Would the Great *Be*, and *not to Be* Divide, / And all the Doubts of *Entity* decide' (*Hymn* 10). Nominalization indicates that this is a quotation and 'Doubts of Entity' may allude to Hamlet's indecision. Other less certain versions include the following:

Might end by death all human misery, / Might have it in our choice, **to be, or not to be** (*Political History* 38).

[He] left her at liberty either **to tell him or not to tell him** (*Moll Flanders* 49).

[I]t was necessary that we should resolve either **to go, or not to go** (*Robinson Crusoe* 154).

[I]was impossible for her to resolve what wou'd be fit **to do, or not to do**, till she was there (*Roxana* 215).

The topic of suicide in the first of these passages, together with the supporting evidence of 'The Great Be' and the fact of Defoe's other Shakespeare references may lead readers to decide that some or all of the following passages are quotations.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Shakespeare quotation had become a done thing and quotations were more frequently marked in less equivocal ways, often including marking for derivation. This development is accompanied by shifts in the use of typographical markers. Before 1700, markers for emphasis and quotation could be confused with each other; in the eighteenth century, the two were 'becoming distinct' (King 41). Inverted commas, which were closed after the last word of the inserted phrase, established themselves as the accepted standard for literary quotation (King

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53), although markers such as spacing, parentheses and italics could also still be found (cf. King 52). A passage from 1736 uses small caps for Hamlet's line: 'Charles I declared, that *Parliaments* themselves were, by the Constitution, to BE OR NOT TO BE, at his Pleasure' (Osborne 798) and in 1758, the Earl of Chesterfield capitalized it as follows: 'To BE, or NOT To BE, is a question of much less importance, in my mind, than to be or not to be well' (*Letters* 555). The first French edition of Chesterfield's letters reflects the fame that the line had acquired by 1777: the line is given in English and set in italics.

Ayez soin de votre santé autant que vous pourrez, car *to be or not to be est une question* de bien moins d'importance, selon moi, que *to be or not to be well* (*Lettres* 4:177).

The striking English insert also includes Chesterfield's jokey, bathetic extension 'to be well'. This kind of addition to Hamlet's phrase, which removes the extraordinary existential quality of the double *to*-infinitive, had been introduced in 1687 in Philip Ayres' 'to be, and not to be, / Alive and Dead' (66). In the later eighteenth century, it became a popular comic effect, as in Isaac Bickerstaff's comic opera *The Padlock* (1768):

DIEGO: Thoughts to council – Let me see –
Hum – to be, or not to be,
A husband is the question (1).

Fumbling for something to say, Diego is relieved to remember the *Hamlet* catchphrase, whose banal use is clearly meant to show him up as half-educated; the presentation of the complete line, even though interrupted by 'a husband', leaves no doubt that this is a quotation.

The overt, clearly signalled quotation in direct speech in *The Padlock* is typical of mid-eighteenth-century literature, where it becomes widely used, 'sophisticated tool for characterization' (Rumbold *Eighteenth-Century* 8). Quoting Shakespeare can be admirable or ridiculous or anything in between. Samuel Richardson, for example, makes both a maidservant and a young upper-class gentleman quote *Hamlet* to very different effects. Here is the foppish aristocrat pleased to have found a conversational cue for a Shakespeare quotation:

Lord *Jackey*, in the Language of some Character in a Play, cry'd out, A palpable Hit, by Jupiter, and laughed egregiously, running about from one to another, repeating the same Words (*Pamela* 3:205).

The maidservant Pamela, who describes this scene in a letter, does not seem to identify the quotation although she (mis-)quotes 'Angels and

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ministers of grace' as something she 'had read in a book a night or two before' (1:37). Richardson is clearly at pains to establish 'that his low-born [Pamela] is capable of reading *Hamlet*, even if she then misquotes the text' (Keymer 123 and 124). Some of Richardson's ambivalence may stem from insecurity; research indicates that many of his 'pedestrian, didactic and artless' quotations (Connaughton 194) may be taken from popular anthologies. Richardson's contemporary and rival Henry Fielding, with no reason to be self-conscious about education, treated Shakespeare quotation in a more relaxed manner. The narrative of the erudite 'Author' figure in *Tom Jones* is studded with all manner of quotations, also in Latin, but takes a careful distance from the habit of overt Shakespeare quotation that may already have felt too fashionable to Fielding. Claudius' line 'When sorrows come, they come not single spies, / But in battalions' (*Hamlet* 4.5.83–84) expresses a commonsensical platitude in a military metaphor. Fielding's 'Author' gives it back its commonplace, proverbial form but adds a rather mystifying introduction: 'It hath been observed by some Man of much greater Reputation for Wisdom than myself, that **Misfortunes seldom come single**' (131). This phrasing, superficially a vague kind of marking for derivation, does not so much *mark* as practically *mask* the quotation, as if The 'Author', in line with Fielding's friendly scorn for so many fashionable (ab-) uses, was indulging the trend for explicitly marked Shakespeare only in a politely mocking, distant manner.

By the late 1770s, the elaborate marking of Fielding, Richardson and their peers was on the wane and more lightly framed forms of casual quotation became the norm. Writers continued to mark a substantial part of their borrowings but now assumed a familiarity that could dispense with detailed information. In this climate, almost any tag of the 'to verb or not to verb' kind could be read as *Hamlet* lite, as a careless, well-mannered homage to a 'celebrated line', as in this magazine article from 1773:

The Thought is Comprised in this celebrated line: 'To be, or not to be? that is the question.' but a question of this kind can have no foundation in the nature of things, [...]. **To be, or not to be? is not the question** with an enlighten'd and discerning mind [...]. But happiness, or misery hereafter, Which, as we now persue, we shall acquire, Which of them we shall then possess? **that is The high important question** which concerns us (Anon. 'Correction' 283).

The irredeemable tedium of such 'banal Shakespeare' (cf. Rumbold 'Common-Hackneyed') is not even relieved when 'to be or not to be' attracts quite creditable additional *Hamlet* echoes:

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What is it all but *Fooling*?
If men will think, if men will see,
That all this To, – or not to be,
Is as we're hot, or cooling
To-day on Expectation's wing,
To-morrow off, *'tis not the thing,*
What is the thing? – why Fooling (Stevens 246–247).

The possible echo of 'the play's the thing' (*Hamlet* 2.2.633) does not do much for profundity here; quoting *Hamlet* is unavoidably and disappointingly banal. This perception carried over into literary dialogue, where characters that practice overt marking sound inevitably faddish or pretentious. In John Minshull's comedy *He Stoops to Conquer*, whose title is itself a comic quotation, we find (in 1804) a maidservant who seems to have been to the theatre: 'O my good Signora, now is the time of trial as the man says in the play, To be, or not to be' (Minshull 24). In fact, a *LION* search for the phrase 'as the man says in the play' yields a dozen hits in plays and novels before 1830, introducing, among others, three *Hamlet* quotations and one from *Macbeth*. Even the apparently genuine memory of a performance cannot make such quotations sound impressive. Although Hannah Cowley's Sir Marvel Mushroom has picked up Hamlet's line in the theatre rather than from a quotation dictionary, the way in which he conflates the role with the star actor confirms the lack of sophistication implicit in his name:

[Please] introduce me to Lady Beauville [because] **not to be** at her route, would be **to be and not to be – as Kemble says**. Pray Ma'am have you seen Kemble? (Cowley *More Ways* 90).

As Shakespeare turns into Hamlet and Hamlet into a star of the stage, quotation becomes just a brief flash in the cant of celebrity-watching.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Hamlet's question had a brief period of specialization on the weighty subject of marriage. One such passage has been quoted in the Introduction: '**To be, or not to be, that was the question, and a question** which Sophia could not answer'; here are two more which both use 'to be or not to be' as shorthand for 'dilemma'.

WHITTLE: Your daughter –

SIR PATRICK: Your wife that is **to be**. Go on –

WHITTLE: My wife that is **not to be** – Zounds! will you hear me?

SIR PATRICK: **To be, or not to be, is that the question?** I can swear too, if it wants a little of that (Garrick *Irish Widow* 33–34).

WIDOW GREEN: What! – Master Waller, and contemplative!

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Presumptive proof of love! Of me he thinks!

Re[s]olves the point 'to be or not to be!'

'To be!' by all the triumphs of my sex! (Knowles *Love-Chase* 51–52).

The expansion into 'be married', 'be a husband' or similar was understandably popular, too: 'A Widow knows the Good, and Bad, of Life / And, has it in her Choice, to be, or not to be, a Wife!' (Philips *Humphrey* 88). Finally there were, of course, 'to marry or not to marry' (the title of at least one poem, one novel and one comedy) and, perfectly iambic, 'to wed or not to wed'. The latter became the most perfect opening for at least twenty topical parodies of Hamlet's soliloquy that are discussed in Chapter 5. These uses of Shakespeare really push the boundaries of banality, most symptomatic of the Romantic epidemic of Shakespeare quotation (cf. Chapter 6). Small wonder that Maria Edgeworth concluded in 1826 that "'To be or not to be" – is a question we can no longer bear' (Edgeworth 'Bores' 325). But of course the line had to be borne for two more centuries.

'To be or not to be' continued to be quoted until it was the epitome of intertextual paralysis, just as an early version of *Hamlet* was for Thomas Nashe (cf. Introduction). In 1901, it is described as ripe for a mercy killing in *Longman's Magazine*: the journalist uses 'to be or not to be' to exemplify the sad fate of 'shreds of literature' in need of a 'happy despatch'. This sad situation comes at the end of a complete life story of a 'poor quotation', which intriguingly develops the family metaphor that is implicit in Barthes' terms 'paternity' and 'filiation'. Even the humble quotation mark is given a position in the family saga:

[B]egotten of some noble father, no sooner has [a quotation] passed the pains of birth than it is torn by some alien from the nourishing bosom of its mother context, and wrapt in the swaddling clothes of inverted commas: interest or brief affection move one putative father after another to undertake its maintenance; the swaddling clothes are taken off by one of them, but another, ignorant of the adolescent's years, swathes it up again, until at last, in books, its maturity is recognised, and thenceforth it is left severely alone; but there remains for it a dishonoured and mutilated old age on the lips of common men (Fowler 'Longman's Magazine' 67).

With predictable gendering, a quotation's origins are assigned to the womb-like original context and a male author, its 'onlie begetter'. To be quoted is to be painfully detached from the mother text, to be born into a confusing, unsafe textual world where paternity is uncertain and can be faked. The literary sin of casual quotation is likened to a sexual scandal – it would require a paternity suit to decide whether 'to be or not to be' is quoted appropriately.

Beyond quotation

In a pleasing parallel with the lightening of Victorian morality in the twentieth century, casual quotations have become more frequent and less scandalous. A few years after the sexual revolution had broken, Roland Barthes decreed that texts and presumably quotations could ‘be read without the guarantee of [a] father’ (‘Work to Text’ 161). Their ‘dishonoured’ old age forgotten, phrases like ‘to be or not to be’ have come back to life as adaptable phrasal templates. ‘Snowclones’, in twenty-first-century terminology, are fixed expressions with blank slots such as ‘in space, no-one can verb’, ‘have something, will travel’ or ‘keep calm and carry on verb-ing’. Three years after the term had been coined in 2003, ‘to be or not to be’ headed a list of snowclones in the *New Scientist*:

Snowclones spring from a rich diversity of sources, from Shakespeare (‘To X or not to X?’) to *Star Trek* (‘It’s X, but not as we know it.’) and movie titles (‘Dude, where’s my X?’) – if the source is known at all. Who, for instance, knows the origin of the snowclone ‘X is my middle name’? (Anon. ‘Snowclone’ 80).

Most people who use a snowclone do know or even wonder about its origin, and this is the state in which Shakespeare’s phrase structure can now go on in countless reincarnations and with countless new verbs. Thanks to the force of the particle ‘to’ and the elasticity of English grammar, the ‘verb’ in ‘to verb or not to verb’ does not even need to be a verb. Linguists have wondered whether ‘to Grice or not to Grice’ in the *Journal of Pragmatics* (cf. Mey 911), and questions like ‘to bikini or not to bikini’ or ‘to bidet or not to bidet’ yield dozens of Google hits. The ‘verb’ does not even need to be a word: the online *Urban Dictionary* has a separate entry for ‘2b or not 2b’. Shakespearean snowclones are quotations that have died and come back to haunt us as friendly ghosts; as oblivious to their origins as any idiom or everyday pun, they have no need to wail ‘Remember me!’ For a rough idea of just how much these words are cut off from the text that made them famous, I did several Google searches for <“to be or not to be”> and for <“to be or not to be” -Hamlet -Shakespeare>. Every time, the number of hits for the second search, i.e. the number of completely unmarked quotations, amounted to at least 90% of the number of hits for the first, more general search. In German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Russian and Italian, the figures ranged between 84% and 98%. It seems safe to say, even allowing for search engine vagaries, we that in the twenty-first century, ‘to be or not to be’ is most frequently encountered in contexts that do *not* contain the words ‘Hamlet’ or ‘Shakespeare’. Having passed through *Hamlet*, ‘to be or not to be’ has re-entered the English language with more options than

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it had before 1600. It can be used as a fully paid-up literary quotation; it can function as an anonymous structural blueprint; its Shakespearean 'origin' may be remembered or not, and if it is remembered, this memory may be significant or not. The following chapters investigate these varieties of casual Shakespeare quotation in their historical development up to the Romantic Age, beginning with the three main kinds of Shakespeare's own casual borrowings in Chapters 2–4: folk materials and Scripture, the Latin classics and English texts.

Notes

- 1 Milton *Paradise Lost* 59 (Book II, lines 103–106). Interestingly, *Paradise Lost*, Milton's panegyric to free will, does not contain a single instance of 'to verb or not to verb', not even in Satan's most Marlovian speeches.
- 2 The phrase evidently had a powerful appeal, cf. two other passages: 'power of our understanding to believe, or not to believe' (Ainsworth 5) and 'a mans free will to believe, or not to believe, to obey or disobey the Gospel of truth preached' (Cartwright 360).
- 3 An example from 1575: 'Thy will be my will, and my will be always to folow thy will. Let there be ever in me one will and one desire with thee, and let me never desire to will or not to will but as thou wilt' (Bull 182).
- 4 Twise uses the formula 'to be or not to be' six more times in the same paragraph.
- 5 In other languages, the phrase is less elegant and versatile. Danish 'At vaere eller ikke vaere' or Italian 'essere o non essere' are unwieldily polysyllabic, while Spanish 'ser o no ser' lacks the metrical relief of unaccented syllables and French 'être ou ne pas être' is clumsy. The striking German word 'Nichtsein' (nonbeing) that features in the canonical Schlegel-Tieck translation has had very little life independent of *Hamlet*. The exception are philosophical treatises, where 'Nichtsein' was used already before Christoph Wieland's pioneering German translation of *Hamlet* in the 1760s.
- 6 My initial exploration of this topic was greatly advanced by an unpublished manuscript which Brian Vickers generously shared.
- 7 Other possible sources include passages in Stobaeus and Eusebius, Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, Xenophon's *Cyropaideia*, Montaigne's *Essais* and Philippe de Mornay's *Discourse of Life and Death* as translated by the Countess of Pembroke (cf. Baldwin *Small Latine* 2:604 and 2:605 and Anders 275).
- 8 Charles O. Fox lists echoes like '(all-)devouring time' between the Sonnets and some complimentary verses by Davies which preface John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie* of 1610 (370).

1 Early modern women's narratives of marital betrayal

On 6 December 1582, Mistress Elizabeth Bourne filed a document with Sir Julius Caesar, who was an Admiralty judge, a Master of Requests, and, later, Master of the Rolls in the Court of Chancery.¹ In her complaint, Bourne asks for permission from the Privy Council to divorce her husband, Anthony, a man whose philandering kept the couple and their friends in court for more than a decade. As cause, she offered salacious details of various humiliations, including his refusal to live with her, his adultery and fathering of “bastards,” his financial negligence, and his threats against her life (including attempts by hired assassins and his own pledge to infect her with the pox). “Mr. Bourne,” she alleged, was “in breach of his holy vows of chaste matrimony and hath lived, and still continueth, in open sin and shame with harlots, to the ruin and spoil of himself, me, and my children.”²

Sixteenth-century English law did not allow wives to divorce their husbands; in fact, under common law, married women had few legal rights. Bourne's self-assurance in her document, however, speaks both to her desperation and to her sense of entitlement. Thus, it cannot be said with any comfort that married women's official legal limitations bred in them a sense of victimization or inaction. In fact, as several historians have shown, wives sued their husbands for separation from bed and board relatively frequently in Ecclesiastical courts and also for financial independence in Equity courts. Moreover, suing for slander or defamation often gave women a legitimate route to public speech. Thus, there existed a gap between the theory and practice of law in early modern England that both limited and licensed women's voices.³ Bourne's chief complaints against her husband – that he engaged habitually in adultery with harlots, disclaimed economic responsibilities, and repeatedly threatened her life – show her sense of the justice both of her complaints and of her right to seek a divorce from him; they also show her awareness of the kinds of marital infractions necessary to a successful divorce suit. Her carefully crafted document conforms to the legal restrictions she faces and is also a compelling record of her attempt to free herself from a man who tormented her for sixteen years.⁴

Bourne's goal is interesting on its own, but, when read in light of other early modern women's texts, legal treatises, marriage sermons, prose romances,

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and educational manuals, it merges with a landscape of cultural practices and discourses on early modern marriage. The texts included in this chapter establish a rhetoric of marital betrayal in documents written by both men and women that inform my reading of Shakespeare's cuckoldry plays in which men's and women's reciprocal accusations compete for narrative authority over their social and legal standing, familial respect, and financial resources. Moments of crisis in early modern marriages offer women opportunities for acting in their own interests, to protect themselves, their friends, and their children from potential harm by men who have abandoned and accused them of various infractions, including disobedience, rebelliousness, and adultery. Lawsuits; social, financial, and physical abandonment; and husbands' own adultery operate as events that shift the balance of power and open spaces of agency for women to seek social recognition as separate legal entities. Conflicting narratives in marital and legal disputes, in women's appeals for justice, and in men's responses to those appeals establish a discourse of recrimination adopted by husbands and wives that is also present in the plays. While women's defenses, both in history and in the plays, do not always end in a revision of legal or marital power, the stories they have left behind shift the terms and locations of, provocations for, and effects of women's agency. Defenses of virtue, of wifely goodness and devotion, are deployed in counter-accusations of abandonment and neglect, of financial hardship and isolation from familial protection, and they reposition women within a female rhetoric of marital betrayal.⁵

Early modern women saw their relationships to men in marriage as forming a partnership, not in twenty-first-century terms, but as demanding different but reciprocal duties of mutual respect and honor and, if possible, of affection for one another. Consequently, women offer a view of marriage and of their lives that contradicts simple narratives of silence and obedience, making it clear that whatever anxieties their husbands have about female fidelity and obedience, women experience reciprocal and equivalent anxieties about their ability to survive, literally to subsist in outcast or unprotected states. Women's responses to and perspectives on their lawsuits, marriages, divorces, and roles as wives and mothers remind us that stories about marital conflict are multiple, contradictory, and often unreliable. Truth in such narratives is malleable, and meaning is determined not by absolute moral or religious categories or individual sovereignty but by an array of desires and aims that both reflect and conflict with cultural stories, with what sounds true, even when it is not true.

I begin with a number of diverse documents dating from 1523 to 1632 and with a brief summary of women's legal options, which have been examined in much more depth by Amy Louise Erickson, Laura Gowing, Tim Stretton, Lawrence Stone, J. A. Sharpe, Martin Ingram, and Maria Cioni, among others, as a way of tracing a rhetorical history of and basis for female anxieties about men's unpredictable uses of power. The competition for narrative authority, as Gowing argues, dominates trials in the ecclesiastical courts

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and is in dialogue with traditional views of women by writers such as Juan Luis Vives, Henry Smith, and Robert Greene. The documents, letters, complaints, and diaries I examine – written by both men and women – offer a sample history of women's agency in relation to law and marriage that is in dialogue with conduct manuals, educational and political treatises, and Shakespeare's cuckoldry plays. Together, these texts map the material instability of wives and show that the laws relevant to women and to property, especially in marriage, changed very little from Vives's *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1523) to *The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights* (1632).⁶ Together, *The Law's Resolutions* and Vives's curriculum emphasize the importance of women's virtue for men. Both texts confirm and are culturally bound to and implicated in the religious and political views on monarchical and domestic harmony found in *An Homily against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion* (1570) and Filmer's *Patriarchia, or The Natural Power of Kings* (1616). These texts – some written for women to understand their private role and some written for men to understand their public role – overlap and intersect with the parallel doctrine of wives' subjection to husbands and of subjects' subjection to the king. Simultaneously, embedded in all these texts are breaks and contradictions that open a contestatory relation to orthodox goals: Vives's text implicitly and unintentionally puts forward an alternative to pious and passive virtue in the specter of disobedience and corruption; the homily and Filmer's tract imply alternatives to dutiful, loyal submission for English subjects in the shape of rebellion and treason; and T.E.'s *Laws* more than implies that women do and do not have rights to property and sovereignty, so that the contradictions present in laws on ownership of dowries, jointures, and portions must give pause, at least, if not license to reclamation of property. The tendency of agency to leak beyond the bounds of power, as Judith Butler explains, can be seen here in the contradictory aims of texts that stipulate the submission of subjects to powers but also provide the means and vocabulary for dissent and disobedience. Thus, as she argues, "the purposes of power are not always the purposes of agency" (*Psychic Life* 15).

Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth Stafford (Duchess of Norfolk), Lady Margaret Cuninghame, Lady Elizabeth Willoughby, and Mistress Elizabeth Bourne depended on the benevolence of husbands who reciprocated with emotional and financial abandonment. Equally, the stories these women's husbands and brothers tell show their dependence on these women for social and political advancement. Yet the examples of Henry VIII's six wives alone, whose histories haunted laws on marriage and divorce for centuries after, testify to men's capricious and tyrannical uses of the law; less powerful men often similarly neglected their financial duties to their wives but still held legal advantage in court. As Barbara J. Harris argues, "The fiction inscribed in the Christian view of marriage and the doctrine of coverture, that couples were one, mystified the coercive element in their relationship, which rested firmly on wives' legal incapacities, economic dependence, and

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the cultural ideal of the obedient wife" (*Aristocratic Women* 76). Harris's catalog of Chancery Court findings shows men to be delinquent in all kinds of financial duties, including though not restricted to dowry payment and establishment of jointures. She also shows them to have been guilty of adultery. The double standard meant, however, that aristocratic women had to endure men's sexual infidelity while penalties against women included "loss of property in one form or another and bastardization of their children" (Harris, *Aristocratic Women* 85).⁷ While men made substantive complaints, as well, about their women, husband's power over their wives' economic and social security could be used as a punitive measure. As I will show, loss of home, income, protection, children, and family often were the material consequences of husbands' allegations against wives.

* * *

Narratives about wives' subjection to husbands in the early modern period derive from the naturalized political and religious hierarchy of power descending, in Robert Filmer's terms, from God, to King, to Man: "If we compare the Natural Rights of a Father with those of a King, we find them all one, without any difference at all but only in the Latitude or Extent of them: as the Father over one Family, so the King as Father over many Families extends his care to preserve, feed, cloth, instruct, and defend the whole Commonwealth" (24).⁸ *An Homily against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion* describes a deliberate and methodical order of power: "God . . . not only ordained that in Families and Households *the wife should be obedient unto her Husband, the Children unto their Parents, the Servants unto their Masters*; but also, . . . he by his holy Word did constitute . . . several and special Governors and Rulers, unto whom the residue of his People should be obedient" (585, emphasis in original). This patrilineal religious and political order forms the core of early modern domestic theory.⁹ It made the relationship of wife to husband parallel to that of servant to master, subject to King. The language of subjection and obedience that the subject owes the King parallels the language of chastity, silence, and obedience imposed on women. It would appear inviolable, quite seriously not a system that anyone, male or female, would want to threaten. Yet we know that it was threatened. The political unrest of the Hundred Years' War, contemporary rebellion festering in parliament's growing discontent with King James's reign that Filmer is directly concerned with, and women's legal actions circumventing, as I will discuss below, common law's apparent stranglehold on married women's legal rights disclosed the vulnerability of power relations to opposition and alteration.

Narratives of monarchical authority were challenged by English subjects' negotiation with systems of power that could not account for, control, or adapt to the flexible nature of day-to-day encounters. The instability of masculinist authority, as many feminist scholars have noted,

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found its way into conduct and education manuals through anxieties about women's sexual nature. Juan Luis Vives's *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, written for Mary Tudor and reissued throughout Europe, makes the primary claim that "chastity is the principal virtue of a Woman" (51). While Vives's text encourages formal education for noble women, his primary concern is the protection of virtue. As Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne point out, Vives's curriculum "opposed formal training in rhetoric for women . . . because its public nature jeopardised women's reputations for chastity which, he insisted, it was the purpose of their upbringing and education to safeguard" (4).¹⁰ To achieve that end, he describes in graphic detail the repercussions of a woman's loss of chastity as a kind of amalgamated story of mourning and occasion for social censure by family members and friends. He imagines:

weeping of the father and mother and bringers up . . . talk of neighbours, friends, and companions, cursing that ungracious young woman . . . when every mother will keep not only their daughters,* but also their sons from the infection of such an unthrifty maid . . . that I wonder how a young woman, seeing this, can either have joy of her life, or live at all, and not pine away for sorrow.

(32)

Vives makes expulsion from society the worst consequences a woman could face, short of losing her life. His description not only makes loss of virtue a loss of value suffered by the unchaste female body but also fuses it with the loss of family, of name, and of home. Devoid of the "pearl" of her virginity and consequently diminished in "price" (Vives 30, 29) – in fact, infected with the disease of bodily incontinence – a woman who loses her reputation faces alienation from everyone she knows and, therefore, a loss of future connections and status through marriage and children: the guarantors of social, emotional, and economic security. The story he tells creates a graphic, social, and material deterrent against loss of virtue.

But Vives does not stop with the loss of friends and family. He suggests a woman may even lose her life at the hands of loved ones:

Hippomenes, a great man of Athens, when he knew his daughter despoiled of one, he shut her up in a stable with a wild horse, kept meatless. . . . In Spain . . . two brethren that thought their sister had been a maiden, when they saw her great with child, they dissembled their anger so long as she was with childe: but as soon as she was delivered of her child, they thrust swords in to her belly, and slew her, the midwife looking on . . . three maidens with a long towel, strangled a maiden that was one of their companions, when they took her in the abominable deed.

(32–3)

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It is not enough to say that friends and families have murdered their women. Rather, Vives's graphic horror stories – with swords, towels, and hungry horses filling the imaginations of the girls he expects to read his treatise – reinforce the violence underwriting masculine anxieties. For while Vives does not actually encourage parents, brothers, and friends to murder guilty young women, he warns that such violence is not a “marvel . . . [w]hen the women taken with the abominable and cruel love, all love cast quite out of their heart” (33).¹¹ In her study of early modern stories about sex and identity, Kathryn Schwarz argues, “[T]he ‘fundamental difficulty’ of communal self-perpetuation is tied to the strategic endorsement of community itself: reputation circulates as the currency of inclusive identity, but the scheme that fixes dangerous names to disposable bodies fails to insulate social subjects. Chastity, which affords the sole security for legitimate bonds, magnifies the problem” (*What You Will* 76). Vives's catalog of violence against women is nothing if not a defense of “communal self-perpetuation,” an attack meant to secure the status quo and protect the community. At the same time, the potential for dissent, for a way of being that defies Vives's cautionary horror tales, is embedded in his narrative. This possibility exceeds the intents of Vives's curriculum and, as Schwarz's study shows, haunts male anxieties about the volitional aspects of silence, chastity and obedience.¹²

The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights confirms the subjection of women to their men, but it also includes important caveats and exceptions. The basis of the law, in this document, inheres in women's affiliation with Eve and subjects women not only domestically (“*In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children, thy desires shall be subject to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*”) but also politically, for “Women have no voice in Parliament, They make no Laws, they consent to none, they abrogate none” (6, emphasis T. E.'s). In fulfillment of this edict, section *viii* of Part II, “That which the husband hath is his own,” affirms that all a man owns at his marriage is retained by him lawfully. Even those things he gives to his wife “are still his own: her Chain, her Bracelets, her Apparel, are all the Goodman's goods” (129). And section *ix*, “That which the Wife hath is the husband's,” confirms in brief that “[f]or thus it is, [i]f before Marriage the Woman were possessed of Horses, Neat, Sheep, Corn, Wool, Money, Plate, and Jewels, all manner of moveable substance is presently by conjunction the husband's, to sell, keep, or bequeath if he die. And though he bequeath them not, yet are they the Husband's Executor's and not the wife's which brought them to her Husband” (130). In this acute lack of proprietorial interests and legal standing, women cannot even file charges against husbands who beat them: “[I]f a man beat an out-law, a traitor, a Pagan, his villain, or his wife, it is dispunishable, because by the Law Common these persons can have no action” (128). T. E.'s rhetoric, however, takes a turn here; he notes that

if a woman be threatened by her husband to be beaten, mischiefed, or slain, Fitzherbert sets down a Writ which she may sue out of Chancery

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to compel him to find surety of honest behaviour toward her, and that he shall neither do nor procure to be done to her (mark I pray you) any bodily damage, otherwise then appertains to the office of a Husband for lawful and reasonable correction.

(128)

T.E. is careful to point out the limits of a man's power, which can be found in a woman's right to file a complaint. And while he acknowledges that he does not know "how far that [lawful and reasonable correction] extendeth" (128), he notes with some irony that a woman may have the right to beat her husband because there is no law forbidding it (128). Continually shifting the balance to show that the law is inconsistent, that it contradicts itself, and that laws may only sound rigidly in a husband's favor, T.E. leaves gaps and fissures that open opportunities for women to seek redress.

Women who did not wish to obey the tenets of marriage advocated by Juan Luis Vives that even an abusive husband ought to be suffered as if "it is the correction of God, and that it chanceth thee as a punishment for thy sins" (106), might, as Bernard Capp argues, seek the assistance of neighbors, friends, and family (*When Gossips Meet* 57–9). While both Vives (in *The Office and Duty of a Husband*) and Henry Smith (in his *Preparative to Marriage*) agree that a man should love and honor his wife and correct her with discretion, or not at all if he wishes to avoid earning her resentment,¹³ both also urge wives to obey their husbands and not to complain in public. Smith's advice in comparison with that of Vives (whose vision of marriage as a union based on mutuality and reciprocity is more measured)¹⁴ depends on clichés of the female scold:

for it becommeth not any woman to set light by her husband, nor to publish his infirmities. For they say, it is an evil bird that defileth his own nest, and if a wife use her husband so, how may the husband use the wife? Because this is the quality of that sex, to overthwart, & upbraid, & sue the preeminence of their husbands. Therefore the Philosophers could not tell how to define a wife, but to call her *The contrary to a husband* as though nothing were so cross or contrary to a man as a wife. This is no Scripture, but no slander to many.

(64)

Smith makes the wife who talks about her husband into a bad housewife, and his association of wives with scolding, while a contemporary cliché, denies women definition or classification – wives are what they are not, and what they are not is husbands. Consequently, any authority they claim makes them monsters, women trying to be men in a world turned upside down. At the same time, Smith's portrait of the scolding wife attributes a rhetorical power to women that exceeds his intents. His effort at silencing the female tongue offers women a way of defining themselves as agents of exposure and shame. One man's gossiping wife is another woman's friend in need.

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Disobedient to the will of her father or husband, the gossiping wife necessarily threatened her reputation as a chaste wife.¹⁵ Inextricably united, chastity, silence, and obedience acted as a kind of holy trinity of virtues for women. Robert Greene's *Penelope's Webb* makes Penelope the mouthpiece for chastity, silence, and obedience, which are the best antidote, she argues, to disagreeable husbands:

I cannot think, (quoth Penelope) that there is an husband so bad, which the honest government of his wife may not in time reform, especially if she keep three special points that are requisite in every woman, Obedience, Chastity, and Silence, three such graces, Nurse, as may reclaim the most graceless husband in the world.

(n. pag.)

The entire narrative examines in detail stories from various sources that become both proofs to the rule and the foundational basis for accusations against wives made by husbands. Plato is quoted as having said that "a woman, though rich and beautiful, deserveth small praise or favour, if the course of her life be not directed after her husband's compass. . . . [A] wife [ought] to have no proper nor peculiar passion or affection, unless framed after the special disposition of her husband." A woman who could not bend her will to her husband's failed to perform her duties as a woman. Her husband's failures were less momentous and, in fact, merely tested the virtue of a woman. Thus, an adulterous husband, or one who beat his wife, or one who failed to provide for or abandoned his family was to be suffered, as the tyrannical King was to be suffered as a punishment by God on wayward subjects. At the same time, Greene's text opens the possibility of agency for wives who wish to tame a choleric husband, for, as the case of Zenobia proves, the wife's willful performance of obedience secures a husband's reciprocal devotion and obedience to his wife. As Schwarz's work so persuasively shows, willful performances of virtue both reinscribe and revise orthodox notions of female nature (88–103).

As the examples of the wives in this chapter demonstrate, and as Capp, Gowing, Stretton, Cioni, and Ingram also show, such warnings did not stop wives from seeking the assistance of their gossip networks at one extreme or law courts at the other. Rather, women navigated their conflicts within the limitations offered by official religious tenets, social customs, or laws creating spaces of agency as marital disputes demanded. They did not see themselves as compromising their virtue by doing so. Certainly, none of the women whose complaints I examine in this chapter see themselves in such danger. Indeed, the discourse on virtue gives each woman a language for describing the wrongs of her husband. In women's complaints, husbands fail to treat wives with love and honor, which wives see as fair exchange for love and obedience. They show, therefore, that men's accusations against women for various marital infractions were met by women's counter-accusations

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and put in motion a discourse of marital betrayal that contradicts every rule or warning on the inviolability of silence and obedience for women in the period. Women see no conflict between documenting their troubles and being virtuous, or, if they do, they quickly dismiss such concerns to pursue justice.

The narrative energy of marital conflict is, as Gowing has shown, remarkably in evidence in early modern legal cases on sex and marriage, especially those on slander and defamation.¹⁶ Gowing argues, “Justice in the church courts depended on story-telling. . . . Such testimonies explain the occasions of misconduct in extended narratives about the world of marriage, family, and neighbourhood and their disruptions by dispute” (*Domestic Dangers* 41–2). Gowing describes narratives of rape, sexual abuse, adultery, and wife-beating that were filtered through the legal process. Men and women participated differently in court proceedings, making different kinds of witnesses whose accounts hinged on their own points of view on family, marriage, and neighborhood relationships; the needs of “the litigants and their lawyers” had an influence on the testimony of witnesses (*Domestic Dangers* 42). Testimony “depended in turn upon the stories constructed by . . . the prosecution, the witness, and the defense; the final outcome confirmed which story had won” (*Domestic Dangers* 42). A competition for narrative authority therefore – and not necessarily a search for the truth – became the distinguishing characteristic of marital legal disputes. Complicating court proceedings further, “various legal and lay voices” participated in gathering, documenting, and shaping testimony (43). Evidence given by witnesses, plaintiffs, and defendants was collectively produced and included the questions of plaintiffs’ lawyers, the clerks hearing testimony, and the proctors who acted as Ecclesiastical lawyers. All these voices were mediated by scribes recording testimony and who added legal phrases as needed for coherence (*Domestic Dangers* 41–8).

Further complicating access to truth, testimony in court was structured by what Gowing calls “a contest for meaning”:

[L]itigants and witnesses argued about the meaning of events, over whether words were spoken in malice or anger, what constituted proofs of marriage, or whether a certain extent of violence was unreasonable enough to constitute marital breakdown. . . . When women and men retold the occasions of dispute to the court, the confrontation between two people translated into a contest for the meaning of their actions, as each produced a story for the court and struggled to make its meaning stick there. Narratives made sense, both in court and out of it, through their similarity to familiar plots in the stock of common knowledge: defamatory exchanges, contracts of marriage, or incidents of illicit sex were conveyed through well-known devices.

(*Domestic Dangers* 43, 56)

The contest for meaning Gowing describes and the dependence of litigants on multiple parties to construct a coherent story is a practical example

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of both the citationality of the utterance and what Butler identifies as the potential for a turning of the utterance, “untether[ing it] from its origin,” as “one way to shift the locus of authority in relation to the utterance” (*Excitable Speech* 93). The stories told in court depended on a recognizable origin, on the citationality of events, emotions, and wrongs. Testimony was persuasive or not according to its familiarity in culture, according to, as Paul Ricoeur puts it, how “acceptable” and, therefore, “apt for being followed” it was (150). Simultaneously, the potential for new narratives and, indeed, for the same narratives to “mean” in new ways opens as testimony re-cites injuries. When the veracity of a story is less important than its hermeneutic appeal, then the feel of a story – its truthiness – becomes crucial; the ability to convince a jury or a judge that one version and interpretation of what has been said is correct produces Gowing’s contest for meaning. The authority of the utterance, therefore, is attached to persuasive and narrative powers unrelated to the truth. This is at first a frightening thought. However, if meaning can be shifted from its conventions, then a contest for meaning becomes an opportunity for agency, making it possible for the “same speech [to be] taken up by the one to whom it is addressed, and turned, becoming the occasion of a speaking back and a speaking through” (Butler, *Excitable Speech* 92).

Early modern court systems increasingly became the site for speaking back in cases brought by women for slander and defamation. A. Erickson, Cioni, Stretton, and Gowing show that women of all classes made use of various court systems, bringing cases of libel, slander, and defamation; litigating for the right to separate property; and suing husbands for legal separation and divorce, citing violent cruelty and adultery.¹⁷ Law in early modern England was complex, governed by different court systems (Ecclesiastical, Equity, Custom, and Common Law) that might all have some jurisdiction on subjects of interest to women.¹⁸ Ecclesiastical courts could be used to enforce moral behavior, in particular sexual propriety, and allowed women to sue in their own name (Gowing 11). Equity courts, such as the Court of Requests and Chancery (of which Sir Julius Caesar, who oversaw the Bourne dispute, came to be a Master and Master of the Rolls, respectively), were a venue for seeking relief outside Common and Ecclesiastical law. “The doctrine of coverture stripped married women of their legal entities and independence. It did not, however, remove all of their rights or all of their obligations” (Stretton 129).¹⁹ Stretton shows that these courts were sympathetic to property disputes, settlement of estates, and legal protection for women when legal separations were won in the Church Courts. In fact, equity courts functioned precisely to find remedies not allowed by law.²⁰ Women took advantage of a number of legal avenues to pursue equity, which included, as I will describe below, frequent and eloquent letters to advisors of the monarch, including the Privy Council, and to family and local magistrates. Decisions made by Parliament were effective because they were statutory, and “courts were bound to uphold them, even if they directly conflicted with common-law

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precedent" (Greenberg, L., "Introduction" 5). What we have, therefore, is a contradictory and unreliable set of laws and practices that could work in women's favor. On the one hand, married women appear devoid of legal rights. On the other, alternate avenues of legal remedy, from Ecclesiastical to Equity Courts, offer women the right to sue in their own names. Thus, the law might offer women redress against injustices of all kinds. At the very least, it offered women avenues for being heard. Women's interrogations of false accusations against them, of men's failures to provide for them and for their children, and of men's expectations for total obedience without reciprocal forms of respect and protection emphasize the dynamic and plural nature of their views of themselves and of their marriages.

In this light, the letters of Anne Boleyn, the Duchess of Norfolk, and Lady Willoughby, the diary record of Margaret Cuninghame, and the divorce complaint of Elizabeth Bourne, like many other women's documents, are shaped by common and contradictory legal, social, and marital customs and pressures that women negotiated daily. These examples demonstrate the different kinds of rhetoric women deployed, whether they asked for a better living, defended their sexual reputations, or sought the right to divorce an adulterous husband. Despite their class differences, all five women claim marital injustices and make their views known with various degrees of insinuation, of rebellion counterbalanced by submission, and of clear demands offset by plaintive supplications, common forms of rhetorical address used by women in the period, which "could be mobilised in a range of contexts beyond the literary and that was amenable to being manipulated to [women's] advantage as well as in their disfavor" (Richards and Thorne 15). Moreover, all five of the women's stories exist in tension with narratives told about them by brothers, fathers, and husbands that they appropriate and revise in order to tell their own counter-narrative. Finally, all five cases demonstrate the reciprocal effects for both men and women in legal and marital disputes, revealing that both sides suffer damages. At the same time, the effects for women are substantive in different ways from those of men; reputation, name, and financial loss are material effects each woman seeks to recoup from the men who retain control over them. The men (in particular the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Willoughby), on the other hand, do not seem to suffer material losses caused by their wives' putative indiscretions; they lose neither the sympathy of other men nor their power over their wives' property, access to children, or social standing.

The women I study here assert their wills and desires in the face of official religious, legal, and social doctrines limiting their agency; they refuse to be silent and obedient, and sometimes they refuse to be chaste. Their complaints resonate with those of the female characters in Shakespeare's cuckoldry plays, so that the plays can be seen as staging Renaissance women's paradoxical and conflicting relationships to silence and speech, obedience and rebellion, subjection and action. Like Shakespeare's women, Boleyn, Stafford, Cuninghame, Willoughby, and Bourne meet the event of marital

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discord with defiance; they file complaints with officials and write letters of complaint to husbands that express simultaneous demands for change and professions of obedience. They express wishes for reconciliation as often as for separation and divorce. Rarely docile, they do not see their defiance of custom as necessarily a detriment to their reputations; in fact, in at least two cases, women's relentless pursuit of legal solutions they did not officially have the power to pursue yielded results in their favor.

* * *

Henry VIII's history as a husband is well documented. But I wish to push his case further to examine a letter attributed to his second wife, Queen Anne Boleyn. While there are at least two schools of thought on the innocence of Anne Boleyn, her case is relevant to my study not only because of the allegation of adultery but also because Henry's performance as a husband offers a rather stark and admittedly unique (though in his case also recurring) example of the precariousness of women's safety in marriage in England. Anne's divorce and execution haunt the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century stage. Its legal effects are also felt in suits for adultery, slander, and defamation that proliferated over the same period. The letter is notable for its simultaneous defiance and humility. In her last letter to Henry, quoted in Cobbett's *Complete Collection of State Trials*, Anne clearly states that she is innocent whereas Henry is not. While historians have decided that this letter is a forgery, primarily based on its lack of coherence in style to other letters accepted as authentic and on its remarkable frankness and counter-accusation against Henry for inconstancy,²¹ the letter reflects similar rhetorical moves made by the other women I will examine in this chapter, such as Lady Willoughby and the Duchess of Norfolk, whose letters shift back and forth between submission and rebellion. The letter might be seen as operating in a kind of genre typical of the kinds of letters women wrote to their men when they were abandoned or accused of various crimes.²² If, indeed, it was not written by Anne, then it appears to have been the composition of someone who thought a woman, and specifically Anne Boleyn, might have written such a letter – or ought to have written such a letter. It shows a woman straddling the uncomfortable line between unquestioned dependence on her husband's good opinion and her own sense of injustice. Whoever wrote it understood that women could be both submissive and belligerent, sometimes (delightfully) in the same sentence.

Most surprising, perhaps, is Anne's claim that she did not "at any time so far forget my self in my exaltation, or received queenship, but that I always looked for such an alteration as now I find; for the ground of my preferment being on no surer foundation than your grace's fancy, the least alteration, I knew, was fit and sufficient to draw that fancy to some other subject" (Cobbett 427). Anne's characterization of her place as Queen as always precarious due to Henry's inconsistent – even unpredictable – favor presents

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a compelling vision of what it might have been like to be one of Henry's wives, perhaps especially in hindsight. More importantly, it lends the letter a particular resonance, pathos, and power. Anne is blunt. While Henry accuses her of adultery and makes it a crime against the Crown, Anne takes the opportunity of his accusation to recite and refute it, making her own factual counter-claim against him and naming the factors that made her place precarious. While this claim stands as evidence of the letter's forgery for many historians – ostensibly because a queen would never write so directly and accusingly to her husband, the King – Anne's letter reads as a product of her arrest, as part and parcel with the dramatic, legal, and marital break created by Henry's suspicion. Sharing in the event of the accusation of adultery, the letter is Anne's opportunity to speak back, to deny his charges, and to make her counter-accusation against Henry for his own new, and faithless, attraction to Jane Seymour. Here, she unintentionally raises the ghost of Katherine, whose divorce from Henry was, in part, a result of his desire for Anne. By documenting her knowledge of Henry's altered affections, of his tendency, in fact, to alter his affections, she calls attention to her husband's mixed and hardly virtuous motives for arresting her on grounds of high treason. Henry's own sexual misconduct, while less serious for a man than a woman (and perhaps especially so for a king as opposed to a queen), works in her letter as an opportunity to implicate him in tyrannical uses of law against a defenseless woman.

Of course, Anne declares her innocence, a necessary move given Henry's desire that she confess "a truth," ostensibly her adultery and treason. While Retha Warnicke finds it unlikely that Henry would offer forgiveness in return for a confession ("Three Forged Letters" 40–1), Greg Walker notes that "Henry allegedly offered Norris a full pardon if he would confess and reveal everything that he knew; but Norris steadfastly maintained his innocence" (5). Thus, a similar offer to Anne, while possibly disingenuous, might well have been made. The Queen, however, refuses this particular opportunity for confessions even as she also expresses an amiable and even compliant willingness to confess faults generally. Anne warns her husband not to "ever imagine that your poor wife will ever be brought to acknowledge a fault, where not so much as a thought thereof preceded. And to speak a truth, never prince had wife more loyal in all duty, and in all true affection, than you have ever found in Ann Boleyn" (426). She goes so far as to call his accusation a "slander of the world" of which she might be cleared if Henry would seek a "fair trial" (Cobbett 427). Strengthening her claims of innocence, she invokes the humility of her station as a woman who never presumed to seek the title of Queen, as well as her undying duty and loyalty to her husband. Regardless of whether or not such a statement is true, her claim (that Henry had "chosen me, from a low estate, to be your queen and companion, far beyond my desert or desire") allows Anne the rhetorical move of meekness and even gratitude for Henry's favor (426). Her claim to humble origins – like other assertions of innocence and loyalty – makes her Henry's obedient subject.

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Anne sharpens her approach, however, when she links Henry's accusations against her to his failure to hold a fair trial and to his "new love":

[Y]ea, let me receive an open trial, for my truth shall fear no open shame. . . . So that whatsoever God or you may determine of me, your grace may be freed from an open censure; mine offence being so lawfully proved, your grace is at liberty, both before God and man, not only to execute worthy punishment on me as an unlawful wife, but to follow your affection, already settled on that party, for whose sake I am now as I am. . . . But if you have already determined of me, and that not only my death, but an infamous slander must bring you the enjoying of your desired happiness; then I desire of God, that he will pardon your great sin therein, and likewise mine enemies, the instruments thereof; and that he will not call you to a strict account for your unprincipely and cruel usage of me, at his general judgment-seat, where both you and my self must shortly appear, and in whose judgment I doubt not, (whatsoever the world may think of me) mine innocence shall be openly known, and sufficiently cleared.

(427)

Anne's blunt counter-accusation against Henry for his own adultery with and desire for another woman also implies that Henry's charges against her are spurious, made only because his pursuit of that woman requires her own elimination. Couched in a plea for a fair trial that would clear Henry of tyranny is another counter-accusation of infidelity. She notes that her lawfully proved guilt would free her husband to pursue the woman who newly holds his affection. While such reasoning appears logical, the statement calls attention to the court proceedings as fraudulent. In her letter, Anne's arrest for adultery and treason become the product of the King's capricious sexual appetites, which force him to get rid of wives he no longer desires. Her prayer that God will not hold him to account for his tyrannical use of power against her is a wily use of compliant subjection and pious religiosity to lodge an indictment against a corrupt system of power. In fact, we might say Anne tells Henry to go to hell. Thus, her letter demonstrates a flexible rhetoric, fluctuating between the submission she owes her husband and King, on the one hand, and resistance against the tyrant trying her, on the other.

While Warnicke argues that "[b]y the standards of her day, Anne was given a fair trial; no extant evidence offers proof that a commission of noblemen who tried her was deliberately stacked with her enemies" ("Three Forged Letters" 43), Eric Ives argues that "[t]o achieve a wholly unchallenged third marriage, Henry had to eliminate Anne" ("The Fall" 655). Ives attributes Anne's arrest to a faction of the court who wanted to promote Princess Mary's restoration to her place, a union with Jane Seymour, and the fall of

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the Boleyns (659–60). His reading suggests that, while Anne's accusation against Henry of an unfair trial may be unwise, it also had some traction. Henry's marriage to Jane Seymour days after Anne's execution both confirms Anne's belief that Henry merely wanted a new wife and casts doubt on the fairness of her trial. Thus, Anne's counter-accusation against Henry for disloyalty and tyranny – she calls his behavior “unprincely” – shows the depth of her sense of, and her desperation to avoid, Henry's abuse. Like Hermione, Anne reiterates her innocence, invoking God's judgment and mercy, and leaves Henry to the “good keeping” and “direct[ion]” in “all [his] actions” of the “Trinity” (427).

There is no doubt that Anne's self-defense and counter-claims are risky. But, as I will show, her rhetoric resembles that of other women in letters and complaints that also shift between desire for sympathy and reconciliation, on the one hand, and rejection of husbands' false stories and demands for respect and proper treatment, on the other. Thus, the letter's authenticity is less important than its illustration of a rhetorically common mode used by women in the period to refute allegations made by husbands. The letter shows, I suggest, a woman who has nothing to lose. She knows the judgment is already against her, so she reclaims her “most loyal and ever faithful” role as wife and puts on record her clear understanding of her husband's motives and his “cruel usage” of her to achieve his “desire.” Thus, her most powerless moment becomes the occasion for speaking back and through the allegations made against her.

* * *

In another notorious marital dispute of the 1530s, Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, cast off his wife Elizabeth Stafford, Duchess of Norfolk, when she opposed his plan to house his mistress, Bess Holland, in their home. The dispute between the married couple became quite a scandal, as Barbara Harris has chronicled, primarily because Elizabeth Stafford wrote frequent and detailed letters to Thomas Cromwell, chief minister of Henry VIII, begging him to force her husband to increase her allowance. The Duchess's letters offer an instance of a woman rejecting not only her husband's authority but also his right to extramarital affairs. Moreover, she scoffs at the consequences she might face from a husband who sees her complaints about his behavior as disobedience to his authority.²³ Three years into their separation, she explains that her financial allowance is insufficient in a letter to Cromwell – “but 50 pounds the quarter, and here I lie in a dear country, and I but three hundred marks a year” (Travitsky and Prescott 40) – and she rejects reconciliation as the solution to her poverty:

I will never sue to the king, nor to none other, to desire my lord my husband to take me again, for I have made much suit to him and nothing regarded. And I made him no fault but declaring of his shameful

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handling of me, as I have written to you, my lord, in other letters before.
There shall no imprisonment change my mind, nor a less living.
(Travitsky and Prescott 40)

The Duchess's promise never to approach the King again is meant neither to placate her husband nor to demonstrate her obedience to him. Rather, her dismissal of reconciliation results from the humiliation attendant on his practice of ignoring her supplications. Thus, her defense of exposing Norfolk's dishonor toward her, including his adultery and lack of consistent and sufficient financial support, rejects all meekness demanded of wives toward their husbands in favor of drawing attention to his duties to her. She will not submit to a man who fails to provide for her; as she sees it, submission and protection are reciprocal obligations of wife and husband. Content with current circumstances that place her "out of danger of mine enemies and of the ill life that I had with my husband" (Travitsky and Prescott 40), the Duchess plans to move to more economical quarters if her husband refuses her a better living (Travitsky and Prescott 41).

The Duchess's appeal to Cromwell discloses the conflicted space of female subjectivity in the period. Intellectually and forcefully independent, she cannot achieve her goals without a powerful advocate. At the same time, what appears to be the powerlessness of her position as cast-off wife is belied by the self-assurance of her letters. She is both daring and practical. But her refusal to allow her husband's mistress to live in her home disobeys her husband's will; as Norfolk sees it, his wife's defiance gives him the right to remove her from her home and to sequester her from friends and family – and in a style to which she is not accustomed. "She lived in a house rented from the crown in Redbourne, Herfordshire" (Harris, "Marriage" 375), where, as the Duchess describes it, he refused financial and legal responsibility for her. In addition to "a better living," Elizabeth asks for her jointure, which would have been in her husband's keeping by law and to which she was entitled only at her husband's death.

Harris points out that the Duchess's letters to family members about the marital dispute defy social expectations that a woman would prioritize her family's need for kinship affiliations over her own emotional needs ("Marriage" 374–5). Henry Smith would certainly have objected to the light she shed on her marital troubles. But the Duchess paints a powerful portrait of her husband's marital betrayal as she imagines his whore living with and accepted by her children: "[I]t is eleven years since my lord my husband first fell in love with her. . . . And he keeps her still in his house, and his children maintain the matter; therefore I will never come at him during my life" (Travitsky and Prescott 42). Complaining of Bess Holland's low-born status, the Duchess questions how a noble woman, like herself, who "always lived like a good woman," could be so easily abandoned:

I was daily waiter in the court sixteen years together, when he hath lived from me more than a year in the king's wars. The King's Grace shall be

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my record how I used myself without any ill name or fame. . . . And here is poor reward I have in my latter days for my well doing!

(Travitsky and Prescott 41–2)

Resembling the letter attributed to Anne Boleyn, the Duchess's letters are careful to cite her virtues as a wife against Norfolk's vices as a husband. She has – as she sees it – been a good wife to him, keeping her virtuous reputation and bearing him five children. The Duchess trusts that her careful performance of wifely duty will have roused in her husband some form of loyalty and respect. Yet, she discovers, nothing is further from the truth. Rather than remaining silent on the subject and accepting her husband's disloyalty, she acts to defend herself and her right to his loyalty. If he fails to live up to that, then the least she asks for is an income that will allow her to live comfortably. As T.E. makes clear years later, she has no recourse in law, no right even to her own jewelry or clothes, which legally belong to her husband. Possessing only words, the Duchess shifts the rhetoric of disobedience used against her by re-citing her husband's accusations in her letters, redirecting his intentions (in Butler's terms), and making her own counter-accusation. Her recitation of his accusation brings his own wrongs into clear relief.

The Duchess was abandoned not only by her husband but by her family, as well; Henry Stafford, Elizabeth's brother, refused Cromwell's request to house his sister or offer her protection. In his letter to Cromwell, 13 May 1533, Stafford expresses his humiliation at her rebuffing of the King's "gentle advisement." Believing her to have squandered the political advantages to her family of her marriage, he writes:

Now, since all these considerations, sundry times renewed by the best and wisest of her kin, nor the wisdom nor gentleness of my said lord's grace her husband, cannot induce her to break her sensual and willful mind, only reckoning at all times her own wit best. . . . I trust that you nor other my good friends will not reckon that in this matter I might do good but rather to put myself in great jeopardy to match myself with her, that by her wild language might undo me and all mine and never deserving the same. But if I had not found you my especial good friend, I would never have opened my mind so far, which is my shame and sorrow, being her brother, to rehearse.

(Travitsky and Prescott 44)

Henry's letter shows his dependence on the goodwill of the King and of the Duke. He is prevented from siding with his sister, as a result. Rejecting his sister's cause, seeing her as a threat to her family and friends, Henry Stafford retains his position by disowning her, refusing to comfort and protect her. A system, therefore, in which men compete with one another for advancement contributes to the subjection of their women. While he expresses some shame at having spoken of his sister in this manner, Henry's position is clear.

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The high displeasure of the Duke, but especially of the King, that “every true subject” should follow, restricts him from helping his sister. Free, it would seem, to make his mistress a public member of his household, the Duke of Norfolk could refuse to fulfill his legal and moral obligations to his wife and to throw all the blame on her. She has a “sensual and willful” mind, whereas he has power.

Thus, the Duchess – as Vives promises disobedient women – was left vulnerable by her isolation from her family, who closed ranks against her.²⁴ Not even her nobility and connections with powerful men could turn the tide of her family's or her husband's hostility. Owning nothing, not even her own clothes or jewels (42), the Duchess abandoned hope of improving her condition. She appears not to have chosen to go to Chancery as she might have but to appeal directly to Cromwell and the King. Whether that was because she assumed greater success with personal appeals to the Privy Council or because she hoped to embarrass her husband cannot be said. Either way, the Duchess refused to submit and continued to defend herself and to demand what she saw as her rights. Her letters offer us a glimpse of how a woman could resist the authority of her husband and brother. Indeed, the Duchess refused to allow her husband to divorce her and remained his wife until his death in 1554 (Harris, “Marriage” 377). Writing letters and making a nuisance of herself to her family rather than quietly suffering her husband's infidelity as she was urged to do, the Duchess claimed a right to speak on her own behalf, a right to define her experience of marital tyranny, and refused to allow her husband and brother to write her story unchallenged. Thus, while Harris sees Elizabeth Stafford as an example of the particularly powerless position of aristocratic women, whose rich dowries brought them little tangible benefits (“Marriage” 378–9), I read her as redirecting the energies aimed against her to resist and redeploy those energies in her defense. Her husband's flagrant infidelity acts as an event that opens an opportunity for rebellion and *redefines* the limits of female agency. Regardless of her family's rage and abandonment, Elizabeth Stafford lived on her own terms, neither silent nor obedient.

* * *

In contrast to Anne and the Duchess, Lady Margaret Cuninghame had a family whose continuous interventions in her marriage helped to sustain her spirit and her finances if not always her body. In “A Part of the Life of Lady Margaret Cuninghame, Daughter of the Earl of Glencairn, that she had with her first Husband, the Master of Evandale, *The just and true Account thereof, as it was at first written with her own hand,*” Lady Margaret clarifies both the insecurity and the contingency of women's position in marriage and the power to be had in writing one's own story. In her narrative, a woman's treatment by her husband becomes a product of arbitrary and overwhelming pressures that cannot be, however much Vives and other

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moralists may believe, predicted or adequately explained. In addition, a support network – including neighbors, a mother, and a sister – becomes crucial in helping her to escape specific abuses and to take legal action against her husband and win a divorce. While Lady Margaret is not accused seriously of adultery or disobedience (her husband makes one allegation in a fit of temper), I retain her story as a particularly fascinating example of a female rhetoric of marital betrayal. The record of their marriage is also notable for her husband's chronic abandonment of his family and his adultery, recorded facts that permitted her successful suit for divorce.

Lady Margaret Cuninghame's account of her marriage to Sir James Hamilton of Crawfordjohn, the Master of Evandale,²⁵ focuses on her husband's financial neglect. Hamilton does not provide a permanent home for his wife and children but boards her in a "hostler house," only to send her home again to her family, "with bairn" (1). Her opening description of her life with him is representative of the rest of the memoir:

In February 1601, I rode home to Evandale, and was boarded in a hostler house, while the next May following, and then I rode again to my Lord my father, being great with bairn: and I bore with his Lordship till the next February. Then I rode home to Evandale again, and was boarded in a hostler house six weeks, and then they would furnish me no longer, because they got evil payment. So then I was destitute.

(1)

Lady Margaret travels back and forth between her parents' home and various hostler houses where her husband boards her without paying for her board. In fact, a pattern emerges in which each time she is with child, he stops paying for her lodging. The sheer predictability of his behavior is shocking in and of itself. Unlike Anne and the Duchess, however, her narrative reads without editorial comment or complaint. Financial destitution, abandonment, and physical abuse are all chronicled as simple fact by Lady Margaret. Her calm, however, is not necessarily a contrast in effect to the anger of the Duchess and the accusations of Anne. Its power resides precisely in its detailed simplicity. Her husband's actions stand on their own, repetitive and predictable, but her descriptions leave a vivid impression of her life with him – displaying rhetorical *enargeia* – nonetheless.

The value of family, and specifically female bonds, surfaces very early in the marriage. She writes:

In 1602, my husband conceived a great anger against me (he being in fancy with Jean Boyd,) and he would not come in to the house I was in. . . . [S]o being altogether destitute, I was forced to advertise my parents, and my Lady my mother sent to my sister Mrs. Susanna to Evandale to me, and desired me to come with her to Finlaystone.

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My sister dealt earnestly with my husband in my favour: he gave her fair words, and made her many fair promises, but performed none of them.

(2)

In contrast to the Duchess's experience, Hamilton's philandering is not ignored by members of Lady Margaret's family. Her mother and sister take action, intervening to change his behavior. While Susanna's efforts with Hamilton fail to achieve more than empty promises of his reform, she takes care of her sister, bringing her home to stay with her. Lady Margaret's mother and sister are crucial, therefore, at relieving her immediate needs for house and home. In this episode, male members of Lady Margaret's family intervene, as well, hoping to achieve reconciliation. But Lady Margaret's father's sharp criticism of his son-in-law in the presence of the young Lord Marques of Hamilton (referred to as a chief) only makes Hamilton angry, and the separation is prolonged as a result. Yet the efforts of Susanna and of Lady Margaret's parents are crucial to her well-being and that of her children, who otherwise might have continued to live at the mercy of a man who took no responsibility for them.

The most dramatic example of Hamilton's abuse comes in 1604, at the end of a peaceful period in their lives together lasting all of eight weeks, and shows how neighbors might help one another through marital crises. Boarding her "in his servant, John Hamilton's house,"

[h]e would not suffer my gentlewoman to remain with me, who was known to be a very godly and discreet woman, [o]ne of his own name, Abigail Hamilton, . . . he gave credit to misreports of her and me both, and cruelly, in the night, put both her and me forth of his house naked, and would not suffer us to put on our clothes, but said he would strike both our backs in two with a sword.

(5)

Here, Lady Margaret's description of being left outdoors ("the night being very foul, and I very sick, for I had lain bedfast twenty days before, being with bairn, I was unable to go well into the night") seems especially hopeless. While Hamilton seems motivated by suspicions of his wife's adultery, or that of her woman, Cuninghame does not address the accusation, nor do friends appear to respond to it. "Yet," she writes, "John Hamilton's wife, and her sister, with great difficulty carried me to the minister's house, in a very miserable estate, as the minister and his wife can bear record" (5). These two women not only defy James Hamilton's command not to help his wife but also disregard the other members of the town who fear to intervene in the couple's argument. Once housed, Lady Margaret remains with the minister until returning, "with great difficulty," to a small chamber in John's house. Her husband leaves her there until "some informed him, that if he

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took all from me I would obtain a living of him by law" (5). At this point, the assistance of others and the threat of legal action obtain for her a meager living under the supervision of John Hamilton's wife. These events clarify the benefits from a female gossip network, which, with sympathetic men, rescue her and persuade her husband to provide for her.

The differences between the Duchess's lack of family support and Lady Margaret's very active family may partly be explained, according to Christine Peters, by differences in social systems between England and Scotland. She notes that, in England,

[m]onarchy, hierarchy, patriarchy, it was assumed, would stand and fall together. In Scotland, and to a lesser degree Wales by this period, . . . [w]here kin structures prevailed and bloodshed was dealt with according to the rules of the feud, the idea of the family as a petty monarchy could have much less resonance, and wives retained much stronger ties with the natal kin.

(7)

We can see the benefits of Scotland's kin system in Lady Margaret's narrative. In stark contrast to social relations in England, the Scottish social system allowed familial connections to benefit all its members. While the Duchess of Norfolk is abandoned by her brother because his bonds with her husband and the King supersede those of kin, Lady Margaret retains an important place in her family. Even if they cannot stop Hamilton from abusing his wife and family, then they can make sure she has both financial assistance and legal representation.

In 1607 Lady Margaret took legal action against her absent husband, who was in France, and she won some income from his mill. The settlement was won in a Kirk session, "the lowest court of the system of the established Church" (Mitchison and Leneman 12). Scottish Kirks were made of "a permanent committee made up of minister and elders" (Mitchison and Leneman 19–20).²⁶ With the help of her father and the Marques of Hamilton, Lady Margaret writes, "I obtained of the person a security, subscribed by him and the Lord of Benhaith, who ever kithed himself a loving friend to me, of the sum of five hundred marks yearly, during my husband's absence" (8). This moment is the first in which Cuninghame takes action on her own, and, having won the money, she spends it wisely, investing in the mill "which was all broken" (8). Hamilton's return from France precipitates a crisis, however, and we hear her speak against him for the first time; she chastises him for his delight "in abusing his body in all filthiness" and refuses to share his bed (9). While this appears to get his attention and to draw from him another promise of "duty" and that he would "in all time coming keep his body from adultery, and that he should use me most lovingly, and promised that he would allot to me to sustain his house upon, whatever my Lord my father would bid him" (9), Hamilton's promises last only a few weeks. In

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1608, Lady Margaret gives birth to their last child, and, when she again refuses to share his bed, he “being in great anger against me, wrote a letter to me, commanding me to remove out of his house within four days, which, if I did not, he would come and force me to remove” (11). This time, the interference of friends appears to fail; the narrative ends, “I remain destitute at the present of any money to sustain me, my bairns and family, remaining at Libertoun the 29 of Sept. 1608” (11).

Importantly, Lady Margaret’s narrative may have acted as more than just a memoir. There is some evidence that it constituted evidence against her husband in a divorce. David George Mullan writes that James Hamilton, “a thoroughgoing scoundrel,” was still alive when Margaret married James Maxwell, citing volume four of James Balfour Paul’s *Scot’s Peerage (Narratives 221–2)*. Indeed, Paul, in his description of the lineage of the Cuninghame family, writes, “She must have been divorced from her husband, who was alive in 1611, as in a charter of 28 August 1610 she was described as the ‘future spouse’ of Sir James Maxwell of Calderwood” (245). While C.K. Sharpe, the editor of Cuninghame’s “Life,” asserts that she was widowed (ii), Sharpe does not have a date for James’s death. Laws on marriage and divorce in Scotland were quite different from those in England. Peters agrees that divorce for adultery was possible and interestingly the only question on remarriage had to do with whether the adulterer should be allowed to marry his paramour (92–3):²⁷ “[T]he *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (1552), accepted that adultery of either party could dissolve marriage. . . . The adulterous husband, it was proposed, should restore his wife’s dowry, forfeit half of his goods to her, and suffer either life imprisonment or perpetual banishment” (95). This law may help us understand how Lady Margaret marries again without having been made a widow. And while we do not know what kind of settlement she received, Hamilton’s adultery gave her the power to divorce him. While Lady Margaret’s experience may not demonstrate the rule for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century marriages (not even in Scotland), she left behind an extraordinary text, both revealing the extent to which a woman might live at the mercy of her husband’s moods and confirming the importance of a strong family and friendship network. Her marriage attests to women’s struggles with duty and loyalty to men who fail to provide for them. A contest surfaces between women’s duty to men, on the one hand, and their duty to themselves and their children, on the other. Finally, this woman takes matters into her own hands – we must not forget because she *can* – and rebels against traditional notions of unquestioning wifely compliance with the authority of a husband.

* * *

We do not have James Hamilton’s side of the story, but in other marital disputes complementary and competing narratives written by men – such as Henry Stafford’s answer to Cromwell – exist and offer not only an

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opposing interpretation of events but also additional details of marital life and conflicts. In a marital dispute between Sir Francis and Lady Elizabeth Willoughby, both parties see their relationship to one another in reciprocal terms, with equal stakes in what might be lost or won by the public perception of their separate honors and of their bonds to one another. In letters exchanged from 1585 to 1586, the only survivors in a well-documented quarrel, Sir Francis and his wife Lady Elizabeth, struggle with competing needs and terms for a resolution to a lengthy separation.²⁸ The letters are also notable for their rhetorical force. Both husband and wife rely on familiar tropes of female obedience and male, paternalistic, authority in marriage. Yet the letters also belie these norms in their use of conditions, reminders of past wrongs, and clear reluctance on both sides to reconcile. Like the Duchess of Norfolk, Lady Willoughby defends her rights passionately. But in contrast to the Duchess, who rejects her husband's authority and seeks help from others, Lady Willoughby both desires and depends on her husband's goodwill. At the same time, she echoes Anne Boleyn, as she shifts back and forth in her letters between submission and defiance, both pleading for reconciliation and warning her husband that she will not accept harsh terms upon her return.²⁹

In contrast to Lady Margaret, Elizabeth Willoughby does not benefit from a kin structure, and she laments her estrangement from both her husband and her father, Sir John Littleton. In a letter seeking his help, she displays the requisite signs of duty to and respect for her father, but she also slips out of that mode and into a more accusatory one. Referring to the troubles in her marriage, she writes, "But emongst them all, there is none that hath troubled me more, or toucht me nearer, than the alienation of yor good opynion & fatherly affection towards me" ("The Willoughby Letters" 549). Her grief at losing her father's support turns into anger, however, and she accuses him of gossiping about her "mishaps," which she believes increase the "rejoicings of my ill wishers" who have consequently acted as "ready messengers of such news to my husband" ("The Willoughby Letters" 549–60). Even though no proofs are produced against her, she worries about others' perception of the dispute:

Alas my good father, if you from whom I should look for comfort in my grief, assistance in my troubles, and succor in my necessities join hands and take part with my adversaries, what hope can I conceive ever to be reconciled to my husband, or what joy can I take in such a wretched & miserable life? Therefore I beseech you for the love of God, take pity of me as of your natural child, have compassion of me as of a distressed woman.

("The Willoughby Letters" 549)

Her grief and bewilderment are acute. Perceiving her father to take her husband's side and to communicate to her "adversaries" that she is guilty, Lady

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Willoughby's position seems hopeless. His opinion on the matter removes the hope that he will help her reconcile with Sir Francis though she desires his assistance. The letter ends in a series of dutiful and traditional statements that signal her obedience to her father, and she asks him "most humbly . . . to suspend your judgment (or at the least your report in suspicions without proof) and receive me again into your accustomed favour, and good opinion, which I more desire and hold dearer then any thing in this world" ("The Willoughby Letters" 550). Resembling Anne's rhetoric, Elizabeth's alternates between predictable expressions of respect and love for her father and more direct rebukes of him that are surprising given her vulnerability. These conflicting stances, however, demonstrate the complexities for women of negotiating spaces of agency that necessarily contradict the compliance with male authority expected of them. At the same time, the pathos of her letters speaks against these men and discloses the violence of male bonds that, like Henry Stafford's alliance with the King, obstruct reconciliation and expose women to social alienation and poverty. Just as Vives predicts will happen, Lady Willoughby's friends and family have become enemies and judges rather than sources of love and support.

In a letter to her husband, Lady Willoughby says she learned from an unnamed person "how you were minded to sue a divorce betwixt us, and that to this end you had sent forth, as it were, spies, certain good fellows into diverse corners of the country, who had undertaken to find out and bring to light this supposed child" ("The Willoughby Letters" 551). Accused of adultery and the birth of an illegitimate child, she fights back against what she calls

infamous & forged slander as it hath been, to my great grief & discredit, bruted abroad by them, so hath it been (if I may so say) every readily believed by you.

Whereas if it had pleased you in the beginning, when it was brought to you, to have brought me to mine answer, your mind might have been long since better satisfied, and the reputation of my honest name not so greatly impaired as it is.

("The Willoughby Letters" 551)

Lady Willoughby denies the accusations against her and condemns them as slanders, attacks against her that her husband believes simply because he never asked her for the truth. She feels her loss of reputation keenly. The harm to women as a result of sexual slander is palpable. She suffers not only because of her husband's accusations but also because widespread belief of them harms her standing and movement in society.³⁰ Simultaneously, she reveals, "(my aforesaid good friend told me in great secret), that I should take heed & beware how I come to you again, for you had determined & vowed that if ever yow took me again, you would keep me shorter than ere I was kept" ("The Willoughby Letters" 551). While she quickly adds

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her certainty that her husband means her no such harm, she also rejects in advance treatment that “is far disagreeable with my bringing up, being Sir John Littelton’s daughter, so it is very unfit for Sir F Willoughby’s wife” (“The Willoughby Letters” 552). Her rhetoric in both letters is powerful not because what she says is necessarily true (the trail of letters is too short to determine that) but because she invokes the damage to her reputation, refuses ill treatment, and laments failures of her father and husband to defend her. This is a woman who knows her worth, states what she feels she deserves, and refuses to accept injustices, but whose vulnerability to a paternalistic system of marriage remains foremost in her narrative.

Like Anne in her letter to Henry, Lady Willoughby repeatedly asserts her subjection to her husband and her fervent hope that he will welcome her home, for her intent is to

study to conform all my words as I may best content & please you, as also to perform all good duties that do become a loving & obedient wife towards her husband.

So on the other side my assured hope and trust is that you, having buried & blotted out of your remembrance all former unkindnesses contrived against me, will both repute of me as of your honest & lawful wife, & requite me with all like love & offices of a good & kind husband.

(“The Willoughby Letters” 552)³¹

Elizabeth Willoughby’s letters operate in precarious balance, with a sort of tightrope-walk between studied subjection and outright rebellion. Her dilemma is significant. She is separated from her husband and her children, to whom she plaintively sends her regards. Significantly, she sees the situation in fairly complex and reciprocal terms. She notes that her obedience to him requires on his side an equal respect and public protection of her reputation. She wishes her public status as an “honest and lawful” woman to be restored to her as a “loving and obedient” wife deserves. She assumes, therefore, that her submission requires a reciprocal official and public acknowledgement by her husband of her honor as his wife. Marriage, in this light, requires mutual if not equal duties of both men and women. Not only, then, do the letters show a woman fighting what she considers to be untrue stories about her and, therefore, rebelling against the trope of silence and obedience, but they also show the process in which she, literally, reinscribes her subjection – reinserting herself into a position of submission.

But there is another side to this story. Sir Francis, interestingly, suggests that Elizabeth herself puts too much credit in what others say about him. “[Y]ou did believe,” he writes,

the report which your friend in secrete & in like good will did declare to you of my hard dealing pretended & vowed against you.

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For my part I will not go about to persuade you the contrary. Only thus far you may judge of me, that your own doing & desert shall be the balance that you shall be weighed by, which as they be good or bad, even so make your full account to receive.

(“The Willoughby Letters” 553)

Comfortable in his position of authority, Sir Francis refuses to address what others may have said about him but says only that she may judge his intentions toward her from her own behavior to him. The return of his wife to his house seems to rest on her ability to accept her duties as a wife. He believes that he has been a good husband, who “sought by persuasion & all mildness to win [his wife] to duty & obedience, . . . in using some severity I sought reformation & not revenge; . . . & endeavored rather by persuasion than correction . . . to reclaim you. With which kind of dealing because your stubborn & froward mind would not be bowed, my softness hath rather deserved reprehension than commendation” (“The Willoughby Letters” 553).³² Sir Francis clearly expects his wife’s obedience as her marital obligation, the performance of which, perforce, necessitates the eradication of stubbornness and frowardness. He denies reports that he, as she puts it, would “lock and pin me up in a chamber, & that I should not go so much as into the garden to take the air, without your leave & license” (“The Willoughby Letters” 553). But he denies it on the basis of his having ever lovingly attempted to reform his wife’s obstinacy and, therefore, as having acted justifiably. Clearly, his authority over her and her submission to him are rights to which he is entitled. He makes no mention of adultery or of any child in this group of letters but only asserts his sovereignty over his wife. His paternalistic advice makes the guardianship of her reputation her own responsibility and not his, and he refrains from any commitment to welcome her home. Importantly, his letter reveals the battle of wills that must have precipitated their separation, one in which a husband’s rule of his wife is met with her rebellion.

While it is important to note that Lady Willoughby finally returned to her husband – as A. Friedman describes, “swallowing her pride and ultimately accepting his terms” – the conflict between the Willoughbys stands as an example of a sixteenth-century marriage in which injunctions “to subdue and submit your will to the pleasure of your head,” as was recommended by Sir Michael Hicks, Lord Burghley’s secretary, in a letter to Lady Willoughby (qtd. in Friedman, *House and Household* 64), were official doctrine and material practice. But such orders were also insufficient and unsatisfactory answers to the pressures of family, disputes over land and money, and Lady Willoughby’s constant ill health that Friedman attributes to the birth of twelve children in sixteen years as well as to “gynecological ailments” (*House and Household* 58, 64–5). In a competition for narrative authority, Lord Willoughby asserts his rights and accuses her of disobedience, and

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Lady Elizabeth answers an accusation of adultery and willfulness with her own counter-accusation of marital betrayal. While she ultimately submits herself to her “head,” the letters reveal a wife who struggled publicly and in writing not only against blind obedience to the will of her husband but also against what she believed to be false narratives about her body and mind.³³

* * *

In my final example, defiance wins out. Mistress Elizabeth Bourne, like the Duchess of Norfolk, abandoned marital negotiations with her husband, Master Anthony Bourne, and sought legal assistance directly from the Privy Council for the right to divorce him. While the majority of her correspondence is notable for its audacity, she begins her complaint bowing to Smith's and Vives's advice, urging women not to air their marital disputes, but to remain modest in their public dealings:

So heavy be these griefs, and so unfit a thing it is for a wife publicly to complain against her husband, that is unwillingly[;] [if,] by his own want of God's grace and good consideration, I were not compelled, I would rather commit his sins, with my sorrows, to the silence of my grave, than to the view and judgment of any living creature.

I have here underwritten the beginning, proceeding, and continuance of his incontinent life; his slanderous reports, wicked practices, terrors and tyrannous speeches against me, my friends, kin, and allies; and the reasons growing from the same, which counsel me not to consent to live with him, who is so constant in sin, and so imperfect in virtue.

(BL ADD 38170, fol. 151)

Mistress Bourne concedes that her complaint and request are beyond the bounds of a wife's appropriate behavior. However, while expressing her regret at publicizing her husband's behavior – indeed, if she had a choice, she would take it to her grave – she graphically describes his wrongs. In her characteristic vivid style, mild acknowledgement of her own, reluctant, wrongs is followed by explicit descriptions of her husband's wickedness. We might expect a woman to complain of slanderous words, malice, fear, and tyranny. But other accusations are usually reserved for women: incontinence, sin, loss of virtue. Only the pressure she is under to defend herself from her husband's slander could force her public airing of their marital conflicts. Thus, her allegations include every conceivable wrong a husband can commit in moralized language usually reserved for wives. She balances precariously between the role of a dutiful but wronged wife and a harpy. Her rhetoric answers not only legal demands of suits for divorce, which have a high bar; she also describes the reasons for it, often delightfully and wittily.³⁴

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In a letter dated 18 August 1582, written to Sir Julius Caesar who was at the beginning of a very illustrious career,³⁵ Mistress Bourne lays out her primary grounds for divorce:

My case is this: Mr. Antony Bourne my husband did about five years past take away Mr. Pagnam's wife, refused my company, and ever since he hath lived with her: he hath by her three or four children living and still keepeth her and her bastards in his charge. / Having now wasted all his own substance and living and three hundred pound[s] a year of my ancient inheritance by his lost life. Seeking to call me before my Lords of her Majesty's council to enjoin me to accept of him[,] not for any love or of good mind to amend his ill life, [b]ut because he would have that little living which I have left to help him to maintain his woman and her bastards and that being spent to caste me off again if he do not shorten my life otherwise.

(BL, ADD 12507, Vol ii fol. 204)

Mistress Bourne's allegations reverse what we expect in marital disputes, at least at first, for it is she, rather than Mr. Bourne, who begins legal proceedings for adultery. Whatever we may believe about the double standard allowing sixteenth-century men to conduct affairs and to care for bastard children, Mistress Bourne, like the Duchess of Norfolk and Lady Margaret Cuninghame, refuses to accept it. With her husband having abandoned her and their legitimate children to live in open sin, the financial distress that his second, illegitimate, family causes her own and his lack of honesty become central to her complaint. Yet such a complaint might not be enough to persuade the Privy Council, or any court, to grant her a divorce. Consequently, she also accuses him of hiring a man to kill her.

Having described the presence of a ruffian lurking about her home and treating her servants to "banquets" to get information from them, she links him to Anthony, whose ill intentions against her are well documented (BL, Add. 38170, fol. 153). The man's interest in her daily habits increase her anxieties about living with her husband and accelerate her pursuit of a legal remedy. The ruffian's promises of money to her servants for help in gaining access to her

puts me in such fear as I dare not adventure to live with him. He did protest and swear before Sir Frances Walsingham his honor that he would never leave Mistress Pagnam[,] that he loved her bastards better at the heel than he did me and his lawful children[,] at the hearts that he would live only to profit them all he could and to plague me and mine. . . .

[S]o it please you to make the search and to make your proceeding upon the beginning, or otherwise as shall like you, to my best advantage. I shall thank you and will defray all the charges growing there by upon

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your bills of accompt. . . . I pray you begin and proceed so soundly as that he may be without advantage to reverse or stay the cause. . . . [A]ssure yourself[,] Sir[,] that what pains friendship or charge you shall undertake to bring this to good effort where I may live in quiet and be free from his violence, I will requite whole . . .

(BL ADD. 12507, fol. 204)

Mistress Bourne resembles the Duchess of Norfolk in her determination to be heard, but here financial resources are not an object of concern. Her directions to Sir Julius Caesar – who throughout his career was an extremely distinguished Admiralty Judge, a Master of Requests, and, later, Master of the Rolls in the Court of Chancery – to hurry an investigation, but discreetly so as not to alert Mr. Bourne, demonstrate her confidence and audacity. Frank about her husband's infidelity, she seems to relish repeating throughout this letter and others, as well as her complaint written later, everything her husband says about his affection for his "bastards." Mistress Bourne takes her complaint to the Queen through her letter to Caesar to demand that "as that for my better safety and quiet of life. I desire to be by the course of the laws divorced from him" (BL, Add. 12507 fol. 204). Equipped with money and no end of rhetorical vigor and drama, Mistress Bourne strategically emphasizes both that she fears her husband's violence – a legal necessity for a woman seeking a divorce – and that her children's financial stability is at stake. The accusation of financial irresponsibility and abandonment, his adultery, and finally the description, in minute detail, of a man hired by her husband to murder her would seem to offer an open-and-shut case for divorce.³⁶

Elizabeth and Anthony Bourne were both children of court officials under Queens Mary and Elizabeth. Anthony Bourne's father, Sir John Bourne, was Queen Mary's Secretary of State, and both he and his son were known for baiting Protestants, with words and swords, and were jailed as a result.³⁷ Elizabeth's mother was a "Gentlewoman Extraordinary of the Privy Chamber" (Bradford 25). Elizabeth's father, Edmund Horne, who died just before she was born, was a "Gentleman Pensioner and in 1537–8, he, as 'Esquire for the Body,' received the office of Steward of the Lordships of Hook Norton, Kelyngton, Throppe and Carsington in the County of Oxford" (Bradford 16). He accompanied officials to Flanders and Boulogne, and to "France with the king's majesty in his Grace's Battle accompanied by six archers on foot and five horsemen. For these services he receives royal grants of land besides the office Steward of Fairford in Gloucestershire" (Bradford 17). Amy, Elizabeth's mother, married James Mervyn after Edmund Horne's death. Mervyn was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, "who visited him and his wife at Fonthill in 1574" (Bradford 24). Although both Anthony and Elizabeth were clearly well connected at court, neither inherited a title, and Anthony never distinguished himself for anything other than brawling, leaving the country without a warrant, and adultery.

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Replete with sexual accusations, the record of letters and complaints between Anthony and Elizabeth Bourne includes Anthony's counter-accusation of adultery against his wife. This accusation proves true and is revealed in letters she wrote to her lover, Sir John Conway, who was also a close associate of her husband, a friend of the family, and appointed by Julius Caesar to intervene in the dispute. Interestingly, Elizabeth introduces the fact of her husband's counter-accusation in a letter to Caesar:

[H]e did swear before his honor likewise to make his own faults seem the least that my youngest daughter was none of his. [H]e still continueth the same speech to everybody and yet desireth to live with me again. [I]t cannot be that a man can ill say and believe of a wife and desire to live with her for her comfort and his credit. [T]his point added to the rest wrongeth and despaireth me so much as that for my better safety and quiet of life I desire to be by the course of the laws divorced from him.

(BL ADD 12507, fol. 204)

Mistress Bourne uses this counter-accusation as an example of her husband's outrageous behavior. She does not seem to fear it as bearing on her reputation. Rather, she uses his accusation as an opportunity to establish her virtue and to testify to her husband's boundless lies, told so as to minimize his own adulterate life. His accusation becomes the occasion of her counter-claims in a suit for divorce. However, in a letter to her husband written during their separation (and sent first to Edward Conway, son of John, in draft form from which I quote here), she discloses her anxiety at his having "wrongfully impeached my chastity," so that she, too, is fighting off what she characterizes as false stories about her:

[Y]ou might as well for yourself, and in less harm for me have taken my life to have given you liberty (so I wish, and much better had it been) than to have careless of my destruction, and your soul's health to have consented the willful murder of my reputation, and innocence, as you have done to make your fault seem the less toward me, and the world, and to bereave me the good opinion of the virtuous. [T]he policy was ill and the consent worse.

(BL ADD 23212, fol. 14)

Mr. Bourne's counter-accusation against her for adultery distresses her as deeply as does Lord Willoughby's against his Lady. The publication of her dishonesty – Mr. Bourne's having sworn to it before "honorable personages" such as Sir Francis Walsingham, who intervened at the request of the Queen – does not just pain her but becomes evidence of his malice toward her because the perception of others will be that "you would never have spoken . . . it in such a presence without . . . truth" (BL ADD 23212, fol. 15).

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Mistress Bourne is hurt by the accusation, lamenting the “murder” of her reputation and public innocence. She accuses him of having made the allegation only to make himself look good, a poorly conceived idea. Consequently, reconciliation with him is unimaginable.

In the same letter to her husband, Elizabeth Bourne reproaches him about his own infidelity in terms that resemble men's accusations against women (I have retained the original line endings for clarity due to damage done to the original pages from which I quote):

Since I have been your wife you have never hel[d] [page torn]
 faith with me in your chastity, nor remained con-[page torn]
 stant in any good mind towards me three months. . . .
 They know not Mr. Bourne, how little profit you [page torn]
 took by God's providence, and her Majesty's merciful [page torn]
 correction of your disordered life by imprisonment, nor [page torn]
 how many misbegotten bastards you had in the present [page torn]
 time of your restraint by Mistress [P]agnam and others, nor[page torn]
 how your love increased them by many sundry women. [page torn]

(BL ADD 23212 fols., 12, 13, 14)

Her objection to his philandering has as much to do with his bodily unfaithfulness to her as it does with the financial deprivation he causes his legitimate children by moving with his mistress and their “bastards” throughout England, Ireland, and Wales. Far from accepting a double standard, Elizabeth Bourne lists his multiple, as she asserts, affairs and army of illegitimate children that he continued to father even while also testifying in court to his wish to live with her again. Apparently asserting simultaneously with such testimony that he would never give up Mistress Pagnam, he makes it impossible for Mistress Bourne to trust his promises of future faithfulness. Moreover, she writes, “I fear the more to live with you, since your malice towards me is so continuing and constant; I dread to sleep with you, because you have sworn my death, and destruction; and I more then fear to make you governor of me, and my children, that hates me for naught, and holds them to be none of yours. I would you had never done yourself, and me that wrong” (BL ADD 23212, fol. 14). Covering as many bases as possible to fuel her divorce suit, Mistress Bourne paints a vivid picture of a husband to whom no woman could wish to remain married. More importantly and strategically, she makes a strong case for interference in their affairs by officials, and she uses the rhetoric of a loving, faithful, and obedient wife to a volatile man whom she fears. Thus, like Anne Boleyn, the Duchess, Lady Margaret, and Lady Willoughby, she both subscribes to and defies edicts on obedience and submission (if not silence). Forced into public complaints and, therefore, *compelled* to violate wifely duties, Mistress Bourne adopts the language of an appropriate wifely constancy while also demanding total financial and marital independence.

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In at least one letter dated 13 February 1575–6,³⁸ Anthony writes to his wife matter-of-factly and dispassionately that he has made financial provisions for her with the assistance of her stepfather, Sir James Mervyn, and Sir John Conway. The letter presents a detailed settlement in which property is both retained and sold in order to facilitate Anthony's and Elizabeth's separate lives. He writes, "I have . . . made unto you therein an estate for life, I have also bought one annuity of fifty pounds by the year, to discharge that which is paid out of Intsolowe, in which you have also an estate for term of life, So as I have made you a landed recompense for Stoweld and your half part of Lynam . . ., these two which I have joined you purchaser in, are to be let at the least for four hundred pounds by the year" (BL ADD 23212 fol. 5). He plans to return plate and jewels to her, which may have been part of her dowry. Annual sums of money are promised in order to keep her financially secure. And there are other men with whom Anthony settles accounts to show, it appears, his good faith. The man Elizabeth describes as violent and unreasonable is entirely absent. At the same time, he openly breaks commitments he had to others and leaves her to resolve them. He closes by letting his wife know when he will be home, sends his blessing to their daughters, and signs "Your loving husband." The letter appears to offer a counter-narrative to that of his wife by presenting a husband who takes care of business between them responsibly and respectfully. The evidence, however, is against him. From this time forward, Anthony Bourne leaves the country with Mistress Pagnam, is sent to the tower for having left the country without the Queen's permission, and refuses to leave his mistress and return home to his wife (Bradford 56–7).

Finally, letters (transcribed by Bradford and included in his book) sent between Mistress Bourne and John Conway suggest strongly that Anthony's counter-accusation of adultery against his wife was true. Her friendship and dependence on Conway for moral and legal support ripened into a love affair.³⁹ She writes to Conway,

Although my wit serves me to say but I love you I will never cease to say that so long as my hand can write it and my tongue can tell it and you do like I should say so. . . . You said you would come if my hosts might not see you. If you come at ten or eleven o'clock at night I can let you in and nobody shall know it. . . . Will it not be most to your comfort? I am sure it will be so to me and therefore so let it be. We had need to be one another's comfort for we have enemies enough to work our despite. We will live and love one another in despite of them, and the more, if more may be, for that they be angry with it. Farewell, mine one first joy,
Yours for ever and ever.

(Qtd. in Bradford 120)

Contradicting all social and religious edicts against adultery, Mistress Bourne writes brazenly to her lover in this letter and others, openly in

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defiance of “enemies” to their love. Given the pages and pages of letters and formal complaint that she wrote on behalf of her cause, which include many references to Anthony’s multiple affairs and numerous “bastards,” Mistress Bourne exceeds Anne’s and the Duchess’s boldness, Lady Margaret’s legal action, and the fluctuating submission and defiance of Lady Willoughby. She defends herself from a husband known to be unstable and violent and asks for that which no one could really grant – a total divorce. More, she did all this while also conducting an affair with her family’s primary associate and ally.

Nevertheless and importantly, the *Arbitrators Report, Indenture of Award* protects Elizabeth from any further harassment by her husband and also puts her financial care during “her sole life or separation from the said Anthony her husband” into the hands of John Conway (SP 13/c, fol. 208, 18 Jan 1583). It also names Conway the legal guardian of the Bourne’s daughters, Amy and Mary, protecting their future alliances from the taint of their father’s profligacy and adultery. The report’s use of “separation” suggests that the division of property and money that are detailed in it make legal and official Mistress Bourne’s financial freedom from her husband. No longer obliged to recognize the marriage except insofar as the award lays out (the wardship of her daughters and her own dependence on Conway), Elizabeth’s defiance of chastity, silence, and obedience appears to win her independence. The financial settlement and long correspondence, in addition to Elizabeth’s own dubious actions prove that the laws on coverture and orthodox views on female conduct allowed for some flexibility and could even work in a woman’s favor.⁴⁰ Certainly, she is more successful at winning her independence than Lady Willoughby and the Duchess of Norfolk. No doubt, her husband’s notoriety as a violent and “lusty” man, his loss of property to the Queen, and his imprisonment in the Tower of London assisted her cause, but Mistress Bourne’s complaint to the Privy Council stands as a reminder that women could and did fight for themselves, their children, and rights to property.⁴¹

In these women’s documents, the wrongs wives feel husbands have committed become as powerful imaginatively, rhetorically, and dramatically as the more culturally familiar wrongs husbands accuse their wives of committing. Moreover, all the women reject inequities in the laws on marriage and property rights denying them independence from their husbands; in fact, these limitations become the motivating force for their resistance. Thus, occupying a position of simultaneous action and honor, of resistance and compliance, their “invocations of speech . . . are insurrectionary acts” in Butler’s sense (*Excitable Speech* 145), redirecting the performative making a woman into a nuisance, or a whore, or an unruly bringer of shame on a family, or a traitor. To be called a name, Butler writes,

both subordinates and enables, producing a sense of agency from ambivalence, a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions of the

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call. To take up the name that one is called is no simple submission to prior authority, for the name is already unmoored from prior context, and entered into the labor of self-redefinition. The word that wounds becomes an instrument of resistance in the redeployment that destroys the prior territory of its operation.

(*Excitable Speech* 163)

The agency Butler imagines both replicates and defies the harmful effects of words. To destroy the “previous territory of” a word’s operation is to contest the power of stories, of histories of such naming, of men to name them, and to alter indelibly the reciprocal relations between subjection and agency. In these texts, despite the official powerlessness of each woman’s circumstances, wives expect husbands to show respect for and to honor them, a basic right in marriage. The Duchess’s letters and Mistress Bourne’s complaint most obviously display a sense of entitlement, as I have already observed, but even the apparent pliant tone of Cuninghame’s narrative is belied by the power of her description, the public nature of her complaint, and her final achievement of a divorce. Thus, we must acknowledge that women are not stopped from assuming rhetorically and legally powerful positions just because official doctrines denied them power. And it does not stop them from assuming power through the same modes as their male counterparts: in the letter, the diary, and the public legal complaint. These women, therefore, appropriate modes of power (in Butler’s sense) that officially belong only to men, take up the names they are called, and redirect them as an instrument of resistance against their husbands; rather than submitting to prior forms of authority embedded in those names, they enter into Butler’s labor of self-redefinition. Performing neither “a resistance that is *really* a recuperation of power [n]or . . . a recuperation that is *really* a resistance,” the women in this chapter show that recuperation and resistance “form the bind of agency” (*Psychic Life of Power* 13). Thus, they appropriate the language of masculinist discourse and redirect its force and meaning to benefit and advance their causes. The power these women arrogate for themselves is both a resistance to and a recuperation of existing powers, and this ambivalence forms what I call the *space* of agency.

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Notes

- 1 See Charles Angell Bradford, *The Conway Papers*, original typescript 88–9. Tim Stretton calls Sir Julius Caesar “[Request’s] most influential master” (*Women Waging Law* 8). For Caesar’s rise to Master of the Rolls (Court of Chancery), see L. M. Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy*, esp. 54–87. On the Privy Council’s attention to familial disputes (including the Bourne case), see Hill’s “The Privy Council and Private Morality” 205–18. While both courts of Requests and Chancery

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- were arms of the Privy Council, the Privy Council also heard pleas independently from the courts.
- 2 BL Add. MS. 38170, fols. 151–8, © The British Library Board. Emily Sherwood and I are co-editing and transcribing the text of the complaint and letters relevant to the case. Quotations from the Bourne collection will be from our manuscript, unless otherwise indicated, and cited parenthetically. I have modernized and regularized both spelling and punctuation of all historical documents in this chapter for clarity.
 - 3 See Lynne A. Greenberg, “A Peal of Words” 189–200. Other treatments of women and the law include Maria Cioni, *Women and Law*; Amy Erickson, *Women and Property*; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law*. On marriage, separation, and divorce in England, see Lawrence Stone, *The Road to Divorce*. And on the English Church Courts’ treatment of marriage, see Martin Ingram, *Church Courts*.
 - 4 M. Lindsay Kaplan argues, “In spite, or perhaps because of the specific conditions surrounding the English Reformation, marriage and divorce law continued in a state of turmoil for more than a century following Henry’s divorce” (233).
 - 5 See Johanna Rickman, *Love, Lust and License*, especially on Frances Villiers adultery case as “an interesting display of the boundaries and limits of a noblewoman’s freedom of action” (174); Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne’s “Introduction” to their important *Rhetoric, Women, and Politics*, esp. 13–18; and Danielle Clarke, who writes, “There were, of course, several ways in which women’s language was positioned as trivial or marginal, but, equally, fissures and contradictions that enabled representations of female speech as power, agency, comfort, piety, or necessity” (“Speaking Women” 72).
 - 6 While *The Law’s Resolutions* is written much later than both Vives’s *Instruction* and Shakespeare’s plays, it educates women on laws that were in effect throughout the sixteenth century. Constance Jordan’s *Renaissance Feminism* is still the most comprehensive study of the Renaissance debate on the nature of women (Cornell UP, 1990).
 - 7 Bernard Capp argues, “Male abuses fell into three overlapping categories – violence, adultery, and failing to provide, often through squandering family resources on drink” (*Gossips* 84–5). All three categories occur in the marriages studied in this chapter. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination* 93–4.
 - 8 I have modernized and regularized the spelling of quotes from Vives, Smith, Greene, Filmer, and the Homily for clarity.
 - 9 See Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, who argues that the relationship between the household and the state are inextricably linked (2).
 - 10 See also Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism* 117–9.
 - 11 Writers who threaten violence, obliquely or explicitly, include Robert Pricke, *The Doctrine of Superiority and Subjection*; Barnabe Rich, *The Excellency of Good Women*; Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women*; William Whately, *A Bride Bush, or a Wedding Sermon*.
 - 12 See also Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity* 68–70.
 - 13 Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism* 216.
 - 14 See in particular Vives’s assessment in *The Office and Duty of an Husband* that “the husband doth defend his wife’s majesty with love and benevolence, and the wife her husband’s with honor & obedience. What shall I need to say the concord causeth them to be esteemed wise and honest. And they must need be good, seeing they have loved so long together” (n. pag.).
 - 15 See Richards and Thorne, “Introduction” 4–8; and Rachel Heard’s reading of Barnaby Rich and Richard Braithwait, 51–7.

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- 16 J. A. Sharpe argues that honor was as important to the lower classes as the upper and that “the two most important developments were the emergence of certain forms of defamation as the grounds for a suit at common law, and the arrival of a clear distinction between spoken slander and written libel” (*Defamation* 4). Sharpe also notes that cases were heard, increasingly, in various courts, including Star Chamber (4–7).
- 17 A. Erickson argues that the focus on common law in women’s legal matters “ignores the other four bodies of law which regulated property ownership in the early modern period . . . [as well as] parliamentary statutes, made by common lawyers sitting in parliament, [which] also played a crucial role in regulating property transmission, principally by intervening in Ecclesiastical law” (*Women and Property* 5). Subha Mukherji discusses an impressive number of cases in which women were active litigants, in “Women, Law and Dramatic Realism” 251–6.
- 18 See, in particular, Stretton, *Women Waging Law* 25–33.
- 19 Stretton’s discussion of coverture in chapter 6 of *Women Waging Law* is fascinating.
- 20 See Cioni, *Women and Law* 13; Barbara Kreps argues, “The rigorous laws which consigned women’s property and goods to their husbands . . . paradoxically fostered the necessity of finding a new kind of law in equity that would to some extent defy husbands who tried to coerce their wives out of what was still legally theirs” (“Paradox of Women” 93).
- 21 G. W. Bernard claims that the “handwriting plainly is not Anne’s” (173). Some scholars have pointed to her use of her maiden name, which would have been unusual since it stripped her of her royal title. And most have commented on the lack of an extant original (though on this basis none of Shakespeare’s plays would have been written by anyone). Alison Weir argues for and against the letter as a forgery (*The Lady in the Tower* 178–82). See also Eric Ives, *The Life and Death* 58–9; Retha Warnicke, “The Forged Letters” *passim*; and Jasper Ridley, “Introduction” 13.
- 22 As Richards and Thorne argue, the rhetoric of “[s]upplication and complaint could provide a highly effective vehicle for social and moral protest” (“Introduction” 16). Importantly, they also note (as I will also argue below) that such strategies serve, “ironically, to restore the very agency they seem to erase” (16).
- 23 See Barbara J. Harris, “Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style” 374; Betty S. Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott, eds., *Female and Male Voices* 39–40.
- 24 See B. Harris’s discussion of the Duchess’s weakened position due to her father’s execution in 1521 (“Marriage” 321).
- 25 Sir James Hamilton traces his lineage to Sir James of Finnart, the illegitimate son of Sir James, Second Lord Hamilton (James Balfour Paul, *Scots Peerage* 355, 362). In contrast, the Cuninghame family became Earls of Glencairn in 1488 (James Balfour Paul, *Scots Peerage* 233).
- 26 According to Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, while “divorce for adultery was a real possibility for anyone who could afford to go to court” in Scotland (86), the Kirks tried to intervene to achieve harmony in other marital disputes, such as ill treatment, desertion, and domestic violence (87–97). Lady Margaret seems to have been extremely lucky both that her husband was an adulterer and that she could afford to go to court.
- 27 See Mitchison’s and Leneman’s discussion, 86–97.
- 28 For a brief history of the couple’s marriage and her transcription of their letters, see Alice T. Friedman, “Portrait of a Marriage” 542–55; and *House and Household*, especially 53–70. The original letters, which I have studied closely,

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are found in the British Library (Lansdowne 46, fol. 30–3). For more on the Willoughbys, see also Cassandra, Duchess of Chandos, *The Continuation of the History* 1958. My quotations from the letters are from Friedman's transcription and cited parenthetically though I have modernized and regularized the spelling and punctuation for clarity.

- 29 James Daybell notes that a secretary assisted Lady Elizabeth to write her letters. Interestingly, "his alterations seem to have been designed to moderate Lady Willoughby's excessive submissiveness and to prevent her from taking full blame for the rift" (*Women Letter-Writers* 79).
- 30 According to A. Friedman, "there is evidence to suggest that it was Sir Francis, and not his wife, who was the parent of a son born out of wedlock" (*House and Household* 64).
- 31 See also A. Friedman's *House and Household* 63–4.
- 32 Frances E. Dolan offers this moment in Sir Francis's letter as exemplifying "the notion of husband and wife as 'one flesh' [that] could also offer a justification for physical chastisement as self-care" (*Marriage and Violence* 85).
- 33 The Willoughby marital conflicts included court interference and Star Chamber proceedings – sought by Lady Willoughby – but the couple was reunited in 1588. After Lady Willoughby died in 1594, Sir Francis remarried and then died in 1596. See also *House and Household* 64–5.
- 34 The legal standards for a divorce suit brought by either husbands or wives were high, however, involving proofs of impotence, precontract, consanguinity, affinity, or tender age for a divorce *a vinculo*, a formal declaration that the "marriage had been void from its commencement by reason of a 'dirimentary impediment'. They could not break the chains, but they could declare that the chains were never there" (John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* 491). For a divorce *a mensa et thoro* (a decree of "judicial separation . . . from board and hearth" making parties eligible to live apart but not freeing them to remarry [John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* 493]), only proof of adultery, extreme cruelty, desertion, or bitter enmity could form a successful basis. Stretton and Gowing agree that wives' claims of husbands' adultery were never enough for divorce, let alone for granting separation. A wife had to link her allegation of adultery with other abuses, usually cruelty and abandonment (Stretton, *Women Waging Law* 194–201; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers* 180–231). See L. Greenberg, "Introduction" 23–4; B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* 140–4; and R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation* 74–111. J. H. Baker's *An Introduction to English Legal History* is an excellent guide. According to Gowing, "England emerged from the Reformation with a uniquely unreformed canon law on marriage" (180).
- 35 Bradford, *Conway Papers* 89.
- 36 See L. Greenberg, "Introduction" 23–4; Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* 144.
- 37 In 1563, the Bishop of Worcester offered a detailed account of Anthony Bourne's violence against a group of Protestants: "Sir John Bourne's eldest Son blaspheming and swearing, said *Now you are among Papists. As for you Mrs. Avice, you are a Shrew. And, Mrs. Wilson, your Husband is a good Fellow. You can want no Help; if you do, send for me.* It is no marvel if Sir John Bourne's Son use such Talk; for he himself calleth Ministers' Wives Whores" (John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation* 390). In *Fasciculus Mervinensus*, Anthony Bourne is described as "an extravagant worthless man, who deserted his wife and children and went with a paramour to live abroad" (Sir William Richard Drake, *Fasciculus Mervinensis* 20).

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- 38 Bradford dates and transcribes parts of this letter, *The Conway Papers* 55–6.
- 39 See Daybell, *Women Letter Writers*, who is interested in Elizabeth Bourne as a “bookish sixteenth-century gentlewoman, who engaged in a wide range of literary interests” and whose letters to and from John Conway often discuss Latin translations of history and poetry (120).
- 40 Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*; Stretton, *Women Waging Law*; and Cioni, *Women and Law*, offer full accounts of the flexibility of the law and the equity courts as sites of legal redress for women plaintiffs. See also A. Erickson, *Women and Property*. On marriage, separation, and divorce in England, see Stone, *The Road to Divorce*. And on the English Church Courts’ treatment of marriage, see Ingram, *Church Courts*.
- 41 The collection of letters related to the Bourne marriage also contain exchanges between Elizabeth and various women, including her mother, sister, and a Mistress Morgan whom Elizabeth begs for help when the Queen demands one thousand pounds in payment to return lands to Anthony after his illegal departure from England. I have omitted these in favor of other women’s stories in the limited space of a chapter. However, they are an excellent indication of the importance to women of the gossip network in marital disputes.