PROBLEM CHILDREN:

TROPING EARLY MODERN REPRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

By

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To Mary Frances

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INTRODUCTION

CHILD FIGURES AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

I. Sweet Nothings

In the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library is a much handled copy of Arthur Dent's *A pastime for parents* that bears witness to the reading, and often the boredom, of at least eight 17th century boys.[1] Among the scribbles, signatures, blots, handwriting practice, and fantastical doodles that fill this catechism, one child copies the questions and answers into the margins. He is likely the John Lawford who signs his full name on the previous page. As is visible in Figure 1, John copies the Father's question, "Can these essentiall attributes of god encrease or decrease," skips the Child's negative response, and then writes his own name. Perhaps later, possibly pausing for fresh pen or ink, given the change in color, John begins to write out the Father's next question, "what may wee learne out of this" but then goes back to transcribe the Child's earlier answer. The full response is: "Nothing that is in GOD can be augmented or diminished, or any way altered: for as hee is once at any time, so is hee alwaies at all times." John only gets through "nothing that is in god." Another child picks up, in a way, from where he left off and trails "nothings" down the page: "nothing, nothing, nothing." "Nothing" becomes the answer to "what may be learned of this," putting a full stop to the series of questions that in a catechism necessarily follow from one answer to the next. John Lawford and his unknown collaborator call a halt to repetition, the text's linear progression, and the

[1] Arthur Dent, *A pastime for parents: or A recreation, to passe away the time; containing the most principall grounds of Christian religion.* (London: Felix Kyngston, for Thomas Man, 1612), esp. A3r. STC 6624.2. There are eight names signed throughout, although there may be more hands. The approximate time period of the hands was verified with Heather Wolfe through private communication, December 17, 2009.

A Paſtime for Parents.

cittie, omnipotencie, for theſe do ſpring from his Eſſence and Forme, as naturally, neceſſarily, and directly, as the beams, light, and heate, iſſue from the Sun, as the ſtremes from a fountaine of water.

Father.

Can theſe Eſſentiall attributes of God encreaſe or decreaſe?

Child.

Nothing that is in GOD can be augmented or diminiſhed, or any way altered : for as hee is once at any time, ſo is hee alwaies at all times.

Father.

What may we learne out of this?

Child.

To feare and tremble, ſo often as wee thinke or ſpeake of this infinite Maieſty.

Father.

What are wee eſpecially to conſider in God for our comfort & inſtruction?

Child.

His wiſedome, prouidence, iuſtice,

A 3 and

Figure 1: Dent, *A pastime for parents,* A3r.

process of their own instruction. They also, likely accidentally, suggest that "nothing" is in God. The boys' writing implies that though God may be unchangeable, this text, the information it imparts, and the authority that demands they read it, all are not. They turn a dutiful recapitulation into evidence of resistance to the formative child development work of the catechism. Their scribblings suggest that they may be learning nothing, doing nothing, and wanting nothing to do with any of this. While this is only one example of children altering as they copy, it is a powerful, anxiety-inducing one. My reading of this variation on Dent is necessarily speculative. Still, this marginalia highlights the limitations of rhetorical attempts to train children. The catechism performs an idealized transmission of knowledge between adults and children. The boys' slight textual alterations and their problematic interpretations are a single example of the ways early modern children might avoid reproducing their elders' ideas, an avoidance that induces substantial anxiety in period authors.

This combination of marginalia and text also figures interaction between two early modern models of cultural reproduction. Cultural reproduction is a process of sharing, adopting, and potentially modifying practices, attitudes – essentially anything that can be taught. In some ways, the boys' writing exemplifies what I term repetitive reproduction, a fantasy that imagines children as replications of their parents. This fantasy was accessible and relied upon for a sense of social stability in early modern England. One step, birth or a formative act directed toward a young child, suffices to insure an ideal child that needs only time to grow into a proper adult. This version of the reproductive process is not a process at all, but simply a singular imaginary act. Repetitive reproduction is an avoidance fantasy that imagines child maturation can occur without the need for substantive adult intervention. Repetition ensures social stability through a

linear progression as children perpetuate into the future the world of their elders' past. In a way, young John's copying verbatim in the margins figures this idealized replication.

At the same time, the revisions of Dent invoke another variation of cultural reproduction that I call hybridity. According to this general model, offspring are the result of contradictory combinations and substantial, continued interventions. Each generation is subject to the rhetorical addition and subtraction of qualities, alterations that in aiming for a superior adulthood make accessible numerous trajectories for development. Far from being one-step, as the repetitive fantasy is, hybridity acknowledges the continuation of cultural reproduction throughout childhood, and indeed life itself. Rather than enabling avoidance, it emphasizes active engagement with reproductive processes. As a genre, catechisms respond to the pressures of hybrid reproduction. Hybridity emphasizes the myriad contingencies of circumstance and child development, and catechisms work to contain and shape the possible responses to such contingencies. Each question strives to construct and authorize a reaction to a particular situation.[2] The children's marginalia and its revision of the printed text also amply demonstrate that child development can cross the limits of idealized growth and development.

Historical children like Lawford and his fellow necessarily play a vital role in cultural reproduction: "If we broadly define culture in terms of what is learnt and shared, then children as carriers of culture, and childhood where so much learning occurs, must be seen as crucial to the reproduction of culture."[3] Just as historical children were, and continue to be, "crucial"

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[2] See Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 82-6; Nigel Smith, "A Child Prophet: Martha Hatfield as *The Wise Virgin*," in *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 79-93, esp. 79.
[3] Chris Custin and Anthony Varley, "Children and Childhood in Rural Ireland: A Consideration of the Ethnographic structure," in Christ Custin, Mary Kelly and Liam O'Dowd, eds. *Culture and Ideology in Ireland* (Galway UP, 1984), 30-46, esp. 30.

participants in cultural reproduction, so representations of children were used to conceptualize, assert, and insure reproductive ideals. Thus early modern child figures serve as a key crux for analyzing the spectrum of reproductive fantasies stretching from repetitive to hybrid. I argue that when early modern writers confronted failures of cultural continuity, they turned to child figures as a means of conceptualizing more functional reproductive models. Further, I argue that early modern child figures did not become locations for working through a matter as vital as social longevity exclusively because of their historical role in cultural reproduction or because of their biological necessity for the endurance of humanity. They attained such a central position in large part because of the paradoxical views of childhood held in 16th and 17th century Europe.

Early modern children were especially problematic creatures. They could be understood to cross categories of species, morality, chronology, and capability. "Whether considered as individuals or as members of a group, children almost by definition straddle important social, economic, and philosophical categories."[4] This made child figures a particularly fraught group on which to base thinking about societal perpetuation. However, it is because of the paradoxical nature of early modern childhood that they were so central to period models of cultural reproduction. I argue that the contradictory versions of childhood bring the repetitive fantasy and hybridity into contact. When period authors' introduce children in a specific role, a contrary possibility almost inevitably surfaces. A perfectly repetitive ideal child figure invokes a version of childhood that implicates hybridity. That is, child figures stress the tensions between the two models and are the tools with which writers attempt to work through those tensions. When applied to an early modern context, the question asked hundreds of years later by Jacques Derrida, "How is a child possible in general?" becomes a question not only about paradoxical

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[4] Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore, eds. *Children and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

views of childhood but also about the very perpetuation of society.[5] Its manifestations are manifold: How can children be so many contradictory things at once? How can childhood be a universally experienced phenomena and yet be so unintelligible? How can children be both so necessary to and so problematic for cultural reproduction? The complexities of early modern child figures and the interactions of the repetitive and hybrid models feed off of and contribute to each other. The results, appearing in period texts, alter the workings of agency and temporality in early modern cultural reproduction.

As authors use the repetitive fantasy and hybridity to correct for each other's faults and respond to the paradoxes of early modern childhood, they both grant child figures agency and provide them with a recursive developmental trajectory. In terms of agency, I argue that as writers claim the authority to alter children rhetorically and use child figures as passive instruments for making a particular version of cultural reproduction function, they simultaneously give up some of the agency they claim. When they expect the overarching claims of agency made by the repetitive fantasy to function, or expect to intervene on the scale that hybridity seems to make available, those assertions of control fracture. Child figures acquire a strange agency that both admits their instrumentality and grants them power. At the most basic level, children can be clearly subject to their parents, and yet those children name and create their parents as parents. Child agency is thus a paradox of passivity and disruptive power. Further, as the methods of cultural reproduction interact around and because of child figures, child development becomes neither linear nor wildly hybrid. As writers try to craft a means of insuring ideal children to perpetuate society, they contribute to a recursive temporality. Repetitive reproduction expects children to maintain the norms of the past in the future, while hybridity's

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997), 146.

numerous steps and interventions eschew any narrative arc. The recursive result of their interaction circles through present, past, and future, making use of repetition while also regularly violating it. While this recursive temporality does not enable entirely indeterminate trajectories of development, neither does it offer to produce idealized ends. These variations on agency and temporality are the result of early modern efforts to construct models of cultural reproduction around child figures.

Before moving on to my analysis of this crux, a few words on the texts and child figures that appear in this chapter and in the project overall. This chapter draws primarily, but not exclusively, on highly figurative passages about children from didactic texts. These include Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster,* Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the minde in generall*, and John Dod and Robert Cleaver's *A godlie forme of householde government*. Although subsequent chapters deal almost exclusively with fictional children, this introduction approaches the blurred line between the idealized children of practical texts and the historical children to whom they were applied. I recognize the potential for slippage between ideal and historical made possible by dealing with purportedly practical texts. Later chapters address works by Ben Jonson, John Marston, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and John Webster. Although most of my materials come from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, I utilize sources ranging from the reign of Henry VIII, like Sir Thomas Elyot and Juan Luis Vives, through the latter part of the 17th century, such as teacher and prolific education writer Charles Hoole. This wide net is enabled by the continuity of contradictory views about the young. From the middle of the 16th century through the end of the 17th childhood and youth was considered a contested period of warring extremes. This consistency of inconsistency is also evident across religious traditions – Puritan, Anglican, and Catholic – as they drew on the same Biblical texts to make similar claims. Thus

the Puritan Richard Greenham appears, as does the Catholic Wright.[6] The works I turn to are in some ways wide ranging, but necessarily provide a limited assortment. Nonetheless, these materials demonstrate the centrality of child figures to conceptions of social stability, and exemplify the ways in which children served as sites for engaging contradictory versions of cultural reproduction.

As for what qualifies as a child figure in this project, throughout I concentrate on an age range reaching from infancy to the early teens, approximately 13 or 14. The definitions of "child," "youth," and other terms applied to the young varied during the early modern period. Their meanings and applications were stretched by relatively young ages of majority, 14 for males and 12 for females, the age of discretion, often placed around 14 to 16, and prolonged periods of apprenticeship for men and women extending into the mid to late 20's.[7] However, childhood and youth were recognizably different periods of life, and I try to avoid absorbing teenagers, who clearly qualified as youth, into my exploration of child figures.[8] Since I am almost always dealing with ideas about childhood, exemplary children in practical works, or child characters, rather than with historical children, this age limit is necessarily rather arbitrary. Additionally, the fact that the default gender for any "child" was male unavoidably troubles my use of the word. This is especially true for the pedagogical texts I often rely on in this chapter. Despite the disparities in their treatment, female and male child figures posed common problems for cultural reproduction. Although boys do predominate in the chapters that follow, I address the

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[6] See Micheal Witmore, *Pretty Creatures: Children and Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007), 15.On chronological and theological continuity, see Griffiths, 57-8.
[7] Griffiths, 5, 21, 52-3. On the varying age application of "child," "boy," "girl & maid," etc. see Table 1, 25.
[8] I attempt to follow Griffiths' critique of Linda A. Pollock and others for using childhood as a catchall term including pre-teens and teenagers – youth (9). See also *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge UP, 1983).

ways that girls, too, do not fit into adult categories, trouble parental efforts at immortality and social stability, and fail to reproduce their elders' worlds – biologically and metaphorically.

II. Repetitive and Hybrid Reproduction

Early modern views of childhood create a paradoxical picture. Children might be viewed as both innately sinful and in need of adult discipline and as innocents threatened by worldly corruption. For example, Augustinian emphasis on the particular proneness of infants, children, and youth to sin was carried over into humanist educational theories. Elyot, Erasmus, and Vives all stressed the need for strict discipline and constant nurturing to stave off an inevitable descent into vice. At the same time, medieval depictions of children as the souls fittest to enter heaven also continued; unless you "become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[9] These children are innocent, and also have an instinct for comprehending religious truths that their elders lack.[10] Children were especially malleable and in need of training while young, and at the same time their attributes could be static. Household management and

[9] Matthew 18:3. See also Psalm 8:1-2; Matthew 19:14, 21:15-16; Ephesians 6:17. All Biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from: *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with the Apocrypha: King James version*, ed. David Norton (Cambridge UP, 2005). On the wisdom of children see also Nigel Smith, 85; Witmore, 37.

[10] On these conflicting attitudes of guilt and innocence, see Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 12-14. On presumptions of youthful susceptibility to sin, see Griffiths, 34-6; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage, In England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 174-5. On medieval attitudes toward children's potentially greater access to God, susceptibility and ability to sin, see Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001),102, 123-4. On the innocence of children and their closeness to God, especially as this relates to sexual innocence, credulousness, medieval child saints, and pathetic victimhood, see Witmore, 29; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood at the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Ronald C. Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). Ralph Houlbrooke notes medieval Catholic stress on the innate depravity of infants and attributes a morally neutral view to humanists. See *The English Family,1450-1700* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1984), 32.

childrearing guides could promptly shift from emphasizing youthful flexibility to stressing the need for parents to attend to fixed character traits. Children were described as perpetuators of family immortality, carrying their parents' world into the future, and at the same time enabled adults to recall and recreate the past.[11] Supposedly lacking in foresight, they were also cast as beings that must live entirely in the present. They might be viewed as foundational, for example as models of obedience for all subservient elements of society, and also as the building blocks perpetuating that society. Aristotle's version of human growth as an unfolding from passive plant during gestation and even infancy, to sensory animal in childhood, to maturation as a reasoning adult reappeared in a wide variety of guises.[12] Children were regularly compared to fields in need of cultivation and to animals in need of training, like dogs, falcons, and colts. They were simultaneously perceived as less than fully human but not quite animal, as lacking in reason but disturbingly skillful at mimicking it.[13] This is the complex of ideas which writers referenced to develop and respond to versions of cultural reproduction.

Repetitive reproduction was a key early modern fantasy on which intellectual understandings of cultural continuity and longevity were based. As I define it, this fantasy encompasses versions of the procreative fantasy that admit development and those that do not. The version articulated, for example, in Shakespeare's procreation sonnets expects idealized

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[11] On children as continuations of their parents' work, and sometimes obstacles to it, see for example Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, "Of Parents and Children," and "Of Marriage and Single Life," 352, 353.

[12] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* William Rhys Roberts, Ingram Bywater, trans. (New York: Modern Library, 1984), 2.12-14, 122-23, for the three phases of the evolution of human rationality. For Aristotle's three stages of fetus development see: "On the Soul," 402a-405b; "History of Animals," sections 583a-b, *De Partibus Animalium I; and, De Generatione Animalium I,* ed. D. M. Balme (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 731a, 734a-736a.

[13] On infants' lack of the early modern qualities of reason that would qualify them as human, see Fudge (2006), 21-2. Lawrence Stone assets that children were generally viewed as less than human, more like animals or playthings (105, 116, 176-7).

offspring to essentially come into being fully formed, with the next generation, by its very birth, duplicating the preceding one. In this form, the repetitive fantasy is asexual, essentially parthenogenic. Only one parent is necessary to spawn a precise copy. Another parent would complicate the linear progression with additional branches on the family tree. Repetitive reproduction can also expect child development and assume that children are innately programmed to mature predictably. They simply have to grow in order to become the desired images of their elders. In either case, adult intervention is unnecessary and child maturation can be ignored. The fantasy's detachment and presumption of authority is evident in tropes figuring children as coins, wax, wood or stone all stamped or carved by their elders that proliferate across early modern texts.[14] Writers drew from and elaborated on classical works to support this model, as is evident in Edward Grant's translation of *De liberis educandis*, attributed to Plutarch: "Euen as seales and images be in soft waxe unsculpted and engrauen, so are disciplines and eruditions infigured and printed in childrens tender minds."[15] Stamping a seal is an individual action, devoid of cooperation and progression. The resultant idealized children were, as Nicholas Orme puts it "numerous, devout, obedient, orderly, well-maintained, and living in the estate to which God has called them," from youth through old age, insuring social consistency.[16]

In order to remain a useful mode of thought, the repetitive fantasy must be an avoidance strategy that overlooks countless discontinuous aspects of society. Of course, children were not

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[14] Printing or writing metaphors are also appears, but often children serve as the figure for printed texts, as they do in Michel de Montaigne's essay, "On the affection of fathers for their children," and in numerous book prefaces. I am concerned with figurative language applied to children, rather than in their use as a trope. See *The Complete Essays*, M. A. Screech, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 449-52.
[15] Edward Grant, trans. *A President for Parentes, Teaching the vertuous training vp of Children and holesome information of yongmen. Written in greke by the prudent and wise Phylosopher Choeroneus Plutarchus, Translated and partly augmented by Ed. Grant* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1571), B5r.
[16] Orme, 82.

replicas of their parents four hundred years ago any more than they are today. Historical 16th and 17th century children would readily have disabused their elders of such a notion. They were so numerous as to be difficult to avoid. By the mid 16th century, children made up 36-40% of England's population, and their numbers continued to rise as the population doubled between 1576 and 1621.[17] As Keith Thomas puts it: "The first point to be made is that they were ubiquitous; and the second is that they tended to behave in a way which was inconsistent with the values of adult society."[18] Of course procreation requires two parents, and adults need to be involved in childrearing. In addition to overwriting historical children, the repetitive fantasy enables those who deploy it to ignore central religious tenets, including original sin. This doctrine dictates that at birth children are necessarily fallen and in need of adult guidance to attain saving religious faith. Indeed, children were born into sin because of their parents, an indication that being a copy of one's parent cannot be an entirely stable or fortunate proposition.[19] Just as birth could obviously not be counted on to produce a comfortably repetitive child, so time and growth alone could not turn them into normative adults. While versions of the ages of man, for example, provided a prevalent model of maturation, the varying number of life stages – often seven, sometimes only three, four, or six– evidences the inconsistency with which the culture imagined child growth.[20] Despite all of these historical and theoretical obstacles, the

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[17] E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Shofield, *The Population History of England and Wales 1541-1871 A Reconstruction.* (Cambridge UP, 1981), 215-19, 443-50.
[18] Keith Thomas, "Children in Early Modern England," in *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 45-77, esp. 51-2.
[19] For example, John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, Thomas Norton, trans. (London: John Norton, 1611), 108; William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties* (London: John Haviland for William Bladen, 1622), 528.
[20] See Griffiths, 20. Also Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life,* trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 20-4.

fantasy of repetition remained, promising complete control to parents and cultural consistency to the state.

Given the durability of such an obviously contestable model of cultural reproduction, the question for this project is not "why does the repetitive model remain so appealing?" but rather "why are there any other versions at all?" If repetitive reproduction can so successfully enable early modern thinkers to overlook its contradictions, or perhaps to recognize those contradictions and yet hold them in paradoxical balance with the reassurances of repetition, why do complications, and even other models, emerge at all? I argue that this occurs when child figures bring this model into contact with hybridity.

While the interaction between the hybrid and repetitive models generates anxiety, they often serve as correctives to each other. Both, if taken to their logical extremes, contain common, potentially destructive ends: sterility and profusion to the extent of overkill. The impossible ideal of the child as perfect copy, when portrayed as realized, often ends chronological progression. For example, in *I Henry VI* Talbot has the image of himself in his son. Yet in order to prove themselves so allied, they must die together in a hopeless battle.[21] Another potential end of repetition is uncontrollable replication. Rather than enabling thinkers to ignore ills, repetition could multiply them, as Heather Dubrow notes: "One of the deepest fantasies in Tudor and Stuart England . . . is uncontrolled repetition emanating from a single case, a single error."[22] Original sin is a powerful version of such reiterating contagion. Hybridity promises greater productivity and variation, and in a horticultural context it was popular. Yet hybrid combinations simultaneously threaten both monstrosity and an inability to reproduce. Grafted trees may

[21] See IV.v; also see Chapter 3 for further discussion of this example.
[22] Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), 38.

produce more fruit in the short term, but they can only pollinate their source components. Crossbred animals, like mules, often cannot procreate. Even while in tension with each other, the contact between the repetitive and hybrid versions of cultural reproduction enables corrections away from the extremes of sterility and monstrous profusion.

I suggest the term "hybridity" as a means for examining children as a crux in ideas of cultural reproduction because it is so prominently associated with the horticultural tropes early modern writers often use in discussing children. Gardening strategies were regularly used to formulate the paradoxical position of child figures.[23] Hybridity evokes growth and reproduction and implies a process involving multiple steps, combinations and alterations. Roger Ascham words his warning about the importance of careful, involved parenting in these botanical terms: "if wise fathers, be not as well waare in weeding from their Children ill thinges, and ill companie, as they were before, in graftinge in them learninge and providing for them good scholemasters, what frute, they shall reape of all their caste & care, common experience doth tell."[24] To take up his word, "graftinge" is one way of describing the ever-changing balance parents, teachers, and others sought to strike. They strove to protect what was good in a child (itself a prime subject of debate) from negative outside influences while also disciplining –

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[23] Examples of botanical troping include: ; Desidarius Erasmus. *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, Craig R. Thompson, trans. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965); Charles Hoole. *The Usher's Duty, or A PLAT-FORME of Teaching LILIES Grammar* (London: J. T. for Andrew Crook, 1659), 10; Jean, Goeurot, *The kegiment [sic] of life, wherunto is added A treatyse of the pestilence, with the booke of children* (London: 1546), S2v; William Kempe, *The education of children in learning* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1588), E3r-v; *The court of good counsel* (London: Ralph Blower, 1607), E4v, F4r; *The office of Christian parents: shewing how children are to be gouerned throughtout all ages and times of their life.* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, 1616), C1v; Richard Mulcaster, *Positions vvherin those primitiue circumstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training vp of children* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1581); Hezekiah [Ezekias] Woodward, *A sons patrimony and daughters portion* (London: T. Vnderhill, 1643), 21-22.

[24] Roger Ascham, *The scholemaster or plaine and perfite way of teaching children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong* (London: John Daye, 1570), sig. F4r.

pruning – the bad. A graft artificially adds that which nature did not provide while in some ways remaining part of a nurturing process. The drastic intervention, the disparate parts involved, and the category-crossing, uncertain results exemplify hybrid reproduction. In Ascham's terms, education could be grafted onto children; their innocence and ignorance would eagerly absorb alien learning, leading to a still idealized outcome. Paul Griffiths observes: "The manipulative nature of contemporary pedagogy drew upon [their] alleged malleability, portraying youth as a young twig or plant; something which in the course of growth could be nurtured and crafted" (51).[25] These horticultural tropes place adults in the position of the gardener and offer opportunities to control children as passive plants. However, the unpredictable outcomes of combination necessarily challenge any gardener's control. As Rebecca Bushnell asks: "if the gardener's job was to improve or better nature, whether in the soil or in himself, what threat did that pose to a society founded on respect for a traditional order grounded in nature?"[26] Since children were often viewed from the outset as paradoxical figures, additions – grafts – served only to contribute further contradiction. My use of hybridity invokes the nonlinear possibilities for reproduction made particularly visible through paradoxical 16th and 17th century views of children.

Hybridity may unavoidably retain some connotations of the postcolonial discourse that has used it extensively in recent years. It invokes for some Homi Bhabha's strategy for working through the contradictions of the colonial past, a potentially imagined indigenous past, and the unknown future. This definition of hybridity has been accused of repeating the same limitations

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[25] See for example Thomas Ingelend, *A pretie and Mery new Enterlude: called the Disobedient Child* (London: [1570]), G4r.

[26] Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996), 52.

imposed by colonial strictures both narrative and political.[27] However, the definition of hybridity I utilize is, by contrast, all about the failure to repeat. The paradoxical combinations of qualities attributed to early modern children, with regular references to botanical grafting and monstrous animal conjunctions, make hybridity a particularly applicable term for the non-linear versions of cultural reproduction that emerge around child figures. It is a useful overarching label for the alternatives juxtaposed against the repetitive ideal.

Child figures do not facilitate contact between repetitive and hybrid versions of reproduction simply because children can be examples of the procreative impetus of each. Rather, child figures become sites around which reproductive and developmental concerns coalesce because they are expected to guarantee claims of adult agency even as they place demands upon it.

III. Betwixt, Between, and Bordering: Child Agency

In his *The Passions of the minde in generall*, Thomas Wright tries to use children as exemplars of the titular passions. However, his definitional efforts highlight the way that using child figures instrumentally may serve to undermine a writer's claims of authority and grant agency to those child figures.

> Three sorts of actions proceede from mens soules, some are internall and immateriall, as the actes of our wittes and willes; others be mere externall and materiall, as the acts of our senses, seeing, hearing, moving, &c. others stand betwixt these two extremes, and border upon them both; the which wee may best discover in children, because they lacke the use of reason, and are guided by an internall imagination, following nothing else but that pleaseth their sences, even after the same maner as bruite beastes doe: for, as we see beastes hate, love, feare

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[27] See for example Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999).

> and hope, so doe children. Those actions then which are common with us, and beasts, wee call Passions, and Affections, or perturbations of the mind . . .[28]

While Wright begins by using children as part of an analogy to distinguish between reason, the senses, and the passions, by the end of this passage he is struggling to define them. Initially, children appear as exemplars of some sort of developmental link between animality and full humanity. Wright introduces children as a means of naming that which has no name, those "others [that] stand betwixt these two extremes, and border upon them both." In doing so he demonstrates the unclassifiable nature of children. Children are somewhere between internal and external, reasonable and sensory, human and animal, overlapping with and excluded by both sets of binaries. They are in the borderlands, in the middle and yet at the margins of things, but they cannot help define the boundaries they cross. Rather, Wright turns to the limits of humanity and animality in an attempt to classify children.[29] He slips from using children to explain the passions, to using animals to explain children and their common dependence on the senses. These children are both passive figures used for his comparisons and possessors of a unique "internall imagination," with motivations and even agency apart from animals and adults.

This "internall imagination" is problematically undefined: internal, like reason, but somehow combined with the senses. Michael Witmore's reading of it divides external, sensory priorities from their internal fulfillments: "It is as if the pleasures of the senses (external, material) can be vicariously satisfied by the "phantasie," or imagination, which represents pleasurable objects without their necessarily having to exist." Children purportedly satisfy their

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[28] Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the minde in generall. Correct, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented* (London: Valentine Simmes for Walter Burre, 1604), 7.

[29] On Wright's association of beasts with immediate gratification and humans with foresight, see Erica Fudge, "Learning to Laugh: Children and Being Human in Early Modern Thought," *Children and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800,* eds. Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.

sensory desires through imaginary means. Yet there is no indication in the passage that such a firm boundary exists within imagination itself. The external sensory perceptions of children are not called imaginary or insubstantial, and the ways in which imagination is "internall" are not noted. Witmore's reading of Wright makes a move very like that made by Wright himself: using children to figure a concept. In his case, Witmore argues that early modern children, with their spontaneity, function like imaginative fiction: "like the prattling child, the imagination can be said to mimic sensory experience without rational constraint."[30] Both emphasize child figures as passive vessels to be endowed with meaning through analogy and at the same time acknowledge their unclassifiable motivations and actions. Even as Wright and Witmore emphasize childhood repetition, they emphasize disparity. Their attempts to make use of representations of childhood reveal child figures' potential agency.

When children are engaged as instruments for making the reproductive models function, their contradictory positions become impossible to ignore. These procreative fantasies tend to assign all control to adults and require passive children to insure a productive future that will sustain extant norms. Yet child figures make possible the assertions of adult agency to which they are supposedly passively subject. Early modern children were expected to serve as models for social and religious behaviors. For example, period views of family and monarchy were mutually dependent, with the monarch as father of the country and the father as king of the family. Schoolmasters and tutors were also aligned with fathers. Indeed, the parent-child relationship was essentially proposed as a pattern for all social relationships.[31] The Fifth

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[30] Witmore, 39.

[31] See for example Griffiths, 65-6; Houlbrooke, 21-22, 30-31; Stone, 151-52; Cynthia B. Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 70-75. Ariés asserts that the alignment of children with the most subservient groups is symptomatic of the recognition of childhood as a separate phase of life (262).

Commandment enjoining children to "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land the Lord thy God giveth thee" enabled interpretive connections between personal and societal longevity and adherence to parental directives.[32] It was applied not only within families, but also as an order for obedience throughout society: servants were to honor masters and subjects were to honor rulers unquestioningly as parents.[33] Children ostensibly reflected the duties of all subservient groups toward their betters and so served as a basis for the social hierarchy. They were needed to function both as societal foundations and as guarantors of the future, as pliant beings whose fixity defines the positions of others. Child figures are asked to fill positions directly at odds with each other, and so turn all of the period paradoxes about childhood from acceptable contradictions to problems in need of solution.

Ascham's *The Scholemaster* demonstrates how child figures undermine the fantasy of adult control by provoking further assertions of authority. Ascham worries that the students usually favored by masters are temperamentally suited only to disrupt productivity, and he characterizes the usual favorite pupils through a pointed horticultural simile:

> They be like trees, that shewe forth, faire blossoms & broad leaves in spring time, but bring out small and not long lasting fruit in harvest time: and that onelie soch, as fall, and rotte, before they be ripe, and so, never, or seldom, cum to any good at all. (D1r)

These children appear as fruit trees, necessarily already grafted, tended, and otherwise prepared but whose innate qualities make them unproductive. They create the illusion of parental success and seem to be growing perfectly, but then fail to sustain expectations. As Ascham describes the rotting harvest, the simile for child figures becomes unclear. Are they the barren trees or the

[32] Exodus 20:12.
[33] On the wide application of the 5th Commandment, see Bushnell, (1996), 41-4; Gordon J. Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in Seventeenth-Century England: Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988).

spoiled fruits, the potential producers or the rotted products? Are these figurative children the sources of a breakdown in linear reproduction, or the inevitable result of paradoxical attitudes toward reproduction and complicating attempts to cling to the fantasy? Here the parental or pedagogical gardener disappears, leaving the child as both failed producer and bad product, responsible for his own collapse.

As in Ascham's example, when child figures function as points of contention over the extent and exercise of authority, they obtain agency themselves. Writers of didactic texts work to clearly categorize, to identify all of the key points for intervention, to note all of the potential parental mistakes and childhood character flaws. Attempts to exert authority or use child figures instrumentally fall apart into piecemeal uses of agency. The more detailed the adult interventions into maturation, the more ideas about childhood include capabilities, as well as weaknesses, and the more child figures seem to have innate qualities that cannot be stamped over like wax. Bushnell notes that humanist educators possessed contemporary gardeners' assurance that they could "shape any child's will and mind through careful culture," as is evident in Ascham's admonition to fathers to "graft[inge] in them learninge" or suffer the consequences. Yet this confidence required the concession that every child has inherent permanent qualities. Gardeners can graft apple trees and prune them up to a point, but there are qualities that cannot be changed. Recognizing such fixity results in recognizing "a child's capacity for resistance."[34] The acknowledgement of child agency as resistance to adult molding also instigates a further impetus to categorize and highlights the limited effectiveness of those interventions. As with culturing hybrid plants, the process of childrearing increasingly calls for the involvement of the adults/gardeners and simultaneously calls their ability to alter and control hybrids into question.

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[34] Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imaging Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003), 137. She makes a similar claim in *A Culture of Teaching,* 75-6.

Ascham recognizes the variation of qualities in his students and is aware of the ways versions of cultural reproduction interact to privilege particular qualities. Mimicry and malleability, key qualities of the quick-witted children he dislikes, may seem to be especially desirable traits. They offer the skill at copying and susceptibility to impression that repetitive reproduction would require, while allowing for variation and regular adult intervention. However, with them there is no guarantee that first influences will be as influential as the repetitive model supposes. Children may continue to absorb external influences as they grow. Precocious children with dexterity in copying their parents and repeating school exercises threaten to fail, but also to fool their elders. Talent for mimicry could allow children to model adult behavioral norms while potentially masking their own attitudes toward them.[35] Play that imitated adult actions could be mocking rather than aspirational.[36] Once children acquired adult skills, qualities that made them seem less anomalous, the uses to which they put those skills slipped even farther from adult control. Children may be molded to repeat their elders' lessons, but once they possess adult capabilities, who can predict what they will do with them?

When Ascham adds adults into the figurative mix sources of agency in the parent-child relationship become even more uncertain. Still using botanical language to articulate concerns about childrearing, he depicts the usual selection of precocious children for further schooling as a matter of impulse:

> Thies yong scholars be chosen coomonlie, as yong apples be chosen by children, in a faire garden about S. James tyde: a childe will chose a sweeting, because it is presentlie faire and pleasant, and refuse a Runnet, by cause it is than grene, hard,

[35] On attitudes toward children's mimicry, see Witmore 50-7. On the propensity of children to lie under adult direction, see 171-5. On their reliability as witnesses, see 195-202.
[36] On mocking play and parody demonstrating imitative talent, see Griffiths, 135; Kate Chedgzoy, "Introduction: What, are they children?" in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, & Robert Shaughnessy, eds. (Cambridge UP, 2007),15-31, esp. 27. On adults' desire to control children's play, see Orme, 164.

> and sowre, whan the one, if it be eaten, doth breed, both wormes and ill humors: the other if it stand his tyme, be ordered and kepte as it should, is holsom of it self, and helpeth to the good digestion of other meates: Sweetings, will receyve wormes, rotte, and dye on the tree, and never or seldom cum to the gathering for good and lasting store. (D2v)

According to Ascham, parents choose schoolboys the way children choose apples: spontaneously and without careful thought. He overtly condemns adults for behaving like children when performing parenting duties for their children, and the apple tropes further blur their subject positions. The problem is not some sort of adult regression, but rather the permeability of categories. As the parents become children, the tree-children that in the preceding passage threatened to become their own rotting fruit do become such "sweetings." The concluding thrust of this passage, that immediately pleasing children "never or seldom cum to the gathering for good and lasting store," echoes the earlier censure of decaying fruit-children that "never, or seldom, cum to any good at all." This textual parallel links the horticultural tropes in an extended conceit that unravels as more elements are added. The analogical identity of the trees becomes completely uncertain. If the parents are children choosing apple-schoolboys, then what are the trees that produced the fruit? Are they still also children? Children are everywhere and nowhere, and the power to produce is in highly paradoxical hands.

Rather than functioning simply as a directive to stop acting like babies and use reasoning in their decision-making, Ascham's tropes call into question adult agency and authority. In blaming adult choices for the unreliability of educational outcomes, he seems to grant them all control even as he questions their ability to handle it. Just as was the case in Wright's *Passions*, using child figures as tropes highlights the conceptual hybridity of children themselves. Not only are adults depicted as lacking judgment, like children, but also the child figures they are supposed to dominate become more obviously difficult to define. While Ascham's simile

presumes that children's impulses are transparent, his language depicts their potential for opacity. Children could be considered incapable of dissimulation because without reason they could not think ahead and so could not lie convincingly.[37] Yet since early modern children were often thought to be incapable of and unbounded by reason, their motivations are also troublingly obscure. In Ascham's extended simile, children as grafted trees whose seasonal growth could be disrupted are already a challenge to linear maturation. As apples they may seem to be more static objects, easier to handle, but even now they cannot be contained or stored, but rather degrade uncontrollably. Ascham's use of figurative language is meant to illustrate childrearing decisions that will better enable schoolmasters to mold idealized pupils. Instead, it amplifies the impossibility of such a task. As Juan Luis Vives writes, "the frute [the child] may grow wylde, and conteine in it fervent and mortal poison, to the utter destruction of the realme."[38] The bad apple rots itself and upsets the structure it was supposed to nourish.

IV. Sweetings and Runnets: Recursive Temporality

Roger Ascham's tree and apple similes also stress the temporal flexibility resulting from the interaction between the repetitive fantasy and hybrid reproduction. His tropes not only scramble the categories of parent and child, producer and produced, master and mastered, but also those of past, present, and future. Ascham accuses adults of acting like children because they select children that are most pleasing in the present, without considering their ability to provide future sustenance and stability. Just as child figures simultaneously support and make

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[37] Such proverbial lack of guile is apparent in commonplaces. See Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950), entries C300 and C328. See also Nigel Smith on Martha Hatfield's childish sincerity, 85-7; Witmore claims children cannot "self-interrupt," 36, 40.

[38] Vives, quoted in Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge UP, 1966).

demands upon adult agency, so they also serve as sites for temporal construction. They are heavily implicated in the dominant versions of temporality associated with each general reproductive model, and in the outcomes of the models' interaction. According to the repetitive ideal, children sustain a linear chronology. If maturation is necessary, it occurs teleologically. Whether imagined as the results of parthenogenesis or development, these ideal children make the future predictable by insuring the repetition of the past. As for hybridity, the pace of child development is fluid both because of intervention – grafting combinations, efforts to produce harvest out of season – and because hybrid children themselves grow by fits and starts with or without adult involvement. Precocious children grow too quickly, others grow too slowly, and childhood opacity may enable the skipping and scrambling of steps. Hybrid trajectories of development are many and volatile. As writers use each model to correct toward the other repetitive linearity meets fluidity, and the overall outcome is recursivity. Chaotic growth is checked by some repetition, but instead of proceeding linearly development loops between past, present, and future. Recursive temporality recalls the past but does not recreate it. It turns in unexpected directions but does not turn away into uncharted territory.

This temporal recursivity is apparent both in Ascham's version of parents as children and in Thomas Wright's own meditation on the attractions of sweet apples. Children were often assumed to lack foresight, and apples were a common source of immediate gratification. Ascham sets his scene in a particular moment, "in a faire garden about S. James tyde," and Wright depicts children as creatures concerned exclusively with the present:

> since we see not by faith present, those things we expect by hope, or abhorre by feare, in the meane time the devill, flesh, and world, delighting us with a present bait, we neglect that we should expect, and accept that we find next: not unlike to children who preferre an aple before their inheritance. (312)

For Wright, the most important things are never perceptible in the present, and what is present is temptation. Even if we cannot comprehend those expected hopes or evils, he urges a focus on the future, instead of "the meane time" of the present. Ascham's botany assumes specific future outcomes and brings them into the present. The future results of choosing either a sweeting or a runnet are certain, and only immaturity prevents parents from choosing rightly: "if [a sweeting] be eaten, doth breed, both wormes and ill humors: the other if it stand his tyme, be ordered and kepte as it should, is holsom of it self." This certainty about what types of apples rot and which store well, this certainty that focusing on the inheritance is worth giving up an apple, entwines future and present and raises questions about the past. This looping from present through good and bad futures and back into the past exemplifies recursive temporality.[39]

Both versions of the condemnation of child figures for taking an apple invoke the origins of the ills these children face. Indeed, the children in both passages stand in for adults behaving badly, indicating the central position children hold in conceptions of cultural reproduction. Although it may be more overt in Wright's formulation, these passages are both about understanding the world, and about constructing means of insuring personal and societal stability. Both authors, by denigrating present choices and emphasizing future outcomes, expose uncertainties about origins. This creates a recursive life cycle for their child figures and the society they represent. In Ascham's passage, the origins of childhood decay - whether the child is figured as wormy fruit or unproductive tree - remain uncertain. The fault could lay with the

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[39] Wright's wording of children's preference for apples echoes Stephen Bateman's edition of the 13th century Franciscan friar Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopedia. Children "make more sorrow and woe, and weepe more for the losse of an apple, than for the losse of their heritage . . ." Indeed, "they loue an apple more than golde." *Batman vppon Bartholome, his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended: with such additions as are requisite, vnto euery seuerall booke: taken foorth of the most approued authors, the like heretofore not translated in English* (London: Thomas East, 1582), O1r.

children themselves, the parents, negative external influences, or with original sin, which necessarily touches all three. While Wright is more overt about the link between the child's apple and "the devill, flesh, and world, delighting us with a present bait," both authors' language of apple, tree, and sin evokes the Garden of Eden. As noted above, concern about innate sinfulness is one version of the fear of contagion spread through exponential repetition. It is an issue for which correction toward hybrid reproduction is useful and child agency is an acceptable outcome. In terms of linearity, the beginning of the fallen world is a past one does not want reiterated into the future. If the first choice cannot be unmade, we certainly want to avoid more choices like it. Yet both Ascham and Wright draw attention to the fall by allusion and obvious omission. These connotations both raise the specter of the past and refuse to align it with the present, foreclosing any linear progression. The resulting recursive trajectory cites the past, but does not return to it; it calls for a focus on the future, but by mixing future and present puts certainty out of reach. Even the supposedly transparent, immediate present is confused with outcomes that children were not supposed to foresee. Yet the child figures enable recursivity. In fact, particularly in Ascham's extended horticultural trope, the actual origins of the children remain uncertain. Given the association of child figures with both trees and apples, the children may be read as producing themselves, which certainly challenges both the ideal of lineal descent and hybridity's grafting.[40]

This temporal instability is also apparent in the contrast between dependence on children's inevitable adult future and the need to identify the right moments for present intervention. On the one hand, children grow up. As Keith Thomas observes: "The process of

[40] This is in contrast to Lee Edelman's articulation of the contemporary idealized Child, which limits what is conceivable and enables a linear historical narrative and unitary sense of society. See *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

social reproduction requires that children be turned into adults" (63). And children do reliably undergo this transformation. Adults could look to themselves to confirm such comfortably repetitive information. They grew up, and surely what they grew into was exactly what had always been intended. On the other hand, insuring that children progressed on schedule, for example determining the appropriate age to begin formal schooling, was an area of major concern. The need to begin inculcating good principles immediately had to be balanced against the need to teach children according to their capabilities. If adult intervention is not timed correctly, their agency will be undermined. For example, if children are exposed to articles of faith before they can comprehend them, they may perform the necessary piety while developing their own variant theology. This was the case for Elizabeth Isham, who recalls her early 17th century childhood in a manuscript autobiography. At age eight, she learned that God could intervene in the earthly world, and she relied on this refuge from her parents: "praying unto thee to avoyde my mothers displeasure, even for my nedle when I had lost it upon other the like accations I haveing prayed and my desire being accomplished I rejoysed much at it supossing it to be thy doeing."[41] Conversely, if instruction does not begin at a young age, when children are old enough to grasp difficult concepts they may have lost their malleability and be too resistant to accept them. As Ascham asserts: "Yong Graftes grow not onelie sonest, but also fairest, and bring alwayes forth the best and sweetest" (E3r). Training must happen early because the young are so naturally inclined to absorb good principles. Children's association with the future and the present leads to contradictory childrearing suggestions that are all but impossible to follow.

As the examples of Ascham, Wright, and others demonstrate, concentrations of paradoxical tropes around child figures are symptomatic of efforts to rearticulate versions of

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[41] Elizabeth Isham, "Autobiography" ca. 1650s, Robert H. Taylor Collection RTC01 no. 62, Princeton University Library, ed. Elizabeth Clarke, transcribed by Alice Eardley.

cultural reproduction. A seemingly unavoidable slide from practicable advice into a profusion of figurative language occurs again and again around issues of child development and reproduction. Attempts to correct away from the potential pitfalls of hybrid and repetitive reproduction by applying tropes simply amplify a recursive narrative of development and the paradoxical agency of child figures. Robert Cleaver and John Dod's popular *A godlie forme of householde government* exemplifies such a conglomeration of numerous commonly used similes and scriptural citations. Their instructions condense in one place many of the major tropes and issues contained within the discourse of childrearing, and so are worth quoting at length:

> And therefore, all Parents are diligently to instruct and teach their Children, the first principles of CHRIST his religion, so soone as be Age, they are able to perceiue and vnderstand the same, that they may (as it were) sucke in godlinesse, together with their mothers milke, and straight-wayes after their Cradle, may be nourished with the tender foode of Vertue, towards that blessed life. To have godly Children (no doubt) is the greatest Treasure that may be. For in the Children doe the Parents liue, (in a manner) after their death. And if they bee well instructed, Cathechised, and virtuously brought vp, GOD is honoured by them, the Commonwealth is aduanced; yea, their parents, and all other, fare the better for them. They are their parents to comfort, next vnto God, their ioy, staff, and vpholding of their Age: and therefore Parents ought to begin betimes to plant vertue in their childrens breasts: for late sowing, bringeth a late, or neuer apt Haruest. Young braunches will bow as a man will haue them, but old Trees will sooner breake then bow.[42]

The straightforward narrative of this passage asserts that children are malleable and become less flexible as they age, so training them young is necessary to ingrain ideal traits. If parents do this, the children will grow up to support their parents, their faith, and their country but remain clearly under the control of these superiors. As Griffiths puts it: "Respectable parents who raised upright youth were a blessing not only for the present generation, but also for later generations who profited from their virtuous offspring" (390). Stability and prosperity extend not only across

[42] Robert Cleaver and John Dod, *A godlie forme of householde government: for the ordering of private families, according to the direction of Gods word* . . . (London: Thomas Man, 1612), Q3v-Q4r. This is a revision of an earlier manual by Robert Cawdry according to Stone, 136.

generations, but also into the future, creating a line that actually makes the future foreseeable. The temporal trajectory seems linear, and children appear passive. However, the passage betrays anxiety about the viability of this story.

The contradictory tropes Dod and Cleaver apply not only create instructions that are virtually impossible to follow collectively, they also demonstrate the fraught nature of developmental timing. The authors emphasize the malleability of young children through metaphors of nursing and flexible tree boughs. These children are treasures and staffs because they will sustain their parents in life, provide parental immortality, advance the glory of God, and support the commonwealth, assuming their flexible natures harden at the right rate. But when, for example, is the "Age, they are able to perceiue and vnderstand" the "first principles" of Christianity? As is noted above, questions abounded regarding the age of reason in children and youths and whether reason or other capabilities were really necessary to begin instruction on religion or any other subject. The nursing metaphor makes the all-important issue of timing even more vague, since it emphasizes inculcation from the very beginning, a course that may or may not be possible. Children might learn patterns of behavior that will serve them as they grow, or they may simply learn how to simulate religious beliefs. There is also contradiction in the pairing of the nursing and sowing language. Consuming virtue, which serves as vital nourishment, is rather different from having seeds of virtue planted inside one and eventually harvested. The payoff of nursing – a full stomach – is immediate, while planting, tending, and harvesting stretches over seasons. And, as evidenced in the variation of preceding passages from other texts, the point in a life at which harvest time arrives is uncertain. Virtue initially appears as a natural first food, something easily imbibed; however, the planting analogy and the emphasis on the importance of timing makes it seem much more uncertain. The child's own growth and that of

virtue become easily dissevered things. Thus multiple chronologies emerge, and infancy blurs with maturity.

Dod and Cleaver also combine the language of nursing with that of husbandry to stress the importance of parental work to ingrain virtue. The sowing imagery introduces implications of agency, as sowing and harvesting perhaps is performed by parents, but may also be done by growing children. Additionally, the planting imagery contrasts with the bending of flexible tree boughs. While the one may still be cast as nurturing, bending is a much more forceful act. The danger that adults might end up breaking their children if they wait too long adds aggression to this assertion of authority. Yet these broken or bent staffs are supposed to support their parents, the church, and the society. Dod and Cleaver have certainly composed very unstable props. And these children are not only intended to prop up their elders and the world they live in, but also to defend it.

The most dangerous element in Dod and Cleaver's assertion of total adult control is their casting of children as weapons. The passage quoted above continues directly into this militaristic conclusion. As I have argued, child instrumentality shades into potential agency in the context of sweeping claims for adult authority, and children in the guise of arrows pose a more overt, violent threat to cultural norms than apple trees. Yet the arrow simile is the end result of all the parental effort Dod and Cleaver require:

> And therefore, as Arrowes are an excellent weapon of defence, to a strong, and a mightie man that can shoot them with courage: Euen so children godly brought vp, are a special protection and defence to their parents. And as the strong mans quiuer, the better it is furnished with chosen shaftes, the better defence he hath: So likewise, the more godly children that parents haue, the greater is their ioy and happiness: Yea and further, as arrows are at the commandement of the owner to be vsed; euen so children well taught, are at the command of godly parents. (Q4r)

The decisive "therefore" follows directly on the assertion about flexible boughs: "Young braunches will bow as a man will haue them, but old Trees will sooner breake then bow." How this claim points to arrows as the key to familial defense is beyond me. This conjunction gives the impression that flexible children may make pliant, ineffective arrow shafts. Dod and Cleaver's phasing also threatens that if children are "godly brought vp" they will prove to be not just peaceful staffs, but contradictorily violent figures. Even if parents do everything right, the work of aiming their children at the enemy without cutting themselves remains.

Emphasizing the need for plentiful armaments may seem a strange way of encouraging fertility, when so many horticultural metaphors are at hand. Dod and Cleaver draw the simile of child as arrow from Psalm 127:

> Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord:
> and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
> As arrows are in the hand of a might man;
> so are children of the youth.
> Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:
> they shall not be ashamed,
> but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. (3-5)

They add the overt emphasis on developing children as weapons wholly "at the command of godly parents" and make those weapons strictly defensive. They also make the likelihood of violent action to defend the parental world explicit. For Dod and Cleaver there is shooting, instead of speaking. Their simile aligns "a mightie man that can shoot them with courage" with parents raising children, a linkage that concedes the difficulty of the task the authors have set for parents. That difficulty stems not simply from paradoxical period attitudes toward children and childrearing, but also from the danger child figures pose to models of cultural reproduction. There is no reason why child figures need be either exclusively defensive, or exclusively in the control of their elders. If all of this godly training, if actually performed correctly, creates a

dangerous weapon, can the arrow not go astray? Surely children could be poorly aimed and shot, wreaking havoc on the places and people they are supposed to defend. The child-weapons Dod and Cleaver claim are, as all of the troping indicates, hardly under their control. The arcs of these arrows are precursors of both temporally recursive turns and destructive child agency.[43]

V. Chapter Summaries

The chapters that follow take up the problems posed by child figures, their strange agency and temporality in distinct but interlocking ways. Chapter 1, "Lack: Children and Ghosts" and Chapter 2, "Excess: Webster's Prodigious Children," establish these as problems child figures pose for cultural reproduction and analyze potential solutions. Lack and excess invoke those dangerous reproductive outcomes, sterility and monstrous profusion. The project progress from explorations of the problems of lack and excess, to readings of attempts to incorporate those problems into versions of cultural reproduction. Chapter 3, "Misappropriation: Richard III's Baby Teeth," and Chapter 4, "Circulation: Foundlings and Fostering in Spenser," demonstrate efforts to use these concerns on personal and larger, societal scales, respectively. Ultimately, and for different reasons, both of these strategies fail to enable personal or a more general social continuity.

As its title indicates, Chapter 1, "Lack: Children and Ghosts," uses literary encounters between children and ghosts as a lens for approaching the reproductive problem of childhood lack. It focuses on John Marston's children's company play *Antonio's Revenge* and on Ben Jonson's poems about deceased children. Childhood lack in the context of this project can refer

[43] Today, Psalm 127 serves as the titular scriptural text for the Quiverfull movement, a "fundamentalist pronatalist theology." See Kathryn Jones, "All God's Children," *Salon*, 14 March 2009 < www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2009/03/14/joyce_quiverfull.html>

to their absence, but generally denotes the ways in which children could be thought of as lacking something necessary for functioning in society. Ghosts, too, are lacking figures, and like child figures they move between life and death, and between the past, present, and future. Thus child figures pose questions about how to make them fully adult and how to restrict them to a linear progression of development. Marston and Jonson depict efforts to supply qualities child figures lack through supplemental repetition, including emphases on lineal inheritance and common pedagogical techniques. The repetitive nature of the genres in question, revenge tragedy and epitaph or elegy, highlight this strategy. In *Antonio's Revenge*, the cycle of vengeful violence is disrupted by a boy who refuses to accept the linearity of inheritance. In his paternal elegies, Jonson works to contain and memorialize his children, yet, paradoxically, in order to bury them properly he must revivify them. Thus supplemental repetition, rather than inculcating missing qualities, further contributes to children's temporal mobility.

In Chapter 2, "Excess: Webster's Child Prodigies," excess names children's many paradoxical qualities and the strategy of layering on tropes as a means of labeling those children. The chapter concentrates on John Webster's tragedies *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* and their differing examinations of ways figurative language interacts with child characters. I frame the problem of childhood excess through the multiplicity of the term "prodigy," which can refer to a precocious child, a monstrosity, and a prophetic omen. In *The White Devil,* the tropes applied to the precocious Giovanni, rather than shaping him, point to his agency. Giovanni rejects his adult role models and becomes the play's most prominent authoritative figure. The rhetoric of adult characters in *The Duchess of Malfi,* does work, if in volatile ways. Webster's combinations of the Duchess's silent, seemingly passive children, language about monstrous births, and tropes about child's play facilitate child figures' transformation into monstrous

composites with disruptive agency. They are monstrous in that, similar to early modern monsters described in pamphlets, they function like highly interpretable texts. Popular interpretations of monstrous births were often much debated and, by influencing attitudes toward neighbors, rulers, religious and political causes, could have dangerous consequences. These child characters become embodiments of both plays' multiple versions of childhood, weak but also potentially masterful.

In Chapter 3, "Misappropriation: Richard III's Baby Teeth," I argue that Shakespeare creates in Richard a character aware of the problems of lack and excess, one that takes advantage of them in constructing his own developmental narrative. Richard combines paradoxical stories of his monstrous nativity, born both prematurely and after such a long gestation that he sported prenatal teeth. He also deploys childish characteristics exemplified by other child figures that proliferate throughout the entire first tetralogy. This composite persona enables him to sidestep expectations for adult and kingly behavior and to absorb his enemies' attacks. However, he also attempts to categorize and restrict the other child figures he encounters, recognizing childhood multiplicity only as it can be applied to himself. Thus, he ultimately reenacts the problem of using child figures instrumentally to attain a teleological end, a practice that attributes agency to those other children and leads to the shattering of Richard's own self-presentation. The princes in the Tower, Edward V and the Duke of York, actively pose a threat to their duplicitous uncle. The princes highlight the ineffectiveness of their uncle's classifying tactics and undermine his personal narrative by highlighting its internal instabilities. Long before they appear as ghosts to taunt their uncle, they contribute to his breakdown before the battle of Bosworth and his eventual defeat.

Finally, Chapter 4, "Circulation: Foundlings and Fostering in Spenser," examines Spenser's depiction of child circulation as a means of producing predictable child figures and thus stable cultural reproduction. Fostering appears in *The Faerie Queene* as a contradictory means of realigning children with the values of their ancestors, while eschewing inherited ills, by raising them outside their biological families. The children, such as Belphoebe and Amoret, Ruddymane, and the bruin baby, circulate through and ideally integrate elements of repetitive and hybrid reproduction. While *A View of the Present State of Ireland* condemns Irish fostering and wet-nursing practices as sources of degenerative contagion, circulation also appears in the text as a means of making Irish children more English, guarding children of the Pale and distributing power. Circulation's fraught position in the political texts helps to highlight its similarly problematic position in the epic poem. In both works, circulation does not produce children capable of insuring social stability. Spenser's circulated child figures reflect the influences through which they cycle, and they do not directly threaten to undermine the expectations of their elders. However, the circulation that forms them leaves them unable to provide that stability – a consist link with their parents' norms and the ability to maintain and reproduce them – that is the aim of their fostering.

CHAPTER I

LACK: CHILDREN AND GHOSTS

I. Walking Through Walls

When the ghost of a murdered father appears to his son his call for vengeance is a repetitive demand that focuses on blood shared in common and on blood spilt: "Antonio, revenge! / I was empoisoned by Piero's hand; / Revenge my blood; take spirit, gentle boy; / Revenge my blood!"[44] (III.ii.34-7). He offers his son a new form of intoxication to replace the poison, and to some extent proffers himself as that "spirit." The father relies on the repetitive fantasy and its promise that children will insure parental immortality. However, this stage father and son share something other than family blood. John Marston wrote *Antonio's Revenge* (1599-1600) for the Children of St. Paul's. The father, Andrugio, the son, Antonio, indeed all of the parts, were played by boy actors, although only one character is a child. Early modern children were often thought to be excellent mimics, a skill that both enabled them to grow up to be like their elders and made them good performers. Yet this skill at copying, what repetitive reproduction seems to require, allowed boys in these roles to depict violations of the linear chronology that fantasy strives to build. This play stresses lineage and repetitive inheritance, yet Marston's original child actors played at being young and old, alive and dead. They crossed the same boundaries as the character of the ghost, who is himself a kind of child figure. Their acting abilities serve to highlight this connection. Not for nothing were early modern actors sometimes called "shadows," another telling term for ghosts.

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[44] All John Marston quotations from *The Malcontent and Other Plays,* ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford UP, 1997).

Child figures and ghosts crossed textual paths in the 16th and 17th centuries with fair regularity. In Marston's play and in Ben Jonson's elegies "On My First Daughter" and "On My First Sonne" (1616) these intersections highlight the similarities between the two groups. Both early modern children and ghosts were often presumed to be missing something, something that prevented them from functioning in society and from being fully formed adult individuals. This shared sense of lack enables ghost and child figures to cross numerous, particularly temporal, boundaries. This chapter's coda on Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), in which there are plenty of ghosts but all plans for procreation fail, highlights the way such timely movements disrupt reproduction.[45] Ghosts cross the boundary between life and death to retell the past and so intervene in the present and future. Children were often expected to inherit and repeat the worlds of their parents. They were supposed to enable a particular future and while also allowing adults to recall and recreate the long dead past. Carol Rutter goes so far as to assert that a child's "duty" is "to translate the past into the future" (38). Early modern children also supposedly made choices purely for immediate gratification, thus living entirely in the present.[46] Both groups alter chronology, bringing other times into the present. Ghosts were thought to walk because something had been lacking in their deaths. These deaths were often violent and always lacking in prayerful calm and preparedness. So, the revenants' restlessness might be assuaged by attending to the factors that disturbed their passing. Children, on the other hand, simply came into the world missing something. Their lack of reason, foresight, and other fully adult qualities presented a problem for the repetitive fantasy in particular. This lack called for interaction between the reproductive models, for hybrid additions grafting on adult qualities. Marston and Jonson's works depict supplementation through yet more repetition to bolster the repetitive ideal.

[45] For example *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, numerous revenge tragedies and parental elegies
[46] On the proverbial spontaneity of children, see Witmore, 70; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, O1r.

They play out the idea that children's aptitude for repetition, copying the examples of their elders and their school exercises, would ultimately supply the missing qualities. They further emphasize lineal inheritance as though more iteration will fill the empty vessels. In these texts, adults like Andrugio's ghost and Jonson's poetic speaker demand that the repetitive fantasy actually function. However, in attempting to use these child figures instrumentally characters and authors alike grant them agency. Further, the addition of yet more repetition simply adds to the temporal loops to which child figures are already prone. It leads to a recursive temporality that, while preventing completely disjointed leaps and bounds, strengthens the boundary-crossing abilities of child figures.

Childhood lack, the sense that children were missing something, was variously represented in paradoxical early modern views of the group. The tropes comparing children to animals and inanimate objects indicate such an assumption. Period pedagogical, conduct, and religious works also stress childhood deficiencies such as reason, judgment, and morals.[47] Michael Witmore argues that in both popular and learned discourse children served as "an exemplary figure for all that humans lack when they are stripped of reason and experience" (15). Writing on these deficiencies, Richard Mulcaster asserts:

> *Reason* directs years, and *roate* rules in youth, *reason* calls in sense and feeling of paine, *roate* runnes on apase and mindeth nothing else but either play in the ende, or a litle praise for a great deale of paines. Now praise never wearies, nor paine ever but wearies, and play pleaseth children with any, yea the greatest iniquitie of circumstance, whether the weather lower, or the maister frowne, so he will give them leave to go. (D4r)[48]

Mulcaster identifies what these children lack and an educational system by which that lack may be compensated for and ultimately remedied. Yet by the end of this passage youth appears to

[47] See for example the previously mentioned Ascham, C4r-D2r; Dod and Cleaver, Q3v-4r; Wright, B4r-v.
[48] Italics original.

have compensations of its own. The schoolboys Mulcaster describes lack not only the reason to really comprehend the lessons they must learn by rote, but also the reason to logically weigh the costs and benefits of their schoolwork. They can be set great tasks and be given little reward, and will take limited, present benefits over any understanding of past pains or future recompense. Yet despite these deficiencies there is a joyfulness about the children Mulcaster depicts. Their minds run in the direction of play, so that even as they are characterized as living in the present they are granted mobility. Further, the alliteration of "play pleaseth children" seems at least equal to "a litle praise for a great deale of paines." These children are wonderfully impervious to poor weather and an irritable master. Their lack of reason does not seem terribly inhibiting, nor does the enforcement of a repetitive pedagogical system seem too much of a burden. Even as a particular lack is identified to explain seemingly illogical child behavior, that lack morphs into something that identifies difference but does not make children less than adult. The problem lack poses for cultural reproduction seems not to be such a problem for the children themselves. This sense of unique children's perspectives, and even abilities, enabled by lack also appears in Marston and Jonson's works.

A different version of lack proved similarly enabling for ghostly figures. The issue that made period ghosts less than human was not simply the fact that they were dead, but rather what was missing when they died. Their sudden, often bloody deaths provide an evident reason for their ability to cross boundaries. Beyond the ghosts of elegy and revenge tragedy that I discuss, this was the case for non-literary apparitions of all stripes. Anyone who did not enjoy a "good death," a death spiritually at peace with God and humanity, was at risk for ghostly persistance.[49] Marston and Tourneur's ghosts have crimes to avenge and personal torments that make barriers

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[49] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Early Modern England* (Oxford UP, 2004), Chapter 6, 232-264.

permeable. The sudden, shocking nature of the deaths Jonson describes also works to enable ghostly returns. Ghosts were understood to have loose ends, and one of the reasons they returned was to uncover secrets, telling stories both about themselves and about the living.[50] For example, in 1623 a poltergeist and visions of a deceased Wiltshire tailor led to the revelation that the ghost's son had been withholding legacies from his sisters.[51] The deaths of those who become ghosts are missing a key piece that would translate them from transgressive figures into something classifiable. The ghosts of revenge tragedies, like Andrugio, often return to witness the rewriting of their pasts, while elegies like Jonson's revise child deaths. The problem ghosts pose seems solvable through the retrospective identification of the missing piece.

When the ghosts are themselves children, as happens multiple times in these texts, boundaries become even more fluid. Like adults who did not enjoy a "good death," any children facing death could be considered at risk due to the fleeting footing their souls had attained in the human world.[52] This particular mobility highlights and contributes to the temporal multiplicity of child figures expected to connect and embody the past and the future. It also further reveals a contemporary sense of children as lacking an earthly anchor to the world. For all of the temporal itinerancy of ghostly children like the ghost of Andrugio – and his performer – and Jonson's children, child figures do not need to die badly, or to undergo any trauma at all, in order to cross the same boundaries between past, present, and future. Child figures step out of history without losing anything.

[50] Laura Gowing, "The Haunting of Susan Lay: Servants and Mistresses in Seventeenth-Century England," *Gender and History,* 14:2 (August, 2002), 183-201, esp. 195.
[51] *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murder and Robbery . . . with the most Strange, Wonderful and Miraculous Discovery of the Same,* (Edinburgh, 1694).
[52] The unbaptised were at especially high risk. Jacqueline Simpson, "The Folklore of Infant Deaths: Burials, Ghosts, and Changelings," in *Representations of Childhood Death,* eds. Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 11-25.

Nonetheless, the similarities between children and ghosts imply that if some lost explanatory factor could be located and rearticulated the strange temporality of child figures could be remedied. Writers like Mulcaster regularly assert that proper adult examples and instruction will supply childhood absences and correct their faults. That is, children's souls and memories are "a treasurie" that should "be furnished, with the very best." It is as though there is an empty room inside them that adults must make an active attempt to fill: "For in default of the better, the worse will take chaire, and bid it selfe welcome" (D2r). Such emphases on filling vacant space and supplying missing materials are less a confrontation with contradictions to the repetitive ideal of reproduction and more a strategy for recuperating cultural continuity. This viewpoint explains children's apparently natural skill in imitation by relying on that skill to enable their proper maturation: "in the litle young soules, first we finde, a capacity to perceive that which is taught them, and to imitate the foregoer" (D2r). If more repetition is needed to provide what is missing, then surely children imitate as compensation for what they lack. Copying authorities from parents to school lessons may supply that something missing and turn children into the adults early modern society needs them to be. The idealized repetition that is made impossible by childhood lack is supplemented by repetitive pedagogical and disciplinary techniques. However, as the example of Paul's Boys has already briefly indicated, this additional repetition only enables child figures' temporal shifts. It is the child actors' skills at repetition that enable them to play so many ages. By copying many models, child figures bring other times into the present.

The recursive movement of child figures become particularly apparent when they are compared to, and even analyzed as, ghosts. Paying attention to the past as it appears in the present is what Jacques Derrida calls *hauntology*, and it is a move that may be facilitated by child

figures as much as by ghosts. This combination of haunting and ontology is a matter of "thinking historicity through haunting" and breaks up any illusions of straightforward development.[53] Derrida asserts that ghosts are a matter of "Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time* makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time and a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history."[54] Ghosts disrupt history, narrative, even growth, as a linear sequence of events. Repetition here creates not copies, not lines, but rather disconnected occasions. This version of repetition highlights the ways that trying to supplement children with repetition to make them images of their parents' world simply complicates their temporal position. Each iteration contributes another moment that is and is not a version of the past; every repetition links disparate times even as they appear singular and self-contained. Derrida's use of the term "staging" highlights the way that both ghosts and children perform the setting of a scene, whether in a play or in a text. They seem to prepare for something to come and at the same foreclose the possibility of progression. Even when the children of Marston's and Jonson's works repeat, recalling parental pasts, mimicking the adults around them, or seeming to guarantee future prosperity, they are not linear replications. Instead, they serve to emphasize inconsistent trajectories of development, looping backward and forward over past and future contradictions. They are as "Altogether other" as any ghost.

The temporal movement of child figures is not impelled simply by the expectations of their elders, but rather indicates agency. Ghosts may be compelled to walk by the nature of their deaths, but they make choices. Similarly, children may be subject to the demands of their elders,

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[53] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 76.
[54] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the state of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

but through those demands they come to stake claims of their own. Recalling the way that early modern ghosts could be explained by their commonly violent or sudden deaths, for Carla Freccero, ghosts are signs of previous trauma.[55] She argues that for "writers engaged in an ethical relation to a traumatic past event, the trace that is also a calling, a demand, a messianic wish or hope, takes the troubled form of a ghost – neither altogether present nor quite absent" (85). As Freccero implies, the trace of other times takes on its own present agency. Her ghosts call on those who write them, hope and even demand responses, much as Andrugio places demands on his son. Similarly, through their boundary crossings child figures call on their elders. Ghosts that return may misremember the past and demand a similarly altered future. Child figures intervene to require other such alterations. In their plays and poetry Marston and Jonson do not, perhaps cannot, keep their children within bounds. Like the ghosts they encounter, and sometimes become, these child figures walk through walls.

II. A Tattletale Postmortem: *Antonio's Revenge*

Paradoxically, the most avid proponent of the repetitive ideal in *Antonio's Revenge* is the ghost who by his very nature transgresses boundaries and chronologies. When Andrugio first appears to Antonio, Marston introduces the ghost's particular emphasis on lineal inheritance:

> Thy mother yields consent
> To be his wife and give his blood a son,
> That made her husbandless and doth complot
> To make her sonless; . . .
> Thou vigour of my youth, juice of my love,
> Seize on revenge . . . III.ii.39-42, 44-45

[55] Freccero, 76. David Lee Miller sees the child of Jonson's "On My First Sonne" as an "avatar of the trauma." See "Writing the Specular Son: Jonson, Freud, Lacan, and the (K)not of Masculinity," *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature,* eds. Valeria Finucci & Regina Schwartz (Princeton UP, 1994), 233-260, 239.

The unnamed "he" here is the villain, who is courting Andrugio's widow. For the ghost, this wife and mother matters only as a means of transmission. Andrugio asserts that only he is capable of fathering her children and so establishes the one step, asexual assumptions of the repetitive fantasy. The ghost casts Antonio as a continuation of his father's youth - the body in which his ghostly form still has life. Despite the ghost's insistence on the functionality of idealized reproduction, neither his vengeful influence nor the son's most earnest demonstrations of filial devotion can prevent the play's ghostly children from crossing and unsettling boundaries on which the repetitive fantasy depends. The interactions of the play's fathers and sons might seem to emphasize the importance of repetitive reproduction – the need for a son and heir to continue a father's work and obey his instructions. Yet, in addition to their temporal mobility, Marston's children create a chaos of possible familial roles. Child figures variously take on the positions of parents and their children, instead of allowing for lineal inheritance. By failing to work as tools for meeting out vengeance, they unsettle assumptions of authority and familial structure.

Antonio's Revenge features three pairs of fathers and sons, all played by children. The play's most prominent ghost and key instigator of revenge is Andrugio, Antonio's murdered father. The villain is Piero, father to a young son, Julio, and to Antonio's love, Mellida. He is responsible for the murders of Andrugio and Felice, the son of the courtier Pandulpho. Marston's child figures include not only the literal child character, Julio, but also Antonio and Piero, who were not only played by children but are also characterized by the playwright's language as such. This play is the sequel to the comic *Antonio and Mellida* (1599-1600), in which the titular characters plight their troth, enabled by a brief respite in the animosity between Andrugio and Piero. The revenge tragedy immediately reverses this conclusion, as it opens with Piero reveling in the murders he has just committed. He uses Felice's body to cast doubt on the chastity of his

own daughter, intending to destroy Antonio's happiness. Meanwhile, he also plots to marry Andrugio's widow. While Pandulpho struggles with a stoic response to his son's death and Antonio rages for his father, Piero persecutes his daughter and neglects his young son, Julio. Piero's own violent murder by the revengers headed by Antonio includes having his tongue plucked out, then being presented with his son's corpse in a kind of Thyestean banquet. Finally, the revengers declare their intention to enter a monastery, leaving open-ended the play's gestures toward working through the nature of generational ties.

The recursive temporal movement of child figures in *Antonio's Revenge* emerges despite, and perhaps even because of, the repetitiveness imbedded in its generic status. As a revenge tragedy, it partakes of the genre's repetitive one-upmanship, each violent act reproducing itself in bloody responses. [56] In addition, the plot of Marston's play is often derivative, repeating prior and contemporaneous works. Its similarities with *The Spanish Tragedy, Titus Andronicus, Richard III*, and, especially, *Hamlet* are much noted.[57] Adding to the play's repetitive tendencies is its position as a children's company play. The child actors play parts, mimicking adults and reproducing entertainment for a grownup audience.[58] They recreate the worlds imagined by the

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[56] It features many conventional elements of revenge tragedy, but not the death of the avenger. See Phoebe S. Spinrad, "The Sacralization of Revenge in *Antonio's Revenge*." *Comparative Drama.* 39:2 (Summer 2005): 169-85, esp. 169; Charles A. and Elaine S. Hallett, "*Antonio's Revenge* and the Integrity of the Revenge Tragedy Motifs," *Studies in Philology,* 76 (1979): 366-86, esp. 386.

[57] For example: G. K. Hunter, ed., *Antonio's Revenge,* Regents Drama Series (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965), xx; W. Reavley Gair, ed., *Antonio's Revenge*, The Revels Plays (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978); Lucy Munro, "Coriolanus and the Little Eyases: They Boyhood of Shakespeare's Hero," *Shakespeare and Childhood,* eds. Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge UP, 2007), 80-95, esp. 83.

[58] Witmore, 111

playwright, the choirmaster, the prompter, and might seem to be commodities entirely under their control.[59]

The mimetic nature of *Antonio's Revenge* and its actors has been grasped critically as a strategy for coping with assumed deficiency. As with Mulcaster's pupils learning by rote, the repetitions of the play and its first performers are often used as a means of identifying what they lack and sometimes of explaining away the play's apparent flaws. In a scholarly context these flaws may include choppy, hyperbolic language, wild plot turns, and a lack of moral compass. Sometimes scholars see the play's deficits as deliberate, as when some argue that Marston is intentionally parodying the revenge tragedy genre and rejecting justifiable retribution. Debates about whether the play is moral, immoral, or amoral, a serious play or a parody, regularly stress or seek to explain its deficits.[60] The play's repetitions allow it to be read as both innately lacking and aesthetically whole. Similarly, childhood deficiency has been seen critically as enabling the child actors' mimetic skill and ironic tone in the drama they presented. The dissonance between the boy actors' bodies and the roles they played is regularly noted as particularly amenable to the

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[59] Claire M. Busse, " 'Pretty Fictions' and 'Little Stories': Child Actors on the Early Modern Stage," in *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800.* eds. Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 75-100, esp. 78-9.

[60] On morality see: Philip J. Ayers "Marston's Antonio's Revenge: The Morality of the Revenging Hero." *SEL* 12.2 (Spring, 1972): 359-374, esp. 359. Barbara J. Baines, "*Antonio's Revenge:* Marston's Play on Revenge Plays," *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900.* 23:2 (Spring, 1983): 277-294, esp. 294; Hunter; Karen Robertson, "*Antonio's Revenge*: The Tyrant, the Stoic, and the Passionate Man," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 4 (1989), 91-106, esp. 103-4; Spinrad, 172. On the play's seriousness see: Hallett; Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton UP, 1940), 124-25; George Geckle, *John Marston's Drama: Themes, Images, Sources* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980); R. A. Foakes, "John Marston's Fantastical Plays: *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*," *Philological Quarterly*. 41.1 (January 1962): 229-39, esp. 229-30; Baines, 277; Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (U of Chicago P, 1984).

often-satirical plays they performed.[61] Witmore argues that this kind of duality was particularly accessible with child actors because of everything they lacked: "the presumption of the child's cognitive incompleteness meant that his body could not be entirely enrolled in the contractual terms of a given fiction" (102). Children are thus put in their place as creatures lacking agency, and that very absence anticipates a predictable future adulthood even as it pokes fun at adult foibles. Critical emphasis on children's incompleteness strives to explain their effectiveness as actors or to shore up perceived flaws in Marston's plays. These strategies recall early modern efforts to buttress cultural reproduction by turning the problem – children are skilful mimics, indicating that they are not fully human – into a solution – if they mimic, they will be.[62]

Yet the young actors of these plays themselves, as they may now be imagined, undermine such critical and early modern pedagogical strategies for resolving problems of apparent lack. If early modern child actors were presumed to lack reason, this absence does not seem to have highlighted the artificial nature of the drama, but rather further blurred the lines between the play and real worlds. This may be seen, for example in the comedy that Marston wrote before *Antonio's Revenge. Antonio and Mellida* includes an induction in which the boy actors come

[61] Busse, 82; Joseph Loewenstein, "Marston's Gorge and the Question of Formalism," *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, eds. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 102; Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia UP, 1977), 109; Witmore*,* 107-111.The argument for burlesque in child performance, specifically in Marston, is famously articulated by Foakes, 229-39. Lucy Munro argues that the idea of a distinct, ironic acting style for children's companies is exaggerated. See *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge UP 2005), 2-3.

[62] On links between pedagogy and theatrical performance, see for example Lynn Enterline, "Rhetoric, Discipline, and the Theatricality of Everyday Life in Elizabethan Grammar Schools," *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 173-90.

onstage as though in the green room, discussing how they will play their parts.[63] This scripted opening both describes and creates the original actors and certainly is not a transparent view into their world. However, it does show the young actors slipping in and out of character so that determining which qualities and utterances reflect fictional parts and which reflect the fictionalized actor becomes very difficult. Rather than appearing detached from their fictional enterprise by a lack of reason and reliance on repetition, these actor/characters are cannot be clearly separated. For example, when one actor seems to be rather carried away by his own rhetoric, another deflates him with facetious praise: "Forobosco: Ha, ha, ha! Tollerably good, good faith, sweet wag. / Alberto: Umh! Why 'tolerably good, good faith, sweet wag'? Go, go, you flatter me. / Forobosco: Right, I but dispose my speech to the habit of my part" (38-41).[64] Another boy assures Alberto that Forobosco is playing: "a supple-chopped flatterer" (48), but the uncertainty about who spoke the offending line remains. Marston deliberately dramatizes identity slippage, blurring the lines between individual and part rather than distinguishing them. Claire M. Busse argues that writers like Marston and Jonson used the boundary-crossing abilities of child actors to breach dramatic distinctions. She asserts that "the indefinable child actor" allows playwrights to "destabilize theatrical boundaries and break down the distance between the audience as spectator to the performance and the audience members as individuals participating in the theatrical enterprise" (83). As she notes, the categorical uncertainty of the child figures unsettles the limits of performance, rather than making them more evident.

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[63] Other children's company plays with inductions include Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), John Day's *Isle of the Gulls* (1606) and John Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600).Webster added an induction to Marston's *Malcontent* (1603) when it was adopted by the King's Men.

[64] The boy actors are distinguished in the text based on the parts they play.

Julio's murder by Antonio exemplifies Marston's depiction of child figures traversing of apparent limits. Fredson Bowers notably declares the murder: "a purely gratuitous piece of business brought in merely to make the audience shudder" (123). However, Julio is not simply an instrumental character, present to give Marston a chance to horrify his audience. Jonathan Dollimore views his death as an example of innocent suffering that undermines belief in any divine order, and for Philip J. Ayers it is the scene that most discounts the idea that the play parodies revenge tragedy. For Karen Robertson it is the key revenge action of the play, overshadowing even Piero's gruesome death.[65] I also see Julio's death as central to the drama and as key to undermining one of its major thematic trends. The scene is one of the play's most repetitive, and one in which the centrality of linear reproduction seems most emphasized. It opens with the ghost's demand for repetitive revenge, and multiple critics have noted the ritualistic nature of the murder, which is certainly repetitive and which stresses paternal inheritance.[66] Yet Julio himself serves to scramble such clear lines of relation, leaving even Antonio in an uncertain familial position.

Antonio rejoices at the opportunity to kill his enemy's son, but only gets this chance because he and Julio have a variety of mutual bonds. Julio comes out into the night searching for his father because his sleep has been plagued by "bugbears and spirits" (III.ii.138) that, given Antonio's own recent encounter with his father's spirit, may be something more than nightmares. Indeed, Andrugio haunts this particular scene and goads his son to murder when Antonio appears to waver. Dismissed by his father, Julio encounters Antonio lurking in hopes of catching Piero alone. While Antonio sees a chance to cause Piero pain, Julio sees a substitute family member.

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[65] Dollimore, 37; Ayers, 362; Robertson, 91-93.
[66] The murder is ritual for Robertson, 100-102; Baines, 286; and Rist, 88. Hunter calls it a Black Mass*,* xvii; Spinrad connects it to the sacrifice of Isaac, 175.

After all, Mellida, Antonio's love, is also Piero's daughter and Julio's sister. Julio first addresses Antonio as brother, drawing on that anticipated marriage, and demands a kiss: "Indeed, my sister said / That I should call you brother, that she did, / When you were married to her. Buss me" (146-8). Julio emphasizes their mutual relation to Mellida. Further, Marston's construction of Julio's "when" blurs the origin of their brotherly relationship, rather than fixing its beginning at a future wedding. The wedding that will never take place sounds rather as though it has already happened. Julio then substitutes Antonio in a variety of roles, declaring: "good truth, / I love you better than my father, 'deed" (148-9) and "'Truth, since my mother died I loved you best" (153). Antonio becomes brother, and thus strangely his enemy's son, and father, a version of Piero planning his own cruel murder, and missing mother. This confusion undermines Antonio's effort to prove himself his father's son through vengeance.

Julio serves not simply to bloody the supposedly righteous revenger's hands but to subvert linear fantasies. His familial substitutions recall Heather Dubrow's emphasis on the effects of parental death, specifically the way it "draws attention both to the permeability of the literal dwelling place and to the closely related permeability of categories, in this case not only special terms like *inside* and *outside* but also *mother* and *father.* Ghosts delight not only in gliding through material walls but also in rendering porous the boundaries between concepts."[67] Marston underlines categorical permeability by moving beyond Julio's ghostly substitution in which the specter of the dead mother coexists with her replacement. Through this haunting child he creates an excess of relationships that scramble and overdetermine the roles of the living. Rick Bowers asserts that "Associations around consanguine terms such as 'brother', 'father', and 'sister' sung from the mouth of the innocent Julio only further enrage Antonio and compel his

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[67] Heather Dubrow, *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss: Forms of Deprivation, Mourning, and Recuperation* (Cambridge UP, 1999), 143.

vengeance."[68] However, in his emphasis on Julio's innocence Bowers forgets Antonio's overt hesitation to kill the boy after his familial recitation. Julio's use of these terms not only buys him a temporary reprieve but also, after the boy's death, continues to disrupt lineal revenge from beyond the grave.

Antonio reacts to Julio's puzzle of relations by imagining a separation of the many components that make up his victim. He is looking for Julio's deficiency – the lack that, if resolved, will make Julio explicable and nullify the boy's confusion of family relations. Worrying over the fact that Julio is not exclusively Piero's, Antonio envisions carving away the offending parts and thus somehow organizing the intertwined associations Julio articulates:

> O that I knew which joint, which side, which limb
> Were father all and had no mother in't,
> That I might rip it vein by vein and carve revenge
> In bleeding rases! III.ii.164-7

Antonio's eventual plan to carve the boy and serve him to both fathers, Andrugio and Piero, is apparent in this declaration, yet his inability to categorize his victim holds him back. Robertson argues that the feud between fathers subsumes their sons.[69] Yet Julio is not the imprint of Piero, and Antonio finds himself to be something other than the embodiment of his father's legacy. Although Antonio resolves to kill the entire confusing composite, "But since 'tis mixed together / Have at adventure, pell-mell, no reverse!" (167-8), he quickly "reverses" himself, hesitating and provoking the ghost's subterranean instigation. When Andrugio's ghost demands revenge, leveraging his paternal influence, Antonio is unable to disentangle the threads of inheritance.

Even as Antonio finally kills Julio, he struggles to reassert the labels the little boy makes problematic. Antonio works to explain his actions to Julio by picking him into parts. Marston

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[68] Rick Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe': the 'Antonio' plays." *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions.* T.F. Wharton, ed. (Cambridge UP, 2000), 14-26, 21.
[69] Robertson, 96, 100-101.

uses this moment to highlight the slippery nature of categories that were never fixed in the first place:

> Come, pretty, tender child,
> It is not thee I hate, not thee I kill.
> Thy father's blood that flows within thy veins
> Is it I loathe, is that revenge must suck.
> I love thy soul; and were thy heart lapped up
> In any flesh but in Piero's blood,
> I would thus kiss it; but being his, thus, thus,
> And thus I'll punch it. III.ii.177-84

Antonio answers Julio's earlier request for a kiss with stabs. This disturbing conglomeration of kiss and thrust, affectionate gesture and murderous act, seems the culmination of Antonio's failed attempt to justify his actions by imagining a divisible Julio. He kills the "pretty, tender child," both hating and loving him. Marston's language demonstrates this confusing inseparability of contradictory emotions, family members, and bodily components. Antonio's attempt to divide Julio into flesh and soul founders when "soul" becomes a very physical "heart." The fatherly blood to be "suck[ed]" becomes a child's heart ready to be "lapped" up by Antonio and his ghostly father. The need to feed revenge, and to satisfy the sense of both ghostly and childhood lack, founders on the problem of explaining Julio's strange mobility and his ability to manipulate the roles of others. The ritual Antonio is urged to enact cannot simplify his own complicated relation to Julio, nor can it help him categorize the little boy.

The impossibility of labeling an offending piece to explain and stop Julio's temporal transgressions is evident in the little boy's responses to Antonio's hyperbolic exclamations. The soon-to-be-murdered Julio cries in confusion: "And you kill me, 'deed, I'll tell my father" (III.ii.172). Petulant and childish perhaps, but certainly possible in a world where Antonio's dead father can walk the earth. In *Antonio and Mellida*, Antonio even springs from his own coffin

upon hearing his pardon.[70] At this point there is no reason to assume that Julio's ghost will not be appearing in later scenes to spur his own father to vengeance. Julio's promise to tattle postmortem, or not to tell so long as he lives, highlights the many ways that Marston crosses supposedly clear lines of relation during the encounter between these two sons. It also further demonstrates that, still alive, Julio can cross boundaries between present and future, life and death. Even when Julio is at his most naïve and needy, he still upsets ritualized revenge. When Julio acquiesces to Antonio's violent act, he insists upon its unclassifiable nature. After Antonio stabs Julio, the boy says: "So you love me, do even what you will" (186). By accepting the death blows as kisses, Julio affirms his own indivisible nature and the impossibility of Antonio's attempts to justify his behavior. He refuses to be only Piero's son by insisting on Antonio's love and the multiple affective roles he fills. Julio's death is supposed to be a key first step toward resolving the crimes that allow the ghost to walk – the offences Piero has committed against Andrugio and Antonio. However, those repetitive impulses serve to further the little boy's own recursive mobility.

This murder highlights not only the fruitlessness of Antonio's search for Julio's supposed deficiency but also the problems inherent in the ghost's demands. Andrugio's version of lineal vengeance is already temporally complicated by his ghostly return, but Julio makes its contradictions and failings very visible by multiply linking the families the ghost would keep apart and confusing parent and child roles. Andrugio's ghost misremembers repetitive reproduction as a functioning process and demands its enactment as a solution to his own murder. Indeed, the ghost presents his own murder as the problem standing in the way of familial and societal continuity. Once the violence of his death is repaid with the violent deaths of Julio

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[70] V.ii.217-25.

and Piero, the obstacle will be resolved. Julio demonstrates that supplementary repetition does not resolve lack but rather creates opportunities for further transgression. His first and last haunting tattletale disrupts any teleological sequence of vengeance.

Even after Julio's death, the shifting interconnections he affirms continue to disturb Antonio's attempts to establish paternity. When Antonio commits the murder the ghost endorses he announces: "Here stands Andrugio's son, / Worthy his father" (III.ii.195-96). He proceeds to sprinkle the blood of the boy on Andrugio's tomb. However, he continues to try to justify the murder through impossible dissection:

> And now there's nothing but Piero left.
> He is Piero, father all; this blood,
> This breast, this heart, Piero all,
> Whom thus I mangle. - Sprite of Julio,
> Forget this was thy trunk. I live thy friend. III.ii.199-203

Julio's threat to tattle after his own death persistently haunts Antonio's attempts at filial appeasement. Although no ghost of Julio ever appears on or under the stage, Antonio keeps this possibility alive. He imagines that spirit's existence as a means of affirming the body and soul division that fell apart before the living Julio. Ghostly boundary crossings due to the violence of Julio's death might be more easily resolved than his living complication of families. However, Antonio is unable to "forget" the conglomeration of elements existing in Julio's body, belying his own words. It is Julio's "sprite," not his father's, that he ultimately imbibes.

Marston maintains the "truth" (III.ii.148, 153) of the multiple familial links first asserted in Julio's lines throughout the play. Thus the problem of Julio's mobility spreads visibly to other characters whose own roles become increasingly difficult to label. Julio claimed Antonio as both a father and a brother. Marston connects Antonio and Piero as father and son, each filling both roles, and as a pair of raving babies. While Antonio insists, in his attempted rationalization of

Julio's murder, "Thy father's blood that flows within they veins / Is it I loathe, is that revenge must suck" (III.ii.179-80), Piero exclaims: "I have been nursed in blood, and still have sucked / The stream of reeking gore" (II.i.19-20). Antonio's appetite for blood makes him very much the brother Julio declared him to be - more like Piero than his own son - and also a substitute for Julio's vicious father. Both Antonio and Piero pose as hungry infants, as naïve in their insatiable desire for blood as Julio is in his desire for affection. The links between Piero and Antonio revealed through Julio become even more apparent after his death. The stage directions characterizing Piero's entrance after murdering Andrugio and Felice are mirrored in Antonio's entrance after murdering Julio. The play begins: *Enter Piero unbraced, his arms bare, smeared in blood, poniard in one hand, bloody, and a torch in the other* (I.i). When Antonio comes to speak with the ghost and confirm the murder, he appears: *his arms bloody, [carrying] a torch and a poniard* (III.iii.72).[71] While Antonio's words imagine Julio's blood to affirm lineal descent and its power within these two families, his appearances echoes that of the man Julio called on him to replace. Marston turns Antonio's declaration of murderous filial duty into a demonstration of the way that children's repetition of their elders scrambles cultural reproduction, rather than stabilizing it. Attempts to supply missing qualities through repetition not only blurs the roles of revenger and villain, but also makes evident the childlike qualities displayed by these characters above and beyond the fact that they were played by boys. When Antonio insists, "This is Julio's blood, / Rich music, father; this is Julio's blood" (III.iii.80-81), his repetition recalls the ways in which the youngest boy, alive and dead, disrupts the momentum toward reiteration and revenge.

The pervasiveness of Julio's influence is further demonstrated when Antonio also takes on the motherly role that Julio assigned him. Julio imagines Antonio as a replacement for his

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[71] Noted by Ayers, 367; Baines, 286; Robertson, 97; Spinrad, 178; Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1969), 160-61.

own dead mother. When Mellida dies, Antonio tries to resign himself to the loss through a simile comparing his position to that of a foster-mother. He addresses heaven:

> Thou gav'st her me as some weak-breasted dame
> Giveth her infant, puts it out to nurse,
> And when it once goes high-lone, takes it back.
> She was my vital blood; . . . IV.ii.7-10

The dead, and therefore heavenly, biological mother becomes the "weak-breasted dame" who reclaims her child once it begins to walk. The simile of a child's death as a return from a wet-nurse to a true heavenly parent was not uncommon during the 16th and 17th centuries.[72] By twisting this consolatory analogy into a lover's mourning speech, Marston further stresses the fluidity of familial roles and temporal positions. Antonio is the replacement mother who, according to humoral theory, would have in nursing the infant given blood transmuted into milk. However, Marston also reverses this understanding, making Mellida's blood Antonio's own. In this way he becomes a blood relative, again a son of Piero and brother of Julio while simultaneously serving as mother. If blood can be so altered by love, then Antonio's connection to Andrugio can be severed and Piero's blood in Julio's veins, so often referenced as a justification for murder, can be tempered by the boy's love for Antonio and Mellida. During the 16th and 17th centuries, wet-nurses were often seen as corrupting figures. The blood they introduced to infants through milk could override the maternal blood they imbibed in the womb. Nurses thus upset idealized understandings of the family and disrupted reproduction and inheritance. By taking on this role, Antonio furthers the reproductive disturbance introduced by the seemingly pliant Julio.

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[72] See for example Paul S. Sever, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth Century London* (London: Methuen, 1985), 87-89.

Marston also repeatedly characterizes Antonio as an orphan and an infant, as is indicated by his positioning as both wet-nurse and nursling. When Antonio and Julio meet in the graveyard, both have been left there by their fathers and both have recently seen spirits. This needy figure is thus further identified with the child he kills. In the same scene in which he calls himself a nurse, Antonio declares: “I am a poor, poor orphan; a weak, weak child” (IV.ii.14). Again, repetition hardly helps him to maintain a singular identity. This childish identification continues when Antonio pretends to be his mother’s fool and plays with children’s toys (IV.i). The physical bodies of the boy actors also help to highlight Antonio’s similarities with Julio. The supposedly successful completion of Antonio’s revenge plot, and thus succession of his father, is undermined by the spirit of Julio whom Antonio himself invokes. Julio’s unclassifiable nature bleeds into the roles of the other characters, making them similarly impossible to define. The repetitive ideal is thus destabilized by the postmortem tattletale and his cohort of haunting children.

III. Burial Rites and Reversals: Jonson’s Paternal *Epigrams*

Another theatrical child who disrupts categorization and temporal development is Salomon Pavy, the subject of Ben Jonson’s epigram CXX, “Epitaph on S. P., a Child of Q(ueen) El(izabeth’s) Chapel.” Like the boys who put on Marston’s “Antonio” plays, Pavy was a child actor, not for Paul’s Boys but for the rival Children of the Chapel. He performed in Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* and died in 1602. As rendered by Jonson, this child crosses boundaries between life and death, youth and age:

> Weep with me all you that read
>   This little story:
> ’Twas a child, that so did thrive
>   In grace, and feature,

As Heaven and Nature seemed to strive
Which owned the creature.
Years he numbered scarce thirteen
When Fates turned cruel,
Yet three filled zodiacs had he been
The stage's jewel.
And did act (what now we moan)
Old men so duly,
As, sooth, the Parcae thought him one,
He played so truly.
So, by error, to his fate
They all consented;
But viewing him since (alas, too late)
They have repented.
And have sought (to give new birth)
In baths to steep him;
But, being so much too good for earth,
Heaven vows to keep him.[73]

This poem is certainly not a temporally straightforward story of a boy's life. His death is a mistake, and he spends three years of his childhood pretending to be old. Pavy slips between being earthly and heavenly, young and old, and he does all of this by acting. Yet the boy's imitative excellence, which fooled the fates and nearly, Orpheus-like, enables him to escape death is also dangerous. In Jonson's poetic account it essentially kills him. Jonson maintains that children who take on adult characteristics only hurt themselves. Then, he takes away Pavy's ability to resist categorization by consigning him to heaven for his childish goodness. Pavy is too skillful at crossing temporal boundaries, and he must be posthumously rewritten into one side of the life and death divide. Jonson acknowledges that children's repetition of their elders is a problematic means of cultural reproduction while also attempting to limit its dangers to the children that practice it. His elegies for children thus raise the question of how society is to be

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[73] All quotations of Ben Jonson's poetry are from *The Complete Poems,* ed. George Parfitt (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

perpetuated if children do not copy adults. If supplemental repetition does not work how, for example, will there ever be another Ben Jonson?

The revival of children as literary ghosts, as in "Epitaph on S. P.," raises concerns about lack that have to do with child death, but also with the sense that children are incomplete. Just as Pavy upsets chronological assumptions in life and is rewritten in death, so other child revenants are invoked in attempts to resolve concerns surrounding their lives and deaths. However, in the process they continue to trouble cultural reproduction. In "On My First Daughter" (XXII) and "On My First Sonne" (XLV), Jonson rewrites his children and also himself as father and author. He addresses loss in the form of the missing child, but also works to find and repair what is missing in children themselves by remaking the deceased as the perfect child who will fulfill parental expectations. The elegies Jonson writes attempt to make use of children to repair the repetitive ideal in a variation of the revenge project undertaken by Andrugio and Antonio. His revisions of his children are retrospective attempts at classification and supplemental repetition that engage concerns of genre and literary paternity. The poetic elegy itself might seem to enact a reproductive fantasy by bringing the children back to life, only to bury and memorialize them in an effort to prevent further ghostly returns. The poems also invoke literary paternity, imagining the author/father as sole creator of children/texts that will insure his immortality and their own. Like physical monuments for children, these poems work to enshrine lost continuity and "to cushion the break in the family line."[74]

Jonson's responses to children's ghostly boundary crossings include containing Pavy's acting skill and memorializing his children. These strategies recall Carla Freccero's description

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[74] Nigel Llewellyn, "[An] Impe entombed here doth lie: the Besford Triptych and Child Memorials in Post-Reformation England," *Representation of Childhood Death*, eds. Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 52-64, esp. 53.

of the “necrological model” of history, which tries to neutralize ghosts. Freccero defines the necrological model as an effort to bury the dead and provide them with monuments. In this version of history, the living try to use their own words to replace the dead.[75] This strategy is a variation on efforts to supply what is lacking in child figures and ghosts. If imperfect deaths are what enable ghosts’ temporal mobility then securely compartmentalizing revenants and replacing their words with the words of the living is a way of providing what is missing. The need to bury also appears in Derrida’s discussion of mourning in *Spectres of Marx*:

> It consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead . . . Nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where – and *it is necessary* (to know – to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more! (9)

Although Derrida does not explicitly mention memorialization, his emphasis on the material aspects of burial such as the body and the place evoke the erection of a monument. Whether material or literary, burial involves a marker. This marker, and the assurance of the place and nature of burial that it stands for, claims ontological certainty. There is no longer any need to worry about what might be missing, no more uncertainty over the location of body and soul. Thus the deaths of children may be seen not as challenges to cultural reproduction but as opportunities to address its inconsistencies. The deaths of Salomon Pavy, Benjamin and Mary Jonson offer Jonson such retrospective opportunities, for example to tidy away Pay’s dangerous talent and to reimaging Benjamin as the fulfillment of his paternal ambitions. While not exactly the inculcation of judgment, Jonson’s memorializing is very much about turning children’s lacking status into a fixed position that confirms generational ties. As in Derrida’s description, Jonson is keen to know where his children are and to keep them there.

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[75] This replacement is never total; specters always continue to appear. Frecerro, 70-1.

The need for definitive burial and its failure to replace or even place the deceased is particularly evident in the form of poetry Jonson chose for recalling his children, a combination of elegy and epitaph.[76] The consolatory work of elegies and the memorializing move of epitaphs attempt to do the historiography and mourning work described by Freccero and Derrida.[77] Ann Lounger notes that literary consolations generally combine two primary motifs: finality and continuity. Both aim for certainty in placing physical and spiritual remains. Finality emphasizes death not as the untimely severing of a life but as an orderly, essential conclusion regulated by fate or God, while continuity stresses the subsequent start of eternal life. Throughout, consolation concentrates on "the teleological sense of ending" (221). The form itself is dedicated to articulating continuity through repeated themes, and in Jonson's poems on deceased children it combines with the sepulchral inscriptions of epitaph in attempts to properly bury and speak for the dead. Indeed, Joshua Score asserts that "On My First Sonne" is Jonson's attempt to recreate the funeral he must have missed. The poet's son, also called Benjamin Jonson, died of the plague in London in 1603 while his father was sheltering in a country house.[78] In Score's reading, the poem is a "compensatory burial ritual" (236) in which poetry provides the proper ceremony and monument. Jonson needs to know where he son is buried, but must bring him back from the dead in order to remake the burial, the son, and himself.

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[76] See Joshua Scodel, "Genre and Occasion in Jonson's 'On My First Sonne,'" *Studies in Philology* 86.2 (Spring 1989): 235-59, esp. 235-37.

[77] Jonson, like many familial elegists, abstracts praise and lament elements to focus on consolation. Donna J. Long, "Maternal Elegies by Mary Carey, Lucy Hastings, Gertrude Thimelly and Alice Thornton," *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent, (Pittsburg: Duquesne UP, 2002), 153-176, esp. 162-63; Ann Lauinger, " 'It Makes the Father, Lesse, to Rue': Resistance to Consolation in Jonson's 'On My First Daughter.'" *Studies in Philology* 86.2 (Spring 1989): 219-234, esp. 220.

[78] See Scodel, 235-36; Ernest B. Gilman, "Plague Writing, 1603: Jonson's 'On My First Sonne,'" *Reading the Renaissance: Ideas and Idioms From Shakespeare to Milton,* ed. Marc Berley (Pittsburg: Duquesne UP, 2002), 153-175.

Repetition is clearly at work as a means of compensation in “On My First Sonne.” At the end of the poem Jonson loops back to the “sin” with which he begins. His punning emphasis on the little boy’s name in the first line - Benjamin means “son of the right hand” – is also echoed in the later naming of himself, his son, and his poetic efforts. The poem’s reiterations are not the kind of identical, linear repetition that this passing on of the father’s name might suggest. Rather, they reflect the ghostly child’s unclassifiable temporality:

> Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
> My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy,
> Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
> Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
> O, could I lose all father, now. For why
> Will man lament the state he should envy?
> To have so soon ’scaped world’s, and flesh’s rage,
> And, if no other misery, yet age!
> Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie
> Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
> For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
> As what he loves may never like too much.

Jonson asserts that his failing is being too fond a father, and that intense parental love is dangerous.[79] It is dangerous for the father who loves and for the child who bears the weight of all that hope and expectation. In this sin the dangers of the repetitive child so seemingly compartmentalized in Pavy’s case come out into the open. The vision of the future in which the son will literally carry on the father’s name wreaks havoc, and yet Jonson cannot help reiterating it in a poem memorializing that name. The reanimated ghost of young Benjamin is strongly implicated in his father’s construction of self. Parents may make children, but children also make individuals parents, and in some sense also make them adults.[80] This recursive trajectory is not caused by the boy’s death, but rather made manifest by it. Jonson’s attempts to supply what is

[79] William E. Cain views this as exaggeration. “Self and Others in Two Poems by Ben Jonson,” *Studies in Philology* 80.2 (Spring 1983): 163-182, esp. 178.
[80] See Rutter, 123.

missing in his child and in himself through textual repetition provoke further struggles with the nature of being a father and a poet.

Efforts to place the ghost of young Benjamin Jonson are not restricted to "On My First Sonne." While Jonson was in the country waiting out the plague he reportedly had the following dream foretelling both the news of the boy's death and his maturation:

> When the King came jn England, at that tyme the Pest was jn London, he being jn the Country at Sr Robert Cottons house with old Cambden, he saw jn a vision his eldest sone (yn a child and at London) appear to him wt ye Marke of a bloodie crosse on his forehead as if it had been cutted wt a suord, at which amazed he prayed unto God, an jn ye morning he came to Mr. Cambdens chamber to tell him, who persuaded him it was but ane apprehension of his fantasie at which he should not be desjected [.] jn ye mean tyme comes yr letters from his wife of ye death of yt Boy yn ye plague. He appeared to him he said of a Manlie shape & of yt Grouth that he thinks he shall be at the resurrection.[81]

Like Salomon Pavy, young Benjamin appears to his father in chronologically confusing ways. His death precedes his growth, and the news of his death follows the specter. David Lee Miller declares both Salomon and Benjamin "temporal conundrums" and versions of the puer senex.[82] Yet even in the face of this confusion the retelling of the dream clings to the hope for a future in which the father's daydreams, rather than his nightmares, will be fulfilled. This is the hope the poem both asserts as lost in death and yet attempts to recreate in burial. Both poem and dream express the desire to compensate for the loss of the boy and to replace the inevitably flawed, unique child with a fantasy. The "bloodie crosse" on the apparition's forehead recalls the mark placed on plague houses by municipal authorities, and so stresses his cause of death.[83] Yet the narrative ends with the "child at London" acquiring a "Manlie shape." Even as the ghost shocks his father, he is reviewed as fulfilling paternal expectations. At the sound of the last trumpet, not

[81] William Drummond, *William Drummond of Hawthornden: Poems and Prose.* Robert H. MacDonald, ed. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976. (HS 1:139-40).
[82] Miller, 237.
[83] Gilman, 154.

only will father and son be reunited, but also the son will be the man his father always wanted him to be.

The father's struggle to recuperate the ghostly child is also evident in "On My First Sonne." The cry of line five splits open the poem's initial consolatory tone:[84] "O, could I lose all father, now. For why / Will man lament the state he should envy?" These lines conventionally imply that if the speaker were not a father he would be able to stop mourning and rejoice in his son's favored state. The idea that lamentation betrays the mourner's envy of the dead is a common theme of consolatory texts. However, this cry also indicates a desire to stop being a father, and so to be spared the pain of his son's death.[85] Katherine Eisaman Maus argues that it reflects Jonson's inability to enact the Roman ideal of detachment because he only imagines his son as an extension of himself.[86] Whether or not the identification is so close, losing his son certainly highlights fault lines running through Jonson's sense of fatherhood, caught up as it is with "hope" (2) for his son's future. As Lauinger notes, line five "is not only an agonized cry for release from sorrow but a wish to escape a habit of self-definition Jonson now recognizes as perilous" (233). The cry displays a longing to separate "I" from "father" while indicating the impossibility of such division. "Father" is "I," and the slippage between the terms awkwardly strains the sentence. The inseparable nature of these words also implies the speaker's desire to die, to lose "father" and all of himself.[87] Even as the poet strains for self-definition, he works to assert a single view of his son. The return to consolatory motifs, like the escape from earthly miseries and the benefits of a short, good life, claim Benjamin's continued, and now perpetual,

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[84] On consolatory themes and Jonson's use of them see Long, 162-3; Cain, 179.
[85] Scodel, 249, 250.
[86] Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind*, (Princeton UP, 1989), 121-2.
[87] Miller sees the poem as Jonson's attempt to "author his own extinction," (240).

innocence.[88] However, these gestures have already been called into question by the preceding agony. The ritual repetition of customary comforts does not blessedly seclude the boy in heaven and resign the poet to earth.

When Jonson appears to return to direct addressing his deceased son, he also explicitly articulates the monumentalizing impulse of epitaph. The directive that the son "Rest in Soft Peace" (9), a hope for heavenly tranquility as outlined by earlier assertions of freedom from earthly woes, is quickly contradicted by the apparent quotation from a tombstone: "here doth lie."[89] Perhaps speaking to his son, perhaps to his monument, the imagined scenario of question and answer brings the revivified little Ben Jonson back to earth: "Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie / Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry" (9-10). This tombstone inters either or both Ben Jonsons, with readings ranging from Ernest Gilman's sense that father and son change places to Judith Kegan Gardiner's view that the father is "dead in the death of his son."[90] Such overlap supports the sense that rather than replicating a smaller version of himself the poet has become dependant on the other Ben Jonson for his own sense of self. The monument attempts to place and compensate for those things the both of them might lack. It also highlights the poet's effort to rewrite his son as an instrument for supporting his own expectations about paternity. The communal grave conveys a yearning for some lost, illusory unity, misremembered as a product of the hopeful son's presence.[91] The need for certainty in terms of a place of burial is thus very like the need to rewrite the dead child as the provider of hopeful futurity and guarantor of meaning.

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[88] Long, 162-3.
[89] On this shift within the poem and its effect on the epitaph genre see Scodel, 242; Cain, 178.
[90] Gilman, 167; Judith Kegan Gardiner, *Craftsmanship in Context: The Development of Ben Jonson's Poetry,* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 50.
[91] Miller's psychoanalytic reading stresses retroactive experience but views the son as a specter of his father's own death (238-40).

The explicit introduction of Jonson's identity as a poet is another attempt to grapple with reproductive discrepancies highlighted by his son's death. Contemporary literary works were regularly glossed in dedications and prefaces as misshapen children. Jonson's conflation of the biological and the literary has garnered critical associations with Montaigne's, Spenser's, and others' enunciations of authorial fatherhood.[92] Young Benjamin Jonson, once in the flesh and now rewritten, is his father and the poet's "best piece of poetry" (10). In naming the nature of his poetic output Jonson names himself, as though through authorship he could supply what both he and his son lack and recreate the linear trajectory of paternity. Yet even as he claims authority, Jonson reiterates the failings that he moves to remedy.[93] As Lauinger asserts: "the boy's death also represents the negating of creation, a failure of art's vaunted immortality, and the boy is in a sense the poem which lies" (233). In turning the child into a poetic creation, he reverses the metaphor of text as child, replicating the reversals already troubling the poem's articulation of repetition as a response to personal and societal instability. By asserting that his child is his greatest poetic creation Jonson accedes that his best days, as a writer and otherwise, are over. He is thus really in the grave with his son, his life determined by the loss. Further, the juxtaposition of homophones in succeeding lines works to stress that the "peaceful" rest of heaven is in "pieces" and that no "piece of poetry" can create "peace" and undisturbed unity. Finally, his claim directly contradicts the poem's earlier mourning strategy, the repetition of consolatory commonplaces. If Jonson assumes he really is the creator who takes credit for the poem/child even in death there cannot be any consolation in heavenly rest or obedience to a divine will. Trying to subsume the struggle between self- and fatherhood within a relabeling as poet does not solve the difficulties encountered in the elegiac mode.

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[92] Cain, 181; Scodel, 254.
[93] Scodel claims that Jonson's poetic monument provides father and son with immortality (248).

The final couplet attempts to correct the paternal sin of hope and so categorize father and son. Yet it is not precisely a promise never to place too much hope or too many expectations on a loved one: "For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such / As what he loves may never like too much" (11-12).[94] The line between "love" and "like" is blurred by alliteration and variable definitions. For example, Wesley Trimpi argues for a clearly distinguished reading of "to like" as "to please,"[95] while for Gilman Jonson's vow not to "like too much" is a practical recognition of child mortality.[96] Such practicality is not feasible either in terms of parental responses to death or in applying narrow definitions of "love" and 'like." As Scodel notes: "the reader's difficulty in comprehending the distinction between the normally synonymous "love" and "like" is the interpretive analogue to the difficulty of actually *living*, outside the space of the poem, the distinction" (258). Although phrased like a definitive concluding statement, Jonson's final lines reiterate the poem's struggles with boundaries and classifications: father and poet, father and son, heaven and earth. If Jonson's sin depending too much on his son carrying his name into the future, then this sentiment and this poem do nothing to repair the damage. Instead of firmly placing his son's death and replacing him with a literary monument that might enable continuity in parental and poetic authority, Jonson emphasizes the haunting instability of his expectations.

The futile efforts that Jonson makes to rewrite and perfect his son have parallel effects in "On My First Daughter." In this the first of his elegies for children, Jonson mixes elegiac and epitaphic elements in an attempt to mark the place of his daughter, Mary's, burial:

> Here lies to each her parents' ruth,
> Mary, the daughter of their youth:

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[94] Jonson rephrases Martial's epigram VI. xxix, 8: "quidquid ames; cupias non placuisse nimis": "whatever you love, pray you do not find it too pleasing."
[95] Wesley Trimpi, "BEN.IONSON his best piece of poetire," *Classical Antiquity* 2.1 (1983), 145-55, esp. 147. See also, Cain, 182; Maus, 122.
[96] Gilman, 163.

Yet, all heaven's gifts, being heaven's due,
It makes the father, less, to rue.
At six months' end, she parted hence
With safety of her innocence;
Whose soul Heaven's queen, (whose name she bears)
In comfort of her mother's tears,
Hath placed amongst her virgin train:
Where, while that severed doth remain,
This grave partakes the fleshly birth.
Which cover lightly, gentle earth.

By beginning the poem with a memorializing epitaph, Jonson marks it the burial site of both a six-month-old infant and her parents' "youth." He attempts to define and structure the space left by these losses. Mary's short life brings to an end a time in her parents' lives and in doing so challenges understandings of parenthood and reproduction. The parents appear as a pair in the first line, but as the poem continues father and mother are singled out. The separate discussions of their grief underline how Mary's the birth and death constructed their parental identities. Jonson tries to stabilize fragmenting ideas of parenthood by establishing an organization for his daughter's heavenly existence and transferring that hierarchy back to earth. Yet as with his later response to child loss, he does not permanently fix the resting place of Mary's body or her spirit.

Jonson first attends to the consolation and consolidation of the fatherly role. He searches his daughter's death for means of personal and familial stability. This is another instance in which Jonson expects child figures to function instrumentally, but exerting the pressures of that assumed authority further fractures his assumptions. Mary's status as a "gift" (3) from heaven recalls the monetary metaphor of "On My First Sonne." As with even Antonio's bizarre mourning of Mellida, Jonson asserts that this baby never really belonged to her father. Jonson makes the inability to truly possess his daughter a means not only for consolation but also for strengthening his paternal position. If Mary never really belonged to him, her loss cannot undo him. However, as with Mary's "exacted" brother, this theme does not console. Lauinger views

the metrical irregularity of line two as further confirmation of the theme's failure.[97] Mary's very impermanence makes fatherhood her gift to Jonson, leaving it as insecure as her life. His emphasis on the "safety of her innocence" is an attempt to fix her fate with certainty, and so also to consolidate his role. Jonson works to firmly place Mary in heaven, much as he does Salomon Pavy. This heaven is not just a divine gift giver and place of rest, but also a hierarchical location.

As Jonson moves on to address the now separated role of the mother, the structure of heaven seems to bolster the broken and destabilized earthly family. That instability is particularly evident in the division of Mary's parents. The presence of the mother in "Daughter" and her absence in "Sonne" have been much analyzed. Jonson has been read as depicting mother-child bonds he cannot penetrate in the heavenly section of "Daughter" and as trying to replace the mother entirely in "Sonne."[98] While the separation of the parents in "Daughter" is central, the poem is not strictly about dividing the paternal from the maternal, or about usurping the maternal role. Similarly, "Sonne" is not consumed by Jonson's effort to exclude the mother. Instead, I argue that "On My First Daughter" is about the breakdown of boundaries and definitions made evident by Mary's death. It is an effort to memorialize, and so resolve, the loss of the infant and the familial lacks it reveals. Jonson works to replace the dead infant with a perfect, heavenly virgin. In turn, her placement in heaven compensates for the earthly family's ills. He stresses that divine hierarchy will favor the baby: "Whose soul Heaven's queen, (whose name she bears) / In comfort of her mother's tears, / Hath placed amongst her virgin train" (7-9). The existence of the queen with a train of attendants ratifies both the existence of a particular heavenly order and a form of linear progression. As little Mary ascends to heaven, she is privileged because she is named after the ultimate mother. Her name is repeated – appearing in the second and seventh

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[97] Lauinger, 223.
[98] See Lauinger, 220, 226, 228-29, 233; Maus, 120. Miller, 239, 244; Scodel, 243-44.

lines – just as her brother's is. That repetition again initially appears to sustain the replicative ideal of reproduction. The mother of God replaces the earthly mother, comforts her, and echoes and supports her role, shaken by the loss of the child that created it. The parallel phrases "her mother's tears" (8) and "her virgin train" (9) highlight the association between the two. Both can be read as the weeping mother.[99] Jonson thus extends reassurance that the authoritative and nurturing structure of the family will remain intact after his daughter's death.

However, immediately after the assurance of the infant's "place" (9) in heaven the poem's location of body and soul loses certainty. The repetition used to place the infant firmly in heaven enables her mobility. Although Mary's body and soul seemed clearly bounded, they soon present the difficulties presented by Julio, who defies Antonio's efforts to divide his components. The lines about Mary's soul proceed to call into question its elevation: "Whose soul . . . placed amongst her virgin train: / Where, while that severed doth remain, / This grave partakes the fleshly birth" (7, 9-11). Line ten disrupts the continuity of its couplet. The end rhyme links line ten to heaven, while its content connects to the concluding lines about the earthly grave.[100] "Where" and "that severed" present multiple ambiguous interpretations, all working to dislocate connections between and within couplets. Perhaps most simply, "Where" can refer to heaven or to the soul's specific place in the "virgin train" (9) while "that severed" may refer to the baby's soul. Yet this in and of itself is problematic. While Jonson needs to separate body and soul in order to maintain a conceptual sense of order and inheritance, the severing of a soul would be a violent act utterly dissimilar from the ideal linear progression to peaceful rest. Particularly on first reading, "Where" also references the grave of the subsequent line or the earthly place where the parents remain. "Severed" certainly invokes, as Lauinger claims, "the baby as separated from

[99] Lauinger, 228.
[100] See Lauinger, 230.

her parents by a literal act of physical brutality" (323). "That severed" could be the body left behind, or even the parents, now separated from each other as "father" and "mother" and from their daughter both body and soul. Just as with the attempted division of "father" and "I" in "On My First Sonne," these severances cut, but do not fully part, the poem's figures. The parents remain informed by Mary's revivified ghost and by each other.

The concluding couplet of "On My First Daughter" focuses on the reproductive uncertainty retrospectively evident throughout the entire poem: "This grave partakes the fleshly birth. / Which cover lightly, gentle earth" (11-12).[101] On the one hand her birth was worldly, "fleshly" (11), implying that her soul is in a better place. However, rather than reflecting such comfort in a mention of heavenly birth, Jonson continues to focus on Mary's earthly form, expressing solicitous concern for the physical condition of her little body.[102] This certainly reflects the by now familiar desire to insure continuity through burial. Still, Jonson's continued emphasis on the earthly unsettles the heavenly innocence and structure he earlier asserted as certainties. The gross "earth" from which Mary's "flesh" was made, itself a synonym for the world and its evils, is asked to be "gentle" (12). Indeed, that earth is the poem's only addressee. There is no prayer to heaven or its queen and it is the earth that offers peaceful rest. The poem cycles back to the earthly grave with which it begins, and back to the same parental problems. The structures and strictures of heaven do not transfer. Even they cannot place the Mary's body and soul or keep her literary ghost from moving.

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[101] Jonson again reiterates a Martial epigram, V. xxxiv: "mollia non rigidus caespes tegat ossa ne illi, / terra, gravis fueris: non fuit illa tibi": "may no hard earth cover her gentle bones: do not lie heavy on her, Earth; she was not a heavy weight on you." See *Epigrams*, trans. Walter C. A. Ker, Loeb Classical Library, 94. 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968).
[102] Lauinger, 230.

IV. Coda: Sleeping with Ghosts

I want to end this chapter with a return to the reiterative impulses of revenge tragedy. However, I turn to a play that includes no children and whose ghost seems pointedly to resist influencing the actions of his son. *The Atheist's Tragedy*, by Cyril Tourneur, is the only revenge tragedy in which the ghost repeatedly appears urging his son *not* to act.[103] Instead of advocating vengeance, the ghost stresses waiting for the inevitable exercise of divine justice. Here children are lacking not because they are missing reason or because they have died, but rather because they have not yet been born. These missing children – the next generation – are frequently used by characters as justifications for their actions. The constant repetition of ghosts – from the actual ghost's insistence on lineal inheritance, to a faux-ghost's use of costume for a tryst – revolve around imperatives of cultural and biological reproduction. The play's ghost, Montferrers, and his murder, D'Amville, argue for drastically different belief systems, atheism and Protestant faith, using the same means: lineal inheritance. And it is this strategy of supplemental repetition that thwarts their goals. Tourneur plays out the way that ghostly repetition outweighs instrumental uses of unborn children and, indeed, prevents their birth in a graveyard scene of mishaps and misapprehensions.

Montferrers returns to tell his son, Charlemont, that he was murdered by his own brother, D'Amville. The ghost also reveals that Charlemont has been deprived of his inheritance because D'Amville faked the young man's death and had himself made heir to Montferrers' estate. Charlemont is thus something of a ghost himself, and is taken to be one by the shocked characters who encounter him after grieving at his funeral. These mourners include Charlemont's beloved, Castabella, whom D'Amville has had married to his own syphilitic son.

[103] Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton UP, 1940), 143.

Ghostly disruption of reproduction becomes most obvious when Charlemont's tormented restraint, D'Amville's villainy, and a comedic subplot combine in Act IV, scene iii. The unborn generation and the future it promises become inaccessible due to repeated and increasingly improbable hauntings. As Charlemont wanders among graves in the churchyard where his father is buried, an assassin sent by D'Amville attacks him. Charlemont kills his assailant and flees, leaving the body. The corpse lies on stage throughout the scene, unremarked until the very end. Then Langebeau Snuffe and Soquette enter for a sexual encounter that visually enacts the interaction between ghostly visions and reproduction. Soquette expresses concern about the potential outcome of such an assignation in thickly procreative terms: "In sooth I come of a generation both by father and mother that were as fruitful as costermongers' wives" (IV.iii.38-40).[104] Snuffe counters her concerns about conception with promises to avoid interruption. He recalls stories about the ghost of Montferrers haunting this church, and then puts on a sheet, wig, and beard to make himself look like the spirit and put off any potential disruptions. Soquette and Snuffe then begin to enact what may seem the very thing the ghost wants and D'Amville strives to prevent. It is a visual picture of the continuance of familial perpetuation from beyond the grave. However, the moment also pointedly makes the both the play's patriarchs and their intense desire for posterity ridiculous.

This graveyard sex is disrupted by the return of Charlemont, a bizarre performance in which the son disrupts the image of paternal efforts at longevity. Having been taken as a ghost earlier in the play, Charlemont reprises that role as he frightens the lovers away. He takes up the ghost disguise discarded by Snuffe as a potentially useful tool for escaping a murder charge. The contradictions of his father's ghostly presence take the form of theatrical props. The exchanges

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[104] Cyril Tourneur, *The Atheist's Tragedy* in *Four Revenge Tragedies,* Katharine Eisaman Maus, ed. (Oxford UP, 1998).

of this scene's entrances and exits relentlessly mirror each other. With each repetition, Tourneur highlights the further boundary-crossing resulting from efforts to ensure lineal inheritance.

After Charlemont takes refuge in the charnel house, D'Amville appears, having lured Castabella to the churchyard for the same reasons articulated by Snuffe. His incestuous proposal is colored by the previously disrupted liaison. Although D'Amville's threat of rape is menacing, his raging declaration of the importance of family lineage feels silly in the shadow of a faux-ghost going at it over the grave of undead man he is impersonating. Indeed, for D'Amville the bones of the deceased are inducements to procreation, even aphrodisiacs: "These dead men's bones lie here of purpose to / Invite us to supply the number of / The living. Come, we'll get young bones and do't" (IV.iii.155-57). Again, the invocation of the dead both prevents biological reproduction and confuses attempts to use unborn children as justifications. D'Amville's humorous, morbid pun is not so different from Soquette's flirtatious response to Snuffe's costume: "So like a ghost that, notwithstanding I have some foreknowledge of you, you make my hair stand almost on end" (65-66). The similarities between these encounters continue, for Charlemont again appears to break up the sex, this time deliberately attired in the disguise he does not know was meant to represent his undead father.

Now yet another couple follows in the footsteps of Snuffe and Soquette. Like Snuffe, D'Amville flees, and Charlemont and Castabella enjoy their own brief romantic interlude. Rather than escaping, the two lie down to sleep, *with either of them a death's head for a pillow* (IV.iii.204). Yet again, Tourneur displays images of sex and burial, life and death. To make these further reflections of prior couplings even more clear, Snuffe enters looking for Soquette and comes upon the corpse that must be lying not far from the sleeping lovers. He mistakes the carcass of the dead assassin for a willing Soquette, and begins to kiss it. The faux-ghost here tries

to make love to a dead man. Realizing his mistake, Snuffe flees, shouting to alert authorities to the murder that has thus far gone undiscovered, much as so many hoped sex would. At this D'Amville re-enters, startled by Snuffe's cries. Although he has long scorned the possibility of an afterlife, D'Amville mistakes those frightened cries as the accusations of his dead brother. Through it all the young lovers sleep on as though truly dead, reviving only when awakened by the watch. Although Montferrers' ghost never actually appears in this scene, his recurring manifestations link together procreation and the permeable bounds of life and death. For all this play's concern with reproduction, there never are any children, except for those already grown up. Indeed, Tourneur demonstrates that unborn, even un-conceived, children are as troubling as those already living or dead. The potential for children haunts the play. The ideal of inheritance they supposedly promise is undermined by reiterative graveyard high jinks.

Together children and ghosts haunt the early modern cultural reproduction. Both were seen as lacking something, and that lack enables their temporal and categorical fluidity. Attempts to make child figures whole, revise deceased children, create children as yet unborn, through supplemental repetition simply facilitate further recursive movement. Those moments in the works of Marston, Jonson, and Tourneur that seem to most definitively underline boundaries in fact mark the moments when child figures cross them. Antonio kills Julio like a sacrifice before his father's tomb. Jonson writes poetic graves for his children. Tourneur stages a frenzy of couplings over the grave of his ghost. The monuments that work to assert continuity – placing the dead on a path toward eternal life and affirming the family's continuing line – serve as the setting for that continuity's upheaval. The gravestone that might mark the boundary between life and death highlights the recursive movement of ghostly children.

CHAPTER II

EXCESS: WEBSTER'S PRODIGIOUS CHILDREN

I. Child Prodigies

Early in John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), Francisco tells Camillo a tale about the sun's dangerous desire to marry. The fable spirals from a condemnation of Camillo's wife to an articulation of repetitive reproduction and its destructive potential. In the story, all of the tradesmen appeal to Jove opposing the sun's matrimonial intentions:

> When there was but one sun, so many men
> Were like to perish by his violent heat,
> What should they do if he were married
> And should beget more, and those children
> Make fireworks like their father? So say I,
> Only I will apply it to your wife:
> Her issue, should not providence prevent it,
> Would make both nature, time, and man repent it. II.i.343-50[105]

There are many layers to this reproductive cautionary tale. Francisco encourages Camillo to be glad he has no children with his adulterous wife, Vittoria. He indicates that Vittoria's conduct would make the legitimacy of any children suspect and damage Camillo's family legacy. The fable also at first appears to be a straightforward articulation of the repetitive fantasy. As the homophones confirm, the sun will have "sons" in his image. Problematically for this pattern, the children of both a deity and a fallen women can do serious damage to society. Webster's tale hints at the trouble excess children, or simply the excesses of a single child, can cause for cultural reproduction.

[105] All quotations of John Webster are from *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays,* ed. René Weis (Oxford UP, 1996).

Francisco's sun story demonstrates the way that explanatory analogies can spawn obstructions for the versions of familial and social inheritance they seek to defend. In his tragedies *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), Webster explores interactions between the figurative language adults apply to childhood and child characters on stage. These interactions also raise questions about excess, a term that for me names both a source of problems for cultural reproduction and a strategy for responding to those problems. Excess invokes the dangers of exponential repetition, the categorical boundaries child figures cross, and the numerous contradictory tropes applied to them. It also identifies the rhetorical strategy of adding yet more figurative language to already paradoxical versions of childhood. Webster's dramatic work has been criticized as excessive, particularly with regard to his numerous characters and purported lack of organizational structure.[106] However, the excesses of his child figures are not simply spillover from a more general condition. Figurative language condenses around and makes them sites where the functionality and failures of rhetorical excess are interrogated. Giovanni, the boy heir to two dukedoms in *The White Devil*, is layered in tropes that suggest his disruptive potential and fracture his elders' authority. This contradictory language anticipates his articulations of difference from adult characterizations. Giovanni emerges, in the end, as the play's most prominent authoritative figure. In his earlier play Webster portrays the collapse of rhetorical attempts to contain Giovanni. In *The Duchess of Malfi* the playwright depicts tropes that work, but very differently than the adult characters intend. The figurative language applied to and referencing childhood accrues to the Duchess and Antonio's

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[106] On Webster's lack of organization and unity, see for example: T. S. Eliot, "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), 98; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1960), 128; John Russell Brown, ed., *The White Devil* (Manchester UP, 1979) xl-xli; Gunnar Boklund, *The Sources of* The White Devil (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 179, 184.

three unnamed, silent children. Their presence provides a physical form to which the rhetoric can adhere. The resultant conglomerations are volatile and often assert control over a chaotic world where adults are trapped and ineffectual.

I read Webster's child characters as child prodigies whose multivalent positions lead to the plays' differently ambiguous endings. The many connotations of "prodigy" include an "extraordinary thing or occurrence, regarded as an omen," "a monster, a freak," or "a person with exceptional qualities or abilities *esp.* a precociously talented child."[107] Webster's children are variously identified as precocious, in Giovanni's case, and as monsters, in the case of the Malfi children. Giovanni has been critically dismissed as an emotive innocent who highlights the hypocrisy and cruelty of his elders, and as an emblem of some lost, traditional family structure. His Malfi peers may simply seem to sympathetically color the Duchess's private family life, tug at heartstrings, and conclude the drama with a hopeful uplift.[108] They have all been classed as trivial characters. For example, Elizabeth Brennan dismisses Giovanni as "something of a prig."[109] Inga-Stina Ewbank terms his appearances "mawkish" and declares the Malfi children's silence "fortunate."[110] However, all of Webster's children are linked to portents and paradoxical combinations. They are implicated in future events and contribute to making that future unstable.

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[107] "prodigy, *n.*" *Oxford English Dictionary*, Revision June 2009. esp. definitions 1., 2., and 3.c.
[108] For a reading of the children as contributing an emphasis on family and an additional pathos see: Gunnar Boklund, *The Duchess of Malfi: Sources, Themes, Characters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1962), 96. On the link between monstrous births and narrative interpretations see Holly Tucker, *Pregnant Fictions: Childbirth and the Fairy Tale in Early-Modern France* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2003).
[109] See for example Lee Bliss, *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1983), 115, 132; Charles R. Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin: The Achievement of John Webster* (Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1986), 177-8; Elizabeth M. Brennan," 'An Understanding Auditory': an Audience for John Webster," *John Webster*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1970), 15.
[110] Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Webster's Realism, or, 'A Cunning Piece Wrought Perspective,'" in *John Webster*, Brian Morris, ed. (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1970), 173.

They are appealing yet repulsive, innocent yet perceptive. In short, they are child prodigies in all senses of the term.

Although precocity and monstrosity may seem excessive in opposite ways, they are part of a continuum. In early modern Europe, precocious children were both desired and viewed with suspicion. On the one hand, children's quick absorption of training and conformation to adult expectations presages predictable adulthood. On the other, such stability is upset by their sheer quick wit and flexibility. Roger Ascham, for example, warns of precocious children's instability: "Quick wittes also be, in most part of their doings, overquicke, hastlie, rashe, headie, and brainsicke" (D1r). This onslaught of adjectives insists that precocious children are so overwhelmingly quick that they overturn their own minds and threaten the serenity of others'. According to Ascham, they rarely grow into steady, reliable adults. Thus, precocity disturbs with its slippery illusion of sameness, while monstrosity disturbs with immediately evident difference, making any deviation from normative forms all too obvious. With monstrous births, the excesses are all too vividly, physically apparent. Although these creatures appear exclusively in Webster's language and not on stage, like Caliban, their differences from expected norms remain overt. Yet the combinations and disfigurements of monstrosity make visible the contradictions and instabilities of precocity. All of those things precocious children have too much and too little of appear in monsters' supernumerary or missing limbs. The many tropes applied to precocious children take physical form in multi-species conjunctions. Occasions of excess troping rely on assumptions of child instrumentality. It is in these moments, when the problem is amplified by the solution, that child figures seem most prodigious. *The Duchess of Malfi* in particular becomes a monstrous vision of productive figurative language. In *The White Devil*, figurative language reveals Giovanni's agency, while in *Malfi*, the rhetoric actually endows the children with agency.

II. Precocity in *The White Devil*

Webster identifies Giovanni as a precocious child, with all of that role's ambiguities, during his first scene. The child wears new armor from his uncle Francisco and eagerly discusses rather fanciful battle plans with his father and uncle. His father, Bracciano, declares: "Forward lapwing! / He flies with the shell on's head" (II.i.124-5). This image of a baby bird airborne so young that he still wears a bit of his shell overtly expresses proud approval, and a bit of condescension, rather than anxiety, and it establishes Giovanni's prodigious speed.[111] Newly hatched, Giovanni launches himself into grownup topics and all of the adults seem delighted. However, as Gail Bradbury notes, the lapwing was also an early modern figure for deception. The bird was understood to draw predators away from the nest by calling from misleading locations, as is reflected in the saying "The lapwing cries farthest from the nest."[112] This additional connotation implies that Giovanni's precocious utterances do not clearly lead to the conclusion his father and uncle seem to presume. That is, Giovanni's gratifying words do not prove an eager willingness to replicate the examples of his elders. Rather, they may create a pleasing illusion that misdirects adult expectations, leaving the precocious child's real attitudes unknown. Thus one of the lines that identifies Giovanni's precocity indicates a potential capacity not only for deception but also for the defense of himself and others. Webster uses Bracciano's own words to hint at the dangers posed by his son.

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[111] See Gail Bradbury, "Webster's 'lapwing': A Significant Illusion in *The White Devil*," *Notes and Queries,* 26 (April, 1979), 148. Webster alludes to the proverb, "The lapwing runneth away with the shell on her head." See Tilley, 368 L69. Shakespeare makes a similar reference in *Hamlet*, V.ii.166.

[112] See Tilley and *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (Oxford, 1970). Bradbury argues that this additional interpretation indicates Giovanni's hidden corruption.

Cardinal Monticelso, among others, tries to use Giovanni as a political tool to bond the warring factions of his family. Yet Webster simultaneously undermines that characterization through the very language he gives to the Cardinal. Before Giovanni's entrance, Francisco and Bracciano are at each other's throats. Monticelso and Francisco have come to chastise Bracciano about his adulterous relationship with Vittoria, who is herself married to Camillo, a kinsman of the Cardinal. Francisco, whose sister, Isabella, is married to Bracciano, becomes particularly vociferous. As the tempers of father and uncle flare, Monticelso conveniently ushers in Giovanni: "No more, my lord, here comes a champion / Shall end the difference between you both" (II.i.94-5). The boy's armor contributes to this characterization as a little knight, but undermines the claim that he is a peacemaker.[113] His presence presages conflict even as the Cardinal's speech asserts the bonding uses to which this little prodigy should be put:

> See, my lords,
> What hopes you store in him; this is a casket
> For both your crowns, and should be held like dear.
> Now he is apt for knowledge; therefore know
> It is a more direct and even way
> To train to virtue those of princely blood
> By examples than by precepts. If by examples,
> Whom should he rather strive to imitate
> Than his own father? Be his pattern then,
> Leave him a stock of virtue that may last
> Should fortune rend his sails and split his mast. II.i.96-106

Monticelso posits the young heir as a political instrument that is the creation of his elders and therefore their common cause. The boy is positioned as the fulfillment of a lineal, if not perfectly repetitive, view of reproduction. Monticelso situates him as the sum of two men, not the image of one, thus striving to end the argument while holding out the prospect of mutual immortality.

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[113] Frederick O. Waage sees Giovanni as a figure devoted to martial ideals and as a moral symbol. See *The White Devil Discover'd: Backgrounds and Foregrounds to Webster's Tragedy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 30-1.

The metaphor of the casket and the inherited crowns that will fill it stresses the apparent fixity of Giovanni's familial role. Yet the Cardinal's assertion of exclusive adult authority is undermined before Giovanni even speaks by the tropes Webster deploys. Caskets may be containers, but the contents are often corpses. While Monticelso may present Giovanni as the bearer of his elders' crowns after their deaths, Webster also figures the boy as the burial site for their ideals and assumptions.

Webster tempers presumptions of adult authority with Monticelso's attempt to use childhood malleability to curb the bad behavior of men. Giovanni is present not only to remind the men of their common bond, but also to make them act as good examples. His malleability is supposed to correct the actions of the adults. Thus even as the Cardinal stresses the stability of patriarchal inheritance, a child's changeability is also expected to serve as an instrument of correction. The behavior of his two principle male role models, as well as their crowns, will fill this casket's empty space and direct the future of their dukedoms, as soon as the casket stops their bickering. Thus Webster turns a speech that seems like a series of commonplaces into a revelation of the instability of views of childhood. For example, the "stock of virtue" the adulterous Bracciano is encouraged to build up invokes horticultural figures of speech and the image of a family tree even as Monticelso tumbles into a new metaphor, turning Giovanni into a ship beset by a future storm of troubles. Webster thus introduces the confusion caused by trying to normalize child development through excess troping. Giovanni is a hopeful knight, an empty casket, a malleable child awaiting his pattern, a branch on his father's tree, and a threatened ship. The crowns he will inherit are certain treasures for this casket, and yet disappear in a storm through which only virtue will sustain him. His political function is to bond his father and uncle,

curb their behaviors, and insure their futures. Monticelso's contradictory troping demonstrates the fragility of those expectations and presages Giovanni's eventual rejection of them.

The textual indicators of Monticelso's attempt to use Giovanni as a political tool were born out in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1996 production of *The White Devil*. Director Gale Edwards' blocking of the casket speech and subsequent exchange made physical contact with Giovanni a feature throughout the scene and repeatedly placed him in a mediating position between adults [See Figure 2].[114] I argue that through touch the production highlighted attempts by the Cardinal, Bracciano, and Francisco to claim the boy. Edwards' positioning of Giovanni between his elders stressed the bonding function Monticelso's lines delineate. For example, as the Cardinal spoke of Giovanni as "a casket / for both your crowns" (II.i.97-8) he drew the boy to center stage, directly between Francisco and Bracciano. The RSC production highlighted the view of the child as corrective instrument when Monticelso made his appeal for Bracciano's reform. He ushered Giovanni to Bracciano, with a hand on the child's shoulder, and placed Giovanni's hand in his father's. These visual representations of the child as emissary and possession were further complicated by competition among the adults for control of Giovanni.

In the RSC production, Giovanni served as a site of contestation as well as the embodiment of family alliances. Francisco and Bracciano vied for his attention and for physical contact with him. For example, Francisco drew Giovanni away from Bracciano while he still held his son's hand. Bracciano even extended his arm to maintain contact with Giovanni for as long as possible. Francisco put an arm around the boy emphatically as he spoke: "See: a good habit makes a child a man, / Whereas a bad one makes a man a beast; / Come, you and I are

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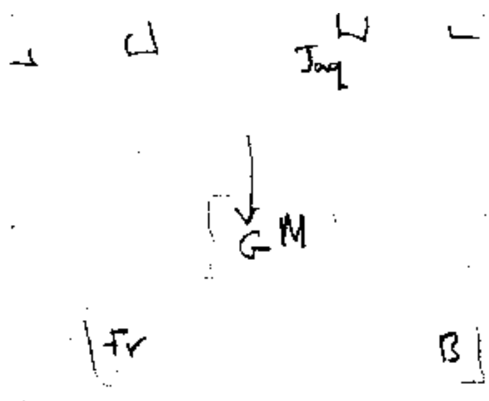
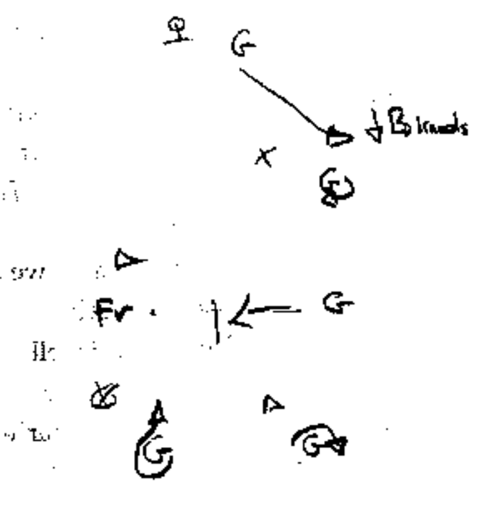
[114] For an analysis of Edwards' blocking as it relates to sexuality and gender in the play, see Nick Tippler, "Cunning with Pistols: Observations on Gale Edwards's 1996-7 RSC Production of John Webster's *The White Devil*," in *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance,* ed. Edward J. Esche (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 275-91.





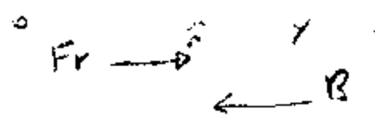


Figure 2: From the prompt book for the RSC’s 1996 *White Devil*

friends" (II.i.136-8). Combining motion and words, Edwards' Francisco jointly praised Giovanni and claimed him, putting the two of them on the side of "good habits" while placing Bracciano on the side of the bad and beastly ones, despite his closing promise of friendship. Edwards underlined the characters' temporary accord by visually referencing Monticelso's previous mediating placement of Giovanni. Francisco and Bracciano stood on either side of the child and shook hands across his body. Francisco's assertions about good and evil serve to trouble those gestures. While the lines stress repetition's influence on childhood maturation, they also emphasize the ease with which children can switch categories. Habit alone makes a child an adult, not particular motives or morals. The parallelism of Francisco's statements also hints at potential closeness between children and beasts. Even as Giovanni seems be a sign of his elders' bond, the many connotations he invokes indicates its instability. On stage, even after their agreement Francisco and Bracciano continued to compete for physical contact with the boy. Edwards' blocking thus reflects an interpretation of Giovanni as a political instrument, but one who insures only a temporary accord.

The RSC production highlighted the instability inherent in dependence on the next generation for perpetuation, but did not explore childhood agency as a source of that instability. Edwards' staging cut Giovanni's entire exchange with Francisco and Bracciano, an exchange that displays the child's potentially troubling precocity.[115] The boy's initial question is about the extent of youthful authority: "Might not a child of good discretion / Be leader to an army?" (II.i.112-3). His uncle's affirmative answer, "a young prince / Of good discretion might" (114-5) stresses through repetition a quality, "discretion," that children were generally thought to lack. Perhaps stressing the rareness of such a quality, through this repetition Webster hints at

[115] Cut lines: II.i.114-35.

Giovanni's possession of it. Although he never appears at the head of an army, this apparently harmless play at soldiering translates into Giovanni's ultimate command of guards and state instruments of torture, and his positioning of himself as a source of justice. Giovanni responds to his uncle's affirmative with a condemnation of generals who have too much concern for their own safety: "He need not fight; methinks his horse as well / Might lead an army for him. If I live / I'll charge the French foe, in the very front / Of all my troops, the foremost man" (120-2). This youthful embrace of martial values delights both father and uncle, precipitating Bracciano's lapwing exclamation. Yet Giovanni's words indicate distaste not only for cowardice but also for using factors to do one's dirty work – a common practice in his elders' Rome. This perhaps foreshadows Giovanni's rejection of Lodovico's excuse for the play's concluding murders, that all was done at his uncle's orders. Christina Luckyj sees Giovanni's military appearance and language as Webster's means of undercutting the swaggering masculinity of the adult men.[116] Giovanni's lines also recall another heir with uncles who receives further analysis in the next chapter, Shakespeare's Edward V. In *Richard III*, Edward V declares: "An if I live until I be a man, / I'll win our ancient right in France again, / Or die a soldier as I lived a king" (III.i.91-3).[117] Webster's potentially deliberate echo points to Giovanni's unstable political position as a child wedged between manipulative men, but in removing direct mention of death Webster may highlight Giovanni's potential for survival and his future conduct. Giovanni's witty repartee indicates ways in which his precocity may unsettle the established practices of his father and uncle.

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[116] Christina Luckyj, "Gender, Rhetoric and Performance in *The White Devil*" in *Revenge Tragedy,* The New Casebooks, ed. Stevie Simkin (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 190-207, esp. 197.
[117] R. W. Dent also draws this connection, while asserting that Webster is probably thinking of Prince Henry. See *John Webster's Borrowing* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1960), 93-4.

Giovanni's references to women in his continued discussion of war also point to the "good discretion" Webster embeds in the character. The child declares that in this hypothetical first war he will free all of his prisoners without ransom. When Francisco questions the practicality of this measure – how will the boy reward his troops? – Giovanni responds: "I'll marry them to all the wealthy widows / That fall that year" (II.i.131). In the back and forth between the two that follows, Giovanni's positions might seem a witty but unworldly effort to stand his ground in a playful dispute. However, Giovanni's emphasis on women also reflects the centrality of women to the play's political machinations and is a hint that he understands more about them than his elders recognize. Giovanni clearly sees marriage as a political tool, and his very existence stems from just such a union. His seemingly ridiculous plans for managing an army thus highlight Monticelso's, Francisco's and Bracciano's own motivations and the vulnerability of their policies.

The ways in which Giovanni does not fit the imitative molds of the casket or even the miniature soldier become increasingly apparent when Webster allocates to him the job of reporting Isabella's death. He is grief-stricken and vulnerable, caught between a father who murdered his mother and an uncle who undertakes the murder of his father. Webster combines this apparent weakness with the portrayal of the boy's understanding of his situation. Giovanni initiates the announcement of Isabella's death by inverting the pattern of emulation introduced in the earlier exchange with his elders: "uncle, I was taught to imitate you / In virtue, and you must imitate me / In colours for your garments" (III.ii.310-2). Giovanni demonstrates that he is aware of adult expectations and methods of childrearing. His mourning also indicates that Isabella provides an example for him to follow, just as his father and uncle do. He wants to know what death means for his mother: "What do the dead do, uncle? Do they eat, / Hear music, go a-

hunting, and be merry, / As we that live?" (322-4). This inquiry may initially seem to confirm Giovanni's position as a sweet child, sheltered from the malignancy of the adult world. However, as a witness to Isabella's poisoning he is hardly a perfect innocent. His words crystallize the concern about what comes after death that is an issue throughout Webster's dramatic art. The playwright has other characters, including Flamineo (V.iv.123-37) and the Duchess (IV.ii.18-9), repeat this same sort of inquiry about what follows death.[118] Francisco's response to his nephew, that the dead "sleep" (III.ii.324), turns this exchange into a matter of physical action, rather than afterlife. However, the subsequent appearances of Giovanni's ghostly parents establish the substantial nature of the boy's question.

Giovanni's relief at the idea that death brings rest reflects his understanding of his mother's final days. The boy's initial response may seem naïve, but also expresses his sorrow: "Lord, Lord, that I were dead; / I have not slept these six nights" (III.ii.325-6). He continues:

> Good God let her sleep ever,
> For I have known her wake an hundred nights,
> When all the pillow, where she laid her head,
> Was brine-wet with her tears.
> I am to complain to you, sir.
> I'll tell you how they have used her now she's dead:
> They wrapped her in a cruel fold of lead,
> And would not let me kiss her. III.ii.327-34

Webster grants Giovanni greater discernment than either his father or his uncle. Francisco remains unaware of Isabella's earlier charade, her decision to appear the agent of her marriage's collapse, and Bracciano, the one who orders her murder, does not care about her personal anguish. Giovanni, however, can specifically describe his mother's misery, even to her damp pillow, as though he has watched over her with care. His own lack of sleep potentially casts him

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[118] Christina Luckyj, *A Winter's Snake: Dramatic Form in the Tragedies of John Webster* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1989), 119.

as the parental figure watching over Isabella's pain. Giovanni's lament figures Isabella clearly, while when Francisco comes face to face with her form he can only try to claim mastery by asserting that his own imagination created the vision. However, the extent of his control is far from certain and the status of Isabella's ghost is open to interpretation.[119] Giovanni's lament also introduces an intimate picture of suffering, loss, and death that counterbalances Bracciano's smirking amusement as he watches tableaus of the murders he orchestrates. Luckyj argues that Webster also contrasts the lament with Vittoria's forceful but ambiguous self-defense at the immediately preceding trial: "Far from reinforcing the melodramatic conception of the protagonists as mere villains, Giovanni's lament functions as a chorus, giving voice to the unfathomable and inevitable mystery of death, as Vittoria's trial illuminates the complexity and mystery of human action" (1989: 119). It is the boy who both articulates Isabella's pain and provides a counterweight to Vittoria's boldness where the adult men cannot.[120]

Webster also relates Giovanni's reflection on the nature of death to Isabella's living misery, confirming the boy's understanding of her experiences. Although Giovanni never precisely rejects Isabella's example of passionate self-sacrifice, he loses her first to what the playwright characterizes as living death and then to murder. When Francisco confronts Bracciano about his relationship with Vittoria he says of Isabella: "would I had given / Both her white hands to death, bound and locked fast / In her last winding-sheet, when I gave thee / But one" (II.i.63-6). Isabella picks up this same terminology later in the scene, when Bracciano vows

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[119] Critical attitudes toward the nature of Isabella's ghost and its independence of or dependence on Francisco vary. Luckyj argues that Webster makes this deliberately uncertain, 2001, 201. Asserting Francisco's mastery over the ghost and the remainder of the revenge action: Bliss, 119-120; Kate Aughterson, *Webster: The Tragedies* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 117.
[120] Susan H. McLeod also links Vittoria and Giovanni, noting their similar responses to Bracciano's poisoning, V.iii.7, 15. See "Duality in *The White Devil" SEL* 20:2 (Spring, 1980), 271-285, esp. 283.

divorce: “O my winding-sheet, / Now shall I need thee shortly!” (205-6). Henceforth Isabella lives in her winding sheet, unable to rest, a precursor of the ghost that will soon appear to Francisco, a ghost that her son has already seen. Judith Weil also links Isabella’s living death with Francisco’s ghostly vision to question his presumption of control over the apparition and subsequent revenge plot.[121] Giovanni recalls Francisco’s language of bondage when he describes his mother’s ill usage after death, “They wrapped her in a cruel fold of lead” (III.ii.33). While this may seem an overwrought description of a lead-lined coffin, it indicates his recognition of Isabella’s treatment during life. Webster’s reference to a coffin here also recalls the ominous undertones of Monticelso’s casket speech. Isabella both fills and is cut off from her son’s casket. Giovanni’s denied desire to kiss her goodbye echoes her last, poisoned, kiss and again suggests his recognition of the ways in which the men he is expected to emulate have casually destroyed his mother.

Webster’s emphasis on mother and child relationships, particularly on nursing, enables him to parallel the play’s precocious child character and former prodigies. Flamineo is very like Roger Ascham’s worst nightmare of quick-witted children grown up. His university education and disillusioned wit recall the moral shiftiness and career instability Ascham predicts. Webster creates two child prodigies who both reject key adult expectations. Although neither Flamineo nor Giovanni mirror their mothers, their responses to nursing are drastically different. Giovanni reports that Isabella stressed this act and himself reads it as a sign of their close relationship: “I have often heard her say she gave me suck, / And it should seem by that she dearly loved me, / Since princes seldom do it” (III.ii.335-7). Frederick Waage argues that instances like this define

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[121] Judith Weil, “*The White Devil* and Old Wives’ Tales,” *Modern Language Review*, 94:2 (April 1999), 328-340, esp. 332, 334.

love in the play as a physical, nurturing bond.[122] Nursing by noblewomen in the early modern period was conventionally understood as proof of exemplary maternal devotion.[123] Flamineo overtly rebels against Cornelia's enactment of this humoral and moral influence. He insists he will not "retain your milk / In my pale forehead [?] / No, this face of mine / I'll arm and fortify with lusty wine" (I.ii.321-23). His rejection of his mother requires some artificial bolstering.[124] Yet it takes on ominous significance in conjunction with the story of the infant Flamineo's portentous damaging of a crucifix that once belonged to his father. As Elizabeth Williamson stresses, the crucifix invokes the family tree.[125] While Giovanni responds to his family's disintegration by rejecting his elder's examples, Flamineo enacts his family's destruction as a baby and brings it to fruition as an adult. Marcello notes: "I have heard you say, giving my brother suck, / He took the crucifix between his hands / And broke a limb off" (V.ii.11-3). Although Cornelia insists "'tis mended" (13), Flamineo tellingly enters at the language of broken limbs and stabs his brother. He rejects his mother's milk not only an adult, but even as an infant by breaking the symbol of family which Cornelia tries to cobble together. Webster uses these nursing associations to heighten the tension of the prodigies' encounter, in which Giovanni casts Flamineo out of the corrupt court world he discarded his mother to pursue.

III. Giovanni Dismounts: Rejection of Adult Examples

The play's only conversation between Giovanni and Flamineo leads to Giovanni's rejection of his villainous father, and by extension the idealized sense that he is a vessel to be

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[122] Waage, 66,120.

[123] See for example Laurant Joubert, *Popular Errors*, Gregory David de Rocher, trans. (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1989), 194-5.

[124] Famineo also references nursing at IV.ii.179-80.

[125] Elizabeth Williamson, "The Domestication of Religious Objects in *The White Devil*," *SEL* 47.2 (Spring 2007), 473-90, esp. 474-6.

filled. Webster also portrays the former child prodigy slipping into assumptions about figurative language and reproduction that only create conflict with the actual child character. After Bracciano's death Flamineo plans to acquire a position with the new duke. Flamineo asserts that "comparisons" (V.iv.4) must not be made to Giovanni's face and scorns using figurative language to influence the young duke. Yet he cannot seem to help relying on analogy to articulate his strategy:

> Wise was the courtly peacock, that being a great minion, and being compared for beauty, by some dottrels that stood by, to the kingly eagle, said the eagle was a far fairer bird than herself, not in respect of her feathers, but in respect of her long talons. His will grow out in time. V.iv.5-9

Webster's use of birds in this lesson on courtly flattery recalls the instability of Bracciano's lapwing label for Giovanni. Flamineo is apprehensive about the boy he assumes will grow up to be an eagle like his father, attacking easy prey (II.i.48-50), but believes that the tactics that enabled him to survive the one will serve him well with the other. However, Webster's language again raises connotations that undercut his character's apparent meaning. Flamineo rightly worries about Giovanni's talons, but they will serve not to threaten his life daily, but rather to cut him out of court life entirely.

When Flamineo makes his move for preferment, he applies the very sort of rhetorical strategy he tries to disavow. He flatters the young duke with a representation of his newfound power - a story of "the little boy that rode behind his father on horseback" (V.iv.12-3):

> 'When you are dead, father', said he, 'I hope then I shall ride in the saddle'. O 'tis a brave thing for a man to sit by himself: he may stretch himself in the stirrups, look about, and see the whole compass of the hemisphere; you're now, my lord, i'th' saddle. V.iv.15-9

Flamineo assumes that being his father's son – being any son destined to inherit power and a title – Giovanni will be pleased with this "comparison." As Lee Bliss points out, Flamineo projects

his own ambitions onto the precocious child,[126] a move Webster uses to connect and contrast the past and present prodigies. Flamineo's tactics align strongly with those of a guide for household governance in which the slippage between practical advice and troping is clearly evident. *The court of good counsel* offers a story very like Flamineo's, asserting that the desire of even very young children to replace their fathers is at the root of familial discord: "as a litle child riding on a time behinde his father, said simply unto him: Father when you are dead, I shall ride in the saddle."[127] This text argues that children imitate adults in order to replace them and that adult anxiety about precocious children stems from the children's desire to replace parents too soon. David Hunt considers such "fear of the child's will" to be a "general cultural theme" in the early modern period. [128] However, through Giovanni's rebuttal and Flamineo's reaction, Webster indicates that child prodigies may be far more dangerous when they do not want to replace their fathers than when they do.

Webster deploys a seemingly straightforward moral lesson to express Giovanni's break from Flamineo's assumptions. Giovanni responds sharply: "Study your prayers, sir, and be penitent / 'Twere fit you'd think on what hath former been; / I have heard grief named the eldest child of sin" (V.iv.20-2). He not only rejects Flamineo's efforts, he disdains the very idea of sitting in his father's place. Giovanni's lines overtly instruct penitence for past crimes, indicating his awareness of at least some of Flamineo's scheming, as well as his father's. Webster also uses these lines to comment on inheritance. Bracciano is the former, sinful duke and Giovanni is his eldest, indeed only, child. Thus the sinful duke does not beget the image of himself, ready for

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[126] Bliss, 127.
[127] *The court of good counsel*. (London: Ralph Blower, 1607), sig. E3v. The text is composed primarily of selections from book 3 of *La civil conversatione*, by Stefano Guazzo.
[128] David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History, The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970), 138-9.

flattery as Flamineo supposes, but rather a grief-stricken son, mourning not only his father but also his mother, the victim of his father's crimes.

Giovanni's words are not a simple dismissal of Bracciano's particularly nefarious ways in favor of alignment with another father figure. Flamineo claims this is the case: "He [Giovanni] hath his uncle's villainous look already / In *decimo-sexto*" (V.iv.28-9). However, the boy's earlier injunction that the duke must now imitate him belies this assumption. Even as Flamineo downplays the threat that Giovanni poses, his continued use of tropes indicates danger: "So the wolf and raven / Are very pretty fools when they are young" (32-3). Like the problematic labeling of Giovanni as a lapwing and eagle, Flamineo's lines also suggest a problem of excessive troping that Webster explores more fully in *The Duchess of Malfi*. When figurative language works, actually accruing to child figures as it does with the Malfi children who are also labeled wolf cubs, the results are dangerously unpredictable.

Giovanni proceeds to deny Francisco's authority even more clearly. Monticelso, Francisco, Bracciano and even Flamineo see troping and repetition as functional pedagogical and disciplinary practices. However, when Giovanni walks in on the massacre of Vittoria, Zanche, and Flamineo at the hands of Francisco's conspirators, his uncle's name offers them no protection. The young duke demands an explanation, raising questions about where power now lies and how societal perpetuation is to be insured: "You bloody villains, / By what authority have you committed / This massacre?" (V.vi.283-5). Lodovico replies, "By thine" (285), explaining: "thy uncle, / Which is a part of thee, enjoined us to't" (285-6). Lodovico presumes that because Francisco is a prime filler of this casket, any authority vested in the casket is his. Kate Aughterton argues that Giovanni naively refuses to accept that his uncle is involved in the

plot.[129] However, the young duke's dismissal of Lodovico's assertion that an innocent child must be an extension of his elders makes such a reading untenable. Instead, Giovanni promises violent justice:

> He turned murderer?
> Away with them to prison, and to torture;
> All that have hands in this shall taste our justice,
> As I hope to heaven. V.vi.290-3

The uncle that Lodovico so confidently cites is not exempted. Giovanni has the authority to punish offenders based on the inherited position of his father and the associated power of his uncle, but in doing so he denies them both. The child prodigy moves to undo the world his family raised him to perpetuate and overturns the political functions they assign him.

Webster uses the multiplicity of Giovanni's position as a precocious child ruler to create the play's ambiguous ending. Giovanni is so overflowing with contradictory qualities, with indications of weakness and strength, cruelty and morality, that myriad interpretations are possible. This uncertainty is reflected in the wide variety of critical arguments about him and the conclusion to which he is central, ranging from assertions of his utter innocence to claims of his total corruption. The claim of Giovanni's innocence has given rise to both the assumption that evil is defeated[130] and that such innocence is too weak to survive. In particular, Francisco's absence from the final reckoning has been stressed as an indication of his continued power and of Giovanni's weakness.[131] From assertions of the boy's corruption stem arguments that he has always been too much his father's son and that he will conform to the political necessity of

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[129] Aughterson, 34-5, 37, 140-1.
[130] See D. C. Gunby, "Webster: *The White Devil*," *SEL* 45 (1971); Waage, 32, 132, 159. On Giovanni as a version as a version of Prince Henry see Margaret Loftus Ranald, *John Webster* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 43; *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown, The Revels Plays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964), 38.
[131] See Aughterson, 34-5, 37; Bliss, 115, 132; Brennan, 15; Forker, 277-9.

violence and deceit.[132] I argue that Giovanni is neither a copy of his elders nor their pure naïve opposite. He definitively rejects the examples of the play's adult men and loses that of his mother. Since he does not adhere to a prominent model, Giovanni's rule could go in any direction. Webster does not write a stable ending in which the child is in total control. Francisco and Monticelso are still at large, and the English ambassador intervenes with his commands. Yet Francisco's evaporation works as much to stress his rejection by Giovanni as to contest it. While he is not imprisoned along with his henchmen, neither does he emerge to affirm Lodovico's claims on his behalf. In the final lines of the play, Webster depicts Giovanni's ambiguous agency free from the strategic rhetorical excesses of his elders.

Webster's concluding couplet stresses the instability, and even danger, generated by Giovanni's excesses. The playwright gives the concluding lines to Giovanni, potentially confirming him as the play's final authority. Yet these same lines may also be read as a commonplace scarcely applicable to the play's events. The couplet is an assertion that evil acts will ultimately work against their perpetrators: "Let guilty men remember their black deeds / Do lean on crutches, made of slender reeds" (V.vi.300-1). Yet Monticelso and Francisco's scheming goes unpunished. However, the couplet may be read as an ominous prediction of Francisco's future, rather than as a futile admonition. Giovanni is, after all, a prodigy making a potentially viable prediction. Further, the "slender reeds" may invoke not only limited support for wickedness but also common horticultural references applied to children. As was evidenced in Chapter 1, children regularly appear as flexible vines and branches, figures that can be bent into desired shapes by their elders during youth but which turn rigid as they mature. Like Monticelso,

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[132] See Bradbury, 48: Ranald, 43; and A. J. Smith, "The Power of *The White Devil*," in *John Webster*, Brian Morris, ed. (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1970), 84.

Lodovico and Francisco rely on Giovanni's malleability, but in this child prodigy Webster creates a figure too flexible, too precocious, for comfort.

III. Monstrosity in *The Duchess of Malfi*

Instead of a precocious child overwhelming self-contradictory tropes, in *The Duchess of Malfi* prodigies born of those tropes destroy the strategy that created them. That is, rhetorical excess works, but instead of normalizing child figures it creates unpredictable monsters. As they appear throughout early modern Europe, monsters are figurative language given physical form. In pamphlets, broadsheets, and books they are not simply curiosities, but also highly interpretable texts.[133] Their misshapen forms were turned into messages of local and national import and were used for many rhetorical purposes: "defining religious, ethnic, and national boundaries; legitimating faith; asserting cultural identity; or reinscribing anomalous, strange, and aberrant experiences."[134] Yet those interpretations were unpredictable and potentially dangerous and such rhetoric could never be definitive. Thus William Cecil's interest in whether or not an unwed servant named Agnes Bowker really had given birth to a cat, an event that might bolster fears of instability in Elizabeth I's young reign. Thus, during the Civil War nearly a century later,

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[133] See for example John Barker, *The true description of a monsterous Chylde, borne in the Ile of Wight* . . . (London, 1564); William Elderton, *The true fourme and shape of a monsterous chyld, whiche was borne in Stony Stratforde* (London: 1565); Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982). *Des Monstres et Prodiges* was published as part of Paré's *Completes Oeures* in 1575.
[134] Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, "Introduction" *Monstrous Bodies / Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 1-22, 6. On deformities as signs of divine judgment, see Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 22-24; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribners, 1971), 89-96. On monstrosity and aberrant erotic practices see Ian Frederick Moulton, "'A Monster Great Deformed'" The Unruly Masculinity of Richard III," *Shakespeare Quarterly.* 47:3 (Autumn 1996): 251-68.

pamphlets reading the birth of headless infants both for and against the Roundheads.[135] Monsters highlight the dangerous interpretability entwined with period anxieties about reproduction.

Webster uses the physical presence of his silent child characters as forms to which the imagery of monstrous combinations adheres. They become physical manifestations of excessive troping. Performance traditions that bring the child characters on stage more frequently than the stage directions require indicate that their presence interacts potently with Webster's language.[136] The playwright also deploys imagery of childhood to situate key points in the play. Divine will regularly appears as an exercise of child's play, with adults reduced to toys. Therefore, as with the monstrous births of period pamphlets, Webster's monstrous births are themselves used for rhetorical purposes by multiple characters. The playwright employs his child characters, the tropes applied to them, and tropes that reference childhood together to create child figures that are unpredictable and destructive. They undermine the repetitive models of societal perpetuation raised in the play's first scene, all of which imagine continuity through copying those at the top. These include: Antonio's description of a court as a "common fountain" (I.i.12), Bosola's image of the Cardinal and Ferdinand as corrupt "plum-trees that grow crooked over standing pools" (47-8), Ferdinand's demand that his court copy him precisely, "Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touchwood, take fire, when I give fire" (118-9). Although the child characters of *Malfi* are not physically deformed, they serve to anchor ideas of monstrosity and humanity that unsettle their elders' initial views of the world.

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[135] David Cressy, "Lamentable, Strange, and Wonderful: Headless Monsters in the English Revolution," in *Monstrous Bodies / Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe,* Knoppers and Landes, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004) 40-63; Cressy, *Agnes Bowker's Cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford UP, 2001), 9-28.
[136] The children appeared in the bedroom scene (III.iii) in the RSC's 1960 and 2001 productions, and in the 1980 Royal Exchange production. The promptbook for the latter held by the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester (Luckyj, 1989: 26).

The resemblance between Webster's monstrous children and their elders proves just as disturbing as overt physical difference. Act II opens with Bosola viciously deriding Castruccio and the Old Lady and then figuring humans as a species of monstrous prodigies:

> Observe my meditation now.
> What thing is in this outward form of man
> To be beloved? We account it ominous
> If nature do produce a colt, or lamb,
> A fawn, or goat, in any limb resembling
> A man; and fly from't as a prodigy.
> Man stands amazed to see his deformity
> In any creature but himself.
> But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
> Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts,
> As the most ulcerous wolf, and swinish measle;
> Though we are eaten up of lice and worms,
> And though continually we bear about us
> A rotten and dead body, we delight
> To hide it in rich tissue. II.i.40-54

Through Bosola, Webster emphasizes not the inherent repugnance of any apparent combination of human and animal, but rather the shock people feel at seeing themselves reflected in other creatures.[137] The fearful reaction overtly associated with the predictive power of the prodigy as bad omen also reveals the horror of self-recognition. It is not the beast that is hideous for Bosola, but rather the man, and the hybrid creature in which man is most likely to recognize himself is a child. Children are monstrous in their resemblance of as well as in their difference from their elders. The childhood possession of potentially animal characteristics may be disturbing, but so too is the apparently attractive similarity to adulthood displayed by precocious children.

Webster also blurs the presumed dividing line between species. While Dymphna Callaghan asserts that with Bosola's speech, "Monstrosity becomes the category against which to define the very nature of being human itself," I argue that it presents humanity as a

[137] Aughterson reads this as a typical misanthrope's argument against narrow, subjective human perceptions (124).

conglomeration.[138] Humans have animal qualities for reasons ranging from diseases like the "most ulcerous wolf" that will later absorb both Ferdinand and two of the Duchess's children, to lice infestations. These mixtures might seem as repulsive as a lamb with human features, but they are also commonplace. The most average conditions thus become monstrous and every birth becomes a prodigy. While in Francisco's warning to Bracciano in *The White Devil* men can become beasts by habit (II.i.136-7), here all people are always beastly and also hypocritical for despising in the monstrous births of animals the combinations they themselves embody.

Webster transitions directly from monstrous colts and lambs to Bosola's description of the pregnant Duchess. He thus links the upcoming birth of her eldest child to the those monstrosities:

> I observe our Duchess
> Is sick o' days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
> The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
> She wanes i'th' cheek and waxes fat i'th flank. II.i.59-62

Luckyj sees the Duchess's entrance as an occasion of pure contrast, with Bosola spewing death and decay while she embodies life.[139] Instead, their juxtaposition points to another monstrous birth. Callaghan also notes Webster's combination of monstrosity and precocity in his depiction of procreation. Callaghan argues that Bosola makes the Duchess "a monstrosity . . . grotesque in pregnancy" and that he imagines the child she carries as similarly monstrous, "a precocious sprite" (145). Bosola calls the unborn infant, "The young springal cutting a caper in her belly" (144), as though the child responding to the apricots had speedily, bizarrely matured into a youth in utero.

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[138] Dympna Callaghan, *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of* King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi, *and* The White Devil (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, Inc., 1989), 144.
[139] Luckyj, (1989) 81.

Delio advances this "sprite" as the ultimately unstable foundation for the future.[140] *The Duchess of Malfi* ends on a note similar to Webster's earlier tragedy, with the surviving son presented as the embodiment of hope:

> Let us make noble use
> Of this great ruin; and join all our force
> To establish this young, hopeful gentleman
> In's mother's right. V.v.109-12

While these lines recall the ending of *The White Devil*, with the emphasis on the inheritance of an apparently corrective child, Delio's words also evoke Monticelso's introduction of Giovanni as a peaceful champion – a contradictory end to his father and uncle's quarrel. The Duchess's son is cast as a political instrument speciously expected to bond the surviving elders together. Some staging choices for the final scene bear out the instability of any purportedly hopeful foundation built upon this boy. For example, at the end of the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2001 production the ghost of the Duchess stood in a spotlight over the bodies of Bosola and Ferdinand. Her son stepped forward to stand with her, and she placed a hand on his shoulder. While this creates a visual tableau of the "mother's right" the heir inherits, it also associates him with the violence and intrigue that destroyed her. The eldest son's connection with his family's past was similarly stressed in the RSC's 1960 production, when the boy knelt among the dead bodies during the final speech, a move Luckyj sees as "mutely contradicting Delio's moral lesson." [141] The extent to which reliance on the surviving son will bring change or more of the same remains ambiguous.

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[140] Viewing Delio as a reliable narrator are: Aughterson, 44-47; Ranald, 53; and D. C. Gunby "*The Duchess of Malfi*: a Theological Approach," *John Webster,* Brian Morris, ed. (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1970) 204.
[141] 2001 RSC production of *The Duchess of Malfi* directed by Gale Edwards; 1960 RSC production directed by Donald McWhinnie. Information verified through the prompt books and video recordings held at the Shakespeare Centre Library.

An even more striking manifestation of childhood's destabilizing excess in this play is the fact that this "hopeful gentlemen" should not be present during the conclusion at all. Webster introduces contradictory expectations of both early death and hopeful reconstruction and positions the son to defy them. The evidence that officially confirms the Duchess's pregnancy and informs Bosola, Ferdinand, and the Cardinal's subsequent actions is the boy's nativity, which Antonio unluckily drops. At the same time Antonio bleeds on his own monogrammed initials, a foreboding portent which Webster highlights through Antonio's reaction: "One that were superstitious would count / This ominous" (II.iii.43-4). Given Antonio's later death, similar predictive power might be expected of the child's horoscope. Bosola reads it aloud: "The lord of the first house, being combust in the ascendant, signifies short life; and Mars being in a human sign, joined to the tail of the Dragon, in the eighth house, doth threaten a violent death" (61-4). This horoscope confirms the prodigious connections Webster draws in Bosola's earlier speech between monstrous births, cosmic portents, and the Duchess's pregnancy. This composite of "human sign" and mythical animal is troubling because of its promised carnage and blurring of species. The son is a prodigy in his astrological reflection of a recognizably human image of violence as well as in his species combination. The divergent social positions of his parents are part of this association with unusual combinations, as their unequal marriage serves as the excuse for the family's destruction. This child seems both an ill omen and the subject of one. All of this language adheres to him and is connoted whenever he appears or is mentioned. He does not live up to the expectations of his elders, but rather lives beyond them, subverting any projections of a hopeful future.[142]

[142] Bliss also notes that one of the few survivors is someone predicted to die (166).

With the horoscope, Webster begins to cultivate amnesia among the adult characters where childhood is concerned. Their expectations and figurative language become part of the play's child figures even as they overlook those contributions. Yet as his characters forget, Webster pointedly returns to the monstrosity of child figures and their paradoxical position as both victims and arbiters of death. His children are weak, silent, minor, and yet linguistically linked to predictive power and fear. Amnesia is evident in the way that Bosola and Antonio easily forget the content of the baby's astrological chart and do not refer to it as the Duchess's downfall progresses. No one expresses surprise at the boy's survival or seems to recall his early association with bloodshed. When the Duchess is apprehended by Bosola and he asks if her youngest two children can speak, she claims they cannot and cries: "But I intend, since they are born accursed, / Curses shall be their first language" (III.v.115-6). This assertion of cursed births recalls the nativity hanging over the birth of their elder brother. Webster draws attention to the silence of his child characters while also recalling their linkage with danger and violence. They may have the aptitude for cursing – a volatile gift connected to the language adults apply to them. The potency of curses, like the predictive power of a bloody nose or a nativity, is uncertain but potentially great.

The son born to the Duchess's first marriage is also a subject of amnesia. Ferdinand briefly mentions this young "Duke of Malfi" (III.iii.68-70), planning to inform him about his mother's secret marriage. The person who historically did inherit his "mother's right" is never seen on stage and is never spoken of again. The seemingly anomalous reference to the Duke provides yet another source of instability for the play's final scene. Elizabeth Brennan argues that Webster deliberately excludes him from the action because his presence would encourage

audiences to pass judgment on the Duchess, Antonio, and others.[143] While I agree that the Duke's brief "appearance" and subsequent disappearance are Webster's choice, not mere forgetfulness, I argue that they make the Duke of Malfi the play's fantasy of the non-monstrous child that can exist only in language that does not work. No figurative language is ever applied to him, and Ferdinand's message fades into ether. The Duke's absence holds out the possibility of his intervention. Perhaps he will act to reestablish lineal inheritance, thwarting his mother's marriage and repairing the family name. Perhaps he will alleviate Ferdinand's anguished repulsion and desire by replacing the Duchess's other, disturbing offspring. However, he cannot emerge to take action because doing so would expose his form to figurative language. His half siblings are transformed by their very presence on stage. The Duke remains the possibility of the instrumental, repetitive child, suspended in limbo because to give him form and action would be to make him monstrous. Historical events do not function as plot for Webster because if the Duke were the play's heir there would be no one to serve as the impossible ideal child. Further, because of his lineage, he could never be quite so disturbingly composite as his siblings. He could have been made into a precocious heir like Giovanni, but Webster had already explored that version of childhood.

V. Tops: Child Figures Set Adults Spinning

Webster introduces the use of child figures as tropes, another element that indicates their monstrosity, in the very first scene. The language of child's play is a formative feature of the Duchess and Antonio's marriage, and as the drama progresses it becomes a means by which multiple characters articulate their experiences of suffering. Antonio identifies fatherhood as a

[143] Brennan, 17

key deficiency of his unmarried condition. As the Duchess courts him, he shares a view of children he does not hold, but only uses as a weak consolation, "feeding my melancholy" (I.i.387) when troubled by his unmarried state:

> Say a man never marry, nor have children,
> What takes that from him? Only the bare name
> Of being a father, or the weak delight
> To see the little wanton ride a-cock-horse
> Upon a painted stick, or hear him chatter
> Like a taught starling. I.i.389-94

This argument dismisses children as little amusements. The child riding "cock-a-horse" recalls Giovanni playing soldier, and instead of a "forward lapwing" Webster gives us "taught starlings," who jabber without knowing what they are saying. Completely lacking any judgment, they mindlessly repeat what they hear from adults. As Antonio indicates in advance that he does not really believe this assessment, Webster uses this passage to establish what children are not in this play. Antonio makes future children foundational to his marriage, and with the horoscope Webster links the child that gives Antonio the fatherly identity he desires to his subsequent loss of family and life. Antonio's faux-dismissal of fatherhood is the first in a series of passages on children, their toys and games. Inga-Stina Ewbank views these as expressing "almost bourgeois sentiment . . . innocence and simple love," (173). However, as the horoscope connection indicates, these references accrue to the play's child figures and grant them treacherous interpretability and even agency.

A later use of child's play imagery demonstrates the paradoxical conjunction of qualities set in motion by Antonio's first mention of children. When the Duchess must say goodbye to her eldest son, Webster emphasizes the position of child figures as both victims and arbiters of suffering. After the flight from Malfi and the dumb show expulsion from Ancona, Webster gives the Duchess lines that cast the boy both as a pure innocent and as a figure for her life's turmoil.

First she pointedly counts her son lucky to lack reason: “Thou art happy, that thou hast not understanding / To know thy misery, for all our wit / And reading brings us to a truer sense / Of sorrow” (III.v.67-71). Yet immediately afterward her son takes the place of God in a visual image of her suffering: “I have seen my little boy oft scourge his top / And compared myself to’t: nought made me e’er / Go right but heaven’s scourge-stick” (79-81). With these lines Webster recalls Antonio’s earlier, lighter reference to children playing with toys. However, in this instance the imagined, future son and key component of family life becomes the real boy reframed as a means of processing the disintegration of that family. The child is both present, alongside his siblings, and a rhetorical device. The adult becomes a passive, inanimate object and the child’s meaningless, repetitive activity becomes the exercise of divine correction. Although the boy is not visually monstrous, like monstrous births his presence and the analogy together stress the limitations of adult agency. Monstrous births were widely attributed to acts of divine power. Whether freaks of nature or signs of a heavenly plan, they emphasize the easy frustration of expectations for reproduction and the complications that may result from human attempts to exert some control over the process. Webster’s scene performs the same function while also signifying the potential for childhood agency.

The conjunction of victimization and agency in child’s play appears again when Bosola torments the imprisoned Duchess. His emphasis on mortality and disgust with human frailty remains, but here he turns to several analogies involving children. Recalling the infested forms of the monstrous births speech, he declares: “our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in; more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earth-worms” (IV.ii.121-3). These lines, like the Duchess’s earlier description of her son and his top, evoke *King Lear*, “As

flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods / They kill us for their sport," (IV.i.34-5 (Q) 36-7 (F)).[144] However, Webster's uses of child's play to analogize affliction, though reminiscent, do not function like Shakespeare's. Instead of stressing mindless, juvenile cruelty, in *The Duchess of Malfi* child's play is a representation of otherwise unattainable mastery. While in *Lear* chaos is explained by the gods' childish indulgences, the Duchess insists on seeing helpful direction from a regulated punishment. Unlike the Duchess, Bosola does not posit divine guidance, but even his boys keep flies instead of killing them. Again, Webster places children in a position of dominance and turns adults into toys they build and control. The children figure the creator of mankind, and their flimsy structures are superior to the human body and whatever it encloses. Webster's characters use childhood to typify the situations they face. Within these rhetorical constructs, the adult character is usually imagined to be in the control of the child figure, or to be in some way less fit than the child. This is the case in Bosola's second child analogy in his exchange: "a little infant that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bedfellow" (131-3). True, Bosola is tormenting the Duchess with her own miserable lack of sleep. Still, the most pained, "unquiet," helpless child has an advantage over her. These words also recall her own very young children, the youngest generally seen on stage as an infant. Even as those child characters are surely threatened by Ferdinand's fury, the adults appear in an even weaker position.

Webster's adult characters repeatedly use child's play to characterize the world dying characters leave behind. When Antonio recurs to this strategy as he dies he asserts that adults, not gods, are like children. More accurately, these adults are like one idea of childhood, the careless version that seeks only immediate gratification. As Antonio lies dying, further wounded

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[144] Edgar's lines, William Shakespeare, *King Lear: The 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio Texts*, ed. Stephen Orgel, *The Complete Works*.

by the news of his wife and children's deaths, he describes the life of a courtier as a children's game:

> Some men have wished to die
> At the hearing of sad tidings: I am glad
> That I shall do't in sadness; I would not now
> Wish my wounds balmed, nor healed, for I have no use
> To put my life to. In all our quest of greatness,
> Like wanton boys whose pastime is their care,
> We follow bubbles, blown in th'air. V.iv.59-65

Webster references his own prior uses of child's play in painful analogies and the lines from *Lear*, with the play of "wanton boys."[145] However, Webster once more does not presume thoughtless cruelty on the part of the young. These children are not killing flies, but chasing beautiful, ephemeral things. Child's play stands in for adult ambition and depicts attempts at attaining transient happiness. Further, in this analogy a single children's game represents all of the efforts of adult life. Yet again, adult behavior is reduced in scope through comparison to childhood, with child figures given a potentially more expansive existence. Antonio's married life is thus completely framed by images of children and their games.

The amnesia that shadows the play's child figures also infiltrates the parental deaths. Antonio forgets the boy's horoscope and the violence it predicted, along with his own bloody handkerchief and bloodied name. Yet through his dying appeal Webster inevitably invokes that doom: "And let my son fly the courts of princes" (V.iv.71). This final fear raises the possibility that Antonio does remember and then gives way to another, inadvertent instance of amnesia. Delio, Antonio's closest friend and the one he calls for as he dies, never hears this final wish and acts in direct opposition to it. Antonio's dying words emphasize the paradoxical connotations the boy's presence brings to the supposedly hopeful conclusion. Facing her own death, the Duchess

[145] It also invokes Bosola's cry: "We are merely the stars' tennis balls" (V.iv.53-4).

also exhibits amnesia with regard to her children. She witnesses wax models of her husband and children in Act IV, scene i and presumes her family to be dead. Yet before her murder she assumes that her youngest son and daughter are alive and speaks lines that are both instructions for bedtime and intimations of impending death: "I pray thee look thou giv'st my little boy / Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl / Say her prayers, ere she sleep" (IV.ii.195-7).[146] The resulting uncertainty about the Duchess's knowledge of her children emphasizes their excessiveness. They even have too many bodies. While their lost half brother, the Duke of Malfi, remains an untouched ideal, their other surviving brother carries the sense of child figures as vulnerable, powerful, and portentous into the final scene.

Webster further stresses the sense of monstrosity as the combination of species and of tropes through the connections he draws between his characters and wolves. The blurring of the lines between human and animal and between analogy and embodiment continue even as the youngest of the helpless children die along with their elders. Webster references wolves throughout the play, and some of the most prominent instances link Ferdinand to the Duchess's children.[147] This combination recalls Bosola's monstrous births speech and lends these passages the sense that although wolfish people may seem horrifying because of their animal qualities, they are just as disturbing because of their humanity. The wolf metaphor also identifies more overtly the threat posed by monstrous children and by the problematic strategy of layering tropes onto an already complicated procreative situation.

Ferdinand first makes the association with wolves as a means of dismissing the children. He approaches the Duchess in the dark, ready to torment her with the severed hand and wax

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[146] This contradiction is sometimes remedied by revealing the purported dead bodies of only Antonio and his eldest son, as in the RSC's 2001 production.
[147] Ferdinand associates the Duchess with wolves earlier, at III.ii.88.

forms of her loved ones, and he uses the metaphor to make the children inhuman and therefore easy to toss aside:

> Where are your cubs?
> Call them your children,
> For though our national law distinguish bastards
> From true legitimate issue, compassionate nature
> Makes them all equal. IV.i.33, 35-8

Ferdinand seems to offer the Duchess reconciliation, just as he claims to set aside legal constraints on the treatment of illegitimate children. Of course, in doing so he asserts the illegitimacy of the Duchess's marriage and denies the legal rights of her children. This mirrors the move Ferdinand makes in calling the children "cubs." He seems to make a concession in allowing them to be, in fact, children, but reveals the way he actually sees them. They are, in Ferdinand's words, both children and animals. His emphasis on illegitimacy alongside species combination also implies a link between the wolf label and very human behavior. The marriage that Ferdinand views as a pollution of family blood results in monstrous offspring.[148] He categorizes the Duchess's sexual relationship with Antonio and the resultant children as animal and therefore monstrous. This move in turn demonstrates his own very human monstrosity. Webster thus indicates the absence of the boundaries of species, family, and law that Ferdinand relies on. After all, Ferdinand has very legitimate blood, and it is he who will soon reveal himself as a wolf man.

Webster further troubles Ferdinand's use of wolfish monstrosity as a label for disposing of the children following their deaths. When he views the bodies of the girl and boy Ferdinand declares: "The death / Of young wolves is never to be pitied" (IV.ii.250-1). Rather than identifying the human reflection in the children that repulses him, Ferdinand identifies the

[148] See II.v.47-48, III.i.78, IV.i.121-3. Judith Weil connects Webster's wolf references with Romulus and Remus, nursed by a wolf or a prostitute, and with reproductive concerns (336-9).

children as animals and so is able to dismiss them. Again, Ferdinand takes refuge in the illusion that the problem the children create for him can be solved through a figure of speech, and again Webster encodes danger in the trope written into his character's mouth. Ferdinand's use of figurative language to make the situation manageable backfires almost immediately, as the wolfishness and humanity of his sister and her children continue to disturb him. The illusion of the label ceases to work in the presence of the Duchess's body, and instead becomes part of a prediction. As Ferdinand slips into regret and anger he declares: "The wolf shall find her grave, and scrape it up; / Not to devour the corpse, but to discover / The horrid murder" (301-3). The pitiful children, those dead young wolves, help to reveal the murder of their mother. They become part of the contagion that infects Ferdinand and scrapes open his skin to reveal the wolf inside. The youngest children never curse, but the monstrous language applied to them does painfully revisit the original speaker.

The monstrosity and predictive force that Ferdinand sees in the Duchess and her children repulses him because they reveal him. Ultimately, rather than seeing a reflection of the Duchess's relationship with Antonio, or a sweet innocence that eventually stimulates feelings of guilt, the monstrous children repel through their resemblance of their elders as well as through their difference. It is a matter of the repugnance of shared humanity, rather than deviant animality. The doctor describes lychanthropy, the "most ulcerous wolf" (II.i.50) contracted from "young wolves" (IV.ii.251), in a later scene:

> In those that are possessed with't there o'erflows
> Such melancholy humour, they imagine
> Themselves to be transformed into wolves,
> Steal forth to churchyards in the dead of night,
> And dig dead bodies up; as two nights since
> One met the Duke, 'bout midnight in a lane
> Behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man
> Upon his shoulder; and he howled fearfully;

Said he was a wolf, only the difference
Was a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,
His on the inside; bade them try their swords,
Rip up his flesh, and try. V.ii.8-19

Ferdinand articulates an internal but still physical monstrosity as the manifestation of his great moral cruelty and emotional torment. This is perhaps degeneration of the kind that Francisco articulates in *The White Devil* – that bad habits turn men into animals. Perhaps it is the transformation the Cardinal warns of, "There is not in nature / A thing that makes man so deformed, so beastly, / As doth intemperate anger" (II.v.56-8), although given his own crimes he has little room to judge. However, Ferdinand's lychanthropy can also be interpreted as a realization of what has always been in Webster's play world: the lack of a dividing line between what is human and what is not. Erica Fudge notes Ferdinand's ability to reason in the midst of his illness, reading this as an indication of the apparent normality of lycanthropics and so of the closeness between the human and animal.[149] Ferdinand is also prodigious in that through the children he predicts his own illness, if inadvertently. Despite their weakness and eventual death, Webster links the Duchess's younger children with the downfall of their tormentor. As with the language of child's play, victims take on some power.

I conclude by returning again to Delio's final lines. As in *The White Devil*, a child is central to the ambiguity that permeates them. Webster undermines the idea of the innocent, and therefore simply instrumental, child throughout the preceding acts. He utilizes components ranging from the surviving son's violent nativity, to the young Duke of Malfi, to images of masterful child's play. This excess of elements results in a monstrous child figure that undercuts Delio's characterization:

Let us make noble use

[149] Fudge, 2000, 54.

> Of this great ruin; and join all our force
> To establish this young, hopeful gentleman
> In's mother's right. These wretched eminent things
> Leave no more fame behind 'em than should one
> Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow;
> As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts,
> Both form and matter. I have ever thought
> Nature doth nothing so great for great men,
> As when she's pleased to make them lords of truth:
> Integrity of life is fame's best friend,
> Which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end. V.v.109-120

Delio presents the son as the hopeful, noble foundation they can build upon the ruins of the Duchess. Webster has already established the inherent instability of such teleological assumptions, and Delio's language paradoxically helps to undermine them. The boy is contradictorily posited as a figure of repair and perpetuation and as a figure of destruction. He is the "sun" that will blot out all memory of "these wretched eminent things." As in the tale of the sun's impending marriage in *The White Devil*, this son/sun is presumed to be the copy of his parents. His heat is described as something less than "fireworks," but the precise nature of the "form and matter" he is expected to melt remains uncertain. The presumed solidity of the Duchess and Antonio's ruins and frailty of Ferdinand the Cardinal's memory are not overtly confirmed. The reified "Nature" which Delio claims will pass on the parents' good qualities to the son also recalls Bosola's earlier, unpredictable version of nature and the creatures it births. Webster maintains multiple versions of nature, and of sons/suns, ensuring the uncertainty of his conclusion.[150]

Webster's concluding literary reference further emphasizes the inefficacy of excessive figurative language and the potential dangers it entails. The final couplet, "Integrity of life is fame's best friend, / Which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end" (V.v.119-20), echoes the

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[150] See Bliss, 166.

first line of a Horatian Ode: “The man of upright life and pure from wickedness.” Horace’s speaker asserts that the only defensive weaponry he needs is a song of his beloved. Poetic song protects him from “a wolf in the Sabine wood” (9), “such a monster” (13) (or perhaps portent) as was unknown in the most hostile lands.[151] While this reference might imply that the Duchess and Antonio’s young son may truly dispel the horrors represented by the werewolf Ferdinand, it also introduces more monsters into the closing of the play. Webster complicates the couplet’s tone of moralistic commonplace with the lurking wolf in the wilderness and the question of how effective any poetic techniques can be at dispelling monsters. This uncertainty mirrors the instability of young boy’s position as a figure of both weakness in the face of adult manipulation and mastery through child’s play.

In both *The While Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster places children at the center of ambiguous conclusions. His child prodigies warn of unpredictable futures and reveal the contradictions imbedded within adult expectations for child maturation and social stability. The surviving heirs, Giovanni and the eldest son of the Duchess and Antonio, appear poised to fall victim to the political machinations that destroyed their parents, to introduce political and moral constancy, to do neither, and to enact some combination of both. Together, the precocious and monstrous child figures of these plays demonstrate common problems stemming from the issue of excess. Their sheer volume of variations and contradictions overwhelms both the repetitive fantasy and its dependence on lineal inheritance and the hybrid rhetorical interventions intended to normalize child figures. The profuse application of figurative language these prodigies provoke fragments assumptions of adult authority and ultimately grants agency to child figures challenging the expectations of their elders. Long before Webster’s child characters appear in

[151] “Integer vitae scelerisque purus” (1). “silva lupus in Sabina” (9). “quale portentum” (13) Horace *Odes I: Carpe Diem,* trans. David West (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), I.22.

positions of authority, the playwright depicts excessive troping as a technique that reveals their inconsistencies and menacing potential. Whether overtly monstrous or opaquely precocious, two headed in body or in behavior, these prodigies expose apparently successful, even prolific, reproduction as a site of anxiety

CHAPTER III

MISAPPROPRIATION: RICHARD III'S BABY TEETH

I. Perils of the Parlous

Richard III and his brother's widow, Queen Elizabeth, agree on very little, particularly when it comes to children. It is thus surprising that in the first quarto of *Richard III* they use the same word to describe the young Duke of York, not as a pawn but as participant in his immediate family's downfall and his uncle's. Responding to York's witty attacks on Richard, both characters declare him "a perilous boy."[152] York turns Richard's taunt about the boy's growth spurt, "Small herbs have grace; great weeds do grow apace" (II.iv.13),[153] into a means of ridiculing Richard's own childhood oddities. His mother responds briskly: "A perilous boy! Go to, you are too shrewd" (II.iv.35). In the very next scene, York challenges Richard's assumptions about childhood growth to his face, teases his uncle about his own physical form and, most pointedly, asks for a dagger. This exchange prompts Richard's own declaration of the boy's "perilous" nature (III.i.154). In both instances, the little boy may seem more imperiled than perilous, as he is on the brink of being taken from his mother in the first scene and about to disappear into the Tower forever in the next. This apparent weakness is evident in Elizabeth's repeated emphasis on her sons' position as innocent victims and in Richard's assumption that the boys will be easy to dispatch. However, the "perilous" linguistic convergence between these two

[152] *The tragedy of King Richard the third,* Q1 (Huntington Library, Early English Books Online: 1597), sig. E4v & F3r.
[153] All quotations of Shakespeare, unless otherwise noted, are from: *The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller, The New Pelican Text. New York: Pelican Group, 2002. Here specifically: *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*, ed. Peter Holland.

enemies indicates that York and his older brother, Edward V, pose a threat to Richard not simply as genealogical impediments to his reign but as perceptive, verbally challenging opponents. Their encounters with Richard not only reveal his own childish self-presentation strategies, but also instigate the collapse of such tactics.

With the apparent similarity between Elizabeth and Richard the potential confusion also begins. While they use the same term to describe York in the first quarto, this agreement is contested in subsequent editions. The words used to describe York differ between the Folio, the six previously printed quartos, and the two subsequent quartos. Within the Folio and quartos seven and eight the terms also differ between Elizabeth and Richard.[154] The definitions of "parlous," "perilous," and the variant spellings appearing in these texts may seem so close as to make the selection of one or the other an unimportant distinction. Indeed, in the *Oxford English Dictionary* Elizabeth's Folio line appears as one of the examples for the first definition of "parlous" with the "perilous" first quarto variation in brackets. Parlous may mean "dangerously cunning or clever" and "mischievous" and the first definition of perilous is similar: "dangerous, hazardous, fraught with peril."[155] However, the distinction does matter to multiple modern editors who set out to justify their decisions to retain the terms from their copy text, now commonly the Folio, or to emend them. These choices reflect and direct interpretations of the princes in the Tower. For example, even though Janis Lull's New Cambridge edition of the play is a strictly Folio version, she still takes time to explain why Richard's word is "perilous," and

[154] Q1 (1597) sig. E4v & F3r; Elizabeth's word for describing York becomes "parlous" (r5v) in the Folio (1623); Her word returns to "perilous" (E4r) in Q7 (1629), while Richard's becomes "perlous" (F3v). Spellings vary throughout. See *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, Q1-8, all (Huntington & Folger Libraries, Early English Books Online, 1597, 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, 1622, 1629, 1634); Charles Hinman, ed. *The First Folio of Shakespeare: The Norton Facsimile*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), TLN 1523, 1740.
[155] "Parlous," definition 1, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*: December 2009; "perilous," definition 1.a. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*: September 2009.

not “parlous”: “Some editors follow Q7-8 in tidying up the metre by using ‘parlous’ here, but a distinction seems deliberately drawn between Elizabeth’s word, which suggests that York’s tongue will get his family in trouble, and Richard’s, which means that York is dangerous to him.”[156] Lull may simply be differentiating herself from her New Cambridge predecessor, John Dover Wilson, and from Antony Hammond’s Arden edition. Both align Elizabeth and Richard by selecting “parlous” for the later.[157] Yet in his Pelican edition Peter Holland, like Lull, adds a justification for maintaining the Folio reading, noting, “parlous [is] the more usual form, but Richard’s use of the stronger form may be intentional here” (n931). If this were simply a case of more recent editorial fidelity to the Folio text topping a prior trend for emending from post-Folio quartos, why all of the emphasis on definitions, deliberation, and character intent?

This perhaps minor editorial crux highlights the uncertainty and multiplicity surrounding childhood that Shakespeare takes advantage of to write Richard and his downfall. The variation reflects the difficulty in defining the threat that young York poses. Lull uses Elizabeth’s “parlous” to stress the possibility that York may simply be a danger to his family, in his innocence saying things that have consequences he cannot comprehend. This editorial emphasis contributes to the frequent reading of either form of Elizabeth’s exclamation as a serious reprimand of her son’s wit.[158] However, it is just as likely to be a rueful, yet proud, recognition of his cleverness. While also adhering to the Folio, Holland stresses a different interpretive possibility, that Richard’s identification of the “perilous boy” may be a deliberate use of “the stronger form.” As such, it serves to recognize of the significant danger York poses to his uncle,

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[156] Janis Lull, ed. The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge UP, 1999), 123, note at III.i.155.
[157] John Dover Wilson, ed. The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1954); Antony Hammond, ed. The Arden Shakespeare (New York: Methuen, 1981), note 218.
[158] For this argument see Catherine Belsey, Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge UP, 2007), 32-48, esp. 45; Morriss Henry Partee, *Childhood in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 54; Witmore, 146;

coloring him as an adversary that is something more than "mischievous." Such editorial decisions lead to the production of readings in which York either is or is not independently capable of being as linguistically duplicitous as his uncle. Together, they create a picture of York's imperiled yet perilous position as potentially both weak and threatening, both innocent and shrewd, that demonstrates the strange agency the play's child figures acquire. Although the princes in the Tower and their Clarence cousins are repeatedly described by the adult characters as innocent lambs, they also appear as weeds and apes, pests and mimics, and are easily manipulated yet stubborn. They are able to escape definition even if they cannot avoid death.

These editorial decisions also echo Richard's picking and choosing of many contradictory versions of childhood to create his self-image. He combines conflicting stories of his own accelerated childhood growth and unnaturally prolonged gestation with Henry VI-inflected claims of childlike innocence. By embracing, among other stories, the tale that he was born with teeth, Richard attempts to sidestep the limitations of appropriate adult and kingly behavior. He reproduces himself through a contradictory narrative of growth and development, a construction that serves to authorize his transgression of moral, familial, and generational bounds. As Marjorie Garber notes, he tries to be "his own parent and his own author."[159] When not playing the child himself, Richard tries to categorize, and thus control, his nephews. He works to fit them a single view of childhood, while he utilizes many. Richard not only casts himself as many types of child, he also tries to be father, son, and husband to many of the other characters. Richard is neither child nor adult, but something in-between. He is both paradoxical child and adult working to eliminate the perilous children around him. Richard's unique, fluid status enables his rise to power, but also leaves him vulnerable to his probing nephews. The

[159] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Casualty* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 36.

princes' own position as contradictory children allows them to identify and question the inconsistencies within Richard's personal development narrative. Even after their murders, and before their actual appearance as ghosts, the princes haunt Richard as he scrambles to maintain postures of both childhood and adulthood. Edward and York make Richard's strategies untenable and so facilitate the collapse of his self-image and his defeat.

As the princes in the Tower help to emphasize, *Richard III* is not short of ghosts, precocious children, or monstrous births. These figures of lack and excess that have in the preceding chapters provided frames for analyses of key problems that children pose for cultural reproduction are copiously present throughout the first tetralogy. The tetralogy's child figures themselves display variations of both the indefinable multiplicity of excess and the innocent incomprehension that makes them seem less than their adult counterparts. By the end of *Richard III* many of the plays' precocious children, like the princes, become the ghosts that haunt Richard on the eve of Bosworth. Indeed, it is York who first articulates what turns out to be a legitimate concern about "my uncle Clarence' angry ghost" (III.i.144) during the very scene in which the princes begin to undermine their surviving uncle. Richard discounts the danger of children and ghosts, both creatures that seem to lack fully human qualities, at his own peril. Meanwhile, Richard is himself a conglomeration of monstrous births that he recombines to create a self-justifying narrative. The excesses of his narrative ultimately impede his efforts to recreate – or reproduce – himself.

The child figures of *Richard III* and the *Henry VI* plays are surrounded by the mutual dangers posed by the spectrum of reproductive fantasies, from repetition to hybrid reproduction: sterility and overwhelming profusion. For example, in *I Henry VI,* Talbot and his son insist so intensely on their commonality that neither one can flee their certain death. Young Talbot's

perfect repetition of his father necessitates the end of the Talbot line: "No more can I be severed from your side / Than can yourself your self in twain divide. / Stay, go, do what you will: the like do I" (IV.v.48-50).[160] The limits of acceptable behavior for any true Talbot are so limited that sterility results.[161] On the other hand, an excess of uncles, whether they are Henry VI's or Edward V's, creates such a profusion of policy struggles and dynastic challenges as to overwhelm hopes for social stability. The supposed positive of dynastic productivity leads to political deadlock, the loss of French territory, and civil war. Henry VI himself, so different from his warlike father, is a prime example of the pitfalls involved in efforts to control and mold children. As Carol Rutter notes, "*Henry VI* is all about a child: a tragic meditation on wasted childhood played . . . a tragedy framed by episodes where history 'means' through children" (8). In *Richard III*, child figures are not only vehicles for transmitting meaning, but also a means of making it. Shakespeare takes up the spectrum of profusion and sterility, excess and lack, by creating in Richard a character well aware of the inconsistencies and contradictions of early modern childhood.

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare dramatizes the misappropriation of cultural reproduction's discrepancies as a strategy for individual success. The playwright constructs a (temporarily) functional narrative for one character, not a means of conceiving stability for the entirety of the play world. Richard misappropriates paradoxical versions of childhood for his own political ends. His own gestational complications enable him to reproduce himself as a man born to be king. The boundary crossing allowed by versions of childhood and the fissures in the rhetorical strategies for coping with such instability enable Richard to avoid his enemies' attacks. Yet in

[160] All parts of *Henry the Sixth*, ed. Janis Lull, *The Complete Works.*
[161] Phyllis Rackin finds this indicative of patriarchy's self-destructive nature. See *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), 155.

him Shakespeare portrays a figure whose personal teleology is inevitably frustrated by the development narrative he constructs. Since Richard tries to use child figures instrumentally, and to assert total authority over the contradictions he identifies, they are bound to escape his control. As previous chapters have argued, when child figures are used instrumentally, they acquire their own strange agency. Richard's attempts to classify children are central to his struggle to hold together his contradictory narrative of entitlement. He appropriates paradoxical childhoods for himself, but still works to contain the child characters of the play. The child figures that Richard deploys for personal gain become the indefinable sources of his undoing.

Some scholarly assessments of child roles in *Richard III* reflect Richard's own attempts to pigeonhole his nephews. The play's almost universally doomed children are often classed as useful affective tools, with the princes on the Tower and their Clarence cousins considered iterations of their young uncle Rutland, who is murdered by Clifford despite his pleas for mercy.[162] This understanding views all of the tetralogy's children as embodied versions of the handkerchief imbued with Rutland's blood that Margaret uses to taunt his father before his own death. They evoke pity and, as Ann Blake asserts in the princes' case, are present as a means of turning audiences against Richard in time for his defeat.[163] At the other end of the spectrum, when they are not read as sweet innocents, these child characters may be assumed to serve little dramatic function beyond irritating, or even disturbing, their audience. "[L]ittle prating York['s]" (III.ii.151) verbal dexterity has resulted critically in his being classed, at best, not with the holy, innocent Shakespearean children but rather with the overly precocious, unrealistic ones. At

[162] *3 Henry VI*, I.iii

[163] Ann Blake, "Children and Suffering in Shakespeare's Plays," *Yearbook of English Studies,* 23, (1993): 293-304. Belsey associates many of the child characters, although not the princes in the Tower, with Rutland (37). For an assertion of the child as a pathetic theatrical device see also Witmore, 141.

worst, in the "careful balance . . . to be struck between precociousness and obnoxiousness" York leans toward the later.[164] Antony Hammond calls York, "a most thoroughly dislikeable brat."[165] Marjorie Garber famously declares of Shakespeare's child characters: "their disquieting adulthood strikes the audience with its oddness, and we are relieved when these terrible infants leave the stage. We may feel it to be no accident that almost all go to their death."[166] However, for Richard it is his nephews' childhood that makes them so hazardous. Hammond's irritation with York and Garber's unease in the presence of "terrible infants" seem to differently discern York and Edward's persistent ability to disturb Richard's self-image and disrupt his controlling strategies.

The princes are perilous – and parlous – because they embody many of the variations of childhood that their uncle misappropriates. The unique passive and yet dangerous agency of child figures in the play exemplifies both why childhood is useful to Richard in the first place and why it becomes a threat to him. Perhaps when York taunts Richard he is, as Buckingham suggests, only repeating insults he has heard from grownups like his mother, Elizabeth. However, since those adults posit him as a child incapable of and unbounded by reason, they cannot predict or control what he will do with the information he has acquired. Through York and Edward, Shakespeare makes Richard's childish exposure impossible to ignore.

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[164] Richard Madelaine, "Material Boys: Apprenticeships & the Boy Actors' Shakespearean Roles," *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Newark, NJ: U of Delaware P, 2003), 30.

[165] Hammond, ed. 111.

[166] Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1981), 30. For responses to criticisms of precocious child characters as unrealistic, see: Mark A. Heberle, "'Innocent Prate': *King John* and Shakespeare's Children," in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, eds. Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle and Naomi Sokoloff (Detroit: Wanye State UP, 1994), 28-43, esp. 29; Leah S. Marcus, *Childhood and Cultural Despair: A Theme and Variations in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1978), 7, 28.

II. Teething: Richard's Contradictory Versions of Childhood

Richard III, indeed the entire first tetralogy, is populated by child figures. Many of them demonstrate the simultaneous instrumentality and strength of child agency in yet another way. They embody the contrast between the apparent incapacity of childhood and the authority of kingship. These are both literal child characters and adults associated linguistically with childhood. They include Edward V and little York, the perpetually nine-month-old Henry VI, the seemingly ineffectual Clarence children, Rutland, and the earlier Edward, Prince of Wales (son of Henry VI). Shakespeare characterizes even Henry VII and, most prominently, Richard III as child kings. The third citizen has good reason to declare: "Woe to that land that's governed by a child" (II.iii.11). However, the child in question is ultimately not Edward, subject though he is to the manipulation of his excess of uncles, but rather Richard himself.

Richard dwells repeatedly on the contrary stories of his gestation and birth. He notes the uncertain length of time spent in his mother's womb, either too long or too little, "so long a-growing and so leisurely" (*R3*.II.iv.19) and yet also "sent before my time / Into these breathing world, scarce half made up" (*R3*. I.i.20-1). He also dwells on his muddled appearance at birth, "deformed, unfinished" (*R3*.I.i.20) but with teeth. He embraces the stories of his infant growth as both fast and slow, accepting and reiterating others' interpretations of his appearance and its implications for his character and future. Richard presents himself as born ready to fight and to command and as "an unlicked bear whelp / That carries no impression like the dam" (*3HVI*.III.iii.161-2), a malleable child ready to take the impressions of his advisors. He is simultaneously too little and too much, and so resembles the problems of lack and excess posed by early modern childhood. In accepting these contradictions, Richard neutralizes the efficacy of his enemies' attacks. He embraces their worst views of him, but authorizes so many possibilities

at once that even blows that strike a target cannot account for all the other aspects of his persona. Like a many-headed hydra, Richard avoids containment in a single definition and retains numerous angles from which to strike back.

Richard's reliance on a temporally confused birth and growth narrative allows him to be both divided from and linked to his family, and the York claim to the throne. While severance justifies many of his deeds, family still bolsters his claim to a special fitness for rule. A supposedly short time in the womb would leave him relatively unmarked by the characteristics of his mother and father, detached from his family and free to pursue his own desires. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin note: "the discourse of deformity becomes part of Richard's own self-characterization and a defining aspect of his dramatization only after he breaks away from his brothers [. . .] He becomes defined by the fact of his monstrous body when he severs himself from all human ties, but not before."[167] Howard and Rackin associate this severance with Richard's declaration near the end of *3 Henry VI*:

> Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
> Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it.
> I had no father, I am like no father;
> I have no brother, I am like no brother; V.vi.77-80

Heaven and hell are the supernatural definers of Richard's body and soul, and in his difference from family members Richard finds that he has no family. To Rackin and Howard's reading I would add that Richard's attention to his deformities and the stories of infancy that nurture such attention enable a breakage from his family, and are not simply the result of that breakage. That is, Richard's sense of special, untouchable difference is shaped by his separation from his family and also itself causes that separation. His emphasis on his own body is not exclusively tied to a

[167] Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering A Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 97. In contrast, Moulton sees the death of Richard's father as the "emblem" of his alienation from masculine fellowship (260-62).

rejection of family, since his lengthy speech in Act III, scene ii of *3 Henry VI* spends substantial time on the way his physical appearance relates to his mind and his goals in advance of the above disavowal. Further, Richard stresses division from family based on his bodily structure only when it suits his political purposes. At other times, indeed, sometimes within the same scene or even the same speech, he references both his lineage and his bodily difference.

Even as Richard divides himself from his family in order to assert his right to kingship, he relies on assertions of his closeness to them. Shakespeare regularly gives him language about family trees, lineal descent, and loyalty.[168] For example, in the very same speech that contains his renunciation of father and brothers, Richard describes his premature birth as an indication of his eagerness to defend his family and attack their enemies.

> For I have often heard my mother say
> I came into the world with my legs forward.
> Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
> And seek their ruin that usurped our right? *3H6*.V.vi.70-3

He appropriates the tales of his mother to his own ends, just as he uses versions of childhood and glosses them for his benefit. On the other end of the temporal spectrum, Richard's simultaneously lengthened gestation offers an amplified link to his father and mother, and a greater period to develop the qualities that mark him as their heir. When Buckingham rehearses Richard's argument for Edward IV's bastardy and Richard's own right "resemblance" (*R3*.III.vii.11) he asserts such an imprint: "Withal I did infer your lineaments, / Being the right idea of your father / Both in form and nobleness of mind" (12-14). Shakespeare highlights these moments when Richard overtly contradicts himself and these contradictions facilitate his rise. After all, Richard, with his useful, interpretable physical abnormalities, is hardly the perfect copy

[168] Richard expresses especially strong filial devotion at *3 Henry VI*, II.i.9-20.

of his father. Nor, given what happens to Young Talbot, and other sons who mirror their fathers, would he want to be.

Even when Richard's mother, the Duchess of York, directly castigates him with her own narrative of his birth and growth, it does not trouble him. I argue that this is because Shakespeare gives Richard a conglomeration of developmental tales so contradictory that her relatively linear trajectory of his life, from one ill inflicted by her son to the next, cannot undermine his self-presentation. As is evident in his treatment of the breeched version of his birth, Richard has already appropriated her stories of his infancy and twisted them. Declaring Richard to be the cause of her hell on earth, the Duchess recounts:

> A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
> Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
> Thy schooldays frightful, des'prate, wild, and furious;
> Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
> Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody IV.iv.168-72

In her version of Richard's ages of man, thus far, his stages follow one after another with a clear, inevitable end in wrack and ruin that is not at all evident to those around Richard at the start of the play, or in the *Henry VI* series. The Duchess sees that her son is ruthless and underhanded, but she links all of these qualities in a direct causal line stretching back before his birth. As Marjorie Garber notes, there are other deterministic sources for the historical figure's accumulation of physical and moral deformities. Richard is "made villainous in appearance to match the desired villainy of his reputation, and then given a personality warped and bent to compensate for his physical shape" (1987:36). Shakespeare's Richard collects many conflicting tales of childhood to avoid this sort of restrictive progression into manhood and condemning monstrosity. Although he, too, focuses on an inevitable end – the crown – he uses multiple trajectories to attain it.

Richard uses his physical differences as means of self-definition, but also as offensive and defensive political weapons. As Garber argues, "Richard turns his chaotic physical condition into a rhetorical benefit" (1987:35).[169] In *3 Henry VI* he clearly accepts tales of pre-natal teething, a move that both justifies his violent actions and ultimately protects him from scathing rhetorical assaults. Richard's infant bite may also be an indicator of early rhetorical strengths. Bartholomaeus Anglicus asserts that incomplete dentition results in poor speech, thus the designation "infans."[170] As Henry VI faces death he declares: "Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born, / To signify thou cam'st to bite the world" (*3H6*.V.vi.53-4). In response, Richard recounts the version of his birth story in which he is born feet first, ready to take on the enemy. But what frightens the midwife and attendant women are those teeth, a reaction he stresses with relish: "'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!' - / And so I was, which plainly signified / That I should snarl and bite and play the dog" (76-8). Although in this instance Richard is gloating over the corpse of Henry VI, elsewhere acknowledgement of such viciousness deflects criticism. When Margaret and Elizabeth charge Richard with the wolfish ravening of Henry VI, his son Edward, and the young princes in the Tower, their horror echoes that which Richard attributes to the women attendant at his birth. Shakespeare links these passages across plays through their common tropes. When Margaret accuses the Duchess of York of giving birth to a terror, she invokes what Richard has himself already admitted: "From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept / A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death: / That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes" (IV.iv.47-9). This combination of the ability to viciously attack and the inability to see and judge victims accords with some of Richard's own temporally

[169] On the formation of Richard's physical deformity as a figure for his internal monstrosity see also Moulton, 261; Greta Olson, "Richard III's Animalistic Criminal Body," *Philological Quarterly*, 82:3 (Summer 2003): 301-24.
[170] He cites Isidore of Seville, N4v.

complicated versions of his birth. He does not have to deny either the crimes or the women's characterization of him, but can accept both as part of his childish self-presentation. At the same time, the women's focus on his cruelty leaves untouched numerous other facets of Richard's self-presentation.

Richard actively encourages attention to his body, unique growth, and childhood. An "indigested and deformed lump" (*3H6*.IV.vi.50) he may be, but he views the most obvious signs of incompleteness, his hunchback, the "envious mountain on my back - / Where sits deformity to mock my body –" (*3HIV*.III.ii.157-8) and weak arm "like a blasted sapling, withered up" (*R3*.III.iv.69), as connected to his gifts of military prowess and political cunning. For example, Richard associates his deformed shoulder with the capability for heavy physical and mental effort necessary to attain his goal: "This shoulder was ordained so thick to heave; / And heave it shall some weight or break my back" (*3H6*.V.vii.22-3). Later, in *Richard III*, he takes the weight of governance on that same back: "Since you will buckle fortune on my back, / To bear her burden, whe'er I will or no, / I must have patience to endure the load" (*R3*.III.vii.227-9).[171] Although in these examples Richard employs contradictory stories of growth that differentiate him from the perpetually infantile Henry VI, Shakespeare also incorporates some of Henry's most identifiable qualities within Richard's complex of childhoods.

Throughout the *Henry VI* plays, Henry's innocence and honesty in political matters is associated both with his piety and with a child-like dependency on others. As with Richard's later victims, the princes in the Tower, Shakespeare tropes such innocence with images of lambs led to slaughter. When the women of *Richard III* term Richard a dog and a wolf, they also label the princes, as in Elizabeth's exclamation: "Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs / And

[171] Richard also references his shoulders at I.ii.98.

throw them in the entrails of the wolf?" (IV.iv.22-3).[172] Shortly before his own murder, Henry VI identifies himself as both shepherd and lamb: "So flies the reckless shepherd from the wolf; / So first the harmless sheep doth yield his fleece," (*3H6*.V.vi.7-8).[173] This association with shepherds and lambs casts Henry as a Christ-like figure and supports his reputation, alive and dead, as "a holy king" (*R3*.I.ii.5).[174] It also emphasizes his passivity and lack of political savvy. Henry's own words and those of others make him the embodiment of holy innocence and its connection with childhood. This innocent version of childhood is one of many possibilities available to Richard, and only one of the many qualities ultimately exhibited by his niece and nephews.

Some of Richard's most prominent, and ludicrous, childish posturing emphasizes Henry VI-like innocence and openness. It surfaces when Richard woos Anne, claiming that only she can reduce him to childhood, her beauty drawing from his eyes a "store of childish drops" (I.ii.158), while in the face of battle and hardship he is all manly firmness. Here Richard appears not only as a paradoxical child, vicious and innocent, but also as a temporally recursive figure blurring the distinctions between childhood and adulthood. Richard particularly poses as a child when asserting his own supposed incapacity for political machinations. He emphasizes innocence and holiness as qualities innate to children as yet unsoiled by the world. These qualities are also desirable in a king, and in making this point Richard clearly references Henry VI. When Richard declares, "I am too childish-foolish for this world" (I.iii.142), he contrasts his own "soft and pitiful" (141), and thus malleable and ingenuous, heart with Edward IV's cruelty toward Clarence. Richard's concluding statement of Act II, scene ii, telling Buckingham, "I, as a child, will go by thy direction" (153), immediately precedes the citizens' discussion of the perils

[172] See also IV.iv.50.
[173] For Henry VI's desire to be a shepherd, see *3 Henry VI*, Act 1, scene v.
[174] On Richard as wolf to the Christ-like lambs, the princes in the Tower, see Olson, 312-13.

of a child king. While Richard and Buckingham are discussing arrangements for young Edward V, the placement of Richard's self-identification calls attention not only to the child character but also to the child figure who is neither precisely child nor adult.

Richard's self-image and self-presentation strategies for attaining power are clearly dependent on a contradictory array of childhoods. Just as he portrays himself in various guises of childhood to sidestep his adversaries, so, too, he deploys ideas of childhood independent from his own stories to contain those enemies - adults and children alike. His hybrid position as neither paradoxical child nor mature adult is particularly evident in these instances. Richard kills the child king Henry VI and his young son, Edward, and at the end of *3 Henry VI* is already declaring his intent to murder his nephews.[175] Despite the fact that Richard is clearly not averse to killing children, he invokes the death of Rutland and cites it as the source of Margaret's subsequent misery. He reiterates the story of how she used Rutland's death to provoke tears from the Duke of York:

> And then to dry them, gav'st thou the duke a clout
> Steeped in the blood of pretty Rutland -
> His curses then, from bitterness of soul
> Denounc'd against thee, are all fall'n upon thee. I.iii.177-80

Given his prior crimes, Richard clearly does not believe in such curses, but exploits the idea of innocent childhood to rout Margaret's personal attack.[176] Indeed, Margaret's and Elizabeth's later characterizations of the murdered princes as innocent lambs rely on the same view of children as vessels for "gentle blood" (IV.iv.50) that, when spilled, calls down vengeance. As is evidenced above, Richard's use of multiple versions of childhood gives him the flexibility to avoid such tactics when turned on him. Still, like Margaret and Elizabeth, he tries to fit

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[175] This intent is evident at V.vii.31-4, when Richard whispers threats to the infant Edward V.
[176] See *3 Henry VI*, I.iv.

individual children into specific categories, attempting to deny them the perilous multiplicity he utilizes himself. Yet, like no other characters, Edward and York prove capable of identifying Richard's strategies, both for eliminating them and elevating himself.

III. Weeds and Herbs: Richard Pruned By His Nephews

The princes in the Tower serve not to attack particular elements of Richard's paradoxical persona, but rather to identify the disjunctive construction of that persona. Further, the disparity between Richard's embrace of childhood multiplicity for his own political purposes and his failure to account for it in child characters precipitates his fall. The first words of young Richard, Duke of York, in the play immediately raise questions about his uncle's stories of childhood growth. York initially seems willing to accept his uncle's words, expressing a wish to grow more slowly because of what his uncle claims:

> quoth my uncle Gloucester,
> 'Small herbs have grace; great weeds do grow apace'
> And since, methinks, I would not grow so fast
> Because sweet flowers are slow, and weeds make haste. II.iv.12-15

Horticultural language in these plays, and in Richard's mouth, is not uncommon. However, it tends to consist of tropes about family trees, their branches, and their fruit.[177] This reference to weeds does not look forward to the end result of a harvest, but rather situates swiftness or slowness of development as potential problems in themselves. Given Richard's use of variable chronologies, with this trope Shakespeare brings his self-presentation into a critical focus. The Duchess of York notes that this standard of slow growth equaling gentleness did not hold for Richard himself, not because of his pre-natal teething but because he was "So long a-growing and so leisurely / That, if his rule were true, he should be gracious" (19-20). Although

[177] See for example *3 Henry VI* V.vii.31-34; *Richard III* III.vii.117-29, 167-70.

Buckingham later suggests that Elizabeth put all of York's precocious teasing into his head, neither she nor the Duchess instructs the boy here. York answers his grandmother by coming up with a "flout" (24) unrelated to her account of Richard's development:

> Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast
> That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old:
> 'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth.
> Grandam, this would have been a biting jest! II.iv.27-30

In this exchange, Shakespeare introduces another Richard, a child as capable of wordplay as his uncle. York turns Richard's words against him and appropriates his uncle's sharp teeth for his own use.

Richard's weeds and herbs taunt asserts a rigid paradigm for children that he cannot and does not apply to his own contradictory versions of childhood. It exemplifies his efforts to clearly define and contain the child characters that surround him. As is apparent from preceding chapters, the figurative depiction of children as plants and of parents and teachers as gardeners is a prominent trope in period pedagogical and childrearing texts.[178] This technique could be used in an effort to conceptualize children as passive plants under the nurturing and disciplinary control of adults. Sir Thomas Elyot prominently figures the child to be nurtured into an ideal royal subject as an herb in *The boke named the Gouernour*:

> I wyll vse the polycie of a wyse and cunnynge gardener, who purposynge to haue in his gardeine a fyne and preciouse herbe . . . he wyll fyrste serche throughe out his gardeyne, where he can fynde the moste melowe and fertyle erth, and therin wyl he put the sede of the herbe to growe, and be norysshed, and in moste diligent wise attende, that no weede be suffred to growe or approche nyghe vnto it . . .[179]

Elyot stresses both the need to select a good situation for a growing child and the need to guard against the encroachment of negative influences. Here weeds not only grow faster than herbs,

[178] See Introduction. This trend is noted by Griffiths, and discussed in greater detail by Bushnell (1996).
[179] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the Gouernour* ([London]: Thomas Berthelet, 1537), B7r

weeds choke their development. Like the trope of children as innocent lambs, this is one of many ways that early modern thinkers attempted to naturalize conceptually unruly children, preparing them for adulthood by containing them within specific types. However, these figurative strategies only underline adult anxiety and childhood difference. Even with the proper pruning and necessary education, children were still unreasonable and unpredictable, capable of ignoring their lessons or using all of their training against adults. With the weeds and herbs maxim, Shakespeare indicates that Richard responds to childhood excess in others as a problem in need of solving. As such, this is an indication that Richard's apparently flexible self-construction strategy has limitations. What he recognizes in general models of cultural reproduction and in his own story he does not see in the child characters Shakespeare places around him. Just as Henry VI's and Margaret's attempts to use Richard's baby teeth against him backfire, so does imagining you can control your nephews like plants, indeed that you can control plants at all, as many frustrated gardeners would attest.

York also appropriates narrative sources that Richard bends to suit himself. Richard attributes versions of his birth and growth to his mother, the midwife, and the ladies present at his birth. When the Duchess presses the prince on the source for his "flout" he cites Richard's nurse. According to the Duchess, this is impossible: "Why, she was dead ere thou wast born" (II.iv.33). York then declares: "If 'twere not she, I cannot tell who told me" (34). Both Richards are essentially relying on hearsay and creating what they want from uncertain sources. Both utilize chronological confusion as they retell what they cannot possibly know for themselves. York's explanation, or rather his refusal to give one, also contradicts interpretations of his verbosity as uncontrolled and ultimately dangerous. As Elizabeth stresses, "Pitchers have ears" (37), and the boy certainly hears a lot in this scene about her fears and the arrests of their

relatives. Yet he never recklessly spills any of that information. York's "cannot" may be read as ignorance about the origins of his information. However, the line also works as a refusal to disclose his source for the flout, demonstrating his ability to keep his mouth shut and indicating his control over and awareness of the implications of his words.

As with his younger brother, York, Edward V's first appearance on stage demonstrates his ability to see through his uncle's tactics. In his first lines, Edward talks of uncles, whose sheer number, according to the third citizen, is dangerous: "For emulation who shall now be nearest / Will touch us all too near" (II.iii.25-6). Rather than wanting fewer, Edward wishes for more uncles – the imprisoned and soon to be executed Grey and Rivers, along with Vaughn and the deceased Clarence.[180] Richard's reply reveals his desire to categorize, and ultimately dispose of, his nephew:

> Sweet prince, the untainted virtue of your years
> Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit,
> Nor more can you distinguish of a man
> Than of his outward show, which, God he knows,
> Seldom or never jumpeth at the heart.
> Those uncles which you want were dangerous III.i.7-12

Richard wants to treat Edward like a young "untainted" innocent, a real version of what he himself repeatedly pretends to be. However, as Richard talks of the "poison of their hearts" (14) the child king discerns the applicability of these words to the uncle who utters them. Although he never presses his disagreements with Richard - about the other uncles, about going to the Tower - Edward does undercut Richard's pretensions to singular linguistic duplicity and manipulative ability. The prince is aware of the looming danger facing both himself and his brother, and this understanding appears both in the caveat he places on his own adult ambitions, "An if I live to be a man . . ." (III.i.91), and his overt return to the dangers of uncles as he goes to the Tower. When

[180] As Edward refers to his half-brother Grey as an "uncle," I do as well.

York raises the specter of Clarence, Edward declares, quite pointedly: “I fear no uncles dead” (146). Richard’s response makes the defiant intent of his nephew’s claim even more overt: “Nor none that live, I hope” (147). While Edward does not disguise his fear or “heavy heart,” he lets his uncle know that, while his murderous purpose will later surprise Buckingham, it is no surprise to his young victims. He uses talk of the Tower and its supposed builder, Julius Caesar, to indicate that Richard does not control the story they both inhabit as completely as he supposes.

Edward’s focus on the transmission of history evidences his awareness of past and present political stakes and of the power possessed by those who tell their own tales. The prince recognizes that even after death words can be perilous, and uses his own to undercut Richard’s ambitions. The boy notes that great events will likely be passed down through the generations even if they are not recorded: “But say, my lord, it were not registered, / Methinks the truth should live from age to age” (III.ii.75-6). Despite this confidence in oral history, Shakespeare also gives Edward language strongly emphasizing Caesar’s control over his own posthumous reputation. The prince stresses Caesar’s written works detailing his own conquests:

> With what his valor did enrich his wit,
> His wit set down to make his valor live.
> Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
> For now he lives in fame, though not in life. III.i.85-8

The prince outlines the mutually reinforcing interaction between deeds and self-presentation that Shakespeare has made so important for Richard. Edward steps outside of the narrow category Richard strives to place him in by identifying his uncle’s own containment in a story already told. Michael Witmore views Edward as a conduit for history who becomes “a figure for the origin of the story itself” (147). However, as Andreas Hofele notes, Edward predicts Richard’s fate as accurately as Margaret does: “Shakespeare’s play, combining the modes of the written and the oral, will make his fame, or rather infamy, live ‘successively from age to age.’ Indeed, he

lives in fame *now*, for the predicted future is also the presence of the play's unfolding action."[181] For all Richard's stories, his many versions of childhood and adulthood, Edward hints at his real lack of control over his own life and life story. He implies that Richard is a kind of anti-Caesar, aiming to rule England but doomed to fail, seemingly in control of his own play but really written by others. Margaret's, the Duchess of York's, and Elizabeth's curses and predictions rest on equating Richard's crimes with his prodigious birth and misshapen body and with particular aspects Richard's own self-presentation of hybridity. In contrast, Edward pierces through this composite identity to locate his uncle's weakness. Through Richard's assertions of authority over his own reproduction, Shakespeare reveals the extent of the agency that has slipped through Richard's fingers. As Richard tries to make versions of childhood work for him, the agency he claims adheres to the powerless and yet dangerous princes that face him in this scene.

Richard fails to respond to Edward's insinuation that he is not in control of his narrative. Instead, throughout the conversation, he employs strategies of rhetorical naturalization, trying to both pin down and avoid the child king by stressing narrow versions of growth and childhood. In asides emphasizing his own verbal facility, Richard predicts the young king's death through a specific view of early modern childhood. First, Richard wryly acknowledges Edward's intelligence, "So wise, they say, do never live long" (III.i.79). Indeed, in the 16th century there was substantial concern that gifted children might sicken as a result of excess study. Richard's line is remarkably similar to what physician Laurant Joubert notes as a popular saying: "He was not meant to live, for he was smart." By burdening their minds while not sufficiently exercising

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[181] Andreas Hofele, "Making History Memorable: More, Shakespeare and Richard III," *The Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 21 (2005), 187-203, esp. 201. On the princes' awareness of private and public history see also A. J. Piesse, "Character Building: Shakespeare's Children in Context," in *Shakespeare and Childhood* (Cambridge UP, 2007), 64-79, esp. 65-6, 72-3.

their bodies, precocious children could permanently alter their humoral complexions and eventually die.[182] This ominous jest highlights Richard's reliance on a narrow trajectory of child development when dealing with actual children. Here growth has an optimal pace and variations in that pace have predictable results, authorizing Richard's deadly intervention. Richard's second aside also predicts the unproductive fates and impending deaths of precocious children: "Short summers lightly have a forward spring" (94).[183] This restrictive view of temporality recalls the weeds and herbs taunt and the Duchess of York's deterministic ages of Richard. Also like that earlier, taunt Richard's asides, applied to the premature versions of his birth, predict his own fall.

Through these asides, Shakespeare juxtaposes versions of child development with the transmission of historical narratives. The presumptions of a standard progression of development on which Richard relies invoke teleological versions of history. He assumes an inevitability about the princes' fate and about the end of his own tale belied by the very strategy he uses to attain it. When Shakespeare converts Richard's initial aside into a public remark, he further confirms the link between understandings of the construction of historical narratives and of child development: "I say, without characters fame lives long" (III.i.81). This promise of longevity contrasts with the earlier death threat, and so hints at the instability of both assertions. While Richard seems to agree with Edward that oral history is enough for fame, the nature of that fame is uncertain. Richard's infamy and Edward's legendary victimhood are "characters" that are outside their control. They are written in "characters" by others, like Sir Thomas Moore and Shakespeare, long after their deaths. Indeed, Shakespeare specifically grants the princes verbal

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[182] Laurant Joubert, *Popular Errors*, trans., Gregory David de Rocher, (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1989), 163. Mulcaster also especially emphasizes the health risks of study (C2v-4v).
[183] Woodward warns parents not to boast about a child with "great parts . . . as a forward Spring is quickly blasted" (24).

skills and political acumen that More's versions lack.[184] Richard is oblivious to the threat the princes pose to his own paradoxical tale of development, a narrative none of them really control.

Upon his arrival from the supposed safety of sanctuary, York continues to challenge his uncle's self-contradictions. Even more overtly than his brother, he confronts Richard with the threat of the princes' imminent deaths:

> York: I pray you, uncle, give me this dagger.
> Richard: My dagger, little cousin? With all my heart.
> Prince Edward: A beggar, brother?
> York: Of my kind uncle, that I know will give,
> And being but a toy, which is no grief to give.
> Richard: A greater gift then that I'll give my cousin.
> York: A greater gift? O, that's the sword to it.
> Richard: Ay, gentle cousin, were it light enough.
> York: O, then I see you will part but with light gifts;
> In weightier things you'll say a beggar nay.
> Richard: It is too weighty for your Grace to wear.
> York: I weigh it lightly, were it heavier.
> Richard: What, would you have my weapon, little lord?
> York: I would, that I might thank you as you call me.
> Richard: How?
> York: Little. III.i.110-25

York engages Richard in language as duplicitous as his own. Richard initially treats his youngest nephew as one who knows not how he condemns himself. However, as York argues his ability to understand the "weighty" threat before him it is Richard who is caught out by the boy's wordplay. Picking up his brother's term, "beggar," and building on Edward's preceding conversation with their uncle, York asserts that despite Richard's language of deference both boys know they are at his mercy. As Reeder notes, "He can grasp mentally, even if he cannot carry physically, the sword that lies before him" (39). In directing Richard's patronizing "little" back at him, York proves that he can "moralize two meanings in one word" (83) as well as his

[184] Sir Thomas More, *The historie of the pitifull life, and unfortunate death of Edward the fifth, and the then Duke of Yorke his brother: with the troublesome and tyrannical government of usurping Richard the third, and his miserable end* (London: Thomas Payne, 1641).

uncle. Heater Dubrow notes that this exchange transforms the initial threat "into a statement in which the victim assumes control and asserts victory" (1999: 179). Like Richard, York is capable of playing on others' perceptions of his position as a child.

York delivers a further blow to Richard's narrative when he takes up Edward's request that Richard "bear with" him. He continues to stress his own physical appearance while contrasting it with Richard's:

> You mean to bear me, not to bear with me.
> Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me,
> Because that I am little, like an ape,
> He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders. III.i.128-31

Shakespeare places York on the distinctive and deformed shoulder with which Richard intends to bear the burden of kingship. Richard's hunchback becomes, at best, a predictor of future piggyback rides, rather than a sign of strength and fitness to rule. The boy almost literally makes a fool out of his uncle, potentially alluding to the tradition of Fools carrying monkeys. These lines also evoke the parallel convention of a show bear with an ape on its shoulders, an image that recalls Richard's characterization of himself as "an unlicked bear whelp."[185] York takes advantage of his uncle's assumption of malleability to reshape Richard's persona. As Michael Bristol notes, bears are both "connected with violence, rape, and destruction," and serve as "symbols of nurture and creativity."[186] The playwright invokes both the threat that Richard poses to his nephews and the process of self-creation in which Richard is engaged.

Shakespeare uses York to play with the contemporary conception of children as lacking reason and so potentially less than fully human. By comparing himself to an ape, Reeder asserts, York actually reveals his understanding: "a fully formed human intelligence seems to assert itself

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[185] See Hammond, ed., 217n; Belsey, 45; Partee, 58; Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 12-30.
[186] Michael D. Bristol, *Big Time Shakespeare,* (London: Routledge, 1996), 165.

in the claim to be less than human."[187] Describing children as apes was another figurative strategy used commonly to stress children's imitative strengths while discounting their ability to understand the words they spoke.[188] For example, Richard Greenham argues against parents who do not educate their young children because "at that age they have but an apish imitation." He asserts that it is better for children to learn the habit of being "apishlie good" while they are still young.[189] York uses yet another view of childhood, one that generally implies childish ignorance, to demonstrate his own perceptiveness and to further undermine Richard's attempts at classification. He insults, even humiliates, his uncle, but is protected from immediate retaliation by the very ideas of childish innocence and lack of reason that he skewers.

Buckingham's response to the exchange between Richard and York indicates the purchase the child's attacks have already found. Initially, he interprets York's derogatory comparison as a conciliatory gesture:

> With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons.
> To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle,
> He prettily and aptly taunts himself.
> So cunning, and so young, is wonderful. III.i.132-5

Since he speaks of Richard in the third person, Buckingham seems to direct his praise of the boy's intelligence and wordplay elsewhere. Yet even his own guarded "mitigation" of York's "scorn" seems to mask a sense that the child has outdone, and wounded, his uncle. When Buckingham tries to alleviate the smart of York's barbs in conversation with Richard he characterizes them not as "pretty", but as direct attacks. Through this shift Shakespeare indicates

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[187] Robert Reeder, "'You are now out of your text': The Performance of Precocity on the Early Modern Stage," *Renaissance Papers 2001*, ed. M. Thomas Hester (Camden House: New York, 2002), 35-44, 39.
[188] Witmore repeatedly notes the proverbial nature of this comparison (6).
[189] Richard Greenham, *A godlie exhortation, and fruitfull admonition to vertuous parents and modest matrons* (London: Nicholas Ling, 1584) A6v.

an air of tension and anxiety created among the men that remains after the children exit. Buckingham tries to ease the sting by blaming Elizabeth for York's words: "Think you, my lord, this little prating York / Was not incensed by his subtle mother / To taunt and scorn you thus opprobriously?" (151-3). As in Buckingham's prior assessment of York's performance, Shakespeare uses the words "taunt" and "scorn," but now they are both directed at Richard. Reeder insists that Buckingham's assertion of ventriloquization must at least be a possibility.[190] However, his quick shift from praise to dismissal suggests a desire to please, rather than honesty. Richard initially seems to accept Buckingham's solution: "No doubt, no doubt. O 'tis a perilous boy, / Bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable: / He is all the mother's from top to toe" (154-6). Richard's words are admiring, yet he has never indicated concern about Elizabeth as an adversary, or an equal, in the way he does here through her son. Even as he rationalizes York's performance, Richard, like Buckingham, cannot seem to help praising it. The sense that the boy is a threat because of his verbal skill and insight seeps through both men's efforts to ascribe that threat to inherited blood. York makes himself into the monkey on Richard's back, "a perilous boy" and a burden that Richard cannot shake, even by having the princes killed.

IV. Perilous and Unrespective Boys

The persistent peril of the princes' challenges to Richard's persona continues to fester in their absence. This is evident in the way Richard orders their execution. While the paranoia he exhibits once he is crowned might be thought the reason for his decision, Richard has long planned to murder them. I argue that his paranoia is induced, at least in part, by his conversation with the princes. Richard initially seems to indicate that Edward is a threat simply because he is

[190] Reeder, 39-40.

alive: "O bitter consequence, / That Edward still should live - true noble prince" (IV.ii.15-16). However, when Buckingham reacts hesitantly to the king's wish that the princes be murdered, Richard declares: "I will converse with iron-witted fools / And unrespective boys. None are for me / That look into me with considerate eyes" (28-30). The princes are not "unrespective," – inattentive and heedless[191] – but instead are "perilous boy[s]," and it was they, not Buckingham, who noticed the murderous undertones in Richard's conversation. Richard may allude not to the "considerate eyes" of an increasingly "circumspect" (31) Buckingham, but rather fear that, having already been "look[ed] into" by his nephews, he is becoming increasingly transparent and vulnerable.

Richard's anxiety following his encounter with the princes is confirmed by his preoccupation with children throughout Act IV, scene ii. Even Clarence's son and daughter, the children Richard feels most able to control, function as disconcerting echoes of their threatening cousins. He frantically makes plans to marry the little girl off badly, and contemptuously asserts, "The boy is foolish, and I fear not him" (55). Yet in rushing to dispatch his niece and nephew he implies that there are children worth fearing. Indeed, the Clarence children are not so disposable as he claims. Richard's encounter with the princes calls into question his ability to assess children; it takes him some time to catch on to his nephews' barbs, and he never manages to gain control over the situation. Such an encounter with the Clarence children is missing from the play, but Richard's assertion of influence calls retroactive attention to the ways in which that influence remains unproven. True, in their one scene the Clarence children do accept both his claim that Edward IV was responsible for their father's death and Richard's promise to act as a father to them. As the boy reports to the Duchess of York:

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[191] "unrespective" 1. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, second edition, 1989. This line from *Richard III* is an example of the definition.

> And when my uncle told me so he wept,
> And pitied me, and kindly kiss'd my cheek;
> Bade my rely on him as on my father,
> And he would love me as a child. II.ii.23-6

This is an example of Richard's shifting from a posture of childhood to one of adulthood as he strives to contain child characters. However, in their brief appearance on stage the Clarence children's behavior is not dependant on Richard's information. They rightly discern the implications of the emotional reactions of the Duchess and Elizabeth, noting Elizabeth's failure to cry for their father, and participate in the adult chorus of lamentation despite the Duchess's efforts to dismiss them as "incapable and shallow innocents" (II.ii.17). As Heather Dubrow notes, the Clarence children's mourning: "establishes indeterminacy and the anxieties it breeds as another consequence of the children's bereavements" (182).[192] This indeterminacy would likely have been amplified by doubling, with the same two child actors appearing as both sets of children. The appearance or mention of one pair of siblings thus even more strongly evokes the other, contributing to the play's emphasis on the paradoxical nature of children and their resistance to Richard's typological efforts.

Richard repeatedly attempts to eliminate childish threats, but instead emphasizes their continuing presence. He calls over a young page who seems to be the sort of "unrespective" child he wants, yet his presence also keeps the focus on the observant nephews. Not only does the boy provide the king with Tyrrel's name, his part would likely have been doubled by a child actor playing one of the princes. The figure who would deliver Richard from the princes also serves as a reminder of their continuing threat. Indeed, Richard's anxieties about children extend even to an adult rival:

> I do remember me Henry the Sixth

[192] On the Clarence children's resistance to the Duchess's strictures see also Piesse, 71.

> Did prophesy that Richmond should be king
> When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
> A king . . . perhaps . . . perhaps –
> How chance the prophet could not, at that time,
> Have told me - I being by - that I should kill him? IV.ii.93-96, 98-99

Richard in effect worries about the interference of two child kings, recalling Henry VI's innocence along with a missed opportunity to exterminate the future Henry VII. As with the other child kings in his way, Richard's first impulse is murder. However, Henry VI's continued influence from beyond the grave indicates that the princes in the Tower will continue to trouble Richard even after their deaths.

Richard's attempt to convince Elizabeth to give him her daughter in marriage further clarifies the princes' continued influence over the breakdown of his self-presentation. When confronted with their deaths, Richard struggles not because the allegations of vicious cruelty made by Elizabeth, Margaret, and the Duchess of York find purchase, but because he can no longer articulate his contradictory identity in politically effective ways. While Phyllis Rackin and Jean Howard sees the exchange between Richard and Elizabeth as a moment in which Richard appropriates feminine agency for his own use, I argue that this episode reveals the instability of his personal narrative.[193] He attempts to persuade Elizabeth to allow him to marry her daughter, also named Elizabeth, using arguments of substitution similar to those he posed to Anne and to Clarence's children, offering to fill the places of the children, husbands, and fathers he killed.[194] He relies on his now weakened position as neither child nor adult, and as many different types of child, but is unprepared to have his strategies penetrated by similarly flexible children.

Consequently, rather than relying on the appeal of his own multiplicity, Richard relies on the assurances of lineal inheritance. Although Shakespeare gives Richard this kind of emphasis

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[193] See Howard and Rackin, 106-7.
[194] Richard stresses himself as a replacement before wooing Anne at I.i.154-56.

on lineage throughout, here it is not part of his own self-presentation. For the first time Richard does not propose to fill every role himself but rather offers Elizabeth grandchildren in the place of her sons: “If I have killed the issue of your womb, / To quicken your increase I will beget / Mine issue of your blood upon your daughter” (IV.iv.295-7). The conditional “if” convicts him of murder should he succeed in fathering children, and his multiply faceted persona can no longer protect him from such blows. Richard subsequently makes a brief attempt to frame himself as a replacement son, “Again shall you be mother to a king” (IV.iv.317), but the figure once so comfortable characterizing himself as a child desists after a few attempts at calling Elizabeth “mother.”[195] Richard strains to assert himself as masterful adult king, and father, and appealing child. He is no longer able to play so many roles, be so many children, and still hold together a narrative of development encompassing infancy and kingship.

The fragmentation of Richard’s contradictory poses as child and adult becomes especially prominent at the end of the confrontation with Elizabeth. Richard, frustrated by her resistance, describes a gestation as disturbing as his own. Tacitly admitting to murdering the princes, Richard offers: “But in your daughter’s womb I bury them, / Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed / Selves of themselves, to your recomforture” (IV.iv.423-5). This is another of Richard’s attempts to contain the princes within a version of infancy, but one so convoluted that it undercuts his efforts at controlling both Elizabeth and himself. Dubrow asserts that Richard hints “at an equation between the current penetration of Elizabeth’s will and the penetration of her daughter’s body” (181). Yet this rhetorical condensation achieves neither goal. Unlike prior uses of his own variable gestations, this story does not allow Richard to appropriate strangeness and deformity for his own benefit. He describes the princes as the agents of reproduction, some

[195] Richard calls Elizabeth “mother” at lines 325 and 412 in close connection with promises of grandchildren.

strange mix of flora and fauna, the womb an oven and a grave. These are hybrid children, unclassifiable, and certainly not Richard's heirs.

Richard's bizarre tale of the princes' monstrous rebirth grants them agency even as it highlights his own developmental narrative's collapse in the face of both excessive monstrosity and sterility. His retellings of his own contrary gestations spiral out of control and into a version of reproduction that overwhelms his own. At the same time, his increasing dependence on lineal descent, his need for a child, an heir other than himself to counteract the debilitating effects of the princes and other child figures, highlights the sterile end of his own story. Shakespeare stresses Richard's inability to further recreate himself as a child through his inability to have a child.[196] In Act IV Anne acknowledges that the curses she laid upon Richard and his future wife in Act I have accurately predicted her future.[197] In Richard's exchange with Elizabeth, Shakespeare recalls those same curses:

> If ever he have child, abortive be it,
> Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
> Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
> May fright the hopeful mother at the view,
> And that be heir to his unhappiness. I.ii.21-25

Although historically Richard and Anne did have a son, another ill-fated Edward, Prince of Wales, Shakespeare eliminates him while also stressing Richard's biological infertility. Garber notes that Anne's curse may be read as depicting Richard's efforts at autogenesis or the birth of history itself, deformed, twisted.[198] In a sense, it does both at once. Richard's tale of himself is that prodigy in all of the senses of the word previously explored. Richard's versions of himself are "untimely" and ugly and include the horrified reactions of women present at his birth(s). His

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[196] In contrast, Ian Frederick Moulton argues Richard does not care about progeny, while also linking his barrenness to his monstrosity (265).
[197] See IV.i. 65-86.
[198] Garber, 1987, 45-46.

narrative itself is "abortive," as it comes apart before the play's end, much to the dismay of Richard, its "mother." His story of the princes' implantation in their sister exemplifies this unraveling. The tale that Richard does not truly control proves to be his only – misshapen and "abortive" – heir.

Although only two among the many ghosts that appear to Richard on the eve of Bosworth, Edward and York are not only victims but also agents of Richard's final fragmentation. The Duchess of York points to their still-active role in Richard's downfall: " . . . the little souls of Edward's children / whisper the spirits of thine enemies / And promise them success and victory" (IV.iv.192-4). Shakespeare has the princes do more than make such promises of triumph. They take up the language of reproduction so prominent in the preceding Act and thus prove themselves a prominent factor in the collapse of Richard's procreative self-presentation. When the princes arrive they promise Richmond heirs: "Live, and beget a happy race of kings!" (V.iii.158). They also make it clear that the body they are "buried" in is not their sister's, but Richard's own: "Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard, / And weight thee down to ruin, shame, and death" (153-4). Indeed, when Richard wakes that unique body proves incapable of holding together so many self-contradictory stories any longer:

> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
> Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why –
> Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself? V.iii.183-87

Richard disintegrates, the multiple versions of his childish and adult selves pulling apart. He is swift and slow, he loves and hates himself. As with the ideas of early modern childhood, many possibilities exist, and Richard can no longer manage them. It is not that he degenerates into childhood, for if nothing else Shakespeare demonstrates in this play that childhood is not a

lesser, exclusively developmental state. Rather, throughout his rise to power Richard attains success by being both an adult and a child, and by being neither. He asserts the strange agency of children and the recognized authority of adulthood. He appropriates the problems child figures pose for cultural reproduction. These excesses and lacks enable him to sidestep the restrictions of adult kingship and its conceptual reliance on lineal inheritance. However, in expecting these pieces to enable the achievement and maintenance of a single end Richard leaves himself vulnerable. Destabilized by Edward and York, themselves paradoxical children who resist his attempts at categorization, he can neither maintain his hybrid stance nor ascribe to a singular option. Richard tries to fit the versions of his gestation, birth, and childhood into a cohesive narrative on which to base his adult life, only to fall apart with it.

V. Henry VII: Crowning Heads and Lost Childhoods

Richard's collapse does not simply herald the return to a lost, ideal version of inheritance. After all, he simply misappropriates versions of childhood accessible within the tetralogy, versions that remain available after his death. Thus Richmond's victory cannot result in a repetitive version of kingship – the king is dead, long live the king – that heals the country. Certainly Richmond, soon to be Henry VII, projects a teleological vision of the Tudor dynasty, and Richard's personal development narrative has collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. However, the reproductive problems Richard highlights but so vividly fails to balance remain prominent through the play's final scene. In many ways Richmond presents a version of kingship and reproduction that is opposite to Richard's. For example, Richmond will have the biological reproductive success with Princess Elizabeth that Richard hopes for but

narrates in an ultimately destructive manner. This sort of apparent contrast ultimately emphasizes what the two characters share: both are variations on the figure of the child king.

Shakespeare casts Richmond as a child king largely through his blessing by Henry VI in *3 Henry VI*. This characterization makes Richmond a potent coda for the playwright's exploration of political uses for versions of childhood. Richard's direct reference to Henry VI's prophecy and the general prominence of child figures throughout *Richard III* enable Richmond's characterization as a child king to remain current through the end of the tetralogy. If audience members are familiar with *3 Henry VI*, when Richmond is mentioned in *Richard III* it may be the beautiful boy who comes to mind. Placing his hand on Richmond's head, Henry VI intones:

> If secret powers
> Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
> This boy will prove our country's bliss.
> His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
> His head by nature framed to wear a crown,
> His hand to wield a scepter, and himself
> Likely in time to bless a regal throne.
> Make much of him, my lords, for this is he
> Must help you more than you are hurt by me. IV.vii.68-76

Richmond is supposed to undo Henry VI's errors, but paradoxically can only grow up to do so because Henry VI predicts it. As Carol Rutter notes, the boy Richmond is "An iconic figure, a child endowed with adult expectations and elaborated with adult interpretation, he is a sign that means through the adult" (18). Yet it is Henry's status as a child figure, and the innocence and holiness it encompasses, that enables the prophecy and marks its subject. Perhaps he lacks some of these qualities as an adult, but this moment makes Richmond a child king. In turn, as Rutter notes, the silent boy "reciprocally constitutes meaning in the adult: it's because Henry recognizes the child and correctly names Richmond "England's hope" that spectators see Henry as a true prophet" (18). Because a child king predicts the rule of Henry VII, Richmond becomes a

character with a similar perpetual association with childhood, despite his military conquest. He also helps to emphasize Henry as a holy child king.

Much as Richard's stories of his infancy are often bound up in his physical form, the boy Richmond's body is key to Shakespeare's presentation of him as a child figure. The playwright pointedly brings the silent child on stage, providing an image of the royal body Henry VI glowingly describes and embodying his prophecy. In Richard's first expression of his desire to be king, the playwright touches on the same body parts and signs of power that he references in that prophecy. While Richard's misshapen form contrasts with Richmond's body formed for royalty, the bodies of both characters make their quests for the crown seemingly inevitable:

> I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,
> And whiles I live, t'account this world but hell,
> Until my misshaped trunk that bears this head
> Be round impaled with a glorious crown. III.ii.168-71[199]

Of course, Richard makes his own declaration, while Henry makes a prediction for Richmond. Yet both predictions stress heads and the crowns that do ultimately sit upon them. The greatest difference between these two passages, I argue, is not who speaks them, or the very different bodies of the future kings. Rather, it is that Richard's claim, and his eventual path to kingship, is all about creating a narrative of development. On the other hand, Richmond's kingship seems enabled by disappearance.

The common status of Richard III and Henry VII as category-crossing child kings serves to stress a disturbing absence in Shakespeare's portrayal of the latter. Richmond is a child figure that does not develop. Rackin and Howard see Richmond as a figure that combines performative skills and lineal inheritance, a "successful compromise between modernity and tradition" (114).

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[199] These lines echo Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine, Part I*, II.vii. *The Complete Plays*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett (London: J. M. Dent, 1999).

However, in terms of his childhood and adulthood there is no compromise or combination. He goes directly from being a silent, passive child to being a conqueror and king. Richmond might seem an example of an aspect of the repetitive ideal, perhaps a child who simply needs time to attain an ideal adulthood. However, his rise clearly requires political wrangling. Further, the child Richmond does not evidence greatness. He does not respond affirmatively to Henry VI's prediction, or respond in any way at all. His physical absence from the stage and his geographical absence from England also help to underscore the missing parts of Richmond's life. Indeed, his appearance as a child figure at the end of *Richard III* is enabled by this developmental gap. The playwright's continued references to Richard's development narrative also highlight this absence. While Richard creates a hybrid, contradictory narrative of growth and change that collapses in sterility and excess, Richmond both stays the same and reappears as someone practically lacking a past. Richmond might serve as proof that the only way to write a child character that survives to fulfill, and wants to fulfill, a destiny laid out by his elders, is to keep that child silent and to completely obscure his development. However, I argue that the complete absence of growth and development, the gaping hole in Richmond's life, is in terms of cultural reproduction no less disturbing than Richard's convoluted tale. Henry VII emerges as a king as much torn between childhood and adulthood, past and future, as his predecessors. Even more overtly than is the case for Richard III, his story is not under his control. From the first it is narrated by Henry VI, and large parts of it are not told at all.

In a sense, Richard III and Henry VII serve as opposite poles on a spectrum of accessible early modern versions of childhood. While Richard is an excessive conglomeration of features, Henry VII is practically as lacking as it is possible to be. And neither can escape the unsettling work, the emphasis on unsustainable versions of development, provided by the princes in the

Tower. The princes continue to trouble the new king's projections of domestic tranquility within the play and even potentially beyond its final lines. Audience members can anticipate the pretenders on the horizon ready to claim the boys' identities. In a way, Perkin Warbeck and his brethren will keep the princes' troublesome spirits alive and insist on crafting further developmental narratives for children whose shadowy deaths might otherwise obscure them.

CHAPTER IV

CIRCULATION: FOUNDLINGS AND FOSTERING IN SPENSER

I. Encircling Infants

While describing the Garden of Adonis in Book III of his *Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser portrays an ideal example of child circulation. Souls in the form of infants cycle through the garden gates in a seamless loop of birth, death, and reincarnation, always returning to where they began:

> After that they againe returned beene,
> They in that Gardin planted bee agayne;
> And grow afresh, as they had neuer sene
> Fleshly corruption, nor mortall payne.
> Some thousand years so doen they there remayne.
> And then of him are clad with other hew,
> Or sent into the chaungefull world agayne,
> Till thether they retourne, where first they grew:
> So like a wheele arownd they ronne from old to new. III.vi.33[200]

The garden's circulation of souls brings these infants back to their point of origin. It represents the perfect form of fostering that Spenser's many foundlings and their foster parents are never able to attain. Fostering in *The Faerie Queene* circulates children in order to confirm them in the values and norms of their biological parents. Spenser depicts circulation as a process of child formation that reasserts parental agency by shifting authority to different parents. In the process, he raises contradicting claims of control among biological and foster parents and children that he does not resolve. His condemnation of Irish fostering practices in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* further indicates the complicated connotations circulation itself invokes. In both his epic

[200] All quotations of the poem come from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, A. C. Hamilton, ed. (London: Longman, 2001).

poem and his political treatise, Spenser addresses fostering as a potential problem and solution for cultural continuity.

The Faerie Queene (I-III 1590, IV-VI 1596) is filled with foundlings and foster children, and it suggests fostering as a form of circulation that may reconcile the volatile interactions between other models of cultural reproduction. Spenser's poem includes emphases on both the repetitive reproduction and hybridity. For example, it contains numerous genealogies that deploy illustrious ancestry and future progeny to promise repetitive, inherited identities for foundlings like the Redcross Knight, foster children like Arthur and Britomart, and changelings like Artegall. They guarantee a glorious present and future for England and its shadow land of Fairy. At the same time, Spenser's very use of allegory and complicated entanglement of narratives enable the proliferation of interpretations. The resulting varied pictures of England and Fairy are nothing if not hybrid. The very presence of so many foundling and foster children in the poem acknowledges reproductive chaos.

Spenser posits fostering as a means of incorporating divergent yet constantly interacting models of reproduction into a stable, consistent loop. Fostering attempts to account for the dangers of repetitive and hybrid reproduction – to avoid repeating past sins and other contagions while enabling the retention of societal norms. It aims to insure a semblance of linearity and continuity in cultural reproduction by contradictorily having children raised in households other than those of their biological parents. As Lauren Silberman argues: "Spenser seeks intellectual stability by examining the principles of mutability."[201] The children ideally return, often to their families of origin, but more generally to a reaffirmation of the customs and values ascribed to their ancestors. William Gouge writes that those of "young and tender years" are like "*moist*

[201] Lauren S. Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III & IV of* The Faerie Queene (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), 43.

potters clay, which may readily be fashioned into any shape: and like soft waxe, which soone receives any print."[202] This strategy is more akin to the child as clay on a potter's wheel to be spun into a vessel than to metaphors of soft wax or carving wood. Child circulation as a method of childrearing existed historically in many forms in England and throughout Europe, including apprenticeships, wardships, and training in another household of similar rank, along with fostering and sending out to nurse.[203] Fostering as a form of circulation in *The Faerie Queene* is especially apparent in the episodes involving the immaculately conceived twins Belphoebe and Amoret in Book III, the bloody-handed baby Ruddymane in Book II, and the unnamed infant saved from a bear's jaws in Book VI. Yet the effect of these stories is to convey circulation as a means of normalization that fails.

Although circulation does function for Spenser, it hardly achieves continuity. Circulating children amongst multiple authority figures, while it might be expected to confirm adult control, further fragments adult authority. In the process, the infants acquire versions of agency that while not obviously opposed to the wishes of their elders seem to render them incapable of fulfilling those wishes. Cycling through numerous influences, tropes, and interpretations does not condense all of those factors to form a stable adult, but rather results in figures that both proliferate further readings and seem virtually stripped of all identity. All of these foster children cannot seem to stop circulating, even in adulthood. Yet only the female foundlings, Amoret and Belphoebe, really get to grow up, although their adulthoods are plagued by interpretive

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[202] William Gouge, "To the Reader," in Woodward, *A sons patrimony and daughters portion*, sig.**1r. Italics original, attributing the content to Horace. The reference is to the epistles, II.ii.8, "argilla quiduis imitaberis uda," "wet clay that can be molded however you wish." The original context has nothing to do with children or youth. See *Epistles, Book II, and Epistle to the Pisones (Ars Poetica)*, ed. Niall Rudd (Cambridge UP, 1989).

[203] See Houlbrooke, 25. Stone claims that fostering worked to reduce the oedipal tension within families, reduced the chances of incest, and in general kept upper and lower class parents from seeing much of their children (108).

profusion. Meanwhile, Ruddymane and the bruin baby evoke promising yet elided futures, as though Spenser cannot imagine circulation producing adult men.

The Faerie Queene's close association with the Ireland in which Spenser wrote it has received substantial critical attention. Jean Feerick, Patricia Fumerton, Andrew Hadfield, Willy Maley, and Richard McCabe, to cite only a few, have amply demonstrated these connections, which stretch far beyond the most explicit references to the political situation in Book V. *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the present state of Ireland* (written c. 1596, entered into the Stationers' Register 1598, published 1633) are similarly engaged in projects of subject and society formation, whether their author is writing to shape young gentlemen, as he asserts in the letter to Raleigh, appeal to the Queen, or encourage political action.[204] Indeed, the above critics and others have specifically linked the episodes I treat with the poet's experience of Ireland. This chapter does not seek to use fostering tales from *The Faerie Queene* to provide some more accurate picture of the poet's opinion on fostering in Ireland or to assert a comprehensive view of child circulation for him. Instead, I take advantage of the very overt inconsistencies about fostering and circulation in *A View*, where they appear as an extreme evil and as positive strategies, to highlight the ambiguity about them lurking in the narratives of *The Faerie Queene*. I argue that whether fostering appears as a potential solution or a problem that must be eliminated, child figures and their circulation is always a useful point of entry for Spenser's attempts to deal with issues of cultural reproduction.

While *A View* overtly stresses linearity and repetition, it also contains discontinuities that seem to rely on circularity for resolution. It is written in the form of a dialogue between Irenius,

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[204] As Willy Maley asserts about *The Faerie Queene*: "Spenser's project is nothing less than the making of Irish colonial society." See *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture, and Identity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 98.

the English administrator with experience in Ireland, and Eudoxus, the figure for the average Englishman. Irenius advocates royal military intervention to violently subdue a land that is rightfully England's according to a lineal inheritance stretching back through Henry II to King Arthur himself.[205] But as *The Faerie Queene* evidences, Arthur is hardly a stable figure. Spenser is one of the New English, recent settlers from as early as 1534 but primarily Elizabethan. New English writers highlighted the perceived degeneracy of the Old English, descendants of the 12th and 13th century settlers who arrived in Ireland after the initial conquest of Henry II. The Old English refused to become Protestants but remained loyal subjects of the crown during the Nine Years War and at least until the 1641 rebellion. *A View* participates in the New English construction of the story of Old English degeneracy and Irish wildness, using concerns about Irish language and customs evident and legislated against from the 12th century on.[206] In it Spenser condemns Irish fostering and the use of Irish wet-nurses as sources of Old English contamination. These practices dilute family feeling, national loyalty, and personal character. However, *A View* also argues for the circulation of power between the authoritative center and the periphery of the Pale. Spenser presents the New English as the preservers of true Englishness, forgotten in the relative ease of court life and lost among the Old English. They appear as the only ones who can propagate English laws, customs, and loyalty in Ireland. Once the Irish are militarily crushed, authority should be delegated to local magistrates in order to accomplish this task. Even as Spenser seems to argue for hierarchical power and lineal descent,

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[205] *A View of the Present State of Ireland,* ed. W. L. Renwick (London: Eric Partridge Ltd., 1934, reprint 1971), 61.
[206] Steven G. Ellis, *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors 1447-1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule* (New York: Longman, 1998), 15, 282-4; Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 20-2; David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1966); Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established 1565-76*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976).

he imagines the periphery restoring strength to the center.[207] The English infants once endangered by fostering become for Spenser and his New English coevals a different sort of circle – a boundary for the making and maintaining of Englishness in Ireland.[208]

In *A View* Spenser alludes to the idea that children spared Irish fostering could be used to recreate the English community in Ireland and establish a boundary around it. Patricia Fumerton explicates a form of circulation whereby child figures may serve to do just that. Fumerton details the passing of aristocratic Elizabethan children, particularly girls, from family to family as they circle, and often end up at, court. She argues that such child exchange is a kind of gift giving and that children were "trivial" and "detached" figures who were granted meaning, or were at least polished and made into valuable aesthetic objects, through circulation. In turn, their circulation constructs the world they are being formed to perpetuate and its limits. As Fumerton puts it: "First, Elizabethan aristocratic society created itself in great part by transcending fragmentary experience through an imaginative re-creation of its practice of exchanging trivial things (especially children). But second, faith in a unitary society required that legitimate exchange repress divisive otherness." This "otherness" includes what Fumerton calls "the uncanny look-alike" of English child exchange, Irish fostering.[209] While children in England might have a wet nurse and later in childhood be sent to stay with another family, Irish wet-nurses and foster mothers were often one in the same. Irish and Old English infants that left home to be nursed and fostered thus could forge close, uninterrupted bonds with their foster families. Fumerton

[207] Hadfield, 17, 22, 63-72. On *A View*'s circular logic see for example Ciaran Brady, "Spenser's Irish Crisis: Humanism and Experience in the 1590s" *Past and Present*, 111 (1986), 17-49, 36-7; David J. Baker, " 'Some Quirk, Some Subtle Evasion': Legal Subversion in Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland,*" *Spenser Studies,* 6 (1986), 147-63.
[208] These New English writers include Richard Beacon, John Derricke, Fynes Morryson, Barnaby Rich, and Sir John Davies.
[209] Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991), 31, 37, 30-7, 44.

highlights the cases of Belphoebe and, especially, Amoret, as examples in *The Faerie Queene* of her child circulation as gift-giving model.

While building on Fumerton, I argue that circulation does not function as smoothly as she asserts. Her gift-giving version of circulation presumes that in general children were exclusively viewed as lacking, as empty vessels or "trinkets" (44) to be used in creating a narrative and without the multiple connotations that might disturb such reassuring stories. As previous chapters have shown, and as Spenser's own foundlings demonstrate, this is not the case. Rather than using circulation to build up meaning for child figures otherwise unable to signify, Spenser introduces fostering as a means of smoothing away contradictions. He raises myriad interpretive possibilities for his foundlings and circulates these child figures to incorporate their many connotations into a harmonious image and so generate cultural continuity. However, the foster children emerge with a combination of stunted growth and a further propagation of readings, particularly troubling outcomes for efforts to stabilize cultural reproduction. Even Belphoebe and Amoret, who do attain adulthood, do not reconcile the influences of their childhood into stable grownup lives. The twins' initial circulation exclusively among women runs much more smoothly than do their later encounters with men, and more smoothly than does the circulation of their male foster child counterparts. Spenser bequeaths the male foster children family duties that they cannot perform, binding them to circulation that may lead to sterility and ultimately to their disappearance. Ruddymane becomes seemingly trapped in an endless loop circling through the expectations of his biological and foster parents and through the roles in a cycle of vengeance. He is called to perpetuate his family's blood by shedding guilty blood in revenge for their deaths, but is also put in the position of being unable to do so. Meanwhile, the bruin baby grows to be a knight, but his adult deeds are lost, as is the fate of the family land he was supposedly born – or

adopted – to defend. Denied a name, through the process of fostering he loses his species and his gender entirely.

II. Belphoebe and Amoret: Circulation as Division

Canto vi of Book III initially purports to explain Belphoebe's exceptional nature. Specifically, Spenser claims to account for her chaste imperviousness to the wild, potentially corrupting forest: "Seemeth that such wilde woodes should far expel / All ciuil vsage and gentility, / And gentle sprite deform with rude rusticity" (III.vi.1.7-9). The presumption that wild conditions deform the "gentle" reflects New English views of Old English degeneration through contact with the wild Irish and their savage land. However, fostering ultimately plays a central role in Belphoebe's gentleness, belying the assertion that she is resistant to outside influences. Rather, Belphoebe and her twin sister, Amoret, who is first introduced in this canto, circulate amongst and reflect many influences. The extraordinary circumstances of their immaculate conception and birth, the purity of their ancestry, the influences of their different foster mothers, all contribute to their formation. While female child figures have sometimes been lacking in this study, Belphoebe and Amoret provide not only a chance to in part remedy this absence but also the example of fostering in *The Faerie Queene* that comes closest to the ideal circulation occurring in the Garden of Adonis. The garden is, not incidentally, the place where Amoret is fostered. As children, at least, the twins circulate through the most positive conditions and face fewer obstacles than do their male counterparts. Perhaps due to their uniformly feminine fostering experience, they seem to circle safely.

However, this circulation not only divides the twins but also ultimately troubles their adult relationships. Their striking differences reflect the divergence that even the most efficient,

integrative circles seem to enact. Rather than combining all of their influences into a reproducible loop, Spenser partitions the sisters as narrow embodiments of specific types of chastity. The twins repeat their mother, each other, ancient narratives, and natural precedent, but also their nominal foster mothers and the women who actually raise them. Their names and their virtues most explicitly reflect their different foster mothers, Diana and Venus, and the education received under their care. For Fumerton, the goddesses provide an example of influential Irish fosterage.[210] While Belphoebe is a permanently virginal huntress, and also one of the poem's lenses for Queen Elizabeth,[211] Amoret exemplifies chaste love. The decisive effect of this intercession underlines a form of fostering success. Together, the twins represent the entire spectrum of chaste virtue, but this is only made possible because they are not raised together. This recourse to separation indicates that the sisters' circulation is not without disruptive influences.

The twins' origins provide the starting point of their circle. Even the timing of Belphoebe's birth, "th' *Horoscope* of her natiuitee" (III.vi.2.4), contributes to her chaste perfection:

> Her berth was of the wombe of Morning dew,
> And her conception of the ioyous Prime,
> And all her whole creation did her shew
> Pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime,
> That is ingenerate in fleshly slime. III.vi.3.1-5

The transparent purity of her conception, birth, and growth themselves mirror the passing hours of a day. This description recalls Psalm 110, verse three, "The dew of thy birth is of the womb of

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[210] Fumerton, 50. Spenser specifically uses the term "fostered" when describing it (III.vi.28.2).
[211] Spenser draws this connection in the letter to Raleigh (35-7).

the morning," which was interpreted in reference to the incarnation of Christ.[212] Spenser references the similarity between her mother's penetration by sunbeams and other immaculate conceptions "in antique books" (6.3), invoking narrative precursors such as Danaë and the Virgin Mary. Spenser also highlights Belphoebe and Amoret's descent from virtuous women, their mother, Chrysogone, and grandmother. Their grandmother's name, Amphisa, indicates this shared blessedness, signifying a double nature and possibly meaning "Both Equal," or "Equally Both."[213] Although Amoret is the second born, birth order makes no difference in their inherited virtues: "twixt them two did share / The heritage of all celestiall grace" (4.6-7). The poet stresses the twins' similarity, and fostering seems unnecessary for such ideal children.

Spenser presents Chrysogone's immaculate conception and painless labor as a key source of the twins' virtue. However, her emotional torment is also a prominent part of the story. Chrysogone gives birth while unconscious: "Who in her sleepe (a wondrous thing to say) / Vnaware had born two babes, as faire as springing day" (III.vi.26.8-9). Spenser's comparison of the infants to "springing day" recalls his initial use of times of day to depict Belphoebe's birth. However, Chrysogone's experience of pregnancy belies the ease of this depiction. Although deep sleep leaves her free of the final labor pains, "She bore withouten pain, that she conceiu'd / Withouten pleasure (27.2-3), her pregnancy itself is terrifying. While the reader enjoys the benefit of an explanation for the pregnancy, Chrysogone never knows what happened: "Yet wist she nought thereof, but sore affright, / Wondered to see her belly so vpblone" (9.7-8). This is not

[212] Thomas P. Roche, *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's* Faerie Queene (Princeton UP, 1964), 104-6.
[213] Hamilton, III.vi.4, footnotes 1 & 2; On the sisters' equality see C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge UP, 1966), 158; Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge UP, 1984), 127; John W. Draper, "Classical Coinage in the *Faerie Queene,*" *PMLA* 47 (1932), 99.

some harmonious natural process akin to sunrise, and this swelling belly in not “the wombe of Morning dew” (3.1). Chrysogone flees into the forest to endure labor alone:

> Whereof conceiuing shame and foule disgrace,
> Albe her guiltlesse conscience her cleard
> She fled into the wildernesse a space,
> Till that vnweeldy burden she had reard,
> And shund dishonor, which as death she feard:
> Where wearie of long traueill, downe to rest
> Her selfe she set, and comfortably cheard;
> There a sad cloud of sleepe her ouerkest,
> And seized euery sence with sorrow sore opprest. III.vi.10

Chrysogone’s womb is not filled with purity, but with “shame and foule disgrace.” Her clear conscience does not protect her. Spenser’s terms, “conceiuing,” “reard,” “traueill,” all signify at least the beginning of labor, and she is only spared further pain because she passes out under extreme emotional and physical pressure. When Venus and Diana discover the unconscious mother, they observe her emotional torment: “her seeming grieu’d” (27.7). Her pain is as available for inheritance as her chastity. Even the goddesses are temporarily susceptible to it, since their reaction initially mirrors Chrysogone: “They were through wonder nigh of sence bereu’d” (27.5). Spenser employs this inheritance problem to justify the twins’ fostering and separation, since the goddesses use Chrysogone’s grief to explain why they take the infants.

Spenser’s poetic speaker highlights the way that Chrysogone’s conception echoes not only religious and mythological precedents, but also a much more natural process. Through this association, her body becomes common earth and her offspring are potentially muddied:

> Miraculous may seeme to him, that reades
> So straunge ensample of conception,
> But reason teacheth that the fruitfull seades
> Of all things liuing, through impression
> Of the sunbeams in moyst complexion,
> Doe life conceiue and quickened are by kynd:
> So after *Nilus* inundation,
> Infinite shapes of creatures men doe fynd,

Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shyned. III.vi.8

While Spenser has already asserted that the twins are, through their breeding and birth, "pure and vnspotted from . . . fleshly slime" (3.4-5), the Nile reference certainly brings mud and slime to mind. Earth may be the formative material of all humans, and perhaps all fairies, yet it evokes fleshly imperfection in the most blameless of circumstances. As Lauren Silberman notes, "Belphoebe's conception has the purity of an intellectual idea. At the same time, the entire cosmos is shown to be sexual, which makes spiritual purity and fastidiousness seem a bit beside the point" (44). This example casts Chrysogone's "pregnant flesh" (7.9) as the flooded, muddy banks of the Nile and turns her children into "creatures" whose "shapes" may be monstrous rather than beautiful. The pure virgins are earth and flesh. I argue that their circulation and division aims to help them escape this muddy inheritance, and also their mother's experience of reproduction. Despite her purity, Chrysogone is extremely vulnerable. Belphoebe and Amoret's different upbringings aim to enable them to repeat their mother's chastity but avoid her impregnation in ignorance, instead giving them some control over the cultural and biological reproduction in their lives. Yet in different ways both sisters still suffer from their mother's lack of knowledge about procreation and her proliferating fertility.

The Garden of Adonis, where Amoret is raised, and the circulation and regeneration of its inhabitants may be read as exemplifying the perfect circle of return which even goddess foster mothers cannot create for the twins.[214] In this garden, there is no need for any agency beyond

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[214] For other readings of the garden see, for example, Harry Berger, *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkley: U of California P, 1988), "Spenser's Garden of Adonis: Force and Form in the Renaissance Imagination," (131-53); James W. Broaddus, *Spenser's Allegory of Love: Social Vision in Books III, IV, and V of* The Faerie Queene (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1995), 70-1. Fumerton argues that the garden represents both child circulation as gift giving and poetry itself as a process of elaborating on and re-gifting nature. She reads it as an idealized but still functional depiction of real world practices (53-9).

God's initial creative command. The cycle of life, death, and return goes on perpetually. The garden might seem the ideal location for fostering. It promises to further purify Amoret, sparing her fleshly contagion and an inheritance of emotional pain while teaching her about the fertility that so frightened Chrysogone. The garden certainly is an example of stability attained through circulation, a "celebration of permanence in the midst of and through the mutability of individual flowers."[215] The infant forms, possibly souls, circling through the garden are not altered by their time away. The porter, Genius, sends them out into the world to be born and takes them back after death:

> A thousand thousand naked babes attend
> About him day and night, which do require,
> That he with fleshly weeds would them attire:
> Such as him list, such as eternall fate
> Ordained hath, he clothes with sinfull mire,
> And sendeth forth to liue in mortall state,
> Till they again returne backe by the hinder gate. III.vi.32.3-9

Spenser's depiction of rebirth emphasizes distance between these babes and their earthly experiences. "Sinfull mire" is the dress code for all, and clothing the naked infants does not cause them to change over the course of their multiple lives. The problem with expecting fostering to function like the ideal circulation of the garden, I argue, is that the garden presents a circle that does not shape, while fostering is meant to accomplish the realignment of ancestors and offspring. Yet even the name of the garden itself gestures toward the imperfect interventions of fostering and the changes living there imposes on Amoret. In antiquity "the Garden of Adonis" referred to a potted plant or forcing bed used to bring plants to maturity more quickly, but the resulting flowers bloomed for a shorter period of time.[216] While this definition could

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[215] Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in* The Faerie Queene (New Haven: Yale UP, 1966), 120.
[216] Cheney, 119. The term appears in Plato's *Phaedrus* and in Julian's history of the Caesars.

imply that Amoret grows up weaker, less hardy, than her sister, for me this manipulation of growth and development highlights the profusion of connotations and substitutions nurtured around Amoret in her youth.[217]

Amoret is raised to be practically all things for all people. She is literally "little love," replacing the runaway Cupid as Venus's substitute child. She is raised by Cupid's wife, Psyche, and so is also their child. In their daughter, Pleasure, she acquires a new twin sister. As such, Amoret is a substitute child and grandchild; she replaces girls and boys. She lives within protective walls but is raised by a woman who has suffered intensely for love; Spenser specifically references Venus's torment of Psyche. Meanwhile, Belphoebe is one of Diana's many nymphs running wild, one of Elizabeth's incarnations in the poem. The Garden of Adonis section also emphasizes the divergence of the twins enabled by fostering through the canto's very structure. The section's many stanzas divide the opening question about Belphoebe's gentleness from Spenser's concluding discussion of Amoret's upbringing. Fumerton asserts that Amoret's Irish style long-term fostering experience and her eventual transfer to the English / Fairy court represents a perfectly completed circle that begins and ends with the queen of both lands. She links the queen with "th'heauens fruitfull ray" (6.2) that impregnated Chrysogone and argues that through Amoret: "Irish fosterage joins with English child exchange to form not an Irish faction but a single, large, unbroken circle centered on Elizabeth" (51). However, this interpretation does not account for the division of Amoret and Belphoebe. Unlike Genius's circulating infants, they inherit contradictions from their mother. Spenser's description of Adonis fertilizing the garden also invokes the sun's impregnation of Chrysogone, an echo that simultaneously recalls the unalleviated complications of Amoret's birth and troubles any

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[217] Cheney views Amoret's education as overly protective, while Belphoebe learns to protect herself, 122-23; 141-42.

assertion of a court as an educational endpoint.[218] The sisters' divergent fostering turns them into very different women, but does not dispel such inherited contradictions. Amoret's circulation to the court perpetuates her profusion of substitutions and interpretations. Meanwhile Belphoebe, herself a version of the queen and a complication for assertions of the court as center or endpoint, grows up unexposed to love and fertility. When she does encounter them as an adult she cannot help proliferating misreadings.

While Fumerton highlights Amoret as an example of Irish and English fostering practices reconciled in a circle around Queen Elizabeth, the difficulties in achieving such an outcome are evident in the poem and amply described in *A View.* As both texts attest, attempts to refigure fostering to create an English circle or boundary in Ireland were fraught with difficulty. New English thinkers proposed using English infants carefully preserved from the infection of Irish wet-nurses, and even Irish infants properly nurtured, as a bulwark against degeneracy. In effect, Spenser advocates putting a stop to the wrong kind of circulation, English participation in Irish fostering practices, to enable the creation of another kind of circle. The resultant ideal English children would not only halt degeneracy, they would reverse the direction of influence and erode Irish customs. In addition to targeting Irish wet-nurses, Irenius also touches on efforts to foster Irish children in England. This practice was sporadically incorporated into English policy as a means of encouraging Irish loyalty to the crown. English and Irish alike would be returned to their proper foster mother, Queen Elizabeth, who presented herself as the "true nourisher and nurse" of her people.[219] However, attempts to persuade the Irish nobility to foster their children in England met with little success. Irenius's prime example of the failure of circulation as a

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[218] Cheney, 128.
[219] *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, eds. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (U of Chicago P, 2000), 149.

means of engendering English qualities in the Irish is Hugh O'Neill, who was fostered with the Sidneys from 1559-1566.[220] The Earl of Tyrone frequently referred to himself as "a ward of your majesty,"[221] but his failure to manifest this nurture through the proper obedience provokes Eudoxus to exclaim: "Was this Rebell then sett up first by the Queen and now become so undewtifull?" (147). Although Elizabeth may be the ideal center of circulation for English and Irish nobility, that ideal goes unrealized in both works.

Spenser's efforts to articulate a functional form of child circulation reflect similar plans for the distribution of sources for political power in Ireland. *A View* does not purely advocate for the intervention of monarchial, centralized authority. It also advocates for the delegation of power to local magistrates and for eliminating the monarch's power to unilaterally alter and add laws, claiming that this should be done by the parliament in Ireland. Even when arguing for a seemingly strengthened central authority, Spenser advocates decision-making in Ireland. Irenius wants the queen to appoint a resident Lord Lieutenant, who would serve over the shorter-term Lord Deputy, or governor. This position would take executive power away from the queen and her council, enabling prompt action instead of waits for communication from England.[222] Overall, Spenser indicates that by giving authority to the margins, the strength of the center will, contradictorily, be maintained. While he decries the delegation of child rearing duties to Irish foster parents, he advocates the delegation of power. In both cases, he proposes circulation as a solution, but his perfect forms of functional circulation seem as impossible to practically attain as the ideal circulation in the Garden of Adonis. The incompleteness of Irenius's plans for

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[220] See Fumerton, 48; Richard A. McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford UP 2002), 239-41.
[221] Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland,* Royal Historical Society Studies in History (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993), 93-4.
[222] See *A View* 182-5, 217-18.

circulation of children and political power echo the instability of Amoret and Belphoebe's positions. They are taken from birth to be nursed and fostered, perhaps in an Irish manner, both are tied to the queen – of England and Fairy – and yet for neither does that tie enable the consolidation of all of their influences and connotations. Amoret is no more an example of reconciling circulation than is Hugh O'Neill.

As women, both sisters clearly perform their particular versions of chastity, yet neither is able to stabilize their mother's reproductive problems. Chrysogone's vulnerability, uncontrollable fertility, and ignorance about her own condition continue to plague them. True, neither sister has children in the poem, but no reproduction at all is not exactly a resolution of their mother's defenseless fecundity. For Amoret, unlike another prominent example of chaste affection, Britomart, there is no firm promise of future offspring. Belphoebe is sure never to have any children, and critics stressing the value Spenser places on fecundity highlight this apparent transgression.[223] Beyond biological reproduction, the sisters' own stories also evidence a lack of stability, even though they are in many ways the women they were circulated to become. Amoret exhibits uncontrollable fertility in the proliferation of interpretations, which her chaste affection, her fixed devotion to Scudamore, cannot stop. She is circulated among men, like Scudamore and Busirane, in a chaotic, torturous, version of her peaceful fostering experience. Both Spenser's characters and later critics read her in a myriad of ways: as the fulfillment of each man's desire, as a woman who does and does not need a further education in marriage, love, or sex, as a women tormented by the desires of others, but also by her own. She seems to lack the agency necessary to save herself, but in fact functions as the interpretively fruitful person she was raised

[223] On Belphoebe's celibacy as a rejection of reproduction see: Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 158; Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance from Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 95-9; Maureen Quilligan, *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983), 197.

to be. Amoret does not serve exclusively as an object to be read, but also opposes readings like Busirane's in the Masque of Cupid, as Silberman notes: "the content of the fictive masque comes to life and resists its author's intentions" (61). The circuitous way that Spenser tells Amoret's story, writing and then overwriting her reunion with Scudamore, telling of their first meeting only at the end of her ordeal, underlines her entrapment in a cycle that began before her birth and which her fostering only amplified.[224] On the other hand, Belphoebe seems fully capable of protecting herself from the vagaries of Cupid. David Scott Wilson-Okamura calls her "by far the most independent character in the whole poem."[225] Donald Cheney reads her as the ultimate Petrarchan beloved, powerful, unyielding, wounding with her eyes. Yet Belphoebe wants to help others, and is always mystified when her efforts go astray. She cannot understand why Timias's health does not improve, and she drastically misreads his interaction with Amoret.[226] Belphoebe scatters misunderstandings as she goes, isolated by ignorance of relationships as much as by choice. The self-absorption noted by critics may in fact be a version of her mother's ignorance

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[224] On Amoret's culpability for her own suffering see William C. Johnson, "Spenser in the House of Busyrane: Transformations of Reality in *The Faerie Queene* III and *Amoretti*," *English Studies*, 73:2 (April 1992): 104-20, esp. 116; John Rooks, *Love's Courtly Ethic in* The Faerie Queene*: From Garden to Wilderness,* University of Kansas Humanistic Studies (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 77-8. This view ignores her characterization as perfect, chaste love. See Chih-hsin Lin, "Amoret's Sacred Suffering: The Protestant Modification of Courtly Love in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *Studies in Philology,* 106:3 (Summer 2009): 354-77, esp. 355. Scudamore, Busirane, Venus, and society as a whole may be culpable for treating Amoret as a trophy. See Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in* The Faerie Queene (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), 96-102; Lauren Silberman, "The Hermaphrodite and the Metamorphosis of Spenserian Allegory," *ELR,* 17:2 (Spring 1987): 207-223; Silberman (1995) 58-68; Dorothy Stephens, "Into Other Arms: Amoret's Evasion,*" ELH* 58:3 (Fall 1991): 523-44, esp. 528.

[225] David Scott Wilson-Okamura, "Belphoebe and Gloriana," *ELR*, 39:1 (Winter 2009), 47-73, esp. 53.

[226] Cheney, 123; Silberman (1995), 37-8.

about love, sex, and procreation.[227] Despite the largely positive connotations of their circulation, both sisters grow into women still circling around reproductive problems. The fixed points provided by their respective versions of chastity amplify, rather than mollify, those concerns.

III. Ruddymane: The Circulation of Revenge

When Spenser uses a bloody spectacle to introduce the quest Guyon follows in Book II, he simultaneously highlights a key reproductive problem. Guyon and the Palmer encounter a family destroyed by the sorceress Acrasia – a dead father, a dying mother, and a living infant stained by his mother's blood and both his parents' mistakes:

> Als in her lap a louely babe did play
> His cruell sport, in stead of sorrow dew;
> For in her streaming blood he did embray
> His litle hands, and tender ionts embew II.i.40.5-8

Although the infant, Ruddymane, does not literally consume his mother, Amavia's, blood, with this image Spenser makes visible the humoral view of nursing. According to this understanding, a mother's milk is a form of transmuted blood. Any nursing woman not only gives her life's blood, she also transfers the qualities contained in that blood to the child.[228] This tableau would seem to bind Ruddymane to his parents, particularly his mother, despite their deaths. However,

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[227] On Belphoebe's "carelessness of others" see Harry Berger, Jr., *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's* Faerie Queene (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957), 124-5. In contrast, Wilson-Okamura argues for Belphoebe as Queen Elizabeth's uniform devotion to her people (61-2).

[228] On nursing and the humoral bond it forges in colonial contexts see: Jean Feerick's forthcoming *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance*, (U of Toronto P, 2010), esp. Chapt. 2 "Uncouth Mylk"; Jennifer L. Morgan, " 'Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54:1 (1997): 167-92; Christopher Highly, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge UP, 1997), 102; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 163-214. On wet-nurses see also Orme, 58. Stone replicates the fears about infectious wet-nurses in early modern texts, rather than analyzing them (99-101; 107).

the baby plays happily, oblivious to Amavia's self-inflicted wounds. This disparity makes the problem for cultural reproduction clear. If the child is an example of repetitive inheritance, he inherits suffering and death. But if he proves different, his "cruell sport" may deface his mother's memory just as it causes her pain in life, and in the process he may challenge adult authority in general. Guyon, serving a foster parent, makes bringing the infant into conjunction with an ideal version of his birth family the business of his interventions. Unlike the female foundlings, this circulation seems to entrap Ruddymane in a loop that forecloses adulthood itself, let alone stability.

Through the familial tableau, Spenser illustrates the struggle to reconcile the dangers of hybridity and repetitive inheritance. Amavia wants her son to simultaneously represent the best of her life and to escape the sins of his parents. Mordant, Ruddymane's father, was seduced from his quest for glory and from his true love by the sorceress Acrasia and taken to the Bower of Bliss. He left Amavia pregnant, and she sets out in pursuit of him. She gives birth alone in the woods and still temporarily succeeds in rescuing Mordant. They are escaping when he drinks a potion poisoned by the sorceress and dies. Mordant's corpse shows ample evidence of the blood that left him susceptible to Acrasia: "His ruddy lips did smile, and rosy red / Did paint his chearefull cheeks, yett being ded" (II.i.41.4-5). In grief, Amavia stabs herself with his sword. The visibility of blood and its color appears as a common feature in descriptions of the entire family. Ruddymane's name may be as easily linked to his father's appearance as to the stain of his mother's blood, and both parents threaten him with a reiterating contagion of sin. This family embodies many of the excesses that Guyon, as the knight of temperance, works to combat in others and in himself.

Amavia wants both the parental immortality promised by the repetitive fantasy and the improvements offered by hybridity. She cries out for death, and then addresses her son:

> But thou, sweete Babe, whom frowning froward fate
> Hath made sad witnesse of thy fathers fall,
> Sith heuen thee deignes to hold in liuing state,
> Long maist thou liue, and better thriue withall,
> Then to thy lucklesse parents did befall:
> Liue thou, and to thy mother dead attest,
> That cleare she dide from blemish criminall;
> Thy litle hands embrewed in bleeding brest
> Loe I for pledges leaue. So giue me leaue to rest. II.i.37

While Ruddymane is "fated" to witness his "fathers fall" and her misery, according to Amavia this does not determine his future. Indeed, the great difference between them – the divide between life and death – offers him the chance to make a break, to "liue, and better thriue withall." The break cannot be clean. The bloody hands turn the baby into a sign of his parents' past. However, they are not exclusively signs of inevitable, original sin. Amavia claims agency over her son's hands – she "leaues" them – and those hands are supposed to prove her lack of guilt. The strange way that blemish is supposed to mark lack of blemish mirrors the paradoxical division and connection Amavia wants for her child. Spenser's double use of "leaue" in the final line indicates the simultaneous continuity and division of the mother's version of inheritance. When Amavia asks for permission to go, she addresses the "heuens" (36.1), but also her son. She does her best to both sever and maintain ties with him. She claims authority over what his body means while also granting him some agency and asking his permission to depart. Ruddymane, as yet unnamed in the poem, is deliberately left behind to be different, and to repair and sustain his parents' reputations beyond death.

Although in Ruddymane's case Spenser figures the mother as a potentially dangerous nurse, the perils of her blood are not so different from those posed by Irish wet-nurses. In *A*

View, Spenser identifies infants as the primary point of entry for degeneracy, and thus as a rallying point for defending Irenius's sense of Englishness. According to Irenius, use of the Irish language by the English is the key factor in such degeneration, and is bound up in childrearing practices. Ruddymane is similarly exposed to both his mother's potentially tainted blood and her paradoxical language about familial repetition and division. He and the English in Ireland need to be aligned with their origins. In both instances the first influences on infants must be corrected so that they can properly perpetuate their parents' worlds. Irenius asserts:

> . . . for first the childe that sucketh the milke of the nurse must of necessitie learne his first speech of her, the which beinge the first that is envred to his tonge, is ever after most pleasing vnto him insomuch as though he afterwards bee taught Englishe, yett the smacke of the first will alwayes abyde with him and not onelie of the speach, but of the manners and Condycions: for besydes the yong children bee lyke Apes, which will affecte and ymitate what they see done before them speciallie by theyre nurses, whom they loue so well, they moreover drawe into them selues, together with their sucke, even the nature and disposition of their nurses, for the minde followeth much the temperature of the bodye: and also the wordes are the Image of the mynde, so as they proceding from the mynde, the mynde must bee needes effected with the wordes: So that the speach beinge Irish, the harte must needes bee Irish, for out of the abundance of the heart, the tonge speaketh. (88)

Spenser's anxiety about contemporary practices intersects here with familiar figurative language. Analogies likening the importance and naturalness of early learning to breastfeeding and those highlighting children's skill at mimicry through comparisons with apes are, as evidenced in the preceding chapters, common in texts on childrearing and stress the need to start training young, while children are still malleable. Spenser seems to take this language at face value and to fear that forming children really is as easy as getting there first.

Also evident in Spenser's wet-nursing complaint is the sense that, while children may be the passive victims of nurses' humors, they also take an active part in their transformation. The infants' rather animalistic capacity for imitation implies participation. They also "drawe into

them selues" the nurses' negative characteristics, further indicating agency. Ruddymane demonstrates a similar instrumentality mixed with threatening agency. While his affinity for "cruell sport" may be absorbed from his mother and father, his actions may be his own. When Guyon attempts to wash the blood from Ruddymane's "guiltie handes" (II.ii.3.4) the reason for that guilt is unclear. This uncertainty about child agency calls into question the workability of regulating wet-nurses and targeting circulation as a means for normalizing, even realigning, children. *A View* raises implicit concerns about how much control adults have over children's imitative and linguistic abilities. Similarly, Ruddymane's implication in his parents' end and his potential agency hint that replacing his mother with new nurses may not override dangerous elements of his humeral composition.

Spenser combines the questions of agency and inheritance posed through Ruddymane and Amavia with temporal recursivity that engulfs the entire family. They share a liminal space crossing the boundaries of life and death. Mordant's coloring suggests life in death. Amavia clearly wavers between the two states, "halfe-dead, halfe quick," (II.i.39.4). Meanwhile, the living child dyes himself in a dying woman's blood. Such indeterminacy further stresses his position as one called both to reflect his parents' blood and to alter the weaknesses of flesh and blood that led to their demise. However, their tainted blood and the liminal temporality of their story invite Guyon's corrections. Indeed, the boundary crossing that goes on in Ruddymane's family also affects the knight of temperance. Their life in death and death in life scene thrusts Guyon into a liminal state, effectively turning him into a living statue: "His hart gan wexe as starke, as marble stone, / And his fresh blood did frieze with fearfull cold, / That all his sences seemd bereft attone:" (42.2-4). He loses his balance, his median, and slips into a paradox. This moment parallels Venus and Diana's reaction to Chrysogone and their decision to foster the

twins. Himself troubled by the instability of the family, Guyon intervenes to purge Ruddymane's inheritance through circulation.

Guyon makes Ruddymane's connection with his parents contingent upon revenging them and so confuses the reproductive imperative to continue the family line with shedding blood. Contrarily, he tries to insure that Ruddymane's inheritance is free from the contagion of his parents' mistakes by refusing to let Amavia rest in peace. He also contradicts her desire for her son to exemplify her innocence while living differently from his parents. In the final stanza of the canto Guyon vows vengeance on the lip of Amavia and Mordant's grave. He cuts locks of their hair:

> Which medling with their blood and earth, he threw
> Into the grave, and gan devoutly sweare:
> Such and such euil God on *Guyon* reare,
> And worse and worse young Orphane be thy payne,
> Till guiltie blood her guerdon doe obtayne: II.i.61.4-8

Guyon uses as his binding agent the same blood that so troubles the family. The ills parental blood might visit on the son live on as part of the vow.[229] Guyon's emphasis on revenge strives to redefine that blood, and the baby's birthmark, to the exclusion of other interpretations raised in the episode. However, it does the exact opposite. The "guiltie blood" that must be shed in vengeance recalls parental guilt and anticipates Guyon's surprise at Ruddymane's own permanently stained "guiltie handes." When Amavia first cries out, she does assert that perhaps the "careless heuens . . . despise / The doome of iust revenge . . ." (36.2-3) but they cannot stop her from dying. However, she never calls on her son to revenge herself or his father. That is Guyon's totalizing move. Even the Palmer continues to include at least Amavia's insistence that the baby's bloody prove her innocence in his interpretation (II.ii.10). Guyon's vow also

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[229] Only Amavia's ever flows in the canto, since Mordant dies of poison. The plural indicates that their mutual sins are evoked by Spenser's mentions of blood.

contradicts his later explanation of his quest to Medina. He belatedly claims that it is not a vendetta, but rather a disinterested good deed assigned to him by Gloriana. This chronologically confused, self-justifying self-contradiction further demonstrates the twisted nature of Guyon's condensed interpretation of the baby's hands.[230] His effort at revision turns the ideal of continuity through child circulation into a violent cycle of vengeance looping through victim, offender, and revenger. Ruddymane's survival is tied to adults in each of these positions as Guyon keeps the mistakes of the victimized parents alive and also binds Ruddymane to the outsider, Acrasia, who enabled them, and to himself as one mutually vowed to vengeance. Meanwhile Ruddymane himself circles through characterizations as innocent victim, guilty party, and future revenger.

Among the readings of Ruddymane's unwashable hands that Guyon evokes in his attempts to override them are multiple Irish referents. Those hands invoke the purported Irish tradition of leaving the right arm unbaptized that "yt might geave a more ungratious and deadely bloe."[231] While an especially deadly arm might be useful in fulfilling Guyon's vow, this means of acquiring one colors revenge as anything but a purifying enterprise. Further, an unholy hand is hardly a good marker of maternal chastity. Spenser himself specifically complicates the image of the bloody hand in *A View* when Irenius describes the O'Neill's war cry: "Langergabo, that it the bloody hand, which is O'Neale's badge" (54).[232] The Earl of Tyrone's "undewtifull" appearance in *A View* hardly makes him an appropriate foster parent, yet his version of Ruddymane's

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[230] See Paul Suttie, *Self-Interpretation in* The Faerie Queene, (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 153-54.
[231] The tradition of leaving arms unbaptized is reported in Edmund Campion, *Two Bokes of the Histories of Ireland*, ed. A. F. Vossen (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1963), 12; it is repeated by Richard Stanyhurst in Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1808), vi, 69.
[232] Noted by McCabe, 122.

birthmark circulates with the rest. With regard to the baby, Feerick asserts: “His hands, then, signify not the “stain” of original sin but rather his racial corruption, a taint accrued to him like just so much inheritance through the father.”[233] However, I argue that all of these elements are simultaneously accessible in the text, and that they all point to the competing imperatives of hybridity and repetition which circulation strives to reconcile. The threat of rebellion accrues to Ruddymane along with his possible guilt and agency, indicating potential danger in Amavia’s hopes that he will live a different kind of life. At the same time, these interpretative possibilities contribute to his entrapment in Guyon’s circle of vengeance.

Given these valences, Ruddymane’s bloody family tableau also recalls a similarly violent image of fostering from *A View*. Spenser condemns the perilously symbiotic fostering relationship in his description of Murrough O’Brien’s execution. In conjunction with the poem, this passage offers a double-edged critique of Ruddymane’s story:

> . . . I sawe an old woman, which was his Foster mother tooke vpp his heade whilst he was quartered and sucked vpp all the blood running there out, saying that the earth was not worthie to drinke yt, and therewith steeped her face and breast and tare her haire crying and shriking out most tirriblie. (81)

The scene recalls the infant playing in his mother’s blood and failing to recognize the horror of this act. Here the foster mother consumes the blood to which she contributed in the form of milk. She also serves as the image of fostering’s violation of purportedly proper, English, family structure, its bonds and loyalties. She is hardly the reason O’Brien is dead, but Spenser represents visually the way Irish nurses will devour the English babies they initially nourish, and thus the way Ireland will consume the English that accommodate, degenerate, and form ties there. However, the foster mother’s refusal to let her child’s blood touch the earth also recalls

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[233] Jean Feerick, “Spenser, Race, and Ire-land.” *English Literary Renaissance*. 32:1 (Winter 2002): 85-117, 111

Guyon's reaction to the devastated family. Although Guyon does mingle blood and earth when he makes his vow, he, too, refuses to let go of the dead. He, too, tries to appropriate spilled blood for his own purposes. The Irish foster mother enacts a circle, cannibalistically reclaiming her own blood, and so demonstrates how disturbing Guyon's version of circulation is. Finally, the image of the fierce, bloody foster mother invokes Amavia. Although she is the biological mother, her blood, her milk unpurified, does not insure her child's developmental future. As Richard McCabe notes, her extreme grief and loud cries invoke Irenius's description of the deafening wailing at Irish burials with their supposedly Scythian roots.[234] If O'Brien's foster mother is a violation, Amavia's articulation of paradoxically connected and divisive reproduction demonstrates how unstable the version of family she violates truly is.

Spenser connects Guyon's vow of vengeance to the knight's very different view of the division between parent and child that Amavia's speeches present as positive. While Amavia articulates difference as a chance for survival and happiness, Guyon sees this disconnect as a painful severance. For him, loss of one's true place and proper connections is a truth of the human condition and is also Ruddymane's specific problem that must be addressed:

> Ah, luckless babe, born vnder cruell starre,
> And in dead parents balefull ashes bred,
> Full little weenest thou, what sorrowes are
> Left thee for porcion of thy liuelyhed,
> Poore Orphane in the wide world scattered,
> As budding braunch rent from the natiue tree,
> And throwen forth, till it be withered: II.ii.2.1-7

The family tree image is violently torn. Jean Feerick argues that Spenser's language of broken branches casts the family as Old English, their sins symptomatic of the lethargy and degeneracy

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[234] McCabe, 121-2.

of that group, severed from their English origins.[235] The "ashes" in which Ruddymane is "bred" recall his parents' blood and the earth used in Guyon's vow. Guyon uses the word that Spenser earlier gives to Amavia to describe her son, "luckless" (II.i.50.9), but here that luck, that fate, is the determining factor. Blood and birth are everything, but also nothing. As with Amavia's version of the episode's reproductive problem, Guyon insists on paradox. He simultaneously asserts that Ruddymane's inheritance insures suffering and argues that this suffering is caused by losing any connection to the family line. In effect, being his parents' child insures his own severance from them.

While Guyon and the Palmer strive to remedy that severance, another potential parental substitute further complicates their efforts. The nymph transformed into the stream becomes an initial replacement for Amavia. The Palmer explains that the spring cannot wash Ruddymane's bloody hands because it was once a chaste nymph. Pursued by Faunus, she called out for rescue and was metamorphosed into waters that cannot be tainted: "Ne lets her waues with any filth be dyde" (II.ii.9.8). Despite this emphasis on her virginity, her waters become a kind of substitute milk. Spenser ties all flowing water to nursing when the Palmer notes that some springs originate with "Dame Nature, from whose fruitfull pap, / Their welheads spring" (6.2-3). The poet also describes Amavia's suffering and the nymph's flight in the same terms. Amavia's screams of pain are those of a: "gentle Hynd," (II.i.38.6) struck by a hunter. The nymph is out hunting "the hartlese Hynd and Robucke" (II.ii.7.4), and when Faunus chases her "As Hynd from her, so she fled from her enimy" (7.9). Indeed, before the Palmer even tells the nymph's story, Spenser associates Amavia, and the image of bloody nursing, with the waters of the spring. Amavia's blood stains the nymph's supposedly pure waters: "the cleane waues with purple gore did ray"

235 Feerick, 109-10.

(II.i.40.3). Thus even as Guyon and the Palmer use the spring to support their interpretation, the water inculcates something Amavia's hopes for her child.

Guyon's final act as foster father is to pass the infant on to his long-term foster mother, Medina. As her name suggests, she is a figure whose commitment to balance and moderation matches that of the Palmer and the knight of temperance. Yet when this transition takes place Guyon's instructions for care are limited to an admonition to raise the child virtuously and an interpretation of the baby's strange birthmark that eschews all readings but revenge – hardly a temperate motivation:

> And that so soone as ryper yeares he raught,
> He might for memory of that dayes ruth,
> Be called *Ruddymane*, and thereby taught,
> T'auenge his Parents death on them, that had it wrought.   II.iii.2.6-9

This is the first and only point at which Spenser uses the name Ruddymane, and Guyon bestows it. While the name does recall his parents' terrible ends, it also stresses the agency of foster parents in forming his identity. This revisionary act of naming even eliminates the interpretation of the baby's bloody hands as a symbol for Amavia's purity. The name "Ruddymane" references parental blood and the baby's bloody hands, but Guyon articulates it as the condensation all of the connotations for that blood into vengeance. This effort at minimization fails to contain other readings, but it does threaten to ensnare him in a sort of perpetual childhood.

Ruddymane's circulation among parents and foster parents becomes a potentially unending cycle of violence. He may remain trapped in that cycle, especially since Medina is instructed to raise the baby to complete a task that, by the end of Book II, will already be completed. Guyon will destroy the Bower of Bliss and capture Acrasia, and Ruddymane will be raised as an anachronism. What will remain for him to do, and how will the circle ever be completed? In bringing Ruddymane up to reject his father's feminizing embrace of luxury and

lethargy and his mother's excessive, self-destructive grief, the foster parents may create a knight who can never put down his sword, never stop moving, and never perpetuate his family. According to Guyon's instructions, he will be raised to be an extremely masculine man and a boy who can never grow up. The only continuity circulation creates here seems to be unending suffering.[236] However, some hope for escape lies in Ruddymane's potential for agency and even rebellion. Guyon's emphasis on revenge keeps the sins and sufferings of Amavia and Mordant alive, along with her call for her son to live differently. Circulation fails to contain the contrary imperatives of Amavia's first cry. If the only continuity it brings is in continued brutality, a break with the family tree no longer seems so terrible.

IV. Bruin Baby: Nature, Nurture, and Inheritance

In Book VI, a foundling baby is plucked not from the side of an unconscious or dying parent, but from the bloody jaws of a bear. The risks of lineal inheritance are apparent in Amoret, Belphoebe, and Ruddymane's family trees, and the unknown, potentially animal, origins of this unnamed infant amplify these concerns. Similarly, the fostering atmospheres of the other children raise questions about the relative influences of nature and nurture, but this boy's adoption by a childless couple actually seems to strip away any identity, down even to his species and gender. Adulthood appears almost entirely out of reach. In this episode Spenser brings these two frameworks, which prioritize very different reproductive problems, into direct conflict. These issues converge on an infant and eventually seem to consume him.

[236] Feerick argues that Ruddymane is unlikely to complete a "transformative trajectory" through Medina due to the persistent, violent choler of the other figures that she reads as Irish (2002), 111-12.

At the start of canto iv, Spenser stresses the tension between nature and nurture. Calepine, a substitute version of Calidore, the knight of courtesy, is rescued from the villainous Turpine by a "saluage man" (VI.iv.2.2). Spenser uses the "saluage" characters throughout the poem to invoke the Irish.[237] This potentially Irish figure serves as an emblem of the negative impact poor nurture can have, the very "lack of meete Nurture" (86) that in *A View* plagues the Irish and Old English alike, while also demonstrating that some innate qualities cannot be extinguished. Despite his isolated life, the salvage man sees the injustice Calepine suffers, feels "pittie" and "compassion" (3.2,6), and acts on those emotions. In spite of these good instincts, and his noble birth (v.2), he is unable to speak and is repeatedly compared to animals: a tiger, a buck, a hound. The forest cannot destroy his humanity, but, unlike Belphoebe, he can be altered by it for the worse. Yet Donald Cheney argues that his wild upbringing is in fact what allows the salvage man to defend Calepine. The salvage man, "though lacking in the positive values of civilized society, is capable of fostering in its inhabitants the strength needed to defend that society" (209). By extension, the Irish appear as less than human, yet with the best of human influences, starved for nurture but retaining good nature and cultivating useful, even necessary strength. While degeneracy is clearly a threat for the English and Irish, Calepine, a figure for the most social and civil of virtues, is won over by the salvage man's kindness.

Shortly thereafter, Calepine is walking in the forest when he encounters the bizarre bear and infant pair and sets off in pursuit. Spenser introduces the episode by noting that it will end badly: "An hard aduenture with vnhappie end, / A cruell Beare, the which an infant bore / Betwixt his bloodie iawes, besprinkled all with gore" (VI.iv.17.7-9). Yet Calepine rescues the

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[237] See for example Hadfield, 133-5; Feerick (2002), 99-103; McCabe, 239-42; Patricia Coughlan, " 'Cheap and common animals": The English Anatomy of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century," *Literature and the English Civil War,* eds. Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge UP, 1990), 205-23, 207.

baby unharmed. Perhaps the "vnhappie end" Spenser refers to is the result of the chase for Calepine, since he becomes lost and cannot find his way back to his traveling companion, Serena, and the salvage man. However, I argue that the "end" may also be read as an outcome of cultural reproduction. It may point to the infant as the figure whose circulation is supposed to reconcile the competing frames and the different problems they emphasize, but is unable to do so. At first the infant seems to be another figure through which the conflict between nature and nurture is played out. The baby in the mouth of the bear is an image of helpless humanity in the grip of the vicious influence of wild, animal nature. He emerges unharmed, perhaps because he ends up with the right foster parents. The baby circles to those parents – Sir Bruin and Matilde – and is inserted into their inheritance narrative as the heir they desperately seek. He is the contested ground on which Spenser lays out both reproductive problems and he is expected to constitute a boundary against wildness of the bear and against Sir Bruin's mortality. However, he does not do so, instead leaving both inheritance and the effects of nurture in unstable positions.

When the baby and bear first appear, they serve to link Calepine to the salvage man. The baby's "piteous plaints" (VI.iv.18.2) palpably affect the knight, "Percing his hart with pities point did thrill," (18.5) and recalling the earlier rescue. Spenser also clearly connects Calepine's pursuit of the bear with the salvage man's pursuit of Turpine. Both are unarmed and both do not stop to worry about their potential weaknesses or to establish plans of attack. They run swiftly, the salvage man like a buck (8.3), Calepine like a hawk (19.7). Both are moved, almost literally given their speed, by pity (3.2 and 18.5). Although the salvage man fails to catch Turpin, he does rescue his wounded victims. Calepine overcomes the bear by challenging him directly in the teeth, which posed such a threat to the baby. Calepine is further linked to the salvage man's animal qualities through the baby that was once the bear's "spoyle" (20.4) and is now the

knight's "louely little spoile" (25.7). Richard McCabe argues that the salvage man is Spenser's literary fantasy of "the ideal relationship between the civil and the savage, the colonist and the native" (241), citing his fawning response to Serena. However, Spenser's similar characterizations of both figures undermine any attempt on his part to establish a simple hierarchy. Through their heroic reactions and subsequent kindness, both Calepine and the salvage man demonstrate the book's key virtue: courtesy. The baby also functions as a corollary for the salvage man, his rescue vividly demonstrating the dangers negative early influences pose to children. This nature versus nurture conflict evident in the cross-connection between Calepine, the salvage man, and the infant establish the centrality of this frame for addressing cultural reproduction in the rest of the child's story.

At this stage, the dangers facing the bruin baby are entirely external. His resilient innate qualities are presumed to be good, as the salvage man's have proven to be. There are no biological parents evident to embody the threat of inherited taint. As with Ruddymane, the blood that covers the bruin baby turns out not to be his own. Calepine searches his limbs for wounds, "but whole them all he found" (VI.iv.23.9). However, unlike Ruddymane, the filth that covers him can be "wypt away" (4). Perhaps this infant remains whole and unmarked because he, unlike the other bloody babe, has the appropriate emotional reaction to being blood-spattered and in a violent situation. His encounter with the bear seems to indicate innocence and innate resilience. However, the visual image that Spenser conjures also evokes the commonplace that bears licked their whelps into shape. Thus the baby carries with him the suspicion that the encounter with the bear did form him in some way, and that he has an animal origin which may dangerously invade his foster family. He also draws attention to that family's name, and the potential for wildness that may already exist within Sir Bruin. As McCabe argues: "Sir Bruin and the 'bear' represent

twin aspects of one persona, the latter indicative of the savagery latent within the civil knight" (189). While these two bears need not be read as one, the infant serves to highlight the nature versus nurture conflict pervading even the childless family focused on lineal descent.

The bruin baby invokes the frequent use of animal tropes to characterize children in early modern texts, a rhetorical technique also applied to supposedly inferior peoples. The alignment between the salvage man and the infant and their mutual comparison with animals indicates the three-way connection between children, animals, and "primitive" societies that Spenser was certainly not alone in drawing, as he does in both his poem and in *A View*. McCabe views Spenser's depiction of the salvage man as "childlike," a characterization which "transform[s] the colonist into a parent" (241). Fumerton asserts: "As in the bridling of the child's animal or aboriginal nature, . . . the English nation sought to suppress the cultural earliness it saw in the Irish" (37). Yet, as we have seen, early modern children were not exclusively aligned with the animals to which they were compared; they were not purely viewed or treated as young horses to be broken.[238] While Spenser draws on such figurative language to recommend not only childrearing but also political policies, he does not stress pure equivalence. The multiple connotations of the tropes he applies reflect this ambiguity. In the dialogue's denunciation of the Old English, Eudoxus speaks of England as a nursing mother and claims the Old English "bit of her dugge from which they sucked lyfe." Irenius responds that "proude hartes doe oftentimes lyke wanton Coltes kicke at theire mothers."[239] Although this example draws the connection between nursing infants, colts in need of taming, and the political situation in Ireland, it also

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[238] In contrast to Stone, who claims that "the deliberate breaking of the young child's will, first by hard physical beating and later by overwhelming psychological pressures" was key to 16th and 17th century childrearing (101). He takes the tropes linking children and animals literally and assumes early moderns did, as well (105, 116, 176-7).
[239] Another use of colt language is at 49. On the interconnection of animal imagery and child figures see Fudge (2000), 20-1.

undermines the claim that an end to Irish wet-nursing, and intermarriage would result in the ideal circulation of real and metaphorical children around England and its queen. These colts in need of breaking are already rebelling not only against their mother, but also against their nurse. It seems unlikely that a change in foster mothers will affect them. In the bruin baby's case, this makes his bear whelp origins as potentially problematic as Richard III's.

Spenser brings these nature-versus-nurture questions into conflict with Sir Bruin and Matilde's need for an heir. Matilde explains that although her husband has conquered a great territory from the terrible giant, Cormoraunt, they have no children to inherit it, so all their work is in vain:

> For th'heauens enuying our prosperitie,
> Haue not vouchsaft to graunt vnto vs twaine
> The gladfull blessing of posteritie,
> Which we might see after out selues remaine
> In th'heritage of our vnhappy paine: VI.iv.31.1-5

After their deaths, "for want of heires" (31.6), the land will revert to the giant. Through Matilde, Spenser articulates key elements of the repetitive fantasy: that children enable parental immortality and ensure that the world will remain the same after a parents' death. While up until this point the canto has largely been concerned with the interaction of hereditary and environmental influences, Matilde claims that simply having a child will solve her problems. She really does need a baby to act as a boundary against an encroaching enemy. Spenser links "prosperitie" and "posteritie" so overwhelmingly in her speech through end rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and appearance that they become not overwhelmingly contingent on each other. However, the poet also labels the missing child's inheritance "vnhappy pain." Matilde's very argument is that an heir will make his parents happy to have taken pains to secure his future, but

this stanza implies that pain will remain unassuaged. This disconnect recalls Spenser's opening prediction of an "vnhappie end" (17.7) to the bruin baby's circulation.

The prophecy that predicts an heir alludes to fostering as the solution to Matilde's reproductive problem. The son and heir will "*Be gotten, not begotten*," (32.7) and grow up to destroy the giant.[240] The bruin baby is the obvious answer; he is a child found for Sir Bruin, not fathered by him. Calepine promises that the infant possesses an unproven, total susceptibility to outside influences. This moldable nature will supposedly enable the baby to fit in to Matilde's narrow view of cultural reproduction:

> If that the cause of this your languishment
> Be lacke of children, to supply your place,
> Lo how good fortune doth to you present
> This litle babe, of swete and louely face,
> And spotlesse spirit, in which ye may enchace
> What euer formes ye list thereto apply,
> Being now soft and fit then to embrace;
> Whether ye list him traine in cheualry,
> Or noursle vp in lore of learn'd Philosophy. VI.iv.35

Earlier the baby's "spotlesse spirit" was reflected in his literally clean face and indicated innocence impervious to negative external influences. His survival in the mouth of the bear designated a level of fixity. Here his beautiful face and pure spirit seem to make the baby a perfect canvas. Calepine tries to meld the nature versus nurture conflict and the repetitive desire for the missing child in a fostering solution that can only function through a faith in total malleability that has already been disproved.

Malleability is not a favored quality for solving any of the canto's primary reproductive problems. Although proverbial childhood malleability allows for molding to suit adult norms, it also leaves children susceptible to negative influences. Fear of the latter is dominant for Spenser

[240] Italics original

in his denunciation of Irish wet-nurses. The repetitive fantasy that Matilde and her husband hope to attain depends on fixity, not flexibility. They expect children to inherently mirror their elders. Sir Bruin wants a copy like Arthur or the Redcross knight, whose innate nature and resultant deeds reveal their ancestry, not an impressionable foundling: "That from his sides some noble chyld should rize / The which through fame should farre be magnified" (33.2-3). Meanwhile, the outcomes of the nature and nurture conflict that Spenser depicts earlier in the canto depend on at least some resistance to external influences. The malleability, and thus the vulnerability, of the humoral body as precisely what enabled the degeneration of the English in Ireland and threatened English nurslings.[241] Cultural continuity and change again come into conflict here, with change - the potential malleability of the baby - both necessary to insure continuity for Matilde and Sir Bruin and dangerous to them. A child that cannot be molded will not become enough like them to be their heir. A child that is too changeable cannot be the boundary against both the giant and mortality that they desire.

The promise of childhood malleability is central to many of the proscriptions of *A View*. In addition to the reworking of fostering practices, Irenius advocates mandatory education for the sons of gentlemen and the establishment of petty schools in every parish. Education will not only mold flexible children, it will also ultimately alter their parents:

> they will in shorte time growe vpp to that Civill conversation, that both the children will louthe the former rudnesse in which they were bredd, and also there parence will even by thensample of there yonge Children, perceaue the fowlenes of theire owne brutishe behauior compared to theirs . . . (205)

This optimistic plan to reverse the direction of degenerating Irish influence through English education recalls English counter-fostering failures. It also reveals an even more ominous possibility. If Irish and Old English parents are so flexible, they can surely be formed to fit a

[241] Feerick (2002), 94-96.

model different from what the New English would propose. This possibility validates the threat the bruin baby poses to Matilde and Sir Bruin. Instead of molding the baby, they could be influenced by him. He can grow to become a disruptive example for them, and indeed as he passes into their care he becomes particularly unclassifiable.

Calepine's promise that the baby will solve Matilde's problem does not exactly come true. Despite the prophecy the baby is supposed to fulfill, there is no further mention of Cormoraunt or his defeat. Indeed, the prophecy's ambiguity on that point makes room for other interpretations. The heir "should drinke / And dry vp all the water, which doth ronne / In the next brooke, by whom that feend shold be fordonne" (32.7-9). The "next brooke" recalls Sir Bruin's defeat of Cormoraunt at "yonder foord" (29.7), but the brook also may allude to Matilde, who "poure[s] forth ceaselesse teares" (33.9). The drinking may invoke nursing, implying that she becomes nurse as well as foster mother. Perhaps becoming a mother, insuring direct inheritance, will be enough to deny the giant the land. This possibility requires that the baby be vulnerable to Matilde's influence and to the humoral changes her tears or milk might enact. Yet if the baby was supposed to stem Matilde's tears, he does not succeed. In taking possession of the baby, Matilde cries: "And hauing ouer it a litle wept, / She bore it thence, and euer as her owne it kept" (37.8-9). These tears also do not have the effect of humorally changing the infant. This baby with no birth story would presumably be more permanently and clearly linked to his adoptive parents than any of the other infants I discuss. For Amoret, and Belphoebe, and Ruddymane their birth parents serve as sites to which the infants remain connected. For the bruin baby, it would seem that an identity should largely be conveyed through the foster relationship. However, in the process of transition to his foster mother, he does not acquire a name, like those other babies, but instead devolves into an "it." This move from "he" to "it" makes not only

parentage but also gender and even species unknown. Pointedly, this occurs not through his encounter with the bear, but through the transfer to his foster mother.

Matilde passes the baby off as a biological heir, a move Spenser's speaker supports but which only increases the baby's categorical instability:

> for so she wisely did,
> And with her husband vnderhand so wrought,
> That when the infant vnto him she brought,
> She made him thinke it surely was his owne,
> And it in goodly thewes so well vpbrought,
> That it became a famous knight well knowne
> And did right noble deedes, the which elsewhere are showne. VI.iv.38. 3-9

Her lie undermines the repetitive fantasy's emphasis on direct descent and obscures the conflict between nature and nurture. Paul Suttie asserts that Matilde and Calepine lie in the interest of a "morally good end," preserving the family realm from the giant: "just at the point, then, where we are made to see clearly that the chivalric ethical discourse of natural, inherited virtue may be no more than a convenient fiction is inevitably equivalent to its being morally reprehensible" (201). I don't believe that their fiction is "morally reprehensible," but it is certainly unstable. Their attempt to solve all of these reproductive problems through a single child, to condense all of the connotations he evokes into a single solution, results in a way in the disappearance of that child. He shrinks into nothing while still evoking troubling possibilities. The baby remains an "it" even as a knight, so his uncertain, potentially animal origins, remain to trouble the supposedly whole Bruin family. His supposedly masculine inheritance of Sir Bruin's land and deeds is destabilized by his lack of gender identification. The knight becomes famous, but his deeds are lost, since Spenser never does relate them "elsewhere." Even the outcome of the struggle with Cormoraunt goes unmentioned. His future remains as unknown as his origins. He

does and yet does not become what they want him to become, he does and does not repeat the qualities of both the bear and the Bruins that raise him.

The bruin baby's experience of fostering as a process that wholly obscures any narrative of his past and future along with his gender, leaving him in a nameless limbo, may be an extreme outcome for Spenser's experiments in child circulation. However, he resembles his coevals Belphoebe, Amoret, and Ruddymane in that all of these child figures emerge from fostering simultaneously exhibiting the qualities inculcated by their parents and foster parents and incapable of fulfilling those parents' directives. That is, they grow up, or do not grow up, to be who they were circulated to become, and yet they cannot insure reproducible continuity. They are not resistant or oppositional, nor are they entirely lacking in agency. The unnamed infant becomes a famous knight, as Calepine, Matilde and Sir Bruin hope, but his deeds are forgotten, even that most important deed of all, securing his adoptive family's line and property. As those deeds are lost, so seems to be any connection he might have to his foster parents or his mysterious origins. Ruddymane is similarly burdened with deeds to accomplish, deeds that Spenser never mentions again in conjunction with the baby. While he is named and connected to his biological and foster parents, the vengeance he cannot accomplish threatens to keep him in limbo. If Medina fulfills her educational task, he will be caught in an unending position of aggression. Even if she does not, he remains trapped between the expectations of Amavia and Guyon and their calls for difference and connection. More clearly than any others, Belphoebe and Amoret grow into the women their circulation forms them to be. However, their division does not enable them to transcend the complications of their maternal inheritance. They each differently perpetuate the fertility and lack of knowledge about reproduction that terrified Chrysogone. They, too, continue to circulate, unable to live consistent, stabilizing adult lives.

Unlike Ruddymane and the unnamed bruin baby, the sisters never appear as infants smeared in blood. They are never soiled with the potential connotations of dangerous nursing, violence, and the sinful or proto-racial stain they may entail. Indeed, Spenser seems to overtly distance them from such associations:

> For not as other wemens commune brood,
> They were enwombed in the sacred throne
> Of her chaste bodie, nor with commune food,
> As other wemens babes, they sucked vitall blood. III.vi.5.6-9

This stanza repeatedly insists on the exceptionality of Chrysogone, Belphoebe, and Amoret. They are not "commune"; they are not like "other wemen." These female fosterlings are certainly different from their male counterparts. However, Spenser's ambiguous syntax makes unclear whether the "vitall blood" is what Amoret and Belphoebe "suck," or whether it is the "commune food" the speaker indicates is beneath them. The image of Belphoebe and Amoret as infants sucking the lifeblood from their mother is at least a possible connotation of the passage. Their childhood circulation, too, involves some bloody mess, and their adult lives are not free of gore. Busirane brutally skewers Amoret's heart, and in trying to heal Timias's wound Belphoebe inflicts another. Circulation does modify the circumstances of *The Faerie Queene*'s foster children, but just as in *A View* it proves to cause as many problems as it solves.

AFTERWARD: CHILDHOOD IS HEALTH

Since, Lord, to thee
A narrow way and little gate
Is all the passage, on my infancy
Thou didst lay hold, and antedate
My faith in me.

O let me still
Write thee great God, and me a child:
Let me be soft and supple to thy will,
Small to myself, to others mild,
Behither ill.

Although by stealth
My flesh get on; yet let her sister
My soul bid nothing, but preserve her wealth:
The growth of flesh is but a blister;
Childhood is health.

George Herbert, *Holy Baptism (2)*[242]

In this project I have stressed the multiplicity of early modern views of childhood. I emphasize the ways in which child figures are inadequate and overwhelming, evasive and infinitely categorized. These qualities destabilize conceptions of cultural reproduction even as they make child figures the contested site through which to rework those conceptions. As my very dissertation title suggests, children are problematic. Yet in the poem above they enjoy a privileged position. I have referenced versions of childhood resembling George Herbert's depiction, particularly in the Introduction, and I would like to again focus briefly on this view of children as especially fit to enter the kingdom of heaven. This sense that little children are the model to which all must revert, in some way or other, in order to attain salvation is not unique to Herbert, but he illustrates it so beautifully with the very structure of his stanzas. Here children

[242] George Herbert, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Tobin (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

are not too small, lacking in some essentially quality, nor do they sprawl. Their malleability leaves them open more to divine influence than to their parents' efforts at molding and the world's negative pressures. While that world packs on corrupting flesh with age, Herbert looks back on and tries to recapture the infant antecedent purified by God's love and gift of baptism. Children serve as foundational exemplars able to fit through the "narrow way and little gate" made visible in the form of Herbert's poem. There is a familiar kind of contradiction in the idea that child figures can be both "supple" and firmly exemplary, encouraging adult self-revision even as they are remade by God, and even as they point constantly to the ever straight and narrow way.

Herbert's rather nostalgic view of childhood also points to a way in which child figures may serve as means to acquire personal and societal health, rather than as means of societal disruption. 16th and 17th century writers turn to polysemous child figures in order to heal the wounds and worlds of adults, as well as to insure cultural continuity. Among the child figures I have examined, Ben Jonson calls on his deceased children to heal the rift in his sense of self that their loss has caused. Webster's heirs are ambiguous figures indicating uncertain outcomes for the territories and policies they inherit, but among the futures they offer is the chance for some peace and rather less corruption. Amoret and Belphoebe certainly embody chaste virtue, although they do not promise stability. Ruddymane's baptism may not enable the divine "hold" on the infant that Herbert describes, but the retention of his mother's blood may actually facilitate a way out of the revengeful cycle Guyon initiates. These are all problem children, perilous in their own ways, but characters and authors also turn to them to bring about health. The child figures tend to be perfectly healthy. It is the adults who need work.

Along with this sense of the figurative healthfulness of early modern children, I acknowledge another area raised but underrepresented in this project: gender as it relates to childhood. Throughout I tend to treat child figures as a group, if a mixed and motley one, and it is a group, within my sampling of texts, with more boys than girls. As a result, attitudes that do apply particularly to boys may threaten to appear as attitudes toward all children. Period understandings of gender surface regularly in this project but are not drawn together into a common argument. I maintain that the reproductive problems raised and demonstrated by the male child figures I examine are also raised by and applied to female child figures. Similarly, tropes of animals, plants, and inanimate objects are applied to all. Girls are no more easily contained categorically than boys. In broad terms, my dissertation can serve as another rebuttal, or at least the beginnings of one, to the idea the early modern girls did not have a childhood, or at least attained that designation at a later historical point than boys.[243] Beyond this, my arguments necessarily raise questions relating to gender that point to potential areas for further scholarship. For example, how does genre figure in portrayals of female and male children? If drama has a tendency to be dominated by boys by virtue of the available actors, do the versions of reproduction they invoke differ markedly from the girls of, for instance, lyric poetry? Certainly, the actual upbringings of historical boy and girls could vary widely. Texts particularly addressing the education of girls stress chastity, modesty, and quietness with greatest intensity, a specificity absent in discussions of male children or of children in general. Differences in education and early training and in the scope and nature of the futures these children were being prepared for may alter models of cultural reproduction, and the ways they may do so undoubtedly invite further investigation.

[243] Ariès famously claims that “boys were the first specialized children” (58).

That emphasis on chastity as the central virtue for girls also gestures toward one way in which versions of cultural reproduction may be complicated by acknowledging the specificity of female child figures. This stress on chastity applies to those female child figures who are younger than the 13-year-old Juliet, those who are not yet capable of biological reproduction. If very young girls are already recognized as reproductive figures in the sense of the children they may produce as well as through their position as figures repeating their parents' values, then the temporal trajectories they invoke may be even more complex than the already noted variants of past, present, and future. They may embody not only adult memories and expectations for their own lives, but also for those of their potential future children. Additional generations and a wider scope of time are implicit in such constructions. While young boys may also invoke generations to come, the emphasis on female purity makes these various biological and cultural futures even more potent. Belphoebe and Amoret's different chastities in conjunction with the intense fertility of their birth produces a proliferation of readings and misreadings, an outcome that gestures toward an array of reproductive possibilities for other female child figures.

A final concern that this dissertation touches on but does not explore further is that of hierarchical status differences. The texts I address are filled with princes, dukes, and heirs to various forms of money and position. Even the foundlings of *The Faerie Queene* are in little danger of a life of drudgery, although suffering is not alien to them. Fostering, wet-nursing, and child exchange in the forms I discuss are certainly higher status practices. Ben Jonson's children and Salomon Pavy hardly provide a sampling of the less well-to-do sort. There are no apprentices, no children of laborers or yeomen. There is no sense of difference between rural and urban child characters. While early modern models of cultural reproduction may simply be produced to maintain extant estate divisions, even limited historical mobility in terms of both

status and geography puts pressure on their functionality. I recognize that the availability of sources both literary and archival, or rather lack thereof, necessarily limits the work possible on early modern children of lesser means, and that in some ways those limitations mark my project. Further, the process of training or forming children was not exclusively about turning them into whole adults or copies of their parents, but could also aim to make them improved versions of their elders. For example, grammar school boys could be turned into ideal public servants, potentially capable of upward mobility. Indeed, humanist educators like Ascham and Mulcaster emphasized education's improving potential, in the process alluding to the potential for learned nobility to, shockingly, overtake inborn nobility, if those noble by blood failed to attain education and exercise their native gifts.[244] While a sense of this sort of change and improvement appears in my discussion of the potential improvements offered by grafting, the questions raised by location and station are left here for future inquiry. Paradoxical complex of conceptions that it was, early modern childhood seems to offer nearly infinite opportunities for additional exploration. But for now I leave the subject with Herbert. For all of my blisters, "childhood is health."

[244] Ascham, 40, 59. Mulcaster, 173.

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