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ARTICULATING AGENCY: WOMEN IN SHAKESPEARE’S HISTORY PLAYS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Emily Sloan-Pace

September 2012

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# Articulating Agency: Women in Shakespeare's History Plays

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Abstract

Articulating Agency: Women in Shakespeare’s History Plays

Emily Sloan-Pace

Shakespeare’s history plays contain some of the most beloved (Falstaff) and the most reviled (Richard III) of all characters in the corpus. While a number of male characters achieve “life” in these works, women appear sparingly. Though women regularly assume starring roles in the comedies and tragedies, the history plays remain largely the purview of men and a warlike masculinity that allots little place for either the feminine or the domestic. My work finds a space for those women who do inhabit the plays, arguing that, while they may at times be vilified, they exercise a tremendous amount of agency and engage in a gendered and historical performance validated by the drama. Starting primarily from the work of Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, I seek to expand the potential readings of women in the history plays, looking at the ways they challenge and participate in traditional historical narratives. In the representations, and successes, of women such as Joan Puzel, Margaret of Anjou, and Mistress Nell Quickly, Shakespeare’s histories rewrite the almost exclusively masculine domain of the source texts, inserting an alternative and feminine voice into the construction of the historical account.
to my mom

Thank you.
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I am grateful for the compassion and support of so many family members over the years. Thanks to Rose and Tim, Judy and Rich, my cousin Sloan, and, of course, my Grandma Maxine, who continues to help me in ways I could have never imagined. Thanks to my constant companion Domino for his affection and headbutts. Finally, thanks to my parents, Steve and Mary Ellen, for their tireless support and patience. Without your love and help I would never have made it through.
Chapter 1
Genre and the Gendered Corpus

Genre has its source in the Latin genus which refers in some cases to “kind” or “sort” or “class” or “species.” But in others, “species” is considered a subclass of “genus.” Its root terms are genre, gignere—to beget and (in the passive) to be born. In this latter sense it refers both to a class and an individual. It is derived from the same root terms as gender. The connection of “genre” to “gender” suggests that an early use of the term was based on division or classification. Two genders are necessary in order to define one, and sexual genders implied not merely classification but a hierarchy or dominance of one gender over the other.”

Etymologically linked, gender and genre function similarly, both predicated on establishing relationships and organizing objects into hierarchies, be they textual or human. I use this linguistic note to begin this chapter because the divisions of genre and gender speak to the primary issues raised in this dissertation, the place of women in the hyper-masculine genre of Shakespeare’s English history plays. Gender and genre construct broad categories of identification, while simultaneously limiting those categories through acts of exclusion. Elizabethan histories perform similar acts of inclusion and exclusion framed around gender: men were “in” as acceptable topics and women were “out.” In England, this was an era when history was being made by a woman without men, as the virgin Queen Elizabeth led the nation into becoming an economic, cultural and military superpower. In a sense, the chronicle histories and the plays they generate depict an attempt to assert masculine relevance to the project of shaping English national identity; laying out the glories of kings past was intended to inspire nationalist fervor, while reminding the audience of the masculine origins of English fortitude and glory. Although Shakespeare’s history plays often present

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aggressive forms of masculinity that hold femininity in disdain, this dissertation argues that the women who do appear are able to demand room for their voices and gendered performances. These histories thus challenge categories of genre and gender, and their refusal to replicate traditional textual or gender standards results in more nuanced conceptions of both.

The history plays narrate a sprawling tale spanning nearly a century. Set against the backdrops of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) and the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485), Shakespeare’s works detail the public and private costs of war and monarchy, while often celebrating the martial, masculine valor that lay behind both.\(^2\) The first tetralogy (1, 2 and 3 Henry VI and Richard III), written in the early 1590s, depicts the English losses of French territory in the years following (the Lancastrian) Henry V’s death (1422). His son Henry VI (rules from 1422-1461) fails to assert authority as King, ceding his duties either to regents or to his wife Margaret. This lack of monarchical agency creates the conditions for the Wars of the Roses, in which the Lancasters attempt to hold onto the throne while their Yorkist cousins attempt to take it. Henry proves inept at playing the king (and the father), handing over his crown to Edward IV (rules 1461-1483), a member of the York family. The kingship eventually makes its way to the villainous King Richard III (rules 1483-1485). In the final play of this quartet, Henry, the Earl of Richmond, kills Richard in

\(^2\) Except where otherwise specified, I take my quotations from the plays from the Arden Shakespeare series. I chose the Arden editions as my primary source because of their extremely thorough line notes, appendices, and their general readability. I also make frequent use of editorial notes from the Oxford and the New Cambridge editions, particularly in my discussion of Mistress Quickly. Notes from the Norton and Pelican editions have also been included at various points in the dissertation.
battle and the house of Tudor takes control of the monarchy (Henry VII, rules 1485-1509). The second tetralogy (Richard II, 1 and 2 Henry IV, Henry V) portrays the events that lead up to the action of the first tetralogy, starting with the deposition of Richard II (1399) by Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV, rules 1399-1413). The Lancaster claim faces struggles from rebels within the kingdom (led by Henry Percy, or Hotspur), within the court (from the impetuous and dissolute behavior of Prince Hal), and from the French seeking to reclaim lands on the continent. While the play features a vast cast of characters (including numerous scenes of the middle class, which have no basis in the source texts), the story’s through-line is the debauchery and subsequent reformation of Prince Hal as he becomes King Henry V. Along the way, Hal must leave the ribald world of the tavern for life at court, including rejecting Sir John Falstaff, the vibrant director of revels and pseudo-father to Hal. Once King, Henry transforms into a warmonger and expert politician, celebrated for his martial virility and rhetorical ferocity. The play ends with promises of peace between England and France via Henry’s marriage to Katharine of Aragon, a peace that has disintegrated by the time of Henry VI.

Shakespeare’s history plays include some of the most loved (Falstaff) and most villainous (Richard III) characters in the corpus. Alongside the celebrated (and popular) dramas of Henry IV and Henry V are some of the least theatrically popular

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(or, as Dennis Kennedy phrases it, “not routinely congenial”) works of the Henry VI cycle. Though the two tetralogies fall under the designation of “Histories” in the 1623 Folio, the plays differ significantly in style, structure, poetic sophistication and political vantage point. The links among the history plays are limited, but they do share several salient characteristics: their focus on the recent English monarchical past, use of similar source texts, and an antipathy (if not antagonism) toward women and for the feminine. The variegated nature of the texts known as “Shakespeare’s Histories” points to the mutability of genre, and is the first issue that I examine in this chapter. Genre is conditional and arbitrary, a relativity illustrated in the naming and renaming of the two tetralogies, with titles in Quarto radically changed in order to create a narrative coherence and historical arc across a group of dissimilar texts in Folio. Early modern histories collapse traditional generic distinctions while creating new ones; moments fictionalized in the play come to attain the status of fact. The genre of history (appearing as pamphlets, ballads and chronicles) written in the Elizabethan era arises from disparate sources and political perspectives, a multi-vocality represented in Shakespeare’s tetralogies through the use of spacious

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5 Shakespeare emphasizes the exceedingly subjective nature of memory and historiography through Queen Margaret’s character in Richard III, a moment discussed in Chapter 3. For an analysis of the role of amnesia and erasure in the construction of history, particularly in 2 Henry IV, see Allison Thorne’s “There is a history in all men’s lives: reinventing history in 2 Henry IV” in Dermot Cavanagh, Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Stephen Longstaffe, Shakespeare's Histories and Counter-Histories (Manchester, UK; New York, New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2006), 62-3.
chronological, linguistic and geographical landscapes. Because Shakespeare’s plays participate in this genre of history, they are granted a unique status as representing “true” accounts of past events, rather than fictionalized moments and characters inserted for dramatic effect. Shakespeare’s contemporaries cite these plays and their presentations of English masculine fortitude and courage as potential correctives to the moral and character failures plaguing society.

In the second part of this chapter I turn my attention to the discourses surrounding women in the early modern period known as the Querelle des femmes. Though gender exists on a spectrum, not all gender performances were valid or socially viable, and early modern texts proliferate articulating the threats posed by aberrant feminine appearance, speech and sexuality. Finally, connecting generic expectations (for historical writing) and genre expectations (regarding women), I introduce the discussion that serves as the primary focus of the dissertation--the ways women in Shakespeare’s history plays unmake and remake historical narratives, offering alternative ways of framing the past while inserting the female voice into a genre that generally neglects their presence. The three women that draw my attention in the chapters that follow complicate expectations of both gender performance and the construction of historical narrative. This trio of Joan Puzel, Margaret of Anjou and Mistress Quickly embodies the numerous threats women are thought to pose to men. However, even as the plays utilize the tropes of the menacing feminine they undermine them, allowing these women to participate in a genre (history) and an act (historiography) from which they are conventionally excluded. Joan’s cross-dressing
evokes the fears about the effects of apparel on the individual as discussed at length in *Querelle* texts like *Hic Mulier* (1620) and *Haec Vir* (1622), while her invocation of demons mimics the warnings about the risks of female speech (among other things) outlined in works like the period’s most famous attack on witchcraft, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487). However, Joan’s villainy is in part mitigated by her brutal treatment at the hands of her English captors, and her final speech is validated through her successful acts of prophecy. Margaret’s unruliness, at least in the eyes of her Yorkist opponents, extends to her enactment of gender and monarchical roles. She rejects male authority from her first appearance to her last, coming to her marriage without a dowry and at English cost, attempting to serve as regent (and king) when Henry fails, and leading an army in waging wars, confounding every man who would silence or banish her. In the depiction of Margaret the discourses about the dangers of the unrestrained woman to the micro- and macro-worlds of family and state as outlined in the *Malleus* find purchase. However, this one-time threat to the throne becomes its fiercest defender, refusing to allow acts of usurpation to go unrecorded, even coming to be aligned (if subtly) with Queen Elizabeth, a woman who also denies and defies convention. In Mistress Quickly, the narratives about female sexual and verbal misconduct are writ large, the merchant woman repeatedly subjected to attacks on her chastity and fidelity by Sir John Falstaff. The struggles faced by Quickly, from recovering debt to maintaining her reputation, represent the challenges that middle-class businesswomen might regularly encounter, particularly widows (women whose
existence outside the sphere of male control made them suspect). However, within these struggles is also a critique of the male, aristocratic Falstaff who attempts to undercut Quickly’s (albeit limited) authority. Though disparate in social and economic status, these women all endure *ad feminam* attacks on their fidelity, femininity and chastity from the men whose authority they challenge.

**Part I: Genre and History**

Genre is a construct that looks forward and backwards, a Janus-like category with limits concurrently omnipresent and non-existent. Genres categorize documents through acts of historical assessment, using existing constituents in order to organize texts present and future. Relational and dynamic, genres expand and contract, effacing differences as they highlights them. As the epigraph that opens this chapter indicates, genres engage with classifications in unique and aggregate forms; they are both individual and collective. Predicated on the creation of hierarchies, genres

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6 In Samuel Rowland’s 1619/1627 gossip pamphlet *Tis Merry when Gossips meet* it is the character of the “Widdow” who leads the “Wife and “Mayde” astray, convincing the former to abandon the “shop [that] must needs be tended” and the latter her “home” in favor of gossip and drinking. Susan Gushee O'Malley, *Custome Is an Idiot: Jacobean Pamphlet Literature on Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 29. See also the discussion of the distrusted and precarious state in which many widows lived in Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, New approaches to European history, 3rd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89-93.
change slightly as each new text enters the corpus, with every document facilitating (if not requiring) an act of redefinition:  

A genre does not exist independently; it arises to compete or to contrast with other genres. Genres do not exist by themselves; they are named and placed within hierarchies or systems of genres, and each is defined by reference to the system and its members. A genre, therefore, is to be understood in relation to other genres, so that its aims and purposes at a particular time are defined by its interrelation with and differentiation from others.

The addition of a new work alters the genre itself, “adding, contradicting, or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it.” Genres and the works that compose them are liminal and dynamic, created via aggregation and consequently unfixed. Though open and mutable, genre is also highly exclusionary. As Derrida notes, “as soon as the word ‘genre’ is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn.” To be part of a genre is to exclude others from it through the creation of boundaries and hierarchies. Genre is fundamentally paradoxical: though “a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging.”

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8 Cohen: 207.
9 Cohen: 204.
10 Cohen: 204.
11 Derrida and Ronell: 56.
[Shakespeare’s] histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws. –Samuel Johnson\(^\text{13}\)

The Folio of 1623 illustrates the conditional nature of Shakespearean genre. Published eight years after the author’s death, the Folio classifies 10 of the 36 plays under the category of “History,” including only plays that deal with English monarchs of the past 200 years.\(^\text{14}\) The editors of Folio, John Hemmings and Henry Condell, grouped the plays according to formal considerations, such as subject matter, and arranged them in chronological order.\(^\text{15}\) While the classification of these plays as history only appeared after the author’s death, the shared characters (and characteristics) across the *dramatis personae* already encouraged a reading of them sequentially. The final lines of *2 Henry IV* point to this reality, as an epilogue delivered by a character named “a dancer” tells us that “our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France” (Epilogue, 24-26). Neither composed nor (it seems) intended to be read as a vast sequential narrative (Michael Hattaway cautions modern scholars against seeing these plays as a “cycle” since “the order of the plays’ composition does not match the sequences of the reigns they portray, and grouping them into ‘tetralogies’ elides their

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\(^{14}\) Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare--the histories* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 5-6. The 10 plays Hemmings and Condell include are the two tetralogies, *King John* and *Henry VIII*.

structural differences”), a case for narrative cohesion can be made.\(^\text{16}\) Though not written “in order,” the overlap present in these plays, be it the retelling of events from 2 and 3 Henry VI in the opening scenes of Richard III or the repeated appearance of minor characters of the tavern world in the Henriad (figures largely insignificant to the plot), gives these works a measure of unity, one that Hemmings and Condell stress in their revision of titles in the Folio.\(^\text{17}\)

The plays, like the larger genre in which they reside, lack a stable and fixed identity, with names themselves subject to alteration. Long descriptive titles in quarto texts give way to succinct designations intended to encourage sequentiality in Folio, titles that emphasize the narrative arc of Henry VI rather than that of the Yorks or other characters. What the Folio identifies as The second Part of Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Good Duke Humfrey reads like a summary of the whole plot in Quarto: The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous houses of York and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey: And the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the Tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of Winchester.

\(^{16}\) The first tetralogy, known as such because it was written first, depicts a time period later than the second. The plays within the Henry VI series are written and performed non-chronologically, with parts 2 and 3 coming in 1591, part 1 in 1592 and Richard III in 1592 or 1593. The second tetralogy is composed in a more linear fashion, with Richard II in 1595, 1 Henry IV in 1596/7, 2 Henry IV in 1597/8 and Henry V in 1599. The quote comes from Michael Hattaway and Cambridge University Press, The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

\(^{17}\) These moments of internal reference to events in previous plays happen repeatedly, but I point to one for example. In 3 Henry VI, Margaret is shown taunting and murdering the Duke of York, events which (the future King) Richard recalls in 1.4 Richard III. These events are included in 3 Henry VI to increase Margaret’s villainy, but they lack any basis in historical documents.
with the notable rebellion of Jacke Cade: And the Duke of Yorkes first claime unto the Crowne. The title of the Quarto text depicts the subject matter of the play at length, leaving Henry VI out entirely. In Folio, the title points to a story about the troubled young King Henry and his Protector Humphrey, a work that begins in medias res; the verbose Quarto title highlights the beginnings of what will be known as the Wars of the Roses, gesturing toward the Yorkist assumption of the throne, the ouster of the vilified Suffolk, the uprising led by Jack Cade and the role of Winchester as tragic hero. Significantly, no mention of King Henry is made in the Quarto title, a literary omission that reflects Henry’s mental and physical absences, while the revision of the titles in Folio place the focus on King Henry and his narrative arc, rather than Jack Cade or the Yorks.

The genre of early modern history is motley, melding established categories for organizing literary forms. According to Aristotle, poets narrate “events such as might occur and have the capability of occurring in accordance with the laws of probability and necessity” while historians relate “events that have actually happened.”\(^\text{18}\) The poet (the writer of epic, drama and music) imitates and represents life, but is also free to take artistic liberty in his depictions of what might have happened, while the historian relates things as they occurred, ostensibly making his work less subjective than the art of “poesy.” By Aristotle’s definition, the historian should not psychologize while the poet may, a distinction Elizabethan history plays

reject. Shakespeare’s work during the genre’s heyday of the 1590s elides these groupings, rendering the categories as unstable as the genre itself, requiring both adherence to the laws of probability and necessity and an imagination of what might possibly have occurred. The Elizabethan historical dramas stood not only as a record of the past, but as a type of philosophical history, a poetic chronicle of a country in the process of becoming a nation. They also served as propaganda, pointing to the masculine endeavors of the past that made possible the glories England achieves under Queen Elizabeth.

Though drawing on numerous theatrical and literary traditions, much of Shakespeare’s history comes from readily identifiable source texts. Raphael Holinshed’s The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland was first published in 1577 and revised for a second edition in 1587, the latter of which appeared in Shakespeare’s personal library and is the basis for the two tetralogies as well as King John, Henry VIII, Cymbeline, King Lear and Macbeth. Holinshed’s work owes much to Edward Hall’s 1542 chronicle, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke, which is in turn indebted to other authors such as Sir Thomas More, Jean Froissart, and Tacitus.\(^{19}\) While Holinshed’s work covers a wider geographical and historical territory than Hall’s, both authors (and by extension Shakespeare) take their basis for 15\(^{th}\)-century English history from the Italian Polydore Vergil, a scholar commissioned by Henry VII (founder of the Tudor line) to

create a historical record to validate and affirm Henry’s claims to the throne.\footnote{Stephen Cohen, \textit{Shakespeare and Historical Formalism} (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 203. See also Dominique Goy-Blanquet, \textit{Shakespeare's Early History Plays: From Chronicle to Stage} (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62.}

Vergil’s insertion of a providential (and by extension propagandistic) tone to his work marks a significant shift in the genre of chronicle history. The \textit{Anglica Historia} moves away from merely chronicling events and instead offers a teleological thesis to create a narrative of the past with a distinct moral and philosophical perspective.\footnote{Patricia-Ann Lee, "Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship," \textit{Renaissance Quarterly} 39.2 (1986): 204.} Vergil drew his historical data from a number of sources written during and around the Wars of the Roses, including ballads, chronicle texts, personal and public correspondence, and pamphlets printed by pro-Yorkist and pro-Lancastrian sources, several of which are reproduced in full in the works of Hall and Holinshed.\footnote{For examples of the variety of sources from which Vergil and Holinshed drew, including William Caxton’s \textit{Brut Chronicles}, Thomas More and Tacitus see Keith Dockray, \textit{Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book}, Sutton history paperbacks (Stroud: Sutton, 2000).} The generic mutability of the plays, their incorporation of elements from comedy to romance to tragedy, in part results from the great variety of sources from which Vergil, Hall and Holinshed drew. Since multiple voices make up these texts, there is no monolithic perspective, allowing contradictory positions (on history, on monarchy, on gender) to coexist while also providing the feminine voice a means of entry into a largely masculine genre.
Discourses of the Dead

Early modern histories operate with a didactic aim, intended, as 15th-century historian William Caxton writes, to shape and improve its readers:

For certainly [history]…is a great blessedness to a man who can be reformed by other and strange men’s hurts and injuries, and by the same [injuries] to know what is necessary and beneficial for life…Therefore the counsels of ancient and white-haired men in whom old age has engendered wisdom are greatly praised by young men. And yet histories so much more excel [those counsels], since the long duration and length of time includes more examples of things, and praiseworthy acts, than the age of one man will suffice to see.

These kinds of historical texts serve a number of functions: they amass the wisdom of the “counsels of ancient and white-haired men,” they record heroic and laudable acts and, most importantly, they “reform” the reader though knowledge of others’ hurts and injuries. Though they engage in a moralizing that is often anathema to modern history, Caxton’s work demonstrates the modern sense of history as a coherent narrative with a methodical record detailing events in the life of a particular region or individual. It is in his work that the word “history” first appears in the English language, describing a type of history that addresses movements and chains of events as a narrative whole, stopping when the narrative dictates rather than adhering strictly to temporal divisions of years or seasons. Within a century of Caxton’s passing use of the word “history” (“the brave deeds which our ancestors accomplished…I have

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undertaken to draw the history for you”), the type of narrative it inspires came to be employed by writers from Thomas More to Christopher Marlowe.\textsuperscript{26} The chronicle play appeared as a new genre in the second half of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, appearing across Europe in a variety of forms, from secularized morality plays to retellings of classical narratives.\textsuperscript{27} The public craved histories, and Shakespeare’s multi-sequential works fueled that appetite. Of the twenty plays Shakespeare wrote pre-1600, nine were histories. It was his signature genre in the 1590s, and he did more to develop it than any other writer.\textsuperscript{28}

The goal of historical production in the Elizabethan era was more about celebrating England and its ascension as a world power than an “accurate” re-creation and recitation of past events. The production of history in the early modern period stems from a larger national project aimed at turning England into a unified entity with a shared linguistic, cultural and historical past.\textsuperscript{29} To borrow a term from Stephen Greenblatt, this was a period of “self-fashioning” for both the individual and nation.\textsuperscript{30} The chronicle plays (both by Shakespeare and others) encouraged the nationalistic fervor of glorifying England by creating etiological myths to unify and justify the

\textsuperscript{26} More’s contribution to the chronicle play is The History of King Richard III, while Marlowe wrote Edward II and The Massacre at Paris.
\textsuperscript{27} Ton Hoenselaars. “Introduction: Shakespeare’s History Plays in Britain and Abroad,” in Hoenselaars, 32.
\textsuperscript{28} Howard in Cohen, Shakespeare and Historical Formalism, 52-3.
bourgeoning nation.\textsuperscript{31} Readings by Irving Ribner or E.M.W. Tillyard see these plays asserting a specific worldview with a providential schema that ends with Elizabeth’s (Protestant) England and the defeat of the Spanish (Catholic) Armada.\textsuperscript{32} Many history plays from the 1590s dramatize moments that lay the foundation for the rise of England as a superpower in the post-Armada period. The emerging nation was articulated and encouraged in the theatrical works of an equally nascent genre, and both the nation and the genre established authority by invoking the past. Critics like Coppelia Kahn, Phyllis Rackin and Jean Howard see in this propagandistic nationalism a form of warlike, aggressive masculinity (if not misogyny), with the nationalism of the plays predicated on the expulsion of the feminine other.\textsuperscript{33} As discussed later in the chapter, there is a gender to this kind of nationalism and to the genre (and sub-genres) that it produces: that gender is male.

Shakespeare’s histories operate in a space between fact and fiction, portraying events and people from the past but in ways that serve dramatic and propagandistic needs. As a result of its claims to represent “fact,” the genre of history (and these plays) enjoys an elevated status over “fictional” genres such as romance, comedy or tragedy. Caxton’s quote highlights the notion of history as fact, as something that facilitates the “recovery of the past” and a reincarnation of its human subjects.\textsuperscript{34} However, early modern histories are also morally didactic, the grand acts of its

\textsuperscript{31} Ribner: 598.
\textsuperscript{33} Coppélia Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 49.
\textsuperscript{34} Holderness, 42-3.
protagonists and the victories won with English blood were believed to promote
moral rectitude and repair the “degenerate effeminate days” plaguing early modern
England.\textsuperscript{35} The histories (including Shakespeare’s history plays) were thought to
represent truth or reality despite the fact that they shared the same authorial biases as
any other text.\textsuperscript{36} Though history texts (and Shakespeare’s plays) may be driven by a
number of goals, the one most pertinent to this discussion is their work as nationalist
propaganda.\textsuperscript{37}

Historical narratives serve the project of nationalism by awakening a
collective consciousness and conferring a shared historical past, a unified identity in
the present, and a belief in a predetermined and glorious future. Benedict Anderson
theorizes the nation as an imagined community, something that lives in the minds of
those who participate in it, who claim nationality, and seek to be a part of a “deep,
horizontal comradeship,” a band of brothers, as Henry V might say.\textsuperscript{38} The
construction of national identity takes place a number of ways, a shared literature
being one of them. Epic poetry (like The Fairie Queene in England or the Orlando
Furioso in Italy) proved a popular tool for encouraging nationalist sentiment, and

\textsuperscript{35} Howard and Rackin, 52. The quote is taken from Thomas Nashe, found in Smith,
18.
\textsuperscript{36} Holderness, 46. See also Certeau, 69. Hayden White discusses the ways that
historical narratives are generated from authorial choices that privilege certain events
while understating the relevance of others. Hayden White, “The Historical Text as
Literary Artifact” in Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, Critical Theory Since 1965
(Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), 403.
\textsuperscript{37} For more on the biases inherent in history and historiography see Certeau,
especially 57-90.
\textsuperscript{38} Benedict R. O’G Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and
Shakespeare’s history plays participate in the national epic tradition found in the works of Spenser, Ariosto and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Jean Howard charts the plays’ role in the formation of a collective national consciousness:

In all the English histories, England is embodied and personified in its monarch, but gradually it also becomes recognizable, in a more modern, nationalist manner, as a bounded territory, a distinct geographic entity supposedly encompassing a shared language, customs, and history. In short, if Shakespeare’s English histories begin in nostalgia for medieval kingship, they end in celebration for a nation that exceeds the equation of country with king.  

Dennis Kennedy projects their relevance to present-day ideas of England:

These plays constitute a national epic in dramatic form, and without doubt they have been significant in the project of nation building and nation maintaining. From the time of Elizabeth I to the time of Elizabeth II, from Burbage to Branagh, Shakespeare’s nine dramas on the political development of England in the fifteenth century, through some nine kings, and occasionally with the addition of King John, have been drawn upon to define or redefine or query national identity.

Shakespeare’s plays both celebrate and question national identity, interrogating the heroic, unified history under construction in the late 16th century. If these plays were intended to evoke a glorious English past, why include the reign of Henry VI, when England underwent thirty years of civil war and lost all of its territories in France? Shakespeare’s celebration of England seems to critique it as well, highlighting the fractures in the midst of the narrative of a coherent nation.

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42 “While Shakespeare created many touchstones for national sentiment, he also showed that, even as the state was developing, the unified nation which might validate that state was a myth. Shakespeare chronicles an age of feuding warlords
Though exultations of English fortitude, blood and territory are a mainstay of the plays, they are interspersed among (and sometimes delivered within) the speeches of reviled Frenchwomen, drunken aristocrats, villainous hunchbacks and failed monarchs. As much as they are paeans to England, these are also narratives about rebellions, usurpers, and those who claim the throne by force.

The Elizabethan history play occupies an ambivalent temporal locale.\(^{43}\) Shakespeare’s histories share in this same space of temporal and generic uncertainty; the timeline of chronological history, the timeline required for dramatic momentum, and events from the author’s own lifetime coexist in these works. Neither discrete nor linear, the plays look ahead and behind, undermining the sense of unity they try to create. Anachronism, whether it is in references to benevolences in Richard II or syphilis in the Henriad (set in a time long before the major outbreak of 1495), muddies the distinction between “past” and “present.”\(^{44}\) It is this dimension of historiography that enables a linking of audience identity with that of national predecessors.\(^{45}\) As England faced a sea of troubles from the Spanish, the Pope, and various rebels within national borders, the history plays offered a way of reframing these woes in relation to the epic arc of English history and heroic success.

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and, in what may seem to be his most patriotic play, Henry V, reminds his audience that the motley hoards of English, Irish, Welsh, and Scots that make up the king’s army scarcely constitutes ‘one nation’. There is so much questioning of glory in Shakespeare that we might even claim that the histories are a rejoinder to Elizabethan projects for a revival of heroic poetry.” Hattaway and Cambridge University Press, 8-10.

\(^{43}\) Certeau, 85.


\(^{45}\) Certeau, 87-89.
Debates over the deleterious or meritorious effects of the theater on both spectators and performers also appeared frequently during Shakespeare’s era.\textsuperscript{46} Critiques of the theater condemn the entertainment for several reasons: it distracts people from work and faith, it facilitates idleness and co-mingling of the sexes, and it is performed in a place of depravity frequented by pickpockets and prostitutes. The theater is a corrupting space, promoting misdirected (potentially homoerotic) desire among viewers and actors.\textsuperscript{47} Defenders of the theater, however, regularly cite history plays. Thomas Heywood’s 1612 \textit{An Apology for Actors} argues for the benefits history plays provide their audiences:

Plays have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English chronicles; and what man have you now that weak capacity cannot discourse of any notable thing recorded even from William the Conqueror, nay, from the landing of Brute, until this day? Being possessed of their true use […] to teach their subjects obedience to their king, to show the people the untimely ends of such as have moved tumults, commotions and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as live in obedience, exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all traitorous and felonious stratagems.\textsuperscript{48}

These plays make the ignorant informed and the unlearned scholars, all while teaching obedience. The depiction of heroic acts by past English monarchs inspires awe and deference to the current monarch, while the portrayal of the disastrous

effects of treasonous machinations dissuades potentially rebellious spectators from engaging in such activities. Because of the history plays, even those of “weake capacity” can participate (indirectly) in the historical narrative from William the Conqueror “until this day,” giving people a stake in a narrative to which they are largely irrelevant and unmentioned and providing access to a past that would otherwise remain shrouded.

English poet Thomas Nashe provides another defense of the theater, framing it specifically around the salubrious power of Shakespeare’s works:

First, for the subject of them (for the most part) it is borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers’ valiant acts (that have lain long buried in rusty brass, and worm-eaten books) are revived, and they themselves raised from the Grave of oblivion, and brought to plead their aged Honours in open presence: than which, what can be a sharper reproof to these degenerate effeminate days of ours.

How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his Tomb, he should triumph again on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least, (at several times) who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.\textsuperscript{49}

Without these plays, the narratives and characters that populate them would remain clasped inside “rusty brass and worm-eaten books.” With characters plucked from the “grave of oblivion” to “plead their aged honours,” the dramas serve as a corrective to

\textsuperscript{49} Thomas Nashe, Works II.212, quoted in Smith, 18. While the “degenerate effeminate days of ours” likely refers to the failure of proper masculine gender performance, it might also be a subtle commentary on the impossibility of the heroic masculine in a world governed by the “effeminate,” i.e. Queen Elizabeth. It is also worth noting that Nashe’s champion of English masculinity, Lord Talbot, is killed by Joan Puzel, a woman: this type of masculinity is not merely perverted (or subverted) in the face of an aberrant female gender performance, it is completely destroyed. Carol Banks notes that this may also represent “an attempt to re-examine old-fashioned military heroism in a society in which attitudes to masculinity were evidently changing” in Cavanagh, et al., 173.
the degenerate effeminacy (by both men and women) plaguing the contemporary world. History plays create a reciprocal relationship between subject and spectator, providing a vivifying power for the historical characters and the audience. Brave Talbot again triumphs on stage, his valor rewarded with the “tears of ten thousand spectators” newly embalming his bones. The allusion to embalming and burial transforms the theater into a space of ritual rather than mere entertainment, a means of translating the “devotion” once paid to the church to the nation. Incorporating a variety of sources, Shakespeare’s histories provide access to the larger genre for those otherwise excluded from it. While these works participate in the celebratory and propagandistic functions of the genre, they also make room for critiques of the very act of historiography. Significantly, these challenges to the standard historical narrative are voiced by those most barred from it: women.

**Part II: Gender and History**

Gender is as artificial and constructed as genre. Joan Scott discusses the ways gender is an analytical, grammatical construction, but is framed as “natural” in order to facilitate a hierarchy of the sexes. Gender, and the male/female binary, are key categories around which society is organized, and more importantly, they are

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50 Anderson identifies the importance of a pseudo-religious devotion to the construction of the imagined community.  
52 Scott: 1066.
crucial to the ways relationships of power are established and signified.\textsuperscript{53} Gender is not simply created on the kinship level (through the household and family), but is actively narrativized and reinforced across major social institutions. The state asserts itself via discourses on gender; by using appeals to manhood in times of war or deriving national pride from female beauty and maternity, the state enforces specific gender performances to serve national (read: power’s) needs.\textsuperscript{54} Though it casts its hierarchies as natural, gender is “contextually defined [and] repeatedly constructed,” subject to the shifting needs of institutional power and changing to ensure that the hierarchy (and the repressive social order it permits) is maintained.\textsuperscript{55} Radically \textit{unnatural}, gender’s power comes from its ability to convince its subjects that it is innate, and therefore fixed and incontestable.

The remainder of this chapter turns to some of the philosophical texts that “defined and constructed” early modern gender hierarchies, and the intense anxieties about gender performance that they reveal. Through readings of conduct manuals, interrogation guides, and screeds about male and female gender performance, some stereotypes of early modern “woman” emerge. Many men (and women) in Shakespeare’s history plays assume these discourses about the nature of the female, debates that I introduce here in order to anticipate their appearance in the discussions that follow on Joan Puzel, Margaret of Anjou, and Mistress Quickly. The chapter then concludes with an examination of the gendered qualities of Shakespeare’s chronicle

\textsuperscript{53} Scott: 1067.

\textsuperscript{54} Scott: 1072.

\textsuperscript{55} Scott: 1075.
plays, as discussed in the critical work of Rackin, Howard and Valerie Traub, among others.\(^{56}\)

**Performing Gender: Querelle-ing femininity**

Written works about early modern women by theologians, scholars and poets abound in the 16\(^{th}\) century in a body of texts that have come to be known as the *Querelle des femmes*.\(^{57}\) While some authors undertook to defend women and their abilities (such as Christine de Pisan, Baldassare Castiglione, and Cornelius Agrippa, to name a few), a great number of them cast women as frail beings failing to control their sexuality, their speech and their dignity. Secretive, deceptive creatures, women consume the resources of men. This is not to say that women are without virtue; some women (those capable of restraint) can possess the ideal feminine qualities of piety, modesty, obedience and most importantly, chastity.\(^{58}\) However, though women can exceed their inherent shortcomings, most are characterized by “pride, lasciviousness, obstinacy, desire for mastery, jealousy, talkativeness, vanity, greed, extravagance, infidelity, physical and moral inferiority, and caprice.”\(^{59}\)

\(^{56}\) Howard and Rackin, 9. See also Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*, Gender, Culture, Difference (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).


\(^{58}\) Wiesner, 28. *An Apology For Women; or, Women’s Defence* (1620) outlines a number of these virtues, and defends woman against those who would say otherwise. Reprinted in O'Malley, 120-40.

\(^{59}\) Wiesner, 24.
As the proliferation of conduct books in the 16th century attests, there was an intense concern about the ordering and containment of bodies: polite society was constructed through acts of policing the body. While male conduct was a regular topic of such books, the female body was a particular site of anxiety, one that could both signify and threaten the state. There is an assumption in these conduct books, particularly in the extremely popular works of Erasmus (as noted by Peter Stallybrass), that the female body is inherently grotesque, an object always engaged in acts of transgression. The grotesque, female corpus subverts the male, classical body, interrogating and undermining the latter’s supremacy in the binary. The grotesque body is never closed off, is always engaged in a process of exchange and mobility.

Peter Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed” in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers, Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe, Women in culture and society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 125. For more on the rise of texts dictating (or at least discussing) proper action for women, and examples of these texts, see Suzanne W. Hull, Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996). See also O’Malley. And Wiesner, 20-26, 41-47.

Ferguson, et al., 129. See also Traub, 26, 44.
Ferguson, et al., 126.
Theodora A. Jankowski, Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 38. Peter Stallybrass also discusses the power of the female grotesque, a figure who “can interrogate class and gender hierarchies, [ultimately] subverting the enclosed body” in the process. See Ferguson, et al., 142.
Joan and Quickly are particularly subject to critiques of the grotesqueness of their bodies, a result of their mobility and public accessibility (the latter often read as a sign of sexual availability). At different times, both women are rendered unintelligible according to traditional understandings of sex and the body, with Joan confusing onlookers as a “maid, and yet so marital” and Quickly subject to dehumanization through comparisons to the otter, an animal who as “neither fish nor flesh” is generically indecipherable. For more on the mobile and transgressive nature
one moment and seeming rampant promiscuity the next, the ease with which the
grotesque body moves in and out of categories creates a profound discomfort for
those who try to control and restrain it.\textsuperscript{65} This grotesque body is represented and more
importantly \textit{not} rejected in the work of Shakespeare, where the assumption of the
essential grotesque-ness of the feminine is fundamentally called into question.\textsuperscript{66}

Because of the role of paternity in dictating early modern social and economic
systems (like primogeniture), the utmost feminine virtue is chastity. Women are
thought naturally prone to lusty behavior, and their inability to remain sexually
faithful threatens the entire social structure:

\textit{Countless evils arise from the incontinence of women which do not do so
from the incontinence of men; and therefore, as was said yesterday, it is
wisely made the rule that women are allowed to fail in everything else, and
not be blamed, so long as they can devote all their resources to preserving that
one virtue of chastity, failing which there would be doubts about one’s
children and the bond which binds the whole world on account of blood, and
of each man’s natural love for his own offspring, would be dissolved.}\textsuperscript{67}

Female infidelity results in the end of natural love between men and their children,
aparently the only thing that gives the world generational coherence. This anxiety
(the key concern is succession) also lies behind the genre of history at the time, as this
type of historiography was a process where men reinserted themselves into the

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of the grotesque, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, \textit{The Politics and Poetics of
Transgression} (London: Methuen, 1986), 22. The fear of the unstable female body is
also discussed by Stallybrass in Ferguson, et al., 128-9.
\textsuperscript{65} Ferguson, et al., 134. For more on the “revealingly paranoid” attitude toward the
female body and the assumptions of woman’s rampant sexuality, see Traub, 3, 27.
\textsuperscript{66} I recall Peter Stallybrass’ reading of Othello’s Emilia here, a figure in whom he
finds both the rejection of the enclosed female body and a validation of the grotesque.
See Stallybrass in Ferguson, et al., 142.
\textsuperscript{67} Baldassare Castiglione, \textit{The Book of the Courtier}, trans. George Anthony Bull,
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Elizabethan historical narrative which was dominated by one who refused to adhere to normative female gender performance: the unmarried, virgin queen, who would not be swayed by either husband or sons. Women’s cuckoldry of their husbands was a social and economic crime, as a man might unknowingly be investing money and effort in the scion of another. Though she was feared for her lust, entire legal and political systems were invested in the ability of a “hungry wombed” woman to temper her desires. This gave women an immense power, but a power whose assertion was almost always disastrous.

Chastity refers to more than sexual activity (or lack thereof): it is a mindset. Chaste speech and appropriate deference go hand in hand with sexual propriety (virginity before marriage, fidelity after it). As Traub articulates, “‘chastity’ requires being still, cold and closed; to be ‘unchaste’ is to be mobile, hot, open. What is striking is the minimal room within which to maneuver; even a minimal of erotic ‘warmth’ is quickly transmogrified into intemperate heat.”68 To be chaste is to remain in a type of stasis; by contrast, the women this dissertation examines are relentlessly dynamic. Margaret and Joan both move freely though court and battlefield, while Quickly (as indicated in her name) is constantly in motion, engaging with the public in the tavern, going into the streets of London when she seeks justice, and (as a member of a rising middle class) exhibiting a measure of social mobility. Women

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68 Traub, 28.
who move cannot be contained, operating with an agency and physical freedom that goes against the controlled and stationary vision of early modern chastity.  

Chaste women remain quiet, unseen (staying inside the home) and unheard. A closed mouth is a sign of sexual chastity, an explicit analogy between the lips and the vagina where the openness of one points to the accessibility of the other. Consequently, women who move and speak outside the home might be subject to accusations of harlotry, their public presence linked to a sexual availability. As Edward Hall notes in one of his many critiques of Joan of Arc, the maid’s frequent and free conversation with the male troops was a key sign of her social and feminine aberrance: because Joan spoke freely she must also have slept freely. The freedom of speech enjoyed by the women this dissertation discusses makes them subject to (though also able to defend against) accusations of sexual corruption. All three

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69 Traub, 32. Chastity in this era could be a matter of life and death for women. Othello, The Winter’s Tale and Much Ado About Nothing illustrate the potentially deadly consequences of female adulterous lust, reflecting a legal reality of the time. As Wiesner notes, “in the 1566 Genevan law, an adulterous married man and his lover were to be punished by twelve days in prison, but an adulterous married woman [was] to be executed; in the 1650 Adultery Act in England, adultery was made a capital offense for a married woman and her partner, but was only punished by three months’ imprisonment for a married man.” The extreme severity of the punishment for women points to the grievous nature of the offence: male affairs produce bastards; female affairs produce socio-economic (primogeniture) chaos. Wiesner, 297.

70 Jankowski, 31.

71 Ferguson, et al., 126. See also Jankowski, 38.

72 Ferguson, et al., 127.

73 Joan was “conversant with every losell, giving occasion to all men to judge, and speak evil of her, and her doings.” Edward Hall, Hall’s chronicle; containing the History of England, during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 159. I refer to her as Joan of Arc to distinguish the historical figure from that of Shakespeare’s creation Joan Puzel.
characters refuse both silence and containment: Joan continues to curse and foretell English doom as she is led to her fate, Margaret exits the play on her own terms despite the repeated attempts by male figures to banish her, and though Quickly may appear rarely she speaks more than any other woman in the second tetralogy, continually asserting her agency and honesty. They not only reject the equation of silence with chastity, their repeated ability to speak in the dramas despite male attempts to silence them points to a validation of their gendered performance. A subtle but powerful source of agency for the women in Shakespeare’s history plays is the narrativizing (or re-narrativizing) of history. These are not simply acts of speech but alternative interpretations of the past (and in Joan’s case her own genealogy) that counter the dominant (male) historical voices in the play. These women contribute to the historical narrative rather than being subject to it, from Margaret’s acts of recollection and recapitulation of the past to Joan’s creation of a queer genealogy to Quickly’s use of Arthurian legend (a mythological narrative otherwise restricted to men).

From her body to her moral character, the early modern woman was always judged in relation to man, particularly in the ways she failed (physically, morally, mentally) relative to male successes. The stages of a woman’s life were demarcated by her relationships with men, with her position as daughter, wife or widow the primary marker of her identity, always conceived of in relation to the “marriage

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74 Notably, Quickly is frequently interrupted (and interpreted) as speaking in language of sexual impropriety, demonstrating the slippery slope of association between female speech and sexual activity.
paradigm.” A middle-class man derived his identity from his membership in a guild (employment): a woman often derived hers entirely from a man. Ruled first by her father and then by her husband, a woman was under a man’s governance, and the decision to enter or abstain from the marriage economy was rarely left to her. As one 16th-century legal scholar wrote, “a woman, properly speaking, is not a human being.” She has no juridical subjectivity, “subsumed [under] the legal identity of her husband.” Women under this ideology primarily functioned as childbearing chattel, an (extreme) perspective Martin Luther also articulated: “women are created for no other purpose than to serve men. If women grow weary or even die while bearing children, that doesn’t harm anything. Let them bear children to death; they are created for that.” Indistinguishable containers, women were useful only so long as they continued to propagate the male line. On par with an animal used strictly for breeding purposes, a woman could be replaced with any other woman, as long as her replacement proved fecund.

Luther’s sentiment worked only in theory: in reality, women of all social ranks played an active part in spaces both inside and outside the home. Women who acted as heads of household performed a number of tasks essential to the maintenance of homes: as Mistress Quickly details in Merry Wives, “I keep his house; and I wash,

75 Jankowski, 24. The necessity of marriage is succinctly articulated by in Tis Merry when Gossips meet: “Maids must be married, least they mar’d should be.” O’Malley, 32.
76 Wiesner, 103.
77 Jankowski, 34.
78 Jacques Cujas, quoted in Wiesner, 13.
79 Wiesner, 37.
80 Martin Luther, quoted in Wiesner, 13.
wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds and do all myself” (I.4. 84-5). She washes and wrings the clothes and bedding, bakes food and cleans dishes, prepares meat and drink (including brewing of ale or beer), and “keeps [the] house” running. If there were children in the household, the woman was also responsible for childcare and educating daughters in the skills needed to be a wife. As the Henriad reveals, women in the marketplace (either as merchants or as customers) exercised great agency and were responsible for large parts of family businesses, negotiating with legal and financial authorities, and taking over the enterprise upon the death of the spouse. Women of the upper classes might serve as ruler in the absence of her husbands, something standard for the women in the family of the historical Margaret of Anjou, whose mother and paternal grandmother both acted as regent when necessity dictated. Women, as the tetralogies demonstrate, were rarely the static,

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81 Jankowski, 31. See also Hull, 149. The importance of the mother’s role in educating her children appears in Christopher Newstead’s 1620 text An Apology For Women; or, Women’s Defence, reprinted in O’Malley, 138.
82 Jankowski, 40.
83 Margaret spent much of her childhood with her paternal grandmother, Yolande of Aragon, a woman who was the regent for her minority son, keeping Aragon out of English hands and securing the marriage of her daughter Marie to the Dauphin. Margaret’s mother proved equally accomplished; when her husband René was held captive, Isabelle of Lorraine claimed his political rights and continued to fight his war. These women proved more than capable administrators in periods of spousal absence: “Raising taxes and armies, administering duchies, making policy, carrying on intrigues, they behaved very much like ruling princes.” See Helen E. Maurer, Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 23.
silent and obedient figures that writers like Luther might hope, with figures from
every social class demonstrating a relentless physicality and personality.  

Categorizing “early modern woman” (or attempting to do so) reveals a
number of male apprehensions and a series of contradictory expectations. The female
body carried immense signifying power, able to represent the proper order of the
patriarchal family and the very integrity of the nation state.  

However, she was also a
type of property, a kind of chattel to be traded in order to secure contracts and
alliances. Consequently, she was an object both quotidian and iconic, irrelevant and
essential. Women were slippery, a treasure that always escaped no matter how tightly
locked up, prone to temptations both sexual and spiritual that men were better able to
resist. While the dominant religions of the 16th century (Protestant and Catholic)

84 Carol Banks, “Warlike women: ‘reproofe to these degenerate effeminate dayes’?” in Cavanagh, et al., 173. Though Luther describes a marriage in which the woman is little more than a passive object, texts such as Rowlands’s gossip pamphlets reveal that this was rarely the case. See the reprint in O’Malley, 16.
85 Ferguson, et al., 129. See also Traub, 44. The female body serves as a map upon which the English nation state is written, as detailed by Stallybrass in Ferguson, et al., 129. This notion is also articulated by Henry V outside the gates of Harfleur, where he promises to mow “like grass/ your fresh fair virgins” while the “pure maidens [will] fall into the hand/ of hot and forcing violation” (3.3.14ff) William Shakespeare and T. W. Craik, King Henry V, The Arden Shakespeare Third series (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995), 217. The domination (and forceful violation) of the female body becomes a key part in the expansion of the English kingdom.
86 Jankowski, 24. See also Ferguson, et al., 127.
87 Ferguson, et al., 128. The female body is thought labile in a way the male’s is not, her figure subject to the changes of pregnancy and her reproductive organs capable of emerging from her body (a non-surgical sex change) given the right humoural and physical conditions. The myth of the spontaneous sex change appears in a variety of texts from the era, including in the work of Michel de Montaigne and Ambroise Paré. See the account of Marie-Germain in Michel de Montaigne and Donald Murdoch Frame, The Complete Essays of Montaigne (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1976), 69. It is also discussed in Ambroise Paré, On Monsters and Marvels, trans.
might differ in their attitudes toward women, both agreed in the spiritual equality of the sexes. Salvation was available to both sexes (albeit through different paths), but this equity did not extend to the political or social spheres, where female subordination to the husband or father was the expectation.

In one sense, being a man in the early modern era was about not being a woman, and vice versa. Proper, and (more importantly) distinct gender performance was key, and deviation from appropriate performance might be punished by a variety of methods. Dramatic, poetic and visual depictions of the scold, the aberrant alewife or the gossip proliferate, with indecorous female behavior revealing a failure of both the woman and her husband. Though this selection from 1637 postdates the history plays of the 1590s, it encapsulates many early modern attitudes about appropriate male/female gender performance and the social impacts for those who fail to adhere to those standards:

Yet, I will ever bear my father’s mind
I scorn as much to stoop to women kind
For if I should, then all men would me hate

Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 31-32. The one-sex model (discussed further below), and the male fear of the reverse teleology, is also discussed in Traub, 51.

For more on the “inherited [religious] traditions” of the era, as well as the changing attitudes toward women as a result of the Protestant Revolution and subsequent Catholic Reformation see Wiesner, 15-20, 26-29 and Chapter 6.

Wiesner, 26.

There is a repeated emphasis on the concept of “seeming” in the female gender performance. Thomas Tuke’s 1616 Discourse Against Painting and Tincturing of Women asserts that “it is not good enough to be good, but she that is good must also seem good; she that is chaste must seem chaste; she that is humble must seem humble.” Quoted in Hull, 182. Castiglione also emphasizes the importance of “seeming,” discussing the ways “a woman should in no way resemble a man as regards her ways, manners, words, gestures and bearing.” See Castiglione, 211.
Because from manhood I degenerate
And surely I should have the love of no man
If I were such a slave unto a woman
Which to prevent, or to avoid ill speeches
I’ll look that thou shall never wear the breeches.\(^91\)

This poem attacks women who refuse to take the yoke and harangues the men who lack sufficient control over their wives. A man who submits to womankind “stoops,” going against the dictates of society and posture. According to the verse, a successful masculine performance predicates itself on the control of women.\(^92\) Men with scolds for brides prove failures as husbands and as men, making manhood defined (at least in part) by dominance over women. Men who defer to their wives (becoming a “slave unto a woman” and letting her “wear the breeches”) are themselves degenerate, to be as rejected as the aberrant woman.\(^93\)

Since gender is largely a question of performance (or “seeming”), there is room for slippage between the performative gender poles, with women coming to act like men and vice versa. The anxieties such movement prompts are evident in pamphlets like *Hic Mulier* (The Mannish-Woman) and *Haec-Vir* (The Womanish-Man). The former is a screed against cross-dressing women and the activities that accompany their masculine attire, arguing that female dress ensures chastity, modesty

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\(^91\) Humphrey Crouch, quoted in Hull, 41.
\(^92\) For more on the relationship between male identity and the aggressive suppression of women see Kahn, 47-49.
\(^93\) Margaret levels a version of this critique against King Henry VI. Following his refusal to fight, Margaret is forced to take up arms; his failure to perform his kingly and husbandly duty causes her to have to do so.
and devotion (for both men and women). All of the worst fears regarding women’s transvestism come to bear in the figure of Joan Puzel, her clothing and gender performance giving way to free verbal (and perhaps physical) encounters with the opposite sex and a refusal of modesty and silent obedience. Women who cross-dress were thought to possess a “monstrousness of [...] deformity,” described in the 1620 tract *Hic Mulier* as having exchanged

the modest attire of the comely Hood, Cowl, Coif, handsome Dress or Kerchief, [for] the cloudy Ruffianly broad-brimmed Hat and wanton Feather; the modest upper parts of a concealing straight gown, [for] the loose, lascivious civil embracement of a French doublet, being all unbuttoned to entice, all of one shape to hide deformity, and extreme short waisted to give a most easy way to every luxurious action; the glory of a fair large hair, to the shame of most ruffianly short locks; the side, thick gathered, and close guarding Safeguards to the short, weak, thin, loose, and every hand-entertaining short bases; for Needles, Swords; for Prayerbooks, bawdy legs; for modest gestures, giantlike behaviors; and for women's modesty, all Mimic and apish incivility.

If clothes make the man, men’s clothes on women make for an aberration; women become “ruffianly” and “wanton,” given to “luxurious” (or lustful) actions that “close guarding” petticoats might have prevented. In Joan Puzel’s case, one would also imagine that such an undergarment would prohibit engaging in military action as well. Along with this clothing comes a change in personality, as sewing, faith and decency give way to swordplay, impropriety and garrulity. The diction highlights the author’s disgust and the assumption that illicit clothing leads to illicit behavior. A

94 Similar critiques of the Mannish-woman and the Womanish-man appear in discussions of Margaret and Joan’s “too-masculine” performances.
95 As Kahn notes, Joan is “a composite portrait of the ways women are dangerous to men.” Kahn, 55.
96 *Hic Mulier: Or The Man-Woman* in O'Malley, 265-66.
woman’s “bawdy legs” indicate a “loose, lascivious” character, enticing men to the “shame” of her “easy way.” Like her morality, her clothing is “weak, thin and loose.”

_Haec Vir_ responds to _Hic Mulier_ in the form of a dialogue between the Womanish-Man named Haec Vir and Mannish-Woman named Hic Mulier. This text from 1622 lays blame for female cross-dressing at the feet of men, emphasizing that women have reluctantly taken up “those manly things which [men] have forsaken, which would [they] again accept, and restore to us the Blushes we laid by, when first we put on your Masculine garments; doubt not but chaste thoughts and bashfulness will again dwell in us.”

The picture of the ideal woman emerges: she is modest in her clothing (dresses to appropriately “conceal” her body rather than “hide deformity”) and decorum (she “blushes” from her “bashfulness”), chaste, restrained, and she spends her time at embroidery and prayer. However, this metamorphosis is not solely her fault: the failed gender performances of men have caused women to take up the suits of masculinity. When male authority again asserts itself, woman’s blushing chastity and modesty will reappear. The Mannish-woman then offers her own critique of contemporary male fashions and masculinity:

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97 _Hic Mulier: Or The Man-Woman_ in O'Malley, 297-8.
98 Castiglione also mentions the role of female blushing (as a “sign of embarrassment or for some other reason”) as a marker of both female beauty and decorum. See Castiglione, 86-7. Of course, Castiglione also encourages women to learn this behavior, a comment that emphasizes blushing as a performance rather than a representation of modesty.
99 Both Joan and Margaret offer laments about male failures to “act like men,” particularly when it comes to waging war, for example in _1 Henry VI_ 5.3.1 and _3 Henry VI_ 1.2.215ff. This sense of male culpability in the failures of women (specifically in the area of chastity) also appears in _An Apology for Women: or, Women’s Defense_ in O'Malley, 127.
Why do you curl, frizzle, and powder your hairs, bestowing more hours and
time in dividing lock from lock, and hair from hair, in giving every thread his
posture, and every curl his true sense and circumference, than ever Caesar did
in marshalling his Army, either at Pharsalia, in Spain, or Britain? […] Were it
not for that little fantastical sharppointed dagger that hangs at your chins, and
the cross hilt which guards your upper lip, hardly would there be any
difference between the fair Mistress and the foolish Servant. […] You have
demolished the noble schools of Horsemanship (of which many were in this
City) hung up your Armes to rust, glued up those swords in their scabbards
that would shake all Christendom with the brandish, and entertained into your
minds such softness, dullness, and effeminate niceness.\(^{100}\)

The Mannish-woman mocks her counterpart’s gender performance: instead of
horsemanship and military victory, men now spend hours fretting over their hair,
ensuring that each “curl” and “frizzle” maintains the proper “posture,” concerns more
appropriate for women. Though monstrous in her “mimic\(\text{ry}\) and apish incivility,”
the Hic Mulier is still a woman; only the weakly phallic goatee and mustache
(“sharppointed dagger” and “cross hilt”) of the Haec Vir distinguish him from the
mistress of the house or her maid, so much has his gender performance and clothing
changed his being. These female clothes and pursuits deaden the male mind, turning
the once imposing defenders of Christendom into creatures of “effeminate niceness.”

Women, it becomes clear, are “softness” and “dullness,” a condition in which the
Haec Vir now “languish[es].” Christianity also suffers when gender norms go awry:
faith falls by the wayside as performances turn non-normative, and when men fail to
defend Christianity through either military campaigns or proper conduct women cease
their prayers. Men are the truly faithful, and when women lack proper direction their

\(^{100}\) Haec-Vir; or, The Womanish Man in O'Malley, 295-6.
souls succumb. Such is perhaps the case of the cross-dressing mannish-woman Joan Puzel, her non-normative performance giving way to spiritual degeneration.

Many texts in the *Querelle des femmes* discuss the threats women pose to the physical and spiritual integrity of men. While Shakespeare does not explicitly draw from it, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (a late 15th-century handbook on witch identification and interrogation) articulates criticisms of female mental, moral and physical failings that are mainstays in male discourses about women in the history plays. The *Malleus Maleficarum* went through dozens of printings, finding great popularity across Europe. Though the text was intended as a handbook for the court interrogator, it offers a general description of the qualities of women. “More credulous” than men, “more impressionable,” naturally undisciplined, and prone “to follow their own impulses without any sense of what is due,” women act with naïve spontaneity, totally lacking in logic and restraint.¹⁰¹ These dangerous beings “have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by Witchcraft.”¹⁰² Female speech easily leads other women

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¹⁰² Institoris and Sprenger, 106. Joan Puzel’s treachery is regularly tied to the demonic supernatural. Intriguingly, since it is a private conversation that Joan has with the Virgin Mary that transforms her from maid to divine militant, this moment could be read (by her English foes, at least) as a representation of the ways gossiping leads to the path of witchcraft. Other texts, such as Samuel Rowlands’s gossip pamphlets reveal a more generalized anxiety about the private conversations of
astray, gossip transforming into treachery. The absence of restraint and the penchant for gossip make for a dangerous combination, and the female tongue tempts men with its dishonesty and allure: “She is a liar by nature, so in her speech she stings while she delights us. Wherefore her voice is like the song of the Sirens, who with their sweet melody entice the passers-by and kill them. For they kill them by emptying their purses, consuming their strength, and causing them to forsake GOD.” Female speech (or song in the case of the Sirens) is the greatest danger of all, able to turn men against their best interests and their very salvation. This critique also invokes the tropes of endless consumption and sexual voracity; women lie in wait to lure their male prey, taking his money and sapping his strength through sex. A lusty creature, “more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations,” a woman uses male bodies to satisfy her wanton needs. The female ability to achieve

women, depicting females gathering to plot how best to deceive men, while also discussing their own promiscuity with various types of lovers. See O'Malley, 19.

103 Institoris and Sprenger, 111.

104 Joan Puzel’s speech is thought to be particularly pernicious, luring men to her will and their doom.

105 Complaints about female profligacy and greed appear regularly in discourses about women, such as in the 1609 A whole crew of kind Gossips, all met to be merry, where one “honest husband” complains that all his wife says is “give me some Money, Money is her song, / She loves to be a spending all day long.” Reprinted in O'Malley, 85.

106 Institoris and Sprenger, 107. Exceptionally promiscuous females appear in the two gossip pamphlets by Samuel Reynolds, the character of the Second Gossip in A whole crew of kind Gossips describing how before her marriage “some five and forty Suitors I did score:/ and I would use the fooles alike (all kinde)/ for which, continuall favours I did finde: […] For like a crafty queane (I must confess)/ I gave kinde words, and smiles, and kisses too, / and things that shall be namelesse I did doo.” The Fourth Gossip details her acts of adultery: when her “Husbands out a night at Dice” she has “kinde Gentlemen, some two or three” come to “comfort [her] with jests and odd device.” Later in the text, when the husbands of the gossips respond to the
multiple orgasms further contributes to the notion of women as insatiable beings, a notion compounded by the fact that the visible consequences (pregnancy) of illicit copulation (either adulterous or non-marital) are apparent in women in a way they are not for men.107

The woman, however, was not entirely at fault for her malignancy: according to the one sex model of anatomy women were failed men lacking the temperament and judgment needed to control desires and impulses.108

Besides the dangers women present to the individual man, the Malleus also details the ways bad women topple empires. In some way, “nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women,” from Helen to Jezebel to Athaliah to __________ complaints their wives have levied, one man asserts that he intends “to let [his wife] have full scope/ and then a whore will prove a whore I hope.” Reprinted in O'Malley, 72, 77-78, 90. Women and men alike in this text verbalize fears about female sexual activity seen in the Malleus (and elsewhere): a woman’s sexual urges are uncontainable, and many women are willing to translate those urges into opportunities for monetary gain, as is the case with the Second and Fourth Gossip. 107 Wiesner, 57, 60.

108 The 2nd-century C.E. Roman physician Galen envisioned the female reproductive system as the inverse of the male, with the vagina, uterus and ovaries a concealed penis, scrotum and testes. This theory persisted to the 16th century, as indicated in Henry VIII’s chief surgeon’s description of the uterus as like a “yard [penis] reversed or turned inward, having testicles likewise.” Thomas Walter Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud, 1st Harvard pbk. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 25-26, 63. French royal surgeon Ambroise Paré (famous for his own acts of classifying bodies in On Monsters and Marvels), notes that “women have [the penis and testes] hidden within the body as men have exposed outside.” Paré, 32-33. In an equation where the visible presence or absence of the phallus determines the individual’s sex, women become failed men, objects born of insufficiency. The discourse that surrounds the female physical body mimics dialogues about the female moral body: women are “reversed” “concealed” and “hidden” while men are “exposed outside,” creating a concealed/revealed dichotomy that squares with narratives of female deceit and trickery. In the same way that the woman’s organs remain secret (save for dissection), so too do women conceal their treachery behind makeup, (false) modesty and other deceits.
Cleopatra. The classic female scapegoats (except Eve) appear to demonstrate the prodigious ability of women to destroy kingdoms and threaten the existence of men. Helen’s adultery and lust are at fault for the fall of Troy and the bloodbath that accompanies it. Jezebel was a prideful figure who convinces men to abandon Judaism and turn to paganism, and her daughter attempts to destroy the male line she bore. Since becoming a mother of sons was a key metric to measure a wife’s success, by killing her male children Athaliah fails as mother. Even more damning, she attempts to blot out the existence of her line to satisfy her own quest for power. Finally, Cleopatra appears, the “worst of women” whose lasciviousness brought terror upon the Romans and (ultimately) led to the destruction of the republic. Cleopatra’s relentless sexual energy consumes men and empires, her speech, beauty and Eastern eroticism able to convince generals to abandon their national loyalties in favor of her exotic seductions. Bad women all, the female power of destruction extends into every realm: war, kingship, religion, family, politics and empire, the same threats that Shakespeare’s Margaret comes to pose.

Though women were able to wreak havoc on both families and empires, they were frequently constructed in terms of lack: lack of male wits, of genitalia, and of

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109 “Nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women. Troy, which was a prosperous kingdom, was, for the rape of one woman, Helen, destroyed, and many thousands of Greeks slain. The kingdom of Jews suffered much misfortune and destruction through the accursed Jezebel, and her daughter Athaliah, queen of Judah, who caused her son’s sons to be killed that on their death she might reign herself; yet each of them was slain. The kingdom of the Romans endured much evil through Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, that worst of women. And so with others. Therefore it is no wonder if the world now suffers through the malice of women.” From Institoris and Sprenger, 111.
110 Having sons was imperative, as the wives of Henry VIII knew all too well.
authority. Because of her inadequacies, a good woman defers to her husband, as outlined in conduct books dedicated to discussions of matrimony. Since wife was a position most early modern women held several times over, conduct books on marriage made a point of emphasizing a woman’s primary job: submission. Edmund Tilney (the Master of the Revels for Queen Elizabeth and King James) offers advice on proper behavior in marriage. His 1568 work, *The Flower of Friendship* (dedicated to the unmarried Queen Elizabeth), details reasons why women should submit to their husbands. This precept is dictated by:

both divine and human laws, [that] giveth the man absolute authority, over the woman in all places. [Man is] most apt for the sovereign being in government, not only skill, and experience to be required, but also capacity to comprehend, wisdom to understand, strength to execute, patience to suffer, means to sustain, and above all a great courage to accomplish, all which are commonly in a man, but in a woman very rare.¹¹¹

In explaining the ways in which men are “apt,” Tilney highlights the deficiencies in women. Most women lack the skill, experience, comprehension, wisdom and fortitude to rule over a husband, let alone a nation. Woman must not merely submit to these interpretations of her abilities, she must internalize and actively recognize her failures. Even Elizabeth, the most powerful women in the nation, was subject to this discourse, at times actively participating in it; her speech at Tilbury (discussed in Chapter 3) shows the Queen framing herself as a fierce-hearted and masculine-stomached being trapped in the vessel of a weak and feeble woman. Her inner male constitution facilitates a unique ability to control herself and the nation, but she must

nevertheless defer (or at least pay lip service) to narratives of female frailty. The author of the 1619 marriage text *A bride-bush* sees the “wife’s special duty” as two-pronged:

First, she must acknowledge her inferiority. Secondly, she must carry herself as an inferior. First then, every good woman must suffer herself equal to be convinced in judgment that she is not her husband’s equal (yea, that her husband is her better by far) without which it is not possible there should be any contentment, either in her heart or in her house. [...] Whosoever therefore doth desire or purpose to be a good wife, or to live comfortably, let her set down this conclusion within her soul: mine husband is my superior, my better; he hath authority and rule over me. Nature hath given it him.112

The wife must acknowledge and construct herself as inferior, an identity based on an inequality that the author reads as the key to “contentment either in her heart or her house.” Despite the biblical injunction in Ephesians to submit to husbands as to the Lord, few marriages operated in the manner outlined by Tilney and Whately, and most men undoubtedly viewed their wives as more than the chattel Luther discusses. Middle-class women wielded significant power over the domestic economy, making purchases and trades, overseeing servants, and managing household finances. Despite the rampant appearance of successful and honest women participating as buyers and sellers in the marketplace, texts like those by Tilney and Whately demonstrate a misogynist attitude about female insufficiency that appears repeatedly in the *Querelle des femmes*. Nevertheless, despite the suspicion and anxiety that circulated around the body and speech of the early modern woman, she was invested with a series of vital ideological, social and economic signifiers. The health of the state and family came to be inscribed on the body of the female, her chastity and silence representing

112 William Whately, quoted in Hull, 38.
an ordered world and enabling the easy transmission of property and power from generation to generation. Though often vilified, degraded and feared, women (especially when a Queen like Elizabeth was on the throne) held the keys to the nation’s future. Perhaps on some level it was a recognition of this truth that provoked such a vitriolic response.

**History Against Women?**

Feminist readings of Shakespeare’s histories, as seen in the work of critics Rackin, Howard, Theodora Jankowski and Kathryn Schwartz, suggest new ways of interpreting these plays, looking at the role of women in a largely masculine genre and the causes and implications of such a gendering. These critics argue that the absence of sustained female figures other than caricatures or linguistic outsiders (such as the Welsh in *1 Henry IV*, or Katherine of Aragon in *Henry V*) results from a systematic process of female exclusion that begins in the source texts. As Rackin notes:

> In a very important sense, chronicle history was not simply written without women: it was also written *against* them. Patriarchal history is designed to construct a verbal substitute for the visible physical connection between a mother and her children, to authenticate the relationships between fathers and sons and to suppress and supplant the role of the mother.\(^{113}\)

In this reading, history texts represent a male attempt to assert parental identity, an identity inherently granted to women through the act of childbirth. The written text of history, one that traces a genealogy from generation to generation, serves as a

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correlative (and corrective) to the feminine history based on physical connections. History texts allow men to make their presence known, to “give birth” to children on paper, a medium that outlives individual memory.

According to this critique, Shakespeare’s histories actively minimize and discredit the women who do appear, a byproduct of the plays’ “emphatically masculine” genre. While these works do not blindly celebrate English masculinity, they replicate (and at times outdo) their source texts by ignoring significant women while also demonizing and exorcising those who do appear, leaving moments when the feminine could be included (marriages, births) unmentioned. If history is about the creation of a genealogical link between father and son, the presence of a woman (and potential mother) undermines that project, the “verbal substitute” of male chronicle history paling in comparison to the “visible physical connection” of childbirth. In Shakespeare, Henry IV has no queen, and Henry V’s Katharine appears only briefly. Significantly, neither Henry V nor Henry VI has a mother in these works: without wives and mothers, the only physical connection these men have is to other men, the only shared history is thus the one they create in the absence of women. Margaret, as one of the few queen and mother figures in the tetralogies (save those women from the short-lived reign of the Yorks), exercises great dramatic power, but her son dies before he assumes the throne. It is clear that kings cannot

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114 Kahn, 47. See also Traub, 53.
have fathers—the assumption of power is often predicated on paternal death. To make history in Shakespeare, it seems, one cannot have a mother either.¹¹⁶

Women are a rarity in Shakespeare’s history plays, reflective of the source texts and the genre as a whole. Although regularly critiqued and often cast out, the women who do appear in the tetralogies serve as more than the whipping posts they may at first seem to be. Rather, they challenge masculine narratives about the female sex, English history and monarchical legitimacy. Women also provide narrative continuity in these plays; although a number of Richards, Edwards, Johns and Henries appear (and die) in these works, there is only ever one Queen Margaret, Joan Puzel, and Mistress Quickly. These women (particularly the first and last) persist across plays: through war, through deposition, through misogyny.

While the women who become significant to the world of Shakespeare’s histories may seem to fare worse than their excluded counterparts, the fact that they are given voices that will not be silenced is important, and is the discussion that will occupy the remainder of this dissertation. Why are these reviled and ridiculed women allowed to remain in a genre that disdains them, exerting exceptional rhetorical and (in some cases) political agency along the way? Building on Rackin and Howard’s reading of the vilified women of Shakespeare’s histories, I seek to find places where female resistance proves effective and is potentially validated. Margaret becomes a champion of English history and the project of male succession, asserting her son’s patrilineal right following her husband’s refusal to defend it: she makes rather than

¹¹⁶ Traub argues that the exclusion of women isn’t just a part of the historical process, it “is the historical process.” Traub, 53.
unmakes history, recalling the past and prophesying the future. The maligned and neglected Mistress Quickly comes to represent of a number of social types (widow, businesswoman, alewife), and is an active (rather than ignorantly passive) participant in her comedic exchanges with Falstaff. More importantly, she is given a biography, one that includes a romantic life, children and a social existence. The middle-class woman is not represented in the chronicles of Hall, Holinshed or Vergil: she is, however, represented in Shakespeare. Even Joan Puzel, a young woman who challenges narratives about femininity by refusing to participate in any of them, is granted a lasting theatrical voice, if not the most powerful one in the play. By rejecting the categories attached to her gender and queering them in the process, she upends the world and captivates the audience. Though violently disposed of, she exits writing her own genealogical past and future, the ultimate act of agency in the genre of history.

The women I study in the plays all serve important roles that are counterintuitive to the gender ideologies of masculinist history. Margaret of Anjou, queen to King Henry VI and mother to Prince Edward, appears in all four parts of the first tetralogy, the only woman to do so. While she enters the play as a distrusted French outsider, she leaves a champion (and prophet) of English history. Her introduction to the audience also marks the beginning of an adulterous affair with Suffolk, the man charged with wooing her for King Henry. Margaret’s arrival from France at great English expense and without a dowry is the subject of repeated critiques from her detractors. Henry’s mounting failures as monarch, husband and
father force Margaret to take up the charge, performing the rituals of court, leading troops into battle and defending her son’s claim to the throne. Defeated and banished by the Yorkist faction, Margaret nevertheless freely remains in the Yorkist court, cursing those in power and (accurately) forecasting their doom. Margaret comes to serve as the voice of memory in Richard III, recalling a narrative of Yorkist villainy adopted by the Tudor chronicles Shakespeare consults. In the course of the plays, Margaret is described as a prostitute, an animal, an Amazon, a monstrosity and more, but despite repeated attempts to silence her this ridiculed and reviled figure continues to speak, leaving the play of her own accord and with a smile.

Mistress Quickly is the alewife and tavern owner of the Boar’s Head Tavern, the regular locale for Falstaff and Prince Hal’s “play[s] extempore.” Like Margaret, Mistress Quickly is a character in four plays, the three parts of the Henriad (1 and 2 Henry IV and Henry V) and The Merry Wives of Windsor. A wife then widow then bride, she moves through multiple stations of a woman’s life. As middle class and a businesswoman, the Mistress is an anomaly in the history genre, a figure who does not appear in any source texts. Like the middle-class women she represents, Quickly wields the greatest agency as a widow in 2 Henry IV and as unmarried (widowed or otherwise) in Merry Wives. In these plays she moves freely in public, engaging with men outside of her business while demonstrating legal and (I contend) linguistic rights. Quickly’s role is minor in 1 Henry IV, but it grows along with her relationship to Falstaff in 2 Henry IV, where she becomes a frequent target of his bawdy word-play and financial malfeasance. In Henry V, Quickly delivers Falstaff’s eulogy,
detailing his death and redemption as a child of Arthur/Abraham. The Quickly of 
Merry Wives helps restore social order by punishing the would-be adulterer Falstaff, 
meting out tortures on the Knight while disguised as a fairy queen. Like Joan and 
Margaret, Quickly endures scathing attacks on her sexual and social reputation, 
dehumanized by Falstaff and his crew yet persistent in her pursuits of justice.

Joan Puzel appears only in 1 Henry VI, leading the French to a series of 
victories against the English before she is captured and executed. While the threats 
she poses to English territories are great, even more frightening are the challenges she 
raises to the male narrative of history. The English are quick to dismiss her (as are the 
French when she loses in battle), and her end is marked by a series of failures: first in 
a military campaign, then in her invocation of the underworld, and finally in an 
attempt to save her life through the leveling of false paternity claims. Despite leaving 
in some measure of disgrace, Joan manages to penetrate an exclusively masculine 
world through a non-normative gender performance that eschews male expectations 
of femininity. Margaret gains access to power via her status as wife and mother; Joan 
does so through her martial ability and militant virginity. Joan queers: she removes 
herself from the economy of marriage, refuses to adhere to the demands of 
femininity, and erases male genealogies while attempting to establish new ones of her 
own. Joan is subject to extensive vitriol from both French and Englishmen, enduring 
a barrage of attacks on her chastity, integrity and person, that mimic standard 
discourses about female duplicity and sexual insatiability laid out in the Malleus 
Maleficarum. Though ultimately scorned by men en masse, Joan still manages to
captivate the audience with her sophisticated and persuasive speech, and her successful acts of prophecy provide her with a posthumous vindication. Joan disrupts and corrupts categories, queering them through her ability to exist as courtesan and virgin, maid and warrior, demonic and divine. In the next chapter I turn to Joan Puzel, the reviled and riveting French maiden of Henry V who subverts gender conventions while upending English heroism, exposing the artificiality of the first and the fragility (and ineffectiveness) of the second.
Chapter 2
Militant Virginity: Joan Puzel and 1 Henry VI

1 Henry VI begins with a “dead march” played on muffled drums as a lament for the death of Henry V. This “dead march” (a stage direction indicated in Folio) establishes the tone for the tetralogy that follows, a series of plays about losses both figurative and literal: the loss of English territories in France, the Lancastrian loss of the English throne, the loss of a strong male king, and the loss of life and resources in the Hundred Years War and the Wars of the Roses. Elegiac in tone, the first tetralogy mourns the successive monarchical failures of Henry VI and Richard III, but ends with a celebration of the Tudor assumption of the throne. They are also works about the failures of established powers, from Henry VI seeing his holdings in France captured and his crown usurped to Richard III being reduced to trading his kingdom for a horse. In the first sixty lines of 1 Henry VI, England suffers a series of royal, martial and geographic losses, all articulated, literally, “before dead Henry [V]’s corpse” (1.1.62). An infant king under the control of a regent succeeds the great English hero who secured the Treaty of Troyes, and into this “dangerously degenerate and unstable world” Joan Puzel brings further chaos.117

1 Henry VI, written after 2 and 3 Henry VI and right before Richard III, depicts a succession of territorial losses to the French in the years after Henry V’s death, and depicts that conflicts that lead to the English Wars of the Roses. The play compresses more than twenty years of historical time into five acts, beginning in 1422 with Henry V’s funeral and ending with Margaret of Anjou’s arrival into England as

117 Howard and Rackin, 52.
Henry VI’s bride in 1445. His death and her arrival bookend a play set largely in France that focuses on two military leaders, the English hero Talbot and the upstart French maiden Joan Puzel. The play is highly episodic, moving among successful attacks and retreats by French and English troops. Though Talbot is the play’s “hero” (representing a dying masculine military order), the figure of Joan is the one who captivates the audience. This dynamic Frenchwoman moves through court and military camp with ease; her rhetorical powers invoke demons, turn hearts and create political allegiances. Presiding over England and France are a pair of seemingly weak and ineffective leaders, King Henry VI and Charles the Dauphin (eventually Charles VII of France). By the play’s end Talbot (and son) are dead from wounds sustained in battle; Joan has been forsaken by the French, the English and the Divine; Charles has become King; and Henry has entered into a marriage contract with Margaret that will prove a Yorkist sticking point for years (and plays) to come. The English start the play in mourning, but as the rest of the tetralogy shows, worse things await them.

Joan Puzel is many things in this play: virgin and whore, shepherdess and Amazon, holy maid and sorceress. She contradicts and undermines male authorities, confusing categories while becoming the embodiment of masculine fears in the play. The problem with Joan, in 1431 (when the historical figure was executed) and in 1 Henry VI, is her refusal to adhere to appropriate gender and social norms.

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118 This is her name in Folio and is how I will refer to the character of 1 Henry VI, as opposed to the historical person Joan of Arc upon whom Puzel is based.
120 Kahn, 55.
Transcripts from Joan of Arc’s retrial (discussed below) in 1455 emphasize that her very body rejected these norms: her personal valet “testified that he had heard it said by many women, who saw the maid undressed many times and knew her secrets, that she never suffered from the secret illness of women and that no one could ever notice or learn anything of it from her clothes or in another way.”\textsuperscript{121} Joan of Arc’s dress, activity and skill were all traditionally masculine, a performance her body internalized through its rejection of menstruation.

\textit{1 Henry VI}’s Puzel is “a youthful peasant whose forces resort to craft, subterfuge, and modern weapons, [embod[ying] a demonized and feminine modernity threatening to the traditional patriarchal order.”\textsuperscript{122} She is equally a threat to the construction of English history undertaken in the play; because of her powerful and energetic stage presence, Joan steals focus and glory from the English heroes depicted on stage.\textsuperscript{123} Lord Talbot may be the play’s “hero,” but Joan is its theatrical star, and as a foreign woman who refuses to adhere to expectations she must be brutally extirpated. Though she is demonized and vilified, there are subtleties to the portrayal of Puzel that become apparent in several ambivalent elements of her character. This ambiguity leaves room for a measure of validated agency, if not audience sympathy.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} Howard and Rackin, 54.
\textsuperscript{123} Howard and Rackin, 58.
\textsuperscript{124} This reading is borne out by a number of performances during the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Some “naturaliz[e] and sanitiz[e]” Joan through transforming her invocation to demons into an address to the Virgin Mary, or by framing her as the cynical outsider able to play a number of roles: “tomboy rough diamond and female victim,
This chapter examines the ways Shakespeare’s Puzel constructs her own identity and is constructed by others. Beginning with a brief examination of the historical figure known as Joan of Arc and her depiction in Shakespeare’s sources, Holinshed and Hall, I then turn to the character as portrayed in 1 Henry VI. Joan Puzel (much like Queen Margaret and Mistress Quickly, the subjects of the chapters that follow) exists in a liminal space in this play, a vivid presence who threatens the English as much with her military skills as with her rhetorical force.125 Joan is problematic to the English for her ability to win at war, but she troubles the world of the play at large through her relentless refusal to adhere to hierarchies, to expectations, and to normativity. She is a “shape-shifter,” a character whose instability (in name, personality, and identity) makes her illegible, at times frighteningly so, to friend and foe alike.126 This indecipherability speaks to a type of

as enigmatic leader (perhaps inspired, perhaps only shrewd actor/manipulator), as iconoclastic onlooker and farseeing prophet of doom.” Grene, Shakespeare's Serial History Plays, 70-75. The editors of the Arden and Cambridge editions also examine the tendency in modern productions to make Joan “ambiguous” and more than just a villain, with some stagings rendering her a type of martyr serving as a “sacrifice to male insecurity.” See William Shakespeare and Edward Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, The Arden Shakespeare. Third series (London: Thomson Learning, 2000), 33. See also William Shakespeare and Michael Hattaway, The First Part of King Henry VI, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27. Fiona Shaw’s performance of Joan for the RSC brutally emphasizes this last point, with the first blow against her body being a stab to the genitals. Discussed in R. L. Smallwood and Royal Shakespeare Company, Players of Shakespeare 6: Essays in the Performance of Shakespeare's History Plays (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 171. See also Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Carol Chillington Rutter, The Henry VI plays, Shakespeare in performance (Manchester, UK; New York, New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave, 2006), 92-95, 122-23. 125 Howard and Rackin, 54. 126 Grene, Shakespeare's Serial History Plays, 71.
queerness, both in Joan’s character and in her actions. Joan rejects and transforms the identity categories she encounters, from the gender to the social to the genealogical. Joan queers (or is queered) in a number of ways, denaturalizing the assumptions attached to the sexes by acting as both “maid” and in “martial” fashion (II.1.21). Though at times her actions adhere to recognizable character types (holy virgin, Amazon and witch, to name a few), Joan regularly queers these identities.

I find queer theory a useful discourse for approaching Joan Puzel’s subject performance as it permits an examination of a type of sexual and gendered expression outside of the homo-/hetero- sexual binary, a binary into which Joan’s holy yet conditional virginity cannot fit. Queer is, on some level, always about acts of


128 Queer theory has provided a number of new inroads into reading texts (as well as gender and sexual performances) from the early modern period. Jonathan Goldberg’s work (influenced by Alan Bray’s study on *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*) has been particularly important in my readings of same-sex and non-normative desire in the era, particularly in *Sodomeries* (especially Chapter 5 “Desiring Hal”) and his edited volume on *Queering the Renaissance*. Madhavi Menon’s collection of essays in *Shakesqueer* makes clear the way Shakespeare’s works frequently undermine the heteronormative, be it through play with the temporal (Matt Ball on *1 Henry IV*) and the linguistic (Bruce Smith on *The Taming of the Shrew*), or the representation of licit homoerotic passion (Mario DiGangi on *1 Henry VI*). My own reading of Joan’s queerness is deeply indebted to the work of Kathryn Schwarz in *Tough Love*, Theodora Jankowski in *Pure Resistance* and *Women in Power in Early Modern Drama*, and Gabriele Bernhard Jackson in “Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare’s Joan of Arc.”

129 Queer is used “not only to define varieties of nonheterosexual activity, but also to define nonreproductive heterosexual activity and nongenital erotic activity” from Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama*, New cultural studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 6-7.
resistance: resistance to the heteronormative, resistance to definition and categorization, and resistance to social expectation.\textsuperscript{130} Parts of Puzel’s performance are centered on this type of queer resistance, particularly in her construction of genealogical history. Joan’s queerness can also be linked to her status as a “grotesque:” her body transgresses social boundaries established by expectations of female decorum and apparel with a vagueness that threatens and subverts normative narratives about female (and male) gender performance.\textsuperscript{131} In the same way that the transgressive grotesque “inverts, contradicts, abrogates or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms,” so too does Joan.\textsuperscript{132} She exploits (and explodes) the expectations assigned to the sexes, acting as extreme versions of both male and female, and by undermining these categories she calls attention to the artificiality and instability of traditional groupings and ideological touchstones, particularly those surrounding masculine heroism.\textsuperscript{133} Her simultaneous indeterminacy yet recognizability in categories not appropriate for her sex makes her immensely troubling while also fascinating to those attempting to define (and confine) her.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} Jankowski, \textit{Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama}, 7. See also Jagose, 99.
\textsuperscript{131} I take my concept of the grotesque from Peter Stallybrass’ discussion in “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed in Ferguson, et al., 126, 42.
\textsuperscript{132} Barbara Babcock, quoted in Stallybrass and White, 17
\textsuperscript{133} See also Jagose, 98. See also Schwarz, 82.
\textsuperscript{134} This sense that she enraptts even as she disturbs is perhaps most apparent in her final scene; though she has been sentenced to death, her male captors continue to let her curse and prophesy.
A Brief History of Joan

Joan of Arc, referred to as the Maid of Orleans and *la pucelle* in source texts, was born in 1412, the youngest of five children. The year of her birth marked the 74th year of the Hundred Years War, with yet another 41 years left to go. Joan claimed that at age thirteen she first “had a voice from God to help her to guide herself.” After several years of hearing the voice she acted on its instruction, leaving her home and journeying to Charles the Dauphin. She eventually managed to convince a garrison captain to provide her with an escort to Charles. Upon reaching the Dauphin she was questioned by his advisors and taken to Poitiers to be examined by a group of clerics. When the clerics deemed her worthy and a physical examination confirmed her virginity she was allowed to approach the troops.

The extent to which Joan actually participated in the battles as opposed to serving as a standard bearer or spectator is unclear; when “asked about which she preferred, either her standard or the sword, she answered that she liked her standard


136 Taylor, 141.
four times as much as her sword.”137 Nevertheless, she does seem to have been present at the battles and contributed to the tactical planning that led to a series of French successes beginning with the siege of Orleans in May of 1429 (a victory that came only days after her arrival at the front). Whatever the reality of Joan’s military leadership, she was perceived by many at the time to be the great French hope, a vassal of God and the savior of the nascent nation. Joan’s time with the French troops, however, was short-lived; as a result of a truce with Lord Burgundy (a truce that in 1 Henry VI Puzel secures), she and her campaign soon fell out of favor. Joan was captured in May of 1430 by Burgundian sympathizers and handed over to the English.138 The English then turned Joan over to clerics at Rouen, where she was tried and convicted of heresy. Though granted a reprieve after agreeing to confess and repent of her sins, when the clerics discovered she had resumed wearing men’s clothing her sentence was reinstated.139 The courts deemed Joan a:

137Charles describes Joan as (merely) “present at the accomplishments of all of these deeds in his Letter to Narbonne in the days following the success at Orleans.” Taylor, 86. For Joan’s quote on her preference, see Taylor, 157.
138 As Charles was involved in a truce with the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, it seems possible he could have paid Joan’s ransom himself; it appears he made no attempt to do so, willing to let the maid be imprisoned. Joan was just as problematic to the French as she was to the English and the Church.
139 The claim that Joan was “tricked” back into male clothing appears in testimony at her nullification trial from an usher present at the Rouen proceedings: “Joan, accused of relapse, replied that while sleeping in her bed the guards removed her female clothing which was on the bed and put there the garments of a man; and although she had asked the guards to return her female clothes so that she could get up and purge her stomach, they refused to return them, saying that she was not having anything other than the clothing of a man.” This statement goes along with the general strategy of the nullification trial, which often ignored Joan’s testimony about the cross-dressing and argued that it was a means of protecting against rape. Joan was reported to have said that she “dare not take off the hose, or to keep them otherwise than
pernicious seductress, a soothsayer, a blasphemer towards God and His saints and a despiser of God Himself in His sacraments; [you have] transgressed against divine, sacred and ecclesiastical laws; and you are seditions, cruel, apostate and schismatic, and you err on numerous points of our faith; and that by what has gone before and in this manner, you have rashly offended against God and the holy Church.\textsuperscript{140}

With the judgment levied, Joan was given to the secular authorities for execution. Condemned on May 29, she burned at the stake on May 31, 1431.

Twenty-five years after her conviction, Joan of Arc’s verdict was overturned in a nullification trial.\textsuperscript{141} This trial, initiated by her mother Isabelle, consisted entirely of testimony by neighbors, friends and family of the pucelle (the French word for maiden), as biased in her favor as the first trial had been against. Since the original trial was presided over by the church, the nullification trial also required the approval of Rome. Pope Calixtus III declared that “the inquiry had not been legitimately constituted and it could not establish that this Joan had fallen into heresy or other things contrary to the faith, because this was neither notorious nor true.”\textsuperscript{142} In the sentence of nullification, the three judges ruled that “the truth was passed over in silence, and false assertions were introduced at many essential points, so that the minds of those who were deliberating and judging could be drawn towards another opinion.”\textsuperscript{143} The articles against her were “torn up” and in the place “where Joan died in a cruel and horrible fire” a cross was erected “in her perpetual memory and to	
tightly knotted, because as the Bishop and Earl well knew, her guards had many times tried to violate her.” See Taylor, 335, 229.
\textsuperscript{140} From the Final Sentence of Joan in Taylor, 223.
\textsuperscript{141} Neither Hall nor Holinshed mention the nullification trial in their accounts.
\textsuperscript{142} Taylor, 263.
\textsuperscript{143} Taylor, 349.
implore the salvation of her and all the other faithful departed.”

Joan and her family were redeemed, a first step toward the maid’s beatification in the early 20th century.

Before moving to the discussion of the source texts Shakespeare employs, I pause for a moment to consider Joan of Arc’s transvestism and its relationship to the character of 1 Henry VI. Joan’s cross-dressing appears to be driven by a number of competing motivations, reasons she articulated in her trial(s) at Rouen and that were suggested by witnesses at her nullification trial. At different times, her transvestism was attributed to personal choice, necessity, divine calling, or the trickery of others. What is clear is that Joan chose to wear male clothing outside of military excursions, as is evident in records from various public functions as well as the documents of her trial at Rouen. During her trial her justifications for wearing male clothing become ambiguous, one moment apparently irrelevant and the next a necessary part of her divine mission. While Joan often framed her apparel as part of a divinely inspired

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144 Taylor, 349.
145 For a summary of the accounts detailing Joan’s transition from female to male dress, see Susan Crane, The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War, The Middle Ages series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 74-75.
146 For a summary of the reasons given by Joan and others see Taylor, 51-53.
147 The Chronicle of the Cordeliers (c.1432) notes that when Joan was “not in armour, she maintained the condition and dress of a knight, her shoes tied with laces to her feet, her hose and her doublet shapely and a hat on her head; she wore very handsome attire of gold and silk, nicely trimmed with fur.” Quoted in Taylor, 236.
148 See the transcript in Taylor, 154. In framing her clothing this way, she makes it both “instrumental and without significance,” according to Crane, 82. During her trial for relapse Joan insisted that she “preferred this male clothing to that of a woman,” while only moments later asserted that “if she were allowed to go to Mass […] she
protest, this was a tempered act of rebellion: she frequently said that if female clothing was the price of release, she would wear it.\textsuperscript{149} Some scholars suggest that Joan’s insistent cross-dressing could be linked to lesbianism or a “lesbian like” sexual identity.\textsuperscript{150} Marina Warner posits Joan as a type of androgyne, adopting a third, other gender that was neither male nor female.\textsuperscript{151} However, the androgyne (as Susan Crane notes) “evades sexuality,” while Joan drew on feminine and masculine qualities in her self-performance.\textsuperscript{152} Neither did Joan attempt to “pass” as a man: she dressed as she did for a number of reasons, but none seem linked to masculine self-identification.\textsuperscript{153}

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\textsuperscript{149} See examples from several of her public examinations in Taylor. 151, 198, 204, 222. Her contention that it was “more lawful” could be a commentary on the conditions of her imprisonment: a female heretic would traditionally be held in an ecclesiastical prison with female guards. By contrast, Joan was guarded by English soldiers. Crane, 84.


\textsuperscript{151} Warner, 139-58, esp. 46.

\textsuperscript{152} Crane, \textit{The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War}, 105.

\textsuperscript{153} Joan never attempts to conceal her sex, and continues to go by the name Joan, as noted by Crane, \textit{The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War}, 93. For more on female masculinity, “passing,” and ambiguous self-gendering see Judith Halberstam, \textit{Female Masculinity} (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998), 20-29. For instances of early modern cross-dressing and female masculinity see Traub, \textit{The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England}, 19-21. For more general analysis behind the reasons women might have worn male clothing in the period (ranging from protection against rape to freedom of
Similarly, Shakespeare’s Puzel never points to desires other than those within accepted heterosexual norms, intending to assume a temporary state of virginity (at least at the beginning of the play). Indeed, as Leah Marcus contends, [Puzel] “depends on the perception of a fundamental inauthenticity in her self-fashioning as a warrior. She dresses in male armor, but never presents herself as anything other than a woman.”¹⁵⁴ Her cross-dressing is somewhat irrelevant in the play: it is her actions rather than her dress that mark her as monstrous (to the English at least), a contrast with the historical figure whose clothing became “an apt metonymy for all the issues of her trial.”¹⁵⁵

Sources

Shakespeare’s source texts about Joan are compiled from both English and French authors, including letters signed by Henry and Charles (known in these texts as the dauphin/dolphin, a homonymic play Shakespeare incorporates).¹⁵⁶

Unsurprisingly, the English sources are generally derisive and skeptical of Joan while

¹⁵⁵ Crane, The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War, 105.
¹⁵⁶ Acceptable forms of the French “dauphin” in English include “dolphin” and “dolphyn,” though these variants fell out of favor after 1670. See “Dauphin,” entry “B” in Simpson, et al. Dolphin was an acceptable “phonetic option for the period,” one that also speaks to a dismissive attitude on the part of the English toward Charles’s authority. Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 290. See also the note on line 92 in Shakespeare and Hattaway, The First Part of King Henry VI, 71.
French texts portray her with laudatory sympathy. Shakespeare had access to the accounts of Hall and Holinshed, works obviously favoring the English cause, themselves based on sources prejudicial to the English. Hall’s *Chronicle* (first published in 1542, with significant amendments in later editions) describes Joan rather hysterically as:

> a rampe of such boldness, that she would course horses and ride them in to water, and do things, that other young maidens, both abhorred & were ashamed to do: yet as some say, whether it were because of her foul face, that no man would desire it, either she had made a vow to live chaste, she kept her maidenhead, and preserved her virginity. [...] Rehearsing to [Charles], visions [...] and fables, full of blasphemy, superstition and hypocrisy, that I marvel much that wise men did believe her, and learned clerks would write such fantasies. What should I rehearse, how they say, she knew and called him her king, whom she never saw before. [...] What should I write, how she declared such privy messages [from] God, our lady, and other saints, to the dolphin, that she made the tears run down from his eyes. So was he deluded, so was he blinded, & so was he deceived by the devils means which suffered her to begin her race, and in conclusion rewarded her with a shameful fall.157

Hall’s disdain for Joan is evident from the beginning. A “rampe” is a tomboy, or a “bold, wanton or lively” woman. It is a term that encapsulates the qualities that a woman should not possess. Joan does what other young women abhor and are “ashamed to do,” violating gender boundaries even before she dons armor. Hall “marvels” at the gullibility of those who believed her, knowing not “what [he] should rehearse” or “what [he] should write,” aside from the fact that Charles was “deluded” “blinded” and “deceived by the devil.” Despite her blasphemy, her deceit and her “boldness,” Hall specifically asserts Joan’s chastity; she has “kept her maidenhead,

157 Hall, 148.
and preserved her virginity,” though not as a vow of chastity but because of her “foul face.” Joan’s virginal status may not be by choice, but it is not questioned.\footnote{Joan as virgin also appears to have been the standard reading from other texts in the 16th century, as outlined by Schwarz, 89.}

Hall’s characterization grows more disparaging as he recounts Joan’s story. He revels in discussing Joan’s falling from her horse, when the “great [French] goddess, [fell] into the bottom of the town ditch, where she lay behind the back of an Ass, sore hurt, till the time that she [was] all filthy with mire and dirt.”\footnote{Hall, 155.} He finally concludes that:

she was more to be marveled at, as a false prophetess, and seducer of the people: than to be honored or worshiped as a saint sent from God into the realm of France. For of this I am sure, that all ancient writers, as well divine, as profane, allege these three things, beside diverse other, to pertain to a good woman. First, shamefastness, which the Roman Ladies so kept, that seldom or never they were seen openly talking with a man; which virtue, at this day amongst the Turks, is highly esteemed. The second is pity: which in a woman’s heart, abhorreth the spilling of the blood of a poor beast, or a seely bride. The third is womanly behavior, avoiding the occasion of evil judgment, and causes of slander. If these qualities, be of necessity, incident to a good woman, where was her shamefastness, when she daily and nightly, was conversant with common soldiers, and men of war, amongst whom, is small honesty, less virtue, and shamefastness, least of all exercised or used? Where was her womanly pity, when she taking to her, the heart of a cruel beast, slew man, woman, and child, where she might have the upper hand? Where was her womanly behavior, when she clad her self in a man’s clothing, and was conversant with every losell, giving occasion to all men to judge, and speak evil of her, and her doings. Then these things, being thus plainly true, all men must needs confess, that the cause ceasing, the effect also ceaseth: so if these moral virtues lacking, she was no good woman, then it must needs, consequently follow, that she was no saint.\footnote{Hall, 159.}

Joan, in source texts and in the play, prompts discussion of proper femininity through articulations of what she is not. Hall’s account of Joan concludes with a discourse on
the characteristics that “pertain to a good woman,” a digression revelatory of many of the gender expectations this dissertation discusses, as well as illuminating the exact nature of Joan’s transgressions from femininity. Since the time of “ancient writers,” good women were expected to possess shame-fastness, pity and chaste action and behavior. The first quality speaks to modesty, decorum and propriety, with the shame-fast (and most beautiful) lady “occasionally blush[ing] openly from embarrassment or for some other reason.” Pity for creatures and innocent people is another characteristic: good women abhor the shedding of blood. Finally, a proper woman avoids actions that may be judged “evil,” regardless of the actual nature of the actions (seeming above reproach is as important as being above reproach). Shame-fastness, in both the anecdotal ancient example and in the case of Joan, deals primarily with female speech in relation to men. Though “Roman ladies” were never

161 The characteristics of early modern woman are outlined in detail in the previous chapter, and I briefly summarize them now. One of the highest feminine virtues was considered to be chastity (in speech, action and sexual expression), but according to early modern commentators the inherently lascivious nature of most women required an extreme vigilance on the part of men (usually fathers or husbands) who would control them. Traub, Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama, esp. 28-32. In these sources, a woman was almost always constructed along the “marriage paradigm,” her status framed by her relationship to men as maid, wife or widow. Jankowski, Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama, 22-53, quote comes from 24. As discussed in chapter 1, “woman” was many things in the early modern period (debated about in a series of texts known as the Querelle des femmes), but perhaps the most important aspect of her gender performance was that she should not at all resemble a man in her appearance, action or body. For more on the expectations and discourses surrounding early modern femininity see Merry Wiesner’s Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe (esp. 13-47), Suzanne Hull’s Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women (esp. 15-28), and Linda Woodbridge’s Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620.
162 Castiglione, 86-7.
“seen openly talking with a man,” Joan “daily and nightly, was conversant with common soldiers, and men of war,” companions who lack honesty and virtue. The freedom of Joan’s tongue perhaps hints at the availability of her body (though Hall does not explicitly say so), and her scurrilous compatriots only serve to degrade her further. Ultimately, Hall dismisses Joan’s claims to supernatural communication (with either gods or devils), and finds her main offense to be her contravention of gender standards. Her liberality in speech, both in its frequency and in her willingness to converse with “every losell” [profligate], gives the public the opportunity to judge her. Even if she is above reproach, the company she keeps permits negative judgments to be leveled against her. While Joan’s cross-dressing is offensive, the casual availability of her (note: not blasphemous) speech is given far more emphasis in Hall than in either Holinshed or the 15th-century source texts.

Holinshed’s Chronicle covers the history of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1066 to the rise of Elizabeth. This chronicle was first published in 1577 and again in 1587, with the second edition serving as a major source for Shakespeare’s history plays. Though in some places a near verbatim reprinting of Hall’s Chronicle, Holinshed does not share an identical opinion about Joan:

In this time of the siege of Orleans […] was carried a young wench of an eighteen years old, called Joan Arc, by name of her father (a sorry shepherd) James of Arc, and Isabel her mother; brought up poorly in their trade of keeping cattle; born at Domremy. Of favor was she counted likesome, of person strongly made and manly, of courage great, hardy and stout withal; an

163 This is a problem also faced by the second tetralogies Mistress Quickly, as discussed in Chapter 4. For more on the elision of silence and chastity, see Stallybrass in Ferguson, et al., 126-7. See also Jankowski, Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama, 38.
understander of councils though she were not at them; great semblance of chastity both of body and behavior; the name of Jesus in her mouth about all her businesses; humble, obedient, and fasting diverse days in the week, A person (as their books make her) raised up by power divine.¹⁶⁴

Included in Holinshed are biographical details absent in Hall, such as Joan’s birthplace, family and profession. Holinshed’s account lacks the vituperative and exasperated tone of Hall, even praising the young maid as “likesome.” Though described in terms traditionally aligned with the “manly” (she is “strongly made,” “hardy” and “stout,” as well as intelligent, or “an understander of councils”), these masculine qualities are coupled with the more feminine characteristics of celibacy and obedience, and the Christian qualities of humility and fidelity. Chaste in “body and behavior,” Joan’s protestations of faith are visible and frequent in Holinshed. While he distances himself from the praise by citing its origins in “their [French] books,” Holinshed does not immediately cloak Joan in the mantle of villainy, initially depicting her as a capable Christian warrior.

Holinshed offers a more thorough account of the proceedings of Joan’s trial than Hall, and it is at this point that his tone takes on a decidedly condemnatory tone. Though Joan was:

found [a virgin, yet] shamefully rejecting her sex abominably in acts and apparel, to have counterfeit mankind, and then, all damnably faithless, to be a pernicious instrument to hostility and bloodshed in devilish witchcraft and sorcery, sentence accordingly was pronounced against her. Howbeit, upon humble confession of her iniquities, with a counterfeit contrition pretending a careful sorrow for the same, execution [was] spared and all mollified into this, that from thenceforth she should cast off her unnatural wearing of man’s habiliments and keep her to garments of her own kind, abjure her pernicious

prison to bewail her misdeeds. Which to perform (according to the manner of abjuration) a solemn oath very gladly she took.\textsuperscript{165}

Joan has “shamefully” rejected her femininity in both her “acts and apparel.” Her attempts to prove a “counterfeit” man render her “damnably faithless” and a handmaiden to “devilish witchcraft and sorcery.” Joan’s deceptions move beyond her transvestitism and into her spirituality, as her “humble confessions” of “contrition” are found to be false acts. The “semblance” of chastity that Holinshed notes in the first passage is elaborated upon in this excerpt. Joan is a pretender: to honesty, to masculinity, to Christianity. Though the articles of accusation against Joan at Rouen begin with her blasphemy and violent acts, Holinshed sees the primary crime as her rejection of traditional femininity, a judgment similar to Hall’s. This first transgression results in a series of crimes that in turn leads to other acts of malfeasance. Despite these crimes, Holinshed (like Hall) asserts Joan’s virginity. Joan may be a lot of things, but she is not a whore.

Holinshed and Hall draw their materials from letters and reports written by Joan’s contemporaries, as well as from the proceedings of her trials. In a letter to King Henry, the Duke of Bedford (brother to Henry V and uncle to Henry VI) accuses King Charles of “seducing and abusing ignorant people, and [being] aided by superstitious and damnable persons, such as a woman of disorderly and infamous life, dressed in man’s clothes, and of immoral conduct.”\textsuperscript{166} No mention is made of Joan’s blasphemy; she is damnable, but more important is her “immoral conduct,” most

\textsuperscript{165} Holinshed and Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare’s Holinshed; The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared, 156.
\textsuperscript{166} Duke of Bedford quoted in Taylor, 120.
specifically her transvestitism. In a memorandum written three years after the execution, Bedford depicts the anxieties suffered by the English during the years of the *pucelle*:

> it seemed there fell by the hand of God a great stroke upon your people assembled there, caused in great part, as I think, by lack of proper belief and by unlawful doubt aroused by a disciple and follower of the fiend called Pucelle, who used false enchantment and sorcery… [Her] strikes and complete victory not only greatly reduced the number of your people there but also drained the courage of the remnant in marvelous ways and encouraged your adversary’s party and enemy to rally at once in great number…

As Bedford recounts, Joan’s victories were so devastating to the English it seemed as if God himself had struck down the English cause in France, permitting the “fiend” maiden to use “false enchantment and sorcery.” Joan’s “complete victory” resulted in the death of many and “drained the courage” of those who remained alive. The French rallied to her cause, and a slew of towns shifted their allegiance. Joan proved a powerful icon of French rebellion (and temporary success) against English forces.

Letters composed by King Henry VI (some reprinted in Hall) also emphasize Joan’s social (gender) failures over her violent crimes. This letter, written a month after her death, gives equal weight to her social and spiritual transgressions:

> Revered father in God, it is commonly enough known, having been spread everywhere already, that this woman who called herself Joan the Pucelle, a false prophetess, had dressed in the clothing of a man for two years or more, against divine law and the estate of her feminine sex, a thing abominable to God, and in this state went before our chief enemy. She frequently led him and those of his part, churchman, nobles and ordinary people, to understand that she had been sent by God, presumptuously boasting that she often had personal and visible communication with St Michael and St Margaret. By these deceits that she was given to believe and by the hope that she created of future victories, she turned the hearts of many men and women from the path

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167 Duke of Bedford quoted in Taylor, 239.
of truth, and won them over by fables and lies. She also dressed herself in arms made for knights and squires [...] In such a state, she set out to lead men-at-arms, and to command armies and great companies, in order to commit and to carry out inhuman cruelties, shedding human blood, stirring up sedition and unrest among the people, inciting them to perjuries and dangerous rebellions, superstitious and false beliefs, disturbing all true peace and renewing mortal war. [She did this while] allowing herself to be worshipped and revered by men as a holy woman, and otherwise acting damnable in many other ways too long to list, which have nonetheless been well enough known in many places, at which almost all Christendom has been greatly scandalized.\textsuperscript{168}

Joan’s fame goes far and wide, “having been spread everywhere” and “commonly” known. Though Henry lists Joan’s first crime as one of false prophecy, it is the cross-dressing that proves most “abominable to God” and against “the estate of her feminine sex.” It is only after a discussion of her social crimes that the description of her blasphemy appears. After a brief catalog of the “fables and lies” by which she “turned the hearts of many men and women from the path of truth,” Joan’s military crimes (the murder of soldiers) are elaborated. These crimes began with a violation of class and gender standards: it is because “she also dressed herself in arms made for knights and squires” that she committed “inhuman cruelties” and brought scandal on “almost all Christendom.”

The emphasis these texts place on cultural disobedience differs from the articles levied against Joan at her trial in 1431. The “Twelve Articles of Accusation” begin with her acts of blasphemy (claiming to see the saints and receive prophecy) and it is only in Article 5 that Joan’s cross-dressing is mentioned, with her military

\textsuperscript{168} Henry VI quoted in Taylor, 225-6. Also reprinted in its entirety in Hall, 157-9.
crimes not coming until Article 7. The Church finds Joan’s most heinous crimes to be against God: for the English, Joan’s social crimes prove more despicable. A letter from Henry that precedes Joan’s execution emphasizes this, focusing first on her gender rather than her violent transgressions:

It is notorious and well known how for some time a woman who calls herself Joan the Pucelle has put off the habit and dress of the female sex, which is contrary to divine law, abominable to God, condemned and prohibited by every law; she has dressed and armed herself in the state and habit of a man, has committed cruel murders and, it is said, has given the simple people to believe, through seduction and deceit, that she was sent from God, and that she had knowledge of His divine secrets, together with many other very dangerous dogmatic theories, most prejudicial and scandalous to our holy catholic faith.

This document from 1431 outlines her main misconduct as a refusal to adhere to a normative female performance. Her rejection of the “habit and dress” of a woman proves offensive to laws both secular and spiritual. This first act of transvestism in turn leads to “cruel murder” and attacks on the Church itself. Because she “has dressed and armed herself in the state and habit of a man,” Joan has gone on to commit murder, seduction and deceit (the last two are traditionally feminine vices). For Hall, Holinshed and King Henry, Joan’s main misdeeds are ones of social aberrance and not blasphemy. The trouble with Joan from the English perspective appears to be her sartorial deviance and not her heresy.

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169 Taylor, 207-12.
170 Henry VI to Pierre Cauchon, Taylor, 135.
Nomen est Omen

Joan Puzel’s queerness, her ambiguity and refusal to be categorized, begins with her name. Like any number of words subject to the vagaries of Renaissance printing practices, Joan (or Iaone) goes by a number of names in the Folio text: Puzel, Puzell, Pucell, and Pucel, as well as in speech prefixes as Puzel., Ioane., Pucell., Pucel., Puc., Pue. and Pu.\textsuperscript{171} Her name is a place of slippage and signification, prompting puns and narratives about her body. While the word \textit{pucelle} initially appears in Old French meaning young girl, it takes on the meaning of young female virgin from the 12\textsuperscript{th} century on.\textsuperscript{172} As Marina Warner describes:

\textit{Pucelle} means “virgin,” but in a special way, with distinct shades connoting youth, innocence and, paradoxically, nobility. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew \textit{‘almah}, used of both the Virgin Mary and the dancing girls in Solomon’s harem in the Bible. It denotes a time of passage, not a permanent condition, It is a word that looks forward to a state of change. In old French, it was the most common word for a young girl; in Middle French, \textit{damoiselle} began taking over. By Joan’s day, \textit{vierge} was also sometimes added to \textit{pucelle} to clarify the meaning of chastity; this shows the underlying ambiguity of the word.\textsuperscript{173}

\textit{Pucelle} in this sense is not merely a marker of gender or age, but one of social status as well. As Joan notes at I.2.113-116, her virginity too is a temporary state (discussed below), the result of her social and spiritual elevation following her encounter with

\textsuperscript{171} For a succinct description of early modern printing, detailing the process from the apprentices to the forms used to the role of editorial intrusion, see “Chapter 3: Making the Text” in D. C. Greetham, \textit{Textual Scholarship: An Introduction} (New York: Garland Pub., 1994), 77-151. For more on Joan’s name, see Shakespeare and Burns, \textit{King Henry VI, Part 1}, 291.

\textsuperscript{172} Taylor, 47.

\textsuperscript{173} Warner, 22.
the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{174} The word, like Joan, exists in a space of sexual and social ambivalence. In English \textit{pucelle} also means virgin, but it sounds like the word for slut or prostitute.\textsuperscript{175} When he first hears of Joan, Talbot plays with her name’s homonymic mutability (“\textit{pucelle} or pucelle,” i.e. virgin or prostitute), calling attention to the ribald potential this overlap creates.\textsuperscript{176} One such connotation, surprisingly unexplored in the play, is the \textit{pucelle}/pizzel echo, the latter word Elizabethan slang for penis. As the Arden editors succinctly comment, “a woman in man’s clothes wielding a sword is a \textit{pucelle} with a pizzle, and therefore a puzzle.”\textsuperscript{177} Joan’s name captures all of these senses, seeping across categories of gender and identity, existing within yet not claiming ownership of any of them.

Joan is frequently discussed through allusion to castigated and celebrated women, contradictory figures (and female types) able to co-exist within her.\textsuperscript{178} After she defeats him in their skirmish, Charles calls Joan an “Amazon” who fights with the “sword of Deborah” (1.3.83-4). Amazons, one-breasted female warriors, are

\textsuperscript{174} Crane finds that the choice of “pucelle” over “vierge” is a way of aligning Joan with a more “secular pattern of virginity,” one that frames her choice around the traditional stages of a woman’s sexual life rather than an “eva[sion of] marriage definitively.” Crane, The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War, 92.
\textsuperscript{175} “The word could mean both “maid” (OED sv I and “slut” (OED sv 2) in the period.” See note 106 in Shakespeare and Hattaway, The First Part of King Henry VI, 92. See also the note for line 106 on “pussel” in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part I, 156.
\textsuperscript{178} Schwarz, 88.
destroyers of the masculine; by killing all infant boys and living in a world without men, Amazons doubly eliminate the male line. Since the comparison moves in the other direction, Amazons reject traditional femininity in favor of the masculine pursuit of war. “Amazon” appears only four times in Shakespeare’s works. Besides a single reference to the Amazon Queen Hippolyta of Midsummer Night’s Dream, the other uses of the noun appear in history plays, describing women acting as martial warriors. The women who make history in these plays act the Amazon, radically rejecting the constraints of the feminine. The mutual exclusivity of the gender and the genre becomes clear: women do not make history, but women who act like men do. While the uses of Amazon in these plays point toward the negative, Elizabethan attitudes toward the figure were generally neutral or positive; Queen Elizabeth was allegorically compared to Amazons through the figure of Spenser’s Britomart (herself a descendant of the Amazon Queen Penthesilea), and in the construction of Elizabeth as a virago.\footnote{Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, “Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare’s Joan of Arc” in R. J. C. Watt, Shakespeare’s History Plays, Longman critical readers (London; New York: Longman, 2002), 26. Leah Marcus discusses the links between Joan and Elizabeth (specifically Joan as a “distorted image” of the Queen) in Marcus, 53. See also Schwarz, 89.} Joan also fights with the “sword of Deborah,” an allusion to an Old Testament prophetess who helps lead the Israelites into battle. Among the earliest recorded examples of a woman at war, Deborah is often listed among female worthies as an exemplary woman.\footnote{She is listed alongside Judith and Esther in Institoris and Sprenger, 106. Joan herself appears as an exemplary woman in Christine de Pisan’s Ditie de Jehanne D’Arc, as noted in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 45.} Joan is not just a warrior or an Amazon, she is a Christian warrior, an established (though rare) model for female gender performance. The
Dauphin continues his praise of Joan, comparing her to “Astraea’s daughter,” a Greek Goddess of justice whose return to Earth points to a new Golden Age, as well as a figure who made regular appearances in official Elizabethan iconography.\(^{181}\)

Joan’s ambiguity permits (and seems to encourage) fetishistic discourses about her body. As the allusion attests, she becomes an object inscribed with many (often dissonant) narratives. Enamored as he is, Charles elaborately promises to idolize Joan in her death:

A statelier pryamis to her I’ll rear
Than Rhodope’s or Memphis’s ever was.
In memory of her, when she is dead,
Her ashes, in an urn more precious
Than the rich-jewelled coffer of Darius
Transported shall be at high festivals
Before the kings and queens of France. (I.5.60-66)

“Rhodope,” while a somewhat ambiguous reference, can point to the courtesan who became Queen of Memphis by marriage and either built (or had built in her memory) the third pyramid.\(^{182}\) A pyramid is more than a memorial structure: it is a tomb, built explicitly to house the dead. The pyramid built for Joan, will not house her body; instead, a “rich-jewelled” coffer will hold her remains, ashes that will be paraded at festivals and court. Charles also promises an act of national idolatry, swearing that “no longer on St. Denis will we cry, but Joan de Puzel shall be France’s saint” (I.5.68-9). In a moment that anticipates the maid’s beatification by more than 400

\(^{181}\) See the gloss for line 43 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 160. See also Marcus, 53. This is also discussed in Jankowski, Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama, 86.

\(^{182}\) The editors of Arden (Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 161.) disagree with this interpretation while the New Cambridge editors support it.
years, the Dauphin promises that Joan will become the nation’s new patron saint, her body celebrated, but a celebration (and sanctification) dependent on her death. In these moments Charles discusses celebrating Joan by anticipating her death, placing her in a temporally ambiguous space akin to that of the early modern history genre itself.

**First Impressions**

Joan enters the play in the middle of a scene where Charles (the Dauphin) and his captains are complaining about the failure of their troops. English forces have repelled the French advance into Orleans, and the King laments the “dogs, cowards and dastards” who left him “midst [his] enemies” (I.2.2-3). Ironically, the Bastard of Orleans introduces Joan to the Dauphin and his court, meaning she arrives into the space of the play via someone born from an illicit sexual act.¹⁸³ Both characters will suffer from the taint of illegitimacy: Talbot taunts Orleans in IV.4, while Joan is subject to attacks on her chastity, faith and integrity throughout the drama. The Bastard announces her presence:

> A holy maid hither with me I bring,  
> Which, by a vision sent to her from heaven,  
> Ordained is to raise this tedious siege  
> And drive the English forth the bounds of France.  
> The spirit of deep prophecy she hath,  
> Exceeding the nine sibyls of old Rome.  
> What’s past and what’s to come she can descry. (I.2.51-58)

¹⁸³ Though he only goes by Bastard of Orleans in the play, the historical person on whom the character is based is Jean de Dunois. Joan’s introduction by this character produces a further level of irony; following her rejection of her paternal lineage in V.3 Joan herself becomes a bastard from (or “of”) Orleans.
The first references to Joan in 1 Henry VI emphasize her faith and her virginity; she is “holy” and a “maid,” terms that subsequently come to frame her character in both laudatory and sarcastic tones. Her “ordained” mission from “heaven” is to “raise” this siege through her “deep prophecy.” The language of free will and the divine, as well as the emphasis on position (both social and physical) become a regular element of discourse by and about Joan. In the first of many allusions to figures from antiquity, Joan is compared to the sibyls of Rome, female prophets of classical myth.\textsuperscript{184} Such a comparison to the sacred oracles of the past who live large in myth elevates Joan to a sacred status, but also makes her a figure who hovers on the edges of Christianity; these women become Christianized in the Middle Ages (via reports of their prophesying the arrival of Christ), but their pagan echoes cannot be forgotten. Joan is a holy maid, but she is also a pagan sibyl, straddling traditions but residing in neither.

Joan’s first appearance onstage depicts a popular folkloric moment that is only related in Holinshed. To test her prophetic skills, Charles assumes a disguise and orders Reignier of Anjou (father of Margaret, the future consort of Henry VI) to stand in his place. As Holinshed describes: “unto the dauphin into his gallery when first she was brought and he, shadowing himself behind, setting other gay lords before him to try her cunning, from all the company, with a salutation (that indeed mars all the matter), she picked him out alone; who thereupon had her to the end of the gallery

\textsuperscript{184} For more on the sibyls and a reading of Joan as the 10\textsuperscript{th} see the gloss for line 56 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 133.
where she held him an hour in secret and private talk.”¹⁸⁵ In Shakespeare’s depiction, Puzel enters resolutely, first with an accusation and then a question:

Reignier, is’t thou that thinkest to beguile me?
Where is the Dauphin? Come, come from behind.
I know thee well, though never seen before.
Be not amazed. There’s nothing hid from me.
In private will I talk with thee apart.
Stand back you lords, and give us leave awhile. (I.2.65-70)

This passage emphasizes Joan’s omniscience, able to pick out the Dauphin because “nothing’s hid from me” while also depicting a young woman with an assertive and confident nature willing to call out her social and political seniors.¹⁸⁶ In a moment of queering language and social expectations, Joan uses the familiar “thee” and “thou” when addressing the King as opposed to the formal “you” or “ye.”¹⁸⁷ For a stranger that is in a radically lower class position in relation to the Dauphin, the use of the former pronouns is unnervingly familiar.¹⁸⁸ Joan refuses to observe social deference in her engagements with the Dauphin and Reignier, and her use of “thee” and “thou” (linguistically) establishes her as their superior. She assumes an immediate intimacy with the King, one that he confirms by talking with her “apart.” Joan relates the story

¹⁸⁵ Holinshed and Hosley, Shakespeare's Holinshed: an Edition of Holinshed's Chronicles, 1587; Sources of Shakespeare's History Plays, King Lear, Cymbeline, and Macbeth, 155.
¹⁸⁶ Arden (based on Oxford) reads this as having a sexual undertone, as indicated in the note on line 71 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 134.
¹⁸⁷ See note 67 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 134.
¹⁸⁸ As Jonathon Hope notes, “the basic factor determining choice of th- or ye-pronoun in early modern English is social relationship: th-forms are used down the social hierarchy; ye-forms up it.” He further notes that “social equals usually exchange mutual ye-forms in the early modern period.” See Jonathan Hope, Shakespeare's Grammar (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2003), 73.
of her upbringing and the miraculous visions that have compelled her to Charles’s side:

Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd’s daughter,
My wit untrained in any kind of art.
Heaven and our Lady gracious hath it pleased
To shine on my contemptible estate.
Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs,
And to sun’s parching heat displayed my cheeks,
God’s mother deigned to appear to me,
And in a vision, full of majesty,
Willed me to leave my base vocation
And free my country from calamity.
Her aid she promised, and assured success.
In complete glory she revealed herself—
And whereas I was black and swart before,
With those clear rays which she infused on me
That beauty am I blest with, which you may see.
Ask me what question thou canst possible,
And I will answer unpremeditated.
My courage try by combat, if thou dar’st,
And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.
Resolve on this; thou shalt be fortunate
If thou receive me for thy warlike mate. (I.2.72-92)

Joan disarms her audience by pointing to her lowly status as a “shepherd’s daughter” “untrained” in the “art” of rhetoric. She speaks in the language of weak, lower-class femininity, calling attention to her “contemptible estate” and “base vocation” to establish her status. Her skin is “black and swart” as a result of “the sun’s parching heat” under which she “waited on her tender lambs.” Petrarchan (and Elizabethan) beauty conventions dictate that women should stay out of the sun, a privilege not available to those who do agricultural work. Previously dark-skinned, Joan is now with beauty “blest,” a result of the Virgin Mary’s appearance. The Virgin, lowering
herself in coming before Joan (“deigned” pointing to the lowness of Joan’s status and the act of descending from heaven), in full “majesty” and “complete glory” shows herself, an act of revelation that leads to transformation. The beams of the sun’s parching heat are now replaced by the “clear rays” of the Virgin’s glory, rays that infuse the once-base Joan in an act of physical and social metamorphosis.

Shakespeare’s account (as the Arden edition notes) permits the coexistence of Hall and Holinshed’s contradictory narratives of Joan’s appearance. Hall, in characteristic disdain for Joan, describes “her foul face, [one] that no man would desire,” a contrast to Holinshed’s comments regarding her “likesome” favor. The Virgin Mary’s visitation also strips Joan of her agency while invigorating her anew. Joan relinquishes control of her fate, “willed” by the Holy Virgin to leave her sheep and “ordained” to raise the siege. Paradoxically, this removal of free will also grants her the agency required to embark on her mission. The “deep prophecy” and visionary insight provided by this meeting permit success in the court and the field, changing her from a “foul face” to one “likesome” enough (in appearance and social status) to penetrate the court. Joan concludes her speech with another act of assertion,

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190 See the note on line 84 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 134. See also the note at line 72 in Shakespeare and Hattaway, The First Part of King Henry VI, 78. For the quote see Holinshed and Hosley, Shakespeare's Holinshed: an Edition of Holinshed's Chronicles, 1587; Sources of Shakespeare's History Plays, King Lear, Cymbeline, and Macbeth, 154.

191 For more on the late medieval trope of the Virgin Mary and the invocation of divine will in exercising sovereign individual agency see Rosemary Muir Wright, “The Virgin in the Sun and in the Tree” in Louise Olga Fradenburg, Women and Sovereignty, Cosmos (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 36-59.
welcoming challenges mental and physical, willing to answer all inquiries and face the king in hand-to-hand combat.\textsuperscript{192}

Puzel declares that she “exceeds” her sex, outdoing expectations of female gender performance by acting like a man. Joan is thus a figure of excess: theatrically gripping, she will enact extreme performances of both male military valor and female sexual and spiritual villainy, and, as evidenced by her combative entrance, an excess of spirit.\textsuperscript{193} Joan further oversteps propriety by turning to the King and proposing a political, if not physical, act of union. She seeks to be a “warlike mate,” an ambiguous phrase with multiple meanings: is Joan to be his wartime advisor, his combative adversary, his political equal, or his married (or at least sexual) companion?\textsuperscript{194} At various points in the play, she takes on all of these roles. The vague meaning contributes to an eroticization of violence frequently seen in the drama, a reminder that copulation and hand-to-hand combat look alike, both characterized by interlocking bodies and acts of penetration. This linkage between sex and violence is one Charles develops, seeking to “buckle” (fight, but also copulate) with Puzel “in single combat.” They skirmish and (as indicated in the stage directions) Joan

\textsuperscript{192} Puzel’s willingness to fight for her place in the court is reminiscent of Bradamante’s defeat of the Kings Of Sweden, Gothenburg and an unnamed King in her visit to Tristan’s castle. See Canto 32, verse 76 in Lodovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, trans. Guido Waldman (London, New York,: Oxford University Press, 1974), 391-92.

\textsuperscript{193} Joan, as Schwartz describes, “does not remain constant; the qualities assigned to her [as sexual commodity and iconographic figure] accumulate to her not to consensus but to an unsocializable collection of extremes.” This excess of extreme identities is itself a type of queerness. See Schwarz, 82.

\textsuperscript{194} See the note on other ambiguities in line 92 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 135.
“overcomes.” Joan renders Charles “prostrate,” physically controlling the Dauphin in actions that create a (sexually tinged) tableau of the “woman on top.”

Joan’s confounding and upending of expectations has an emotionally and physically disorienting effect on men. Within fifty lines of her first entrance the Dauphin has become rapt with her presence. While he begins the scene testing her “skill” he soon assumes the language of courtly and Petrarchan love, declaring himself in “prostrate thrall” and begging Joan to make him her “servant and not sovereign be.” The Dauphin promises to cede all power to her, not merely making her an equal but a master. His willingness to relinquish autonomy is again stated following her first victory at Orleans, when he swears to “divide [his] crown with her” (I.5.57). Within moments of her entrance, Joan has flipped the hierarchical order, moving from the lowest of social places (lower class, agrarian, female) to “warlike mate” of the King. Joan’s first encounter with Talbot is also unsettling to the English hero, who describes the power the sight of this armed woman has on him: “my thoughts are whirled like a potter’s wheel, I know not where I am nor what I do” (I.5.19-20). Joan is a disruptive presence, confusing (and confounding) expectations at every turn, causing Talbot to forget his very sense of purpose: “I

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195 To borrow a phrase from Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1975), 125. For more on the potential stagings of Joan on top see the notes for line 117 in *Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1*, 137.

196 See the discussion of Joan’s “double emasculating” effect on men in Kahn, 55-56.
know not where I am nor what I do.”

The great English hero is floored by the sight of the French maid who is driving back his troops, momentarily stripped of his purpose, motivation and will. Unable to best her in a skirmish, he turns to the only possible explanation (discussed further below): she must be a devil.

Joan’s sexuality, namely her status as virgin, whore or both is a regular focus of commentary within the play. Joan insists, in rhymed couplets, on her virginity: “I must not yield to any rites of love,/ For my profession’s sacred from above./ When I have chased all thy foes from hence,/ Then will I think upon a recompense.” (I.2.113-6) She rejects the King’s advances, distancing herself from the courtly love language he employs in declaring himself her “subject.” Joan’s is a divinely ordered chastity (her “profession is sacred from above,”), but it is also conditional: she “must not yield” to love at present, but she “will think upon a recompense” when she completes her martial duties, indicating that this abstinence is also a temporary state. Joan removes herself from the marriage economy, but she will re-enter this market (receiving “recompense”) when she has defeated the English. Joan thus exists in a state of ambiguous sexuality: a divinely decreed virgin, but able to engage in acts of sexual expression when she deems fit. Joan has an agency over her own body almost unheard of in the period, removing herself from and reinserting herself into the sexual

Schwarz describes this as a moment where Joan threatens to “un-man” Talbot, Schwarz, 87. This speech also echoes with the fear and disorientation expressed in Bedford’s letter to King Henry (discussed earlier).

See note on line 114 in Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 137. This temporary nature of the identity of virgin is discussed in the Marina Warner quote, and is perhaps a characteristic of the pucelle/Puzel name itself. This is also discussed (as previously noted) by Crane, The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War, 92.

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economy as she sees fit: it is not heaven that will make this decision, but something that Joan herself who will “think on” it. Though she claims to have lost agency over her body because of her divine mission, she has achieved autonomy over her sexual expression.

Joan’s rhetorical and physical success prompts near immediate derogatory comments regarding her chastity and her faith. The easy favor she gains from the King leads Alencon to remark that “doubtless [the King] shrives this woman to her smock” (I.2.119). The pair’s physical proximity (she has just defeated the Dauphin in the skirmish and is speaking alone with him) translates to sexual intimacy: when a priest “shrives” (hears confession), the confessor wears a type of undergarment or smock. Alencon mutates the holy sense of confession into the profane in his implication that Charles subjects Joan’s body to an erotic interrogation.199 Charles has not only been physically overcome, he has been emotionally conquered as well, lacking all “mean” (moderation). In a standard critique from the Malleus Maleficarum, Reignier points to the dangers of female speech, noting that “these women are shrewd tempters with their tongues.” Joan and her “shrewd” speech are able to lead men out of “mean” and into immodesty.200 When Talbot hears of Joan’s successes on the field, he immediately resorts to sexual degradation, punning with the “Puzel or pussel” connection to highlight the slang meaning of slut or harlot. Within a

199 Shakespeare and Burns, King Henry VI, Part 1, 138.
200 The Malleus Maleficarum details a number of ways by which women lead men astray. Women’s tears are especially potent at causing men to act inappropriately, as “shown by Samson’s wife, who coaxed him to tell her the riddle he had propounded to the Philistines, and told them the answer, and so deceived him.” Institoris and Sprenger, 108.
dozen lines, Talbot refers to Joan as a “devil, or devil’s dam,” a “strumpet” and a “witch,” the first (of many) associations of Joan with witchcraft and underworld fiends. As Theodora Jankowski notes, the only evidence Talbot has to back any of these claims is “Joan’s unfemale refusal to be captured.”201 Her success in a masculine field doesn’t simply mark her as aberrant: it makes her abhorrent, against nature, and queer.

While Joan initially rejects the Dauphin’s advances, she appears to soon after become his lover. In II.1, Charles informs Alencon and the others that “most part of all this night/ Within her quarter and mine own precinct/ I was employed in passing to and fro/ About relieving of the sentinels” (II.1.67-70). Charles recounts an evening of planning strategies, but this is read by other characters (and editors) as implying that the two were up all night engaged in lovers’ affairs. Burgundy notes that he saw the couple leave their bed chambers: “arm in arm they both came swiftly running/ like to a pair of loving turtle-doves/ that could not live asunder day or night” (II.2.29-31). While they may be lovers, the assumption made by both the English and French (and without evidence) is that the two are having sex, these men articulating a traditional narrative about female sexuality while degrading Joan’s access to the Dauphin by attributing it to her sexual skills rather than her intellectual or martial abilities.202 If Charles and Joan are lovers, it seems odd that she repeatedly ignores his verbal intimations of romance (particularly given her willingness to be overly familiar with

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201 Jankowski, Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama, 2.
202 See Jankowski, Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama, 2.
the King in her use of “thee” at I.2.67). From their first encounter, Charles speaks in the language of courtly love, describing his thralldom and submission. He will later call her “sweeting,” another term reserved for lovers (III.3.21). Joan never audibly reciprocates, referring to the King by either his title or his name, save for a single instance of “friend” at II.1.54. Like “warlike mate,” friend possesses an ambiguity, providing for the illicit and the innocuous, but still far from the language of love that Charles employs. The verbal affections seem to move in only one way. As Talbot’s comments from I.4 and I.5 show, the reality is irrelevant: she is whatever explanation is necessary to justify her success and still allow the male figures to save face.

The misogynistic assumptions regarding Joan’s lasciviousness continue throughout the play. Besides the regular accusations of witchcraft, Joan is referred to as a “trull” who “carr[ies the weight of Frenchmen in their] armor” during her sexual forays (II.2.28, II.1.24). She is a “hag […] encompassed” by “lusty paramours” (III.2.51-2) and a “shameless courtesan” (III.2.45). Young Talbot mocks her as a “giglot wench” (IV.4.153), a wanton and a lower-class woman to be dismissed for her sexual proclivities and social status. Even Joan’s father will cast her out as whore: when she rejects his paternity, he refuses her as a daughter and a moral woman, calling her a “drab” (prostitute). Even the man for whom she fights attacks her, with Charles assuming the loss of Orleans to be the result of “cunning” by the “deceitful dame” Joan (II.1.50).

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203 Shakespeare and Burns, *King Henry VI, Part 1*, 250.
Gender, as discussed in chapter 1, is an ideological category used to create hierarchies and establish power. In the space of Elizabethan theater, where young men play the parts of women, the performative nature of gender was particularly evident. I Henry IV calls attention to the performance of gender several times, especially the notion of “acting the man.” Joan enters as Charles laments the failures of his warriors to hold the line: “what men have I? Dogs, cowards, dastards!” (I.2.22) This complaint is similarly echoed by Talbot moments before Joan enters, as he bemoans the departure of his strength, valor and force at I.5.1 (a line which refers to both Talbot’s failures in arms and those of his troops). Joan’s first encounters with both the French and the English come on the heels of failed masculine performances; just as the character Hic Mulier warns, the mannish-woman makes an appearance when men falter. Gender as something one performs is explicitly referenced twice in the play, though it is a thematic undercurrent throughout. After the capture of Orleans, Alencon relates that “all France will be replete with mirth and joy, when they hear how we have played the men” (I.5.54-5). The acts of martial valor required to take the city are masculine acts, only to be “played” by men. However, it is the female Joan who has just led the charge, and Charles quickly corrects Alencon: it is not “we by whom the day is won” but Joan alone who has actually “played the

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204 Scott: 1067.
205 For a discussion of the anxiety and its appearance in Elizabethan literature see Levine.
206 As articulated by the character of the Hic Mulier in the 1622 pamphlet Haec-Vir: “Hence we have preserved (though to our own shames) those manly things which you have forsaken, which would you again accept, and restore to us the Blushes we laid by, when first we put on your Masculine garments.” O'Malley, 297-8.
Burgundy, when still allied with the English, comments on Joan’s gender presentation, hoping Joan “prove[s] not masculine ere long” (II.1.23). Burgundy’s words highlight the unnatural character of gender, a denaturalization made explicit through Puzel’s body. Proving masculine is something one does for a given period of time. Much as she performs the part of virgin, Joan performs masculinity as well, and both are temporally conditional. Her female masculinity also marks a moment of queering, undermining the link between sex and gender though playing with and commenting upon the social expectations attached to both male and female.

**Speaking the Speech**

In III.3, with English forces faltering in the face of an aggressive French onslaught, Charles and Joan approach the Duke of Burgundy with a truce, asking the French Burgundy to break his alliances with the English and fight for his country rather than against it:

- **Burgundy:** Who craves a parley with the Burgundy?
- **Joan:** The princely Charles of France, thy countryman.
- **Burgundy:** What sayest thou, Charles? For I am marching hence
- **Joan:** Brave Burgundy, undoubted hope of France, Stay. Let thy humble handmaid speak to thee.
- **Burgundy:** Speak on, but be not over-tedious. (III.3.37-42)

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207 She insists the siege go forth when Reignier suggests giving up at I.2.125
208 Leah Marcus describes Joan’s as a “metadramatic” gender, one that calls attention to the distinctions between acting “male and female, then playfully merge[s] them back into one.” Marcus, 100.
Joan serves as the voice of the King, tasked with answering Burgundy’s question and “enchanting” him with her words.\textsuperscript{209} Joan has already proven rhetorically persuasive, turning the Dauphin and his court in her favor over the course of fifty lines of verse in I.2. Puzel begins her speech to Burgundy in the same self-effacing way she begins her speech to the court: casting herself as a “humble handmaid.” Her status as weak, feminine and lower class is contrasted with the “brave Burgundy, undoubted hope of France.” She establishes a hierarchy and distribution of glory, both of which adhere to normative expectations of a strong man and a weak woman.

Look on thy country, look on fertile France,
And see the cities and the towns defaced
By wasting ruin of the cruel foe.
As looks the mother of her lowly babe
When death doth close his tender dying eyes,
See, see the pining malady of France;
Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,
Which thou thyself hast given her woeful breast.
O turn thy edged sword another way,
Strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help.
One drop of blood drawn from thy country’s bosom
Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore.
Return thee, therefore, with a flood of tears,
And wash away thy country’s stained spots. (III.3.43-56)

Joan launches into a speech that the editors of the Arden twice refer to as “overdoing it,” metaphorizing France through a series of hyperbolic images that at times borders on the comically “over tedious.”\textsuperscript{210} Puzel describes the “defaced” and “fertile

\textsuperscript{209} The use of “enchant” and Burgundy’s later comment that he is “bewitched” are examples of the ways Joan is repeatedly associated with the magical, both benign and malevolent.

\textsuperscript{210} While modern editors read the speech this way, one wonders if the same interpretation occurred in the minds of early modern audiences. See the glosses on lines 47 and 48 in Shakespeare and Burns, \textit{King Henry VI, Part 1}, 217. While
France,” calling on Burgundy to look on the country’s ruin as would a mother looking on “her lowly babe when death doth close his tender eyes.” France (and by extension Burgundy) is feminized repeatedly, Puzel invoking the language of female frailty and maternity to sway the errant Duke. Joan points at the “unnatural wounds” Burgundy has inflicted upon the nation, and by extension himself, the cause of the “pining malady” the country endures. These wounds are inflicted on the still anthropomorphized body of France, the “woeful breast” struck by Burgundy’s “edged sword.” The breastfeeding imagery (the mother cradling the lowly babe) continues with the description of the “blood drawn from thy country’s bosom.” Puzel implores him to “hurt not those that help,” asking him to cease his attacks on France and instead return with a “flood of tears” to demonstrate his grief and “wash away” the country’s bloody “stained spots.” Burgundy’s tears, an outward sign of his repentance, can serve as balm for the national suffering that he has caused.

Burgundy is compelled to switch allegiances after Joan’s first speech, a transformation the play frames as evidence of her rhetorical skill. As the King is made a believer through Puzel’s displays of knowledge and skill, Burgundy is taken in by her appeals to humanity for the “mother” land:

Burgundy: Either she hath bewitched me with her words,  
Or nature makes me suddenly relent.  
Joan: Besides, all French and France exclaims on thee,

Burgundy states that his change might be the effect of “nature,” his comments regarding the reason he shifts his position focus more frequently on the power of her speech rather than the result of a “change of heart” caused by national loyalty or human sympathy.

211 Howard and Rackin, 50.  
212 Howard and Rackin, 50.
Doubting thy birth and lawful progeny.  
Who join’st thou with, but with a lordly nation  
That will not trust thee but for profit’s sake? […]  
Come, come, return; return, thou wandering lord!  
Charles and the rest will take thee in their arms.  
Burgundy: I am vanquished. These haughty words of hers  
Have battered me like roaring cannon shot  
And made me almost yield upon my knees  
Forgive me, country, and sweet countrymen;  
And, lords, accept this hearty kind embrace.  
My forces and my power of men are yours.  
So farewell, Talbot; I’ll no longer trust thee.  
Joan: Done like a Frenchmen – turn and turn again. (III.3.58-85)

Burgundy attributes his change of heart to either witchcraft or nature. Typical of the English narrative about Joan (in which Burgundy himself has participated), her success must come as the result of nefarious trickery, a characteristic typical of female speech as outlined in a number of texts from the period. Though already successful (as indicated by Burgundy’s aside), Joan continues on a new tack, shaming him by asserting that all of France questions his character as a man and his titular rights. Because he is a traitor to his king, Burgundy’s bona fides as a French man (and son) come into dispute, a line of attack that is both an insult and a challenge to the accused’s livelihood. According to Joan, both French and English people question Burgundy’s ancestry (his “lawful progeny”) and his loyalty. He is suspect to both sides, existing in a tenuous liminality Joan knows well. Puzel concludes her speech directing Burgundy to “come, come, return” to the French embrace, where he will

213 16th- and 17th-century English pamphlets depict women discussing various ways to deceive their husbands financially and sexually. See examples from Samuel Rowlands’s works in O’Malley, 19. According to the Malleus, “They have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from the fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft. Institoris and Sprenger, 106.
“return, [the] wandering lord” to find the arms of “Charles and the rest” welcoming.\textsuperscript{214} Admitting his defeat, the “vanquished” Burgundy is fully swayed by Joan’s words (not nature or witchcraft), and he grants her language a power he previously denied. He speaks of his transformation via the diction of warfare, her “haughty” speech “batter[ing]” his body “like roaring cannon shot” and nearly forcing him to his knees. Having already rendered Charles physically prostrate through her military prowess, here she figuratively does the same with Burgundy, laying him low through her rhetorical powers. Joan’s final line proves elusive, one with potentially comedic resonances in her description of the fickle Frenchmen “turn[ing] and turn[ing] again.” Though meaning that French men have no conviction (an attitude that would play well with an English audience), this line also establishes Joan’s role as “irreverent outsider,” someone whom the audience connects with through her meta-theatrical critiques.\textsuperscript{215} Joan is offering a type of performance commentary: on her own actions, on Burgundy’s and on the French.\textsuperscript{216} She has just

\textsuperscript{214} Joan does not seem to be a part of this “welcoming party.”

\textsuperscript{215} This line is sometimes played as an aside but it is a matter on which editorial interpretations differ. Arden, based on what appears in Folio, does not include an aside, while Norton and Pelican make only the latter half of the line (“turn and turn again”) an aside. New Cambridge makes the entire line an aside. Whether it is enthusiastic praise for Burgundy, a critique of masculinity, or a commentary on the events onstage, or all simultaneously, it is another moment of verbal ambiguity: Joan’s gender and her sex (pucelle/pizzel) are unclear—appropriately, so is her speech. See the gloss for line 85 on the “aside” question in Shakespeare and Burns, \textit{King Henry VI, Part 1}, 219. Another potential reading of this line (either as an aside or delivered to those onstage) is as a reference to the French Henry of Navarre’s religious conversion in order to gain the throne in 1593. This line would need to have been added after the initial 1592 performance date, as discussed in the note on line 85 in Shakespeare and Hattaway, \textit{The First Part of King Henry VI}, 137.

\textsuperscript{216} Jankowski, \textit{Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama}, 87.
employed a number of strategies to sway Burgundy, appealing to his vanity, his humanity, his loyalty, his financial well-being and his reputation; perhaps this line, then, calls attention to the rhetorical tricks Joan has just “turned” to capture her target.

**A Fiery End**

The French fortunes change for the worse following the death of the English hero Talbot and his son in IV.4, and by V.2 a frantic Joan implores demonic fiends for help in battle. Prior to this scene, there has been no evidence of Joan’s witchcraft, though the English have frequently made allusion to it. The play definitively associates these creatures invoked by Joan with the underworld (seen in the stage cue “Enter Fiends” between lines 28 and 29), though late 20th-century productions have staged the scene with more ambiguity about the nature of the beings, the fiends sometimes cast as angels or as “psychological allegory” (stage directions as included in Folio appear in italics).217

The regent conquers, and the Frenchmen fly. 
Now help, ye charming spells and periapts, 
And ye choice spirits that admonish me 
And give me signs of future accidents. 

*Thunder* 
You speedy helpers, that are substitutes 
Under the lordly monarch of the north, 
Appear, and aid me in this enterprise. 

*Enter Fiends* 
This speed and quick appearance argues proof 
Of your accustomed diligence to me. 
Now, ye familiar spirits that are culled 

Out of the powerful regions under earth,
Help me this once, that France may get the field.
They walk, and speak not
O, hold me not with silence overlong!
Where I was wont to feed you with my blood,
I’ll lop a member off and give it to you
In earnest of further benefit,
So you do condescend to help me now.
They hang their heads
No hope to have redress? My body shall
Pay recompense if you will grant my suit.
They shake their heads
Cannot my body nor blood sacrifice
Entreat you to your wonted furtherance?
Then take my soul – my body, soul and all –
Before that England give the French foil.
They depart.
See, they forsake me. Now the time is come
That France must vail her lofty-plumed crest
And let her head fall into England’s lap.
My ancient incantations are too weak,
And hell too strong for me to buckle with.
Now, France, thy glory droopeth to the dust. (V.2.22-50)

Joan appears, as she did in her first entrance into the play, after a moment of French
male flight, leaving the maiden to curse these soldiers in the same way that Charles
does in I.2. I call attention to the similarity between Joan and Charles in their
complaints to highlight the repeated instances of French masculine failure in war,
failures that prompt women to act outside of their normative gender performance.
Joan enters to subvert grammar and social order following the description of the first
instance of French flight; after the second she attempts to invoke demonic aid.
Women, as noted by the Hic Mulier, “cease their prayers” and take up male pursuits
when men fail to act appropriately masculine.218

Joan is frequently associated with magic, either divine or devilish: this scene casts that aid as demonic, legitimizing English assumptions regarding the reasons behind her military success. Joan’s acts of invocation begin with the intimate (the “periapts” refer to written charms and amulets worn next to the body for protection) and move outward, to the spirits that show her the “signs of future accidents.” The mute fiends appear, their “speed” and quickness indicative of their “accustomed diligence.” While the focus of the scene is on Joan’s invocation of the fiends, her failure to successfully do so is far more intriguing, subtly pointing to the credibility of her earlier narratives regarding her communication with Mary. She implores them to “help me this once, that France may get the field.” Here she explicitly requests assistance “this once,” her choice of the word “once” underscoring that this kind of physical help has not occurred before while also emphasizing that she previously received divine rather than demonic intervention. The fiends fail to answer, and Joan begins to bargain with what she has: her sex, her body, and her soul. She first offers her blood, recalling traditional narratives about witches’ sabbats and the practice of feeding these figures through a special mark or nipple on their body (“wont to feed you with my blood”). While this physical intimacy is diabolical and points to her sexual availability, even as Joan presents her body as carnal and digestive food

(offering to “lop a member off”), she asserts her chastity. Here she will give her “body as recompense,” an echo of Puzel’s rhetoric in her rejection of Charles’s pursuits of I.2. Earlier in the play, Joan insists that she must “not yield to any rites of love” until France is saved, at which point she will think upon recompense, i.e. reconsidering her vow of chastity. Contrary to the accusations of whoredom she regularly endures, Joan’s use of this word seems to indicate that she has not received sexual recompense (from Charles, or anyone else) and is here proffering her body for the first time. Puzel then offers a “blood sacrifice” (either her own or that of her enemies) but is again unsuccessful, quickly moving on to give her “body, soul, and all.” The fiends depart, rejecting the French maiden and sealing her fate. While this

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220 As Joan begins to lament her future, her speech takes on an ambiguously sexual tint, echoing the language of other characters. Now that Joan is rejected, “France must vale her lofty-plumed crest/and let her head fall into England’s lap.” Joan’s success has already been elided with that of France: now that the demons have rejected her, the French warrior (perhaps Joan herself?) must remove the “lofty-plumed crest” of the military helmet and fall to submission in “England’s lap.” No editions gloss this as a moment of double entendre, but I think the image of a “head” falling into a “lap” could contain a reference to oral sex. The sexualization of the lap/head image is played upon in a number of Shakespeare’s plays, most notably by Hamlet when he discusses “country matters” with Ophelia in III.2, toying with the sexual potential of heads lying between maiden’s legs. While it need not be read sexually, the repeated linkage elsewhere in the play between sex and violence make this reading a possibility. This moment also demonstrates Joan’s brutal pragmatism. Rape and violation of the female body are a primary means of asserting power, especially in war, as indicated by Henry V’s speech at Harfleur (and quoted in chapter 1), where he promises to “mow[…] like grass/your fresh virgins” and ensure that “pure maidens fall into the hand/of hot and forcing violation” (Henry V, III.3.13-14, 20-21). Joan acknowledges that French female bodies will be taken as a result of the fiends’ desertion, perhaps even her own given that Charles has cast her as a proto-“patron saint” of the nation (I.5.68). She is the savior of France; in order for England to fully succeed, she must be entirely de-sanctified, exposed as unchristian (which this scene achieves), and physically violated, something Joan seems to anticipate. For the use of the woman’s body to signify power, see Scott: 1067, 72.
scene could link Joan with the underworld, it reveals her failures as a witch more explicitly: she is unsuccessful the only time we see her contacting demons. Though she seems to allude to an ongoing relationship with them, the audience never sees her successfully consorting with fiends. Importantly, the moment when she does engage with them takes place in private, unseen by other characters. Those who accuse her of witchcraft may be correct, but they accuse her based solely on her “unfemale” success. By the scene’s end, Joan is demonized, which is ironic given her failure to successfully elicit fiendish help.

As the end of this speech highlights, Joan possesses a pragmatic and at times brutal attitude toward politics and fate, one that strips away artifice and challenges conventional ideologies regarding heroism. While Talbot represents a nostalgic vision of old world heroism and chivalry, Joan’s is a more earthy and physical perspective on the world. As a parting rallying cry before the siege of Orleans, Joan announces that “glory is like a circle in the water,/ which never ceaseth to enlarge itself/ till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought./ With Henry’s death, the English circle ends./ Dispersed are the glories it included” (I.2.33-37). Joan employs an elegant simile to describe the fleeting nature of glory. It is an insubstantial object that begins small but, by growing, is destroyed. Glory disperses itself into nothingness, so it is something

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221 See (again) Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays*, 69. Also Howard and Rackin, 54. Also David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories; Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 104-5. Carol Banks suggests that Joan’s performance and “Shakespeare’s plays [in general] may be less a backlash against female power and supremacy than an attempt to re-examine old-fashioned military heroism in a society in which attitudes to masculinity were evidently changing.” See Banks, “Warlike women: ‘reproofe to these degenerate effeminate dayes’?” in Cavanagh, et al., 173.
that must be constantly recreated; when the hero dies, so too does the fame. Joan articulates the worst of English fears: the death of Henry V means the English circle of glory has finally come to an end. She demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of politics, human nature and power; laurels don’t last. Her attitude toward glory extends to her interpretations of loss and defeat. When Rouen is retaken by the English so soon after its French recovery, Puzel advises that they should not “grieve” this loss since “care is no cure, but rather corrosive, for things that are not to be remedied” (III.3.2-4). With this sentiment, one echoed repeatedly in Shakespeare’s work, Joan encourages her compatriots to allow “frantic Talbot” his momentary victory and instead begin preparations for the next attack. Her practicality has a hard edge as well: when the Englishman Sir William Lucy comes to collect the bodies of the fallen Talbots for burial, Joan allows them to be taken because “to keep them here they would but stink and putrefy the air” (VI.4.202). Joan sees no power in dead corpses; they simply rot and pollute the air. While Lucy promises that a phoenix shall rise from the Talbots’ ashes, Joan seems unconcerned: bodies are bodies,

Of course, the genre of early modern history (and the history plays) was thought a means of breathing new life into the characters (such as Talbot) of the heroic past. As discussed in chapter 1, this was a position taken up in defenses of the theater by writers like the 16th-century poet Thomas Nashe. See Smith, 1.

Rackin and Howard see this as a moment of Joan’s asserting the value of the (feminine) physical presence over the (male) historical record. Howard and Rackin, 58-60. See also Schwarz, 96.

Compare Joan’s line to the sentiments expressed in “past cure is still past care” from Love’s Labours Lost (V.2.28), or “what's gone and what's past help should be past grief” in The Winter’s Tale (III.2.220-21). Both citations come from William Shakespeare, Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus and Andrew Gurr, The Norton Shakespeare, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 780, 2913.

Much like the long-winded speech glorifying Talbot that Lucy has just delivered.
“stinking and flyblown” rather than charms that ensure success (IV.4.188). Unlike Charles, who plans to idolize (and fetishize) Joan’s remains as he carries them through town and country, Puzel seems indifferent to the treatment of the dead. Glory dies with the body, and all bodies go the same way.

Joan is taken by the English, though exactly how is left unclear. Upon her capture by York, it is evident that (unlike the historical personage), Puzel will not receive a trial and her punishment is predetermined (York announces that the “fell-banning hag” “comest to the stake” [V.2.63-66], taking on the roles of accuser, judge and executioner). The scene that follows her capture is one in which her father and her jailors, York and Warwick, cruelly berate and chastise her:

Shepherd: Ah, Joan, this kills thy father's heart outright!
Have I sought every country far and near,
And, now it is my chance to find thee out,
Must I behold thy timeless cruel death?
Ah, Joan, sweet daughter Joan, I'll die with thee.
Joan: Decrepit miser, base ignoble wretch.
I am descended of a gentler blood:
Thou art no father nor no friend of mine.
Shepherd: Out, out! My lords, an't please you, 'tis not so;
I did beget her, all the parish knows:
Her mother liveth yet, can testify
She was the first fruit of my bach'lorship.
Warwick: Graceless, wilt thou deny thy parentage?
York: This argues what her kind of life hath been,
Wicked and vile; and so her death concludes.
Shepherd: Fie, Joan, that thou wilt be so obstacle!
God knows thou art a collop of my flesh;

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226 Rackin and Howard see this as (one of many) moments when Joan acts the anti-historian, refusing the narrative verification of Talbot’s greatness that Lucy repeatedly tries to offer. Howard and Rackin, 57-8.

227 Hamlet’s comment in V.1 speaks to this perspective: “Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' th' earth? ... And smelled like that, too?” (V.1.173-176) in Shakespeare, et al., The Norton Shakespeare.
And for thy sake have I shed many a tear:
Deny me not, I prithee, gentle Joan.
Joan: Peasant, avaunt! You have suborn'd this man,
Of purpose to obscure my noble birth.
Shepherd: 'Tis true, I gave a noble to the priest
The morn that I was wedded to her mother.
Kneel down and take my blessing, good my girl.
Wilt thou not stoop? Now cursed be the time
Of thy nativity! I would the milk
Thy mother gave thee when thou suck'dst her breast,
Had been a little ratsbane for thy sake!
Or else, when thou didst keep my lambs a-field,
I wish some ravenous wolf had eaten thee!
Dost thou deny thy father, cursed drab?
O, burn her, burn her! Hanging is too good. (V.3.2-33)

Joan’s humble shepherd father arrives to find his daughter imprisoned and degraded.

Searching across the country for her, he appears moments before her “timeless cruel death.” He laments his daughter’s situation, promising “sweet daughter Joan, [that] I’ll die with thee” (V.3.6), a line reminiscent of Talbot’s dying declaration to his son that “side by side, together live and die,/ And soul with soul from France to heaven fly” (IV.5.54-55). In response, Joan unleashes a torrent of angry words, attacking the shepherd’s “decrepit” body and his “base” ignobility. She refuses to acknowledge the man as her father, insisting that she descends from a nobler line. The woman who once introduced herself as a shepherdess of base vocation now claims “gentler” blood, an elevation in social status allusively linked to the Virgin Mary’s act of

228 For a discussion of the parallels between the Talbots’ death scene and Joan’s meeting with her father, see Howard and Rackin, 61-2. While Rackin and Howard see this as a moment of parodistic inversion of the earlier scene between father and son, Joan’s insistence that her “father” leave rather than stay and die with her could be seen as an act of heroism of Puzel’s part, a desire to spare her father (or some person claiming to be him) from suffering ill-consequences (physical or pecuniary) for her misdeeds. On a separate note, the reference to Joan as “sweet” recalls Charles’s use of “sweeting” at III.3.21, the once erotic translated to the innocuously intimate.
revelation to Puzel. By rejecting her father and his paternal genealogy, Joan rejects the traditional social and ideological orders that were pivotal to the masculine historiography of the early modern period.\(^{229}\) Warwick expresses shock at Joan’s act (“Graceless, wilt thou deny thy parentage”), highlighting the significance of these filial relationships; in a world of primogeniture and dowry payments, lineage and paternity are essential to the establishment of an individual’s economic and marital life. By rejecting her family, she is rejecting all means of connecting to society in normative ways.

Joan’s father continues to plead, describing how he has shed “many a tear” for “gentle Joan” (V.6.20) and requests that she kneel so that he may give her a final blessing. This is an entreaty she appears to deny, as it is immediately followed by her father’s curse. Like many of the Frenchmen in the play, the Shepherd spurns Joan (albeit for different reasons), cursing her birth and the breast milk that sustained her as an infant.\(^{230}\) The Shepherd creates an image of a murderous act of breastfeeding, morphing the nutritive into the lethal.\(^{231}\) He continues to detail his fantasy that a “ravenous wolf” had eaten her as she tended the lambs. His sadness now turned to hate, he castigates her as a “drab,” or whore. These attacks parrot common attitudes

\(^{229}\) Joan here also proves an anti-historian in her attempts to “subvert [masculine] historical and historiographic enterprises,” in this case trying to remove herself entirely from these enterprises by creating a new, non-masculine and non-reproductive historiography. For more on Joan as an anti-historian, see Rackin, "Anti-Historians: Women's Roles in Shakespeare's Histories," 329.

\(^{230}\) Cf. “Like a Frenchman, turn and turn again,” those who fly the field at the start of V.2, or Charles and his characterization of her as a “deceitful dame” following the loss of Orleans in II.1.

\(^{231}\) Perhaps an echo of the “fatal” breastfeeding image Joan evokes in her speech to Burgundy at III.3.44ff.
about the lascivious nature of women.\textsuperscript{232} As she frustrates male intentions, proving “obstacle” (as the Shepherd would say), the most standard means of attacking her is by questioning her chastity, insisting that neither her body nor her word can be pure. Though lacking evidence, even her father casts her out as prostitute, arguing that Joan should be denied the quick death of hanging and made to suffer with the flames.

Joan’s rejection of her father (and his exit) permits her to perform an act of auto-genealogy, to create her own queer (non-reproductive) historical lineage.\textsuperscript{233} She has already asserted her “gentler blood” and the “noble [re-]birth” that results from her encounter with the Virgin Mary:

First, let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:
Not me begotten of a shepherd swain,
But issued from the progeny of kings;
Virtuous and holy; chosen from above,
By inspiration of celestial grace,
To work exceeding miracles on earth.
I never had to do with wicked spirits:
But you, that are polluted with your lusts,
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,
Because you want the grace that others have,
You judge it straight a thing impossible
To compass wonders but by help of devils.
No, misconceived! Joan of Arc hath been
A virgin from her tender infancy,
Chaste and immaculate in very thought;

\textsuperscript{232}“She is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations.” Institoris and Sprenger, 107. Samuel Reynolds’s gossip pamphlets from the early part of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century regularly show women discussing their sexual profligacy, both before and after marriage. See O’Malley, 19, 72. For a summary of the anxieties surrounding the female body, and the assumptions of her unbridled sexual urges, see Wiesner, 56-70.

\textsuperscript{233}For queer as “nonreproductive” see Jankowski, \textit{Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama}, 6.
Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effused,
Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven. (V.3.36-51)

“The progeny of kings virtuous and holy,” Joan is a woman with a destiny to “work
exceeding miracles on earth.” Transformed by the Virgin Mary, she lacks the
pollutions of lust and the “corrupt[ions] of a thousand vices.” Her purification is also
a rebirth, requiring the creation of a new genealogy that begins with Mary and
extends to kings and beyond. Joan removes her exclusively male lineage (her initial “I
am a shepherd’s daughter” narrative makes no mention of a mother) and re-
establishes a family tree that begins with Mary and extends throughout heaven. Joan
thus un-writes a male genealogy and constructs a divine maternal one in its place.

It is an act of anti-historicism that also generates new histories in which the maternal
line carries sway. It queers the traditional narrative by taking the dominant
(masculine) role of writing history and recasting the female, and specifically the
female virgin (both Mary and Joan), at its center. Joan’s history is not merely auto-

234 Joan invokes the divine will that infuses her body, making hers a “genealogy of
destiny rather than blood,” similar to that of the Virgin Mary as discussed in
Rosemary Muir Wright in Louise Olga Fradenburg, Women and sovereignty, Cosmos:
the yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society (Edinburgh: Edinburgh
235 Perhaps creating a “gyne”-alogy?
236 Joan’s genealogy of descent from a cosmic virgin is a “fantasy of maternal
sovereignty” also illustrated in Story 30 of Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptameron
(1558). Though Navarre’s narrative is one of an incestuous genealogy, it provides
“enabling terms of a form of female authority” that Joan’s tale of (re-)birth from a
virgin recalls. Though I am unable to determine if Shakespeare read the Heptameron,
I call attention to this moment in Story 30 to highlight that similar discourses about
maternal sovereignty were in circulation. See Carla Freccero, Queer/early/modern,
Series Q (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 59-65. For more on
Navarre’s privileging of the maternal “genealogy” and authority, see Freccero’s “Marguerite de
generative, it is anti-generative, a method of creating lineage that removes the male and the reproductive from the equation. Joan insists that she has not “done” with wicked spirits, and calls her captors out for their interpretive failures; their “lack of grace” constricts their vision, leaving them only able to “compass wonders but by help of devils.” These men misconceive the divine, a result of their imaginative lack and not her own. Joan again asserts her virginity, declaring herself chaste and immaculate in thought.

Warwick and York dismiss her, calling for her execution. Joan announces that she is pregnant and appeals to human compassion for her unborn child, “pleading the belly” in a last attempt to save her life: “I am with child, ye bloody homicides./ Murder not then the fruit within my womb,/Although ye hale me to a violent death” (V.3.62-64). Hoping to be granted a temporary reprieve, Joan cites her pregnancy

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237 Given the demons’ recent rejection of her, a case might be made that she is telling the truth.

238 “Pleading the belly” is a standard recourse for the female in English Law. If a woman was successful in proving that she was pregnant with a child who had “quickened” (discernibly moved in utero) she could be granted a stay of execution, a reprieve that could lead to a pardon. By pleading the belly, the defendant was entitled to an examination conducted by a jury of matrons, an apparently commonplace feature of criminal trials in the 16th and 17th centuries. This meant a group of women would inspect the body of the claimant and then determine pregnancy. Of course, there was room for abuse in this system, either by tricking the jury that one was pregnant through artificial deceits (inflating the belly by food and drink), or by gaining enough time between the inspection and the execution to get pregnant in captivity. See James Oldham, "On Pleading the Belly: A History of the Jury of Matrons," Criminal Justice History 6 (1985): esp. 1-22. This practice is also briefly discussed in Jody Greene, The Trouble with Ownership: Literary Property and Authorial Liability in England, 1660-1730, Material texts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 193-4.
immediately on the heels of declaring the sanctity of her “maiden-blood.” While these two conditions appear irreconcilable, Joan’s “mother” the Virgin Mary would prove otherwise. Joan creates an immaculate conception, a queer pregnancy, to spare her life and maintain her virginal status. The English have had enough; they mock her claims of pregnancy in the same way they mocked her claims of virginity:

York: Now heaven forfend -- the holy maid with child!
Warwick: The greatest miracle that e'er ye wrought:
Is all your strict preciseness come to this?
York: She and the Dauphin have been juggling:
I did imagine what would be her refuge.
Warwick: Well, go to; we'll have no bastards live;
Especially since Charles must father it.
Joan: You are deceived; my child is none of his:
It was Alencon that enjoy'd my love.
York: Alencon! that notorious Machiavel!
It dies, and if it had a thousand lives.
Joan: O, give me leave, I have deluded you:
'Twas neither Charles nor yet the duke I named,
But Reignier, king of Naples, that prevail'd.
Warwick: A married man! that's most intolerable.
York: Why, here's a girl! I think she knows not well,
There were so many, whom she may accuse.
Warwick: It's sign she hath been liberal and free.
York: And yet, forsooth, she is a virgin pure.
Strumpet, thy words condemn thy brat and thee:
Use no entreaty, for it is in vain. (V.3.65-85)

The inclusion of the pregnancy claim is largely a Shakespearean invention, something that serves to make Joan and her captors look worse. Shakespeare’s Joan perverts

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239 Joan the worse for her desperation, her captors for their ill-treatment of her and refusal to adhere to norms of justice. Source texts Hall and Holinshed do not include mention of a pregnancy and subsequent delay of execution, and this is a moment that appears in passing only in Brut’s Chronicles. As Taylor summarizes, Brut is “the only source to question Joan’s virginity with any conviction. [It tells] the entirely fictitious story of how Joan claimed to be pregnant after her arrest, thereby gaining a reprieve until this was revealed to be a lie, whereupon she was burned.” Taylor, 48.
the genealogies that make up history: the child’s father is everyone and no-one, a frightening bastard that must be destroyed as must its mother. As these final degradations prove, it is Joan’s hyper-lasciviousness and simultaneous chastity, her grotesque performance of femininity and her success at masculinity, rather than her heresy or witchcraft that are of greatest offense. The woman who so insistently claimed virginity must be taken down a peg before she is killed, in a scene that makes the English out to be callous men moved by no “entreaty.” York and Warwick list the names of all the men Joan has seemed to have sex with: besides the Dauphin, Joan has allowed Alencon to “enjoy[… her] love” and the married Reignier. While Warrick sees the adultery as “most intolerable,” York is convinced that “there were so many – whom she may accuse” she may not actually know who the father is.

Joan is vilified in this scene, but she is far from the villain of the play. Her treatment at the hands of Warwick and York, their misogynistic taunting, mocking, gloating and refusal to enact proper procedures of justice combine to create a decidedly non-heroic image of the English. In their rejection of custom, the two men flaunt English law and expectation and violate norms of propriety. They clearly take pleasure in cutting Joan down to size, gleefully gloating at the “virgin pure” forced to seek out this “refuge.” They imagine multiple acts of infanticide, promising that the child of Alencon will die violently, as “if it had a thousand lives,” as will the bastard son of Charles. Joan is already imprisoned and sentenced to execution; she is

240 If the [likely apocryphal] account from Brut is to be believed, the historical Joan was granted this type of reprieve. See the passage in question in Taylor, 354.
now violently exorcised and degraded. However, those who speak these last and most violent attacks on her do not emerge unscathed. The hyperbolic vitriol of two armed men towering over an imprisoned young woman in rags creates on Shakespeare’s stage some measure of sympathy for Joan, an emotion modern performances have regularly played to. This final moment of vilification tempers the portrait of English heroism. The now-dead Talbot was the embodiment of English honor: his replacement Richard is not. Perhaps Joan’s mistreatment also tempers the portrait of her. Her earlier freedom (to lead the charge, to move in public, to speak) have caused the worst narratives of femininity to be ascribed to her. However, in some sense it seems that the English stories of Joan’s diabolical ways prompt her to act that way: we see no nefarious magic prior to the last act of the play, despite the regular drumbeat of claims about her mystical treachery. Alongside the critiques of Joan’s moral integrity are those attacking her sexual honesty. In order to save her life, first with the demons and then with confessions of whorishness, Joan unsuccessfully assumes and attempts to conform to the roles that men have created about her.

Despite York and Warwick’s multiple declarations to lead her hence (“take her away, she hath lived too long” and “ay, ay: away with her to execution”), Joan does not go: her speech continues to captivate its hearers, despite their assertions that they are done with her. Realizing she can say no more, Joan eventually gives the

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241 A degradation discussed in Howard and Rackin, 44-45.
242 Grene, *Shakespeare’s Serial History Plays*, 50-55.
243 Much like Queen Margaret in *Richard III*, who will also leave that play with an act of cursing and at a time of her own choosing, despite many earlier attempts to banish her.
order to “lead [her] hence” to the pyre. In a final act of agency, Joan commences her own execution, leaving the play on her own schedule. Her final speech reveals one remaining source of power in her ability to curse and prophesy:

Then lead me hence; with whom I leave my curse:
May never glorious sun reflex his beams
Upon the country where you make abode;
But darkness and the gloomy shade of death
Environ you, till mischief and despair
Drive you to break your necks or hang yourselves! (V.3.86-91)

Joan offers a somewhat accurate prediction of the future (a past for Shakespeare’s audience). The next fifty-five years in English history were dark, with all French holdings lost (an economic and psychological blow) and the kingdom thrown into a civil war. Darkness and the gloomy shade of death descended upon England in the long and bloody Wars of the Roses, and though Richard did not hang himself, his neck was broken and his severed head placed on a pike outside of St. Albans in 1455, killed by his Lancastrian kin. Richard III brought “mischief and despair” upon the court, killing family members and committing political suicide. Joan therefore is granted the privilege of foresight, one “inherited” from Margaret in the succeeding plays.244 Two French women “speak the speech” truthfully, perhaps challenging us as audience to reconsider the possible truth of their claims to chastity, honesty and sincerity. Joan exits: desperate, perhaps despised, but prophetic and soon to be proven right.

244 I use the term inherits to remind the reader that though this is the first play in the tetralogy, it was actually the last to be written. Joan is Margaret’s predecessor, but she is also her theatrical descendant.
Concluding Queerly

Joan’s major threat in 1 Henry VI derives from her ability to penetrate: from the inner sanctum of the court to the heart of the King to the gates of Rouen to the bodies of soldiers, Joan excels in the traditionally masculine realm, rejecting traditional models of femininity and insisting (by asserting her chastity) that she herself will not be penetrated. Aside from her rhetorical “penetrations” in turning Charles and Burgundy to her cause, Joan conceives and executes a plot to take Rouen. In disguise, Joan comments on her necessary performance, the need to “talk like the vulgar sort of marketmen/ that come to gather money for their corn” (III.2.4-5). She speaks to the guards in French, declaring herself a member of “les pauvres gens de France” (peasants, the poor people of France).\(^{245}\) Her trick successful, Rouen is captured. It is the female Joan who takes the town while Charles, Alencon, the Bastard and Reignier wait outside the gates for her signal. Puzel is the (masculine, active) warrior against the (feminine, passive) onlookers waiting outside. She “thrusts” her body through the gates of Rouen, and soon after “thrusts” forth a sign of victory, a sign immediately compared to a “happy wedding torch/ that joineth Rouen unto her countrymen” (III.2.22, 25-6). This military victory is framed around the erotic, an image of marriage precipitated (and facilitated) by Joan’s own violence. However, by serving as torchbearer, Joan manages to distance herself (again) from

\(^{245}\)One of the few instances of spoken French in this play, this moment emphasizes both Joan’s association with the common people and her elision with France itself. This moment is also discussed in Howard and Rackin, 55. A very different scene where the female body comes to represent France is seen in Henry V’s Katherine of Valois.
the martial economy. In classical myth, the Greek god Hymen carries the wedding torch: by assuming this role, Joan is excluding herself from playing either the bride or the groom. Like Hymen, Joan presides and sanctifies this marriage but is not party to it, removing herself from ritual expectation even as she employs its language and ceremony.

Joan Puzel resides both inside and outside normative expectations, enacting and distancing herself from them through her rejection of femininity and assumption of virgin abstinence. In her clothes, her masculine gender performance and her sexuality, Joan refuses the traditional categories available to her as a lower-class woman, or (for that matter) as any kind of woman who could be reintegrated into society. Clothing makes the man, or in this case makes the woman into a man, and Joan’s martial dress and success make her indecipherable. As a woman at war, killing men and yet fighting with a divine purpose, Joan hovers somewhere among the figures of the Christian Deborah, the Amazonian warriors of antiquity, and the demonic witch. She is Christian and pagan and demonic, male and female, all and none simultaneously. 246

Joan’s refusal to participate in the traditional sexual economy also renders her queer. As an adult virgin outside of the clergy, she rejects the sex/gender system that pervades early modern society, and in this she resembles Queen Elizabeth. 247 Joan (and Elizabeth’s) virginity challenges the entire socio-economic arrangement that

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246 For Joan’s profound discontinuity of character, see Schwarz, 86.
247 See: Jankowski, Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama, 6. Schwarz, 89. For the parallels between Joan and Queen Elizabeth, see Marcus, 51-52, 89.
binds early modern life; by removing herself from this order, she denies the patriarchal hierarchy and its demand that the function of women is to have children and secure male inheritance. The issue of Joan’s purity (of body, word and spirit) is repeatedly raised in the text, accusations of impropriety coming from both French and English characters despite Joan’s assertions of chastity. Ultimately, Joan plays to these suspicions in a last-gasp attempt to save her life, performing all the worst narratives that have amassed about her. Of course, in the same way that her chastity is seen as dubious, so too are her claims to rampant whoredom and pregnancy in Act V. The status of neither virgin, nor whore, nor mother can ensure Joan’s pardon: she is too queer to be reintegrated, regardless of the gender performance she is willing to enact. Queerness forbids forgiveness.

Puzel is an existential threat to the English and to conceptions of heroic masculinity, usurping male gender roles while calling attention to their artificiality. Of course, it is not only the English that reject Joan but the French as well. Charles makes no attempt to negotiate her return (reflecting the historical reality), and in the truce negotiations of V.4 she goes entirely unmentioned. There is no Sir Lucy to sing her praises, and like the circle in the water, Joan’s glory has disappeared. Curiously, despite the many dangers that Joan presents, she achieves a type of immortality through the character of Margaret that is not accorded to the likes of Talbot and other English heroes. Queen Margaret of Anjou, the subject of the next chapter, is

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\(^{249}\) Joan’s “immortality” is detailed in "Henry VI, Part I" in Howard and Rackin, esp 54-58.
another Frenchwoman who will take up the military charge, defying normative gender performances when her husband King Henry VI fails to “play the man” and defend his crown, his family and his country. Joan’s capture and execution temporally frame Margaret’s introduction to the drama, with one Frenchwoman giving way to another.\textsuperscript{250} Linked textually through this shared entrance and exit, modern productions have highlighted this connection by having the same actress play both characters.\textsuperscript{251} This doubling emphasizes what the text leaves unsaid: Margaret is a new Joan, closer to the throne and perhaps an even greater threat. Joan may die, but her presence lives on in Margaret, a woman who towers over the remainder of the tetralogy as villain and valiant.

The myth of Joan that Shakespeare builds his narrative upon is in part a myth of queer bodies that don’t operate along normative lines. Joan’s most aggressive (and frightening) act of queering comes in her relationship to filial bonds. If part of the project of writing histories in the early modern era was to assert the masculine narrative of the national genealogy (as Rackin, Howard and others articulate), Joan repeatedly disrupts such projects. From her rejection of her father and his paternal claims, to the creation of new royal genealogies, to the claims of pregnancy with noble scion, Joan is a male nightmare of genealogical destruction and invention. She

\textsuperscript{250} Margaret and Suffolk enter the text immediately following York’s capture of Joan. This also marks another instance of non-sexual reproduction, a genealogy without men and without sex: Joan has “given birth” to a successor. As Marcus describes it, Margaret “rises up like the immortal bird to take Joan’s place after the witch is led off for execution.” Margaret becomes a symbolic daughter “in that she is child to Anjou, whom Joan has named among her lovers. See Marcus, 89.

\textsuperscript{251} Fiona Bell discusses her experience with this doubling in Smallwood and Royal Shakespeare Company, 163-83.
not only refuses the male lineages ascribed to her, but insists on generating her own.

In these acts of rejection and creation, she queers both past and future.
Chapter 3  
The Trouble with Margaret

Queen Margaret of Anjou casts a long shadow across Shakespeare’s first tetralogy. One of a handful of characters to appear in four different plays, Margaret’s combined lines equal the number delivered by Hamlet in the play that bears his name. In addition to her rhetorical breadth, Margaret’s character is dynamic, starting as an adulterous outsider and moving to become a defender of the throne and a voice of historical memory. Shakespeare’s Margaret repeatedly challenges the narratives about her and the past constructed by her male enemies, refusing to allow the Yorkists to rewrite history in order to justify their acts of usurpation. In her advocacy for her son’s rightful claim to the throne, Margaret promotes the established succession pattern of the English line and embraces a historical narrative about the Yorkists that would be taken up by Tudor historians. Though at times vilified, derided and cast out, Margaret remains a figure who remembers and prophesies, possessing a foresight uniquely hers. Margaret challenges the masculine control of the historical narrative, a genre viewed today as having been written not just without women but against them.

Shakespeare’s first tetralogy depicts the dense and often convoluted historical events known as the Wars of the Roses. Fought in the aftermath of the disastrous English losses in the Hundred Year’s War against France (1337-1453), these wars were a series of conflicts for control of French territory punctuated by periods of peace.\textsuperscript{252} From 1455 to 1485 the English houses of Lancaster and York fought a

\textsuperscript{252} For an extremely detailed account of the events of the Hundred Years War, see the three volumes (of a planned five) by Jonathan Sumption. Volumes 1-3 detail the
number of civil wars over rival claims to the throne. Margaret of Anjou entered into an environment where Yorkist resentment over Lancastrian control of the crown had been stewing for a half a century. When Margaret’s husband Henry VI proved a weak king prone to bouts of mental incapacitation, the Yorks attacked. In an attempt to protect herself and their son Edward’s claim to the throne, Margaret asserted her own right to rule and refused to cede authority to the appointed regent Richard, Duke of York. After a number of bloody battles, Margaret and Henry were captured and


Apropos of the larger topic of this dissertation, the internecine struggles do not come to be known collectively as the “Wars of the Roses” until the 19th century, and this moniker derives in part from the Temple Garden scene in 1 Henry VI. A highly influential work on the period is A. J. Pollard, The Wars of the Roses (London: Macmillan, 1988). See also Desmond Seward, The Wars of the Roses: and the lives of five men and women in the fifteenth century (London: Constable, 1995). For an excellent collection of primary texts see Dockray. See also Keith Dockray, William Shakespeare, the Wars of the Roses and the Historians (Stroud, Gloucestershire; Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2002).

The source texts provided by Dockray offer a number of great documents about Margaret from her 15th-century contemporaries. A detailed biography of Margaret is available from Maurer. J. L. Laynesmith’s text on medieval queenship includes an extensive discussion of Margaret, as well the other women who served as queens during the Wars of the Roses. J. L. Laynesmith, The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445-1503 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
Edward was killed (1471). Henry was executed that same year, while Margaret was imprisoned and eventually ransomed to the French. The York house held the crown for less than two decades, Richard III losing it to Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485). Shakespeare’s plays condense nearly 60 years of history into the first tetralogy of 1, 2 and 3 Henry VI and Richard III, depicting a brutal period of the English past that would serve as steppingstone to Elizabeth’s own claims to the throne.

Margaret’s vision of both the past and the future is validated by the plays, even as her performances (as a leader, a woman and a narrator of history) prompt a number of anxieties in the male characters. The problem with Shakespeare’s Margaret is twofold: she is extremely capable as a leader and she refuses to subscribe to the Yorkist version of history. My analysis of the first tetralogy’s Margaret includes a reading of the source texts Shakespeare utilized in order to create this character, texts often suffused with vitriol for the Queen. Margaret proved objectionable to pro-Yorkist and English 15th- and 16th-century writers for a number of reasons: her Gallic foreignness, her lack of a substantial dowry, and her at times non-normative gender performances (particularly her highly visible participation in political and military campaigns) presented her contemporaries with opportunities to attack. Shakespeare’s plays employ and reject these critiques, casting Margaret as both a deceptive “she wolf-of France” and as a vessel for English historical memory. While detailing Margaret’s aberrant gender performance, the plays also point to Henry, whose monarchical and gender failures seem to spur Margaret’s behavior. Reading the first
tetralogy alongside Shakespeare’s source texts offers a more complicated vision of the historical person upon whom Margaret the character is based. Her depravities may prove hyperbolic, but they are countered by the validation of her narrative and her successful act of prophesy in the final scenes of Richard III. This chapter looks at the ways Margaret troubles: troubles men in the first tetralogy, troubles her English contemporaries, and troubles expectations of femininity.

Margaret enters Shakespeare’s drama in the closing scenes of 1 Henry VI. Her first appearance, in V.2, is sandwiched between scenes of Joan Puzel’s capture and execution (1431). She thus enters on the heels of a Frenchwoman who has just handed England a series of costly defeats, threatening the stability of the kingdom through her military and rhetorical acumen. Puzel leaves the play following a number of failures: failure to invoke the underworld, failure to win in battle, failure to sway her English captors. Margaret’s entrance between scenes of Joan’s defeat connects the two women, a structural linkage that signals to the audience that Margaret might pose the same type of dangers to England that Joan did. The succession of one Frenchwoman after another enters constitutes an instance of chronological license for dramatic effect: Joan was executed in 1431, fourteen years before Margaret’s engagement to Henry in 1445. Margaret will turn out to be a revision of Joan: she fights for the English throne on the side of the English, she bends natural forces and men to her will, she asserts her agency and then lives to see vindication.

255 Be it through illicit sexuality, witchcraft, trickery, and military defeat.
We may see a correlation between Margaret’s increasing power and the discussion of her aberrance: the more political muscle she flexes, the greater the attacks on her femininity and gender performance. Margaret’s marital and moral transgressions in Part 2 and early Part 3 serve to increase the dramatic effect of her rehabilitation as defender of the throne and her child in the second half of 3 Henry VI. The second half of the tetralogy finds the queen transformed into an eloquent (and lone) defender of Lancastrian claims to rule and to established rituals of succession. In Richard III, Margaret serves as a voice of historical memory and a prophet of Yorkist doom. In her ability to see both the past and the future, Margaret demonstrates insight and force of speech, while her exit from the play at a moment of personal victory lends her characterization and narrative a measure of validation in the space of the play and the genre.

Wife, Mother, Mistress

Shakespeare’s construction of Queen Margaret derives from several English historical texts. The 16th-century chronicle histories of Edmund Hall and Raphael Holinshed, the primary sources for the English history plays, take their narratives from works written during and after Margaret’s lifetime. One frequent topic for discussion in these source texts is Margaret’s gender performance, i.e. her feminine and masculine

256 Maurer, 129.
257 In 3 Henry VI, Edward accompanies the queen in virtually every scene in which she appears. His preference for his mother is clear, as noted by Nina S. Levine, Women's Matters: Politics, Gender, and Nation in Shakespeare's Early History Plays (Newark London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University Presses, 1998), 87.
characteristics. Rafeallo de Negra, a Milanese ambassador writing to Pope Pius II in 1458, describes her as “a most handsome woman, though somewhat dark and not so beautiful as your serenity.” Her appearance is articulated in the most muted of terms; she is suitable and proper, her skin a bit dark, not “beautiful.” The Historia Anglica by Polydore Vergil (a work commissioned by Henry VIII that serves as basis for the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed) describes Margaret as “a woman of sufficient forecast, very desirous of renown, full of policy, councel, comely behavior, and all manly qualities, in whom appeared great wit, great diligence, great heed and carefulness; but she was [also] of the kind of other women, who commonly are much given [to] mutability and change.” While she possesses the fickle characteristics of women, her intellectual prowess and political acumen align her with more “manly” qualities. Margaret is an amalgam of masculine courage and feminine fragility, a concept Edward Hall echoes in describing her as

a woman of a great wit, and yet of no greater wit, then of hot stomach, desirous of glory and covetous of honor, and of reason, policy council, and other gifts and talents of nature, belonging to a man, full and flowing: of wit and wiliness she lacked nothing, nor of diligence, study and business, she was not un-expert: but yet she had one point of a very woman: for often times, when she was vehement and fully bent in a matter, she was suddenly like a weathercock, mutable, and turning.

258 Dockray, Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book, 15. As Patricia Less notes “the representatives of Milan were among those who kept a careful eye on English affairs, partly because their ruler was supporting Ferrante of Aragon for the throne of Sicily, against France and the claims of the Queen's father, Reignier of Anjou. This and other circumstances gave them a bias in favor of York, and a reason for reporting rumor and gossip hostile to the Lancastrian cause. Lee: 196.
259 Polydore Vergil in Dockray, William Shakespeare, the Wars of the Roses and the Historians, 14.
260 Hall, 208.
Margaret’s wit, wisdom and ambition are all characteristics “belonging to a man,” yet they are undermined by her feminine inconstancy. Hall expands upon Vergil’s commentary, describing her as “hot stomack[ed]” like a man, made of the same humoural temperament and in possession of reason and diligence. Margaret is a sort of hic mulier, a mannish-woman, though not in an abhorrent or monstrous way akin to that of Joan of Arc.\(^{261}\) It is her hot stomach and her masculine qualities that bring about her political success, and these are characteristics to be praised even if they reside inside a woman.

Shakespeare represents these reports of Margaret’s feisty wit and temperament from her first appearance on stage at the end of \textit{1 Henry IV}. In V.2, the English Earl of Suffolk (a member of Henry VI’s court) enters with Margaret in tow.

\begin{quote}
Suffolk: Be what thou wilt, thou art my prisoner. 
O fairest beauty, do not fear nor fly,
For I will touch thee but with reverent hands,
And lay them gently on thy tender side.
I kiss these fingers for eternal peace.
Who art thou? Say, that I may honour thee.
Margaret: Margaret my name, and daughter to a king,
The King of Naples, whoso’er thou art. (V.2.66-73)
\end{quote}

Margaret’s first speech is an assertion of her royal identity and family lineage. While Suffolk may be holding her “prisoner,” her beauty immediately disarms him and he instead seeks to prostrate himself to honor her. This casts her in contrast to Joan Puzel, who explicitly rejects her lineage when her father approaches her before her death. Where Joan breaks ties, Margaret asserts them. Where Puzel’s last acts are of

\(^{261}\) Joan of Arc refers to the historical figure, while Joan Puzel refers to Shakespeare’s character based on the historical personage in \textit{1 Henry VI}.\[120]
failed speech (the inability to invoke underworld assistance and to elicit sympathy from her captors), Margaret’s first are a series of assertions of authority and movements toward autonomy. Speaking her name almost immediately results in her freedom; Suffolk claims that she is “allotted to be ta’en by me” but simultaneously recants ownership, telling Margaret that

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[…] if this servile usage once offend,
Go, and be free again, as Suffolk’s friend
O stay! I have no power to let her pass.
My hand would free her, but my heart says no.
As plays the sun upon the glassy stream,
Twinkling another counterfeit beam,
So seems this gorgeous beauty to mine eyes.
Fain would I woo her, yet I dare not speak.
I’ll call for pen and ink, and write my mind. (1 Henry VI V.2.79-87)

When Suffolk “frees” her, Margaret walks away and he speaks about her as “nature’s miracle.” It is not just her beauty that secures her release, but her agency as viewer; he is “daunted by a woman’s sight” and left confounded. (V.5.25) Suffolk becomes a classic Petrarchan lover at this moment, his body paralyzed by his emotions, his voice unable to speak, and his spirit caught in the desire to sit “and write [his] mind.” The asides that follow are clichés of Petrarchan love; Suffolk’s expression of his inner turmoil, his desire to speak and to love his desired lady recall the Rime Sparse and the love sonnet tradition it spawned. Margaret mocks Suffolk’s transformation into a type of lovesick poet. When Suffolk does not answer Margaret’s requests for a ransom price (he is too busy engaging in asides about potential pitfalls from and strategies of wooing Margaret for both Henry VI and for himself), she begins to imitate him, speaking to herself in asides and calculating strategies for escape. Suffolk emerges
from his act of monologuing and demands to know what Margaret is doing by talking to herself; her reply: “’tis but quid for quo.” When Margaret is ignored, so too shall she ignore; she exerts power over her supposed captor through her beauty, her sight, and her speech (or lack thereof). Margaret may be captured, but Suffolk is captive.

When Suffolk and Margaret resume their dialogue, the latter’s rhetorical acumen, intelligence, and fierce reason become clear, as does her theory of kingship:

   Suffolk: Say, gentle Princess, would you not suppose
   Your bondage happy to be made a queen?
   Margaret: To be a queen in bondage is more vile
   Than is a slave in base servility,
   For princes should be free. (V.2.131-35)

While Suffolk tries to frame marriage to a king as “happy bondage,” Margaret refuses such notions; all acts of bondage are offensive to the enslaved. The confined monarch suffers more from bondage: rendered vile by it, the bound prince is reduced to a level below “base servility.” Margaret ultimately agrees to Suffolk’s undertakings if her father Reignier (the Duke of Anjou and cousin of the Dauphin) grants consent, which he does. After completing the negotiations, Suffolk attempts to steal a kiss from Margaret under the guise of a “princely commendation” for Henry. Margaret refuses to play coy, insisting that what she sends is “a pure unspotted heart” (V.5.138). Suffolk kisses Margaret, which she will not acknowledge as a mark of affection to her king, telling the Earl she “will not so presume to send such peevish tokens to a king.” Margaret is fiercely pragmatic: a king cannot, and should not, be wooed by such trifling matters. In her eyes, kingship and royal marriage are far weightier matters than Suffolk’s Petrarchan playfulness would allow. Margaret comes from a place of
intellectual reason, unlike the rapt Suffolk. Margaret appears as a linguistically clever and aggressive character, asserting her rights from her first entrance.

Shakespeare also dramatizes the marriage negotiations conducted between Suffolk and Reignier, a contract that will become a regular target of Yorkist harangues. Reignier allows Margaret to wed Henry upon the condition that he be allowed to “enjoy mine own, the counties of Maine and Anjou,/ Free from oppression or the stroke of war” (V.2.175-76). Margaret repeatedly requests to know her ransom price at the beginning of this scene; Suffolk finally answers that it is he who will pay a “ransom” for her (V.2.113). In the opening scene of 2 Henry VI, the magnitude of this agreement is made clear; upon hearing that she is also “sent over [at] the King of England’s own proper cost and charges, without dowry” (2 Henry VI I.1.55-8), the King’s councilors portend English doom, declaring the marriage “fatal,” something that will “undo all, as all had never been” (2 Henry VI, I.1.99). Margaret’s arrival, without dowry and at English cost, marks a rejection of English tradition and a shift in power relations. As the financial beneficiary of this match, Margaret immediately assumes a position of power; she enters as a “woman on top,” a power that she will increasingly wield as 2 Henry VI progresses.262

The complaints of the courtiers as verbalized in 2 Henry VI are sentiments found in the chronicles and other sources. Margaret’s arrival sans dowry and at English expense is aberrant enough to warrant repeated commentary. Rafaello de Negra wrote that “the king of England took her without any dowry, and he even

262 See “Women On Top” in Davis, 124-51.
restored some lands which he held to her father,” and Dr. Thomas Gascoigne (two time Chancellor of Oxford) argued that from the match “England received nothing of goods, but the loss of Maine and Anjou.” Hall’s assessment is that “Reyner duke of Aniow, call[s] himself kyng of Scicile, Naples, Hierusalem, [but has] onely the name and stile of the same, without any peny profite, or fote of possession,” something Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York paraphrases in iambic pentameter declaring that “her father is no better than an earl,/ Although in glorious titles he excel” (1 Henry VI V.7.37-8) and “bears the type of the king of Naples/ Of both the Sicils and Jerusalem—/ [he is] not so wealthy as an English yeoman” (2 Henry VI IV.4.122-4). These marriage negotiations signal more than just a break from tradition; they are also a disruption of social and gender hierarchy: the King is marrying beneath himself and paying for the privilege. The fear, and one that will be borne out, is that this is the first of many political upheavals and challenges to normative gender performances Margaret will prompt or enact.

The play regularly casts Henry and Margaret’s marriage as the result of Suffolkian manipulation and as coming at significant cost for the English. Suffolk goes to great lengths to justify the pairing and the conditions surrounding the wedding at the end of 1 Henry VI, directly addressing the financial concerns raised by Gloucester and Exeter:

A dower, my lords? Disgrace not so your King
That he should be so abject, base, and poor

263 Dockray, Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book, 15. And Maurer, 27.
264 Hall, 203-4.
To choose for wealth and not for perfect love.
Henry is able to enrich his queen,
And not to seek a queen to make him rich.
So worthless peasants bargain for their wives,
As market men for oxen, sheep or horse.
Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship. ([Henry VI], V.4.48-56)

Though a biased source--given his attraction to Margaret--Suffolk’s attitude toward marriage defies convention; gone (or at least unmentioned) are the economic considerations that might motivate a royal pairing, replaced instead with a romantic vision of wedlock. Suffolk disdains the entire concept of a dowry, arguing that it demeans a king “to choose for wealth and not for perfect love.” Scorning the process of marital “attorneyship” as something in which only the “worthless peasant” engages, Suffolk casts the traditional dowry practice as a distinctly lower class ritual that debases (or signifies the abjection of) both parties. According to Suffolk, marriage is more than just negotiation, it is an act of emotional enrichment that comes from “perfect love” and not the need for wealth. This, however, is a disingenuous line of reasoning: Suffolk may distance this marriage from the market economy of trading “oxen, sheep or horse,” but he clearly sees Margaret as a political investment, one that “will confirm our Peace and keep the Frenchmen in allegiance” (V.4.42-3). As the comments from York et al. in 2 Henry VI reveal, the court remains unconvinced.

Margaret’s infidelity to Henry VI with the courtier Suffolk receives limited emphasis in 2 Henry VI, occasionally serving as fodder for Yorkist critiques but otherwise irrelevant to the drama.265 Margaret’s sexuality (specifically, the desire she

265 Howard and Rackin, 72-73.
inspires in Suffolk) seems to facilitate her ascent, but it consequently marks her as devious. The last French woman we have seen on stage (an imprisoned Joan Puzel at the end of 1 Henry VI) also posed a sexual threat, offering her body to demons and alleging false paternity. While not demonic, Margaret’s sexuality could pose a far more frightening risk, potentially threatening the stability and legitimacy of the monarchical line. However, despite Margaret’s adulterous affair with Suffolk, Prince Edward’s paternity goes largely unquestioned. As Phyllis Rackin and Jean E. Howard note, Margaret’s adultery “has no real impact on the action of the Henry VI plays. [Her] sexual transgressions seem almost irrelevant — dramatically unnecessary attributes, at best added to underscore [her] characterization as [a threat] to masculine honor, at worst gratuitous slanders.” 266 She may be unfaithful to Henry VI, but Edward’s legitimacy as heir apparent is never under suspicion. Margaret’s infidelity may be threatening, but not to the line of right succession.

While no major source texts point to an adulterous affair with Suffolk, suspicions regarding Margaret’s fidelity were a mainstay of Yorkist propaganda during the mid-15th century, stories of infidelity that contribute to the larger narrative of Margaret as unruly. 267 The eight-year interval between her marriage to Henry and the birth of their only child Edward made royal marital relations, or lack thereof, a popular topic, and the Queen’s enemies readily exploited the subject. As Hall reports,

267 There is no evidence to support the claim that Margaret had an affair with William de la Pole or any other man. Maurer, 129. For more on the figure of the “unruly woman” in Shakespeare see Penny Gay, As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women, Gender and performance (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).
she “sustained not a little slander and obloquy [verbal abuse] of the common people, who had an opinion that the king was not able to get a child and therefore sticketed not to say that this was not his son, with many slanderous words greatly sounding to the Queen’s dishonor.” Claims that the heir apparent was illegitimate attacked Margaret’s honor and Henry’s authority, and the throne was quick to respond: one man was “drawn, hanged and quartered for producing bills asserting that Prince Edward was not the Queen’s son.” Edward’s rumored illegitimacy comes to signify a micro-disorder in the royal family; if the King cannot control his family, how can he govern the macro-world of England?

Margaret’s suspected adulterous sexuality is a sign of a broader unruliness on her part, which is framed by Yorkist propaganda as the cause of vast disorder and distress in the kingdom:

[as] scripture says, ‘woe be to that region where is a king unwise or innocent’. Moreover it is a right and great perversion [For] a woman of a land to be a regent – Queen Margaret, I mean, that ever has meant To govern all England with might and power, And to destroy the right line was her intent. 270

Margaret’s inappropriate sexual desire is thought to reveal a larger desire for power. While men may legitimately crave power, for the female to do so is perverse; in

Margaret’s case, this wish to “govern all England with might and power” is primarily driven by an attempt to destroy the “right line” of succession, masculinity and English dominance. Margaret’s craven nature predates her arrival; back to the days of scripture she has “ever” wanted to usurp and destroy, a villainy that cuts across time. Of course, this ballad reveals that any woman serving as regent undermines the declarations of scripture. The question of the “right line” is in the eye of the beholder: to the Yorkists, Henry IV usurped the throne, and the Yorks are the proper inheritors (the Lancasters read the line of succession differently). There is a causal relationship, however – Henry’s “unwise” innocence is the first source of “woe,” one that facilitates the presence of the others.

According to the sentiment of the ballad, Margaret’s perversion and disruption of the “right” renders her a type of anti-historian, a woman who cuts off monarchical lines and the futures they might hold. As Rackin writes, since nearly all the “protagonists of Shakespeare’s history plays, conceived both as subjects and as writers of history, were inevitably male[,] the women who do appear are typically defined as opponents and subverters of the historical and historiographic enterprise—in short, as anti-historians.”

Humphrey of Gloucester (King Henry VI’s uncle) verbalizes this sentiment in 2 Henry VI, warning that “fatal [is] this marriage, cancelling [our] fame/ Blotting [our] names from books of memory,/ Razing the characters of [our] renown,/ Defacing monuments of conquered France,/ undoing all, as all had never been” (2 Henry VI I.1.95-9). Margaret’s potential to write (or un-

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write) history rather than be directed by it is frightening in its show of agency. The French queen’s presence in England means the end of the English presence in France, and the end of the physical and written markers that memorialize the history of that English presence. This marriage effaces monuments and erases texts, unmaking the physical markers of history. Such markers are often all that remain of history; to cancel, raze, blot and deface is to destroy the memory of the past. Masculine and feminine history is a zero-sum game in this equation: for Margaret to make history as a female regent, male history must be unmade.

Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York (the rival claimant to Henry VI’s throne), reads history as a masculine endeavor, meaning that a woman who attempts to make any history threatens masculinity. From York’s perspective, this marriage “dims the honour of this warlike isle” (honor here linked with bellicosity), and the reverse dowry operates against traditional English history; “I never read but England’s kings have had/ Large sums of gold and dowries with their wives--/ And our King Henry gives away his own,/ To match with her that brings no vantages” (2 Henry VI I.1.121-8). According to York, this inverted instance of marital negotiations represents a “never read” (or, more importantly, written) event in the English past. Margaret’s arrival is a departure from monarchical, marital and gender role tradition, but not one of her own negotiation. Ultimately, her repeated movements against normative practices (by choice as an adulterer and by chance as the subject of marriage contracts) cause the Yorks to read her as anti-historical, a figure that works against their narrative and that refuses to be silenced. In her
ambition and sexuality, Margaret threatens male control of both the monarchy and masculinity, the two foci of the nascent genre of history.\(^2\)\(^7\)\(^2\)

Margaret’s arrival at the English court in the opening scene of 2 Henry VI introduces a crucial question that dictates the play’s subsequent plot movements: who actually controls the crown? Through the episodes that ensue between the Lancastrians and Yorks, the play queries the relationship between gender performance and ownership of the throne. Henry’s acts of financial compensation in exchange for Margaret are a repeated canard for his critics in the play, emblematic of a failed king and a queen who oversteps her bounds. The source texts, too, pinpoint Margaret (her marriage agreement, her gender performance, her desire for power) as a root cause of the problems that England endures during the civil wars. She affords these authors the opportunity to offer moralistic judgments about her: it is her aberrance that brings about English woe. Hall and Holinshed inject a providential emphasis into their readings of this marriage.\(^2\)\(^7\)\(^3\) Holinshed is particularly heavy handed in his analysis of Margaret and Henry’s nuptials, invoking divine intervention and “Fortune’s wheel” in explaining Henry’s failed tenure:

But most of all it should seem that God was displeased with this marriage, for after the confirmation thereof the king’s friends fell from him, both in England and in France, the lords of his realm fell at division, and the commons rebelled in such sort that, finally, after many fields fought in and many thousands of men slain, the King at length was deposed and his son killed and this Queen sent home again with as much misery and sorrow as she

\(^{272}\) Howard and Rackin, 82.
\(^{273}\) A narrative theme derived from the work of Polydore Vergil, discussed in Lee: 204.
was received with pomp and triumph; such is the instability of worldly felicity and so wavering is false flattering Fortune.\textsuperscript{274}

Holinshed declares the “confirmation” of this marriage as the moment when Henry lost his friends, his lands and his popular support, eventually leading to the loss of his crown. Even God is displeased by this union and brings about a world of sorrows at home and abroad as a consequence.

\textbf{Re-Making History}

As the Yorks make increasingly aggressive movements to seize power, Shakespeare’s Margaret pleads with Henry to screw his courage to the sticking place to no avail. Henry’s repeated failures to assert monarchical authority prompt her to action; however, since his inability to act requires her to do so, this motivation complicates the reading of her character as primarily an anti-historian. The anti-historian works against the narrative of “history and the historiographic enterprise” of the play.\textsuperscript{275} This enterprise actively excludes women, both as subjects and as authors,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{274} Holinshed, et al., \textit{Holinshed's Chronicle as Used in Shakespeare's Plays}, 171. \textsuperscript{275} The genre of history in this era, and the didactic and moralizing intentions that drove its creation, is discussed in chapter 1 and briefly summarized here. History was thought to reveal a “truth” in its representation of events, in possession of an ability to reform the reader (or viewer, in the case of history plays) and possibly the society at large. Though granted a mantle of objectivity, histories are always constructed from “a particular point of view or from within a context of a structured set of events […] that are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain [events] and the highlighting of others.” (From Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” Adams and Searle, 397. Frederic Jameson makes a similar point in Fredric Jameson, \textit{The Political Unconscious / Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act} (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 28.). Histories are narratives created by choices and then “emplotted,” acts of selection and interpretation that reveal the biases of its authors (See White in Adams and Searle, 398.) Historiography, or the}
creating a masculine genealogy that emphasizes written male lineages over the physical feminine genealogy of childbirth. Attempts to question, subvert or usurp the masculine focus of historical narrative are acts of anti-history; her rhetorical skill, physical beauty and proximity to and desire for power make her a threat to the history the Yorks want to narrate. But Margaret is less an anti-historian than an alternative historical voice validated amid the violence and cruelty of Richard III: she works for an English historical narrative, although not the one Yorkist men want to record. Margaret does act “against” history, but she does so as a result of Henry’s mental and monarchical absence. Margaret and Henry fail to uphold traditional expectations of royal gender performance, but this failure is generally read as the exclusive result of the Queen’s aggressiveness, rather than Henry’s meekness and incapacity. By 3 Henry VI the reality of who holds the power is clear: Clarence declares Margaret “the king, though [Henry] do wear the crown” (3 Henry VI II.2.90). When York notes that “the Queen this day here holds her Parliament,” Henry VI does not even argue in favor of his own monarchy, instead promising the crown to York and disinheriting his

making of historical narratives, is also a social act: histories permit a type of “discourse with the dead,” a means by which the present can engage with the past (See Certeau, 46.). These histories also tell the stories of a communal shared ancestry (cultural or genealogical), stories that help to create the imagined communities and ideologies fundamental to the work of nation building taking place in the late 16th century (See Anderson, 6-7.). The English nation under Elizabeth was trying to articulate and authorize itself in a way that its residents could invest in. One strategy for establishing authority is evoking the past, and Tudor authors wrote histories that detailed the ways that great men of English history paved the way for England’s ascent to world power under Elizabeth. In sum, early modern history is subjective yet thought objective, constructed but thought seamless, and grants privileges to certain elements (such as male voices) while excluding events and characters whose presence might undermine or challenge the authority of the narrative.
own son (3 Henry VI I.1.35). When confronted with the undoubtedly familiar claim that his inheritance derives from his grandfather Henry IV’s act of usurpation, the King’s only response is, “I know not what to say—my title’s weak” (I.1.135). Henry’s inability to defend himself rhetorically also points to a lack of martial skill. The King prefers elaborate speeches on the glories of pastoral life to hand-to-hand combat and battle strategy, as he details in his longest speech in the play at 3 Henry VI II.5.

Henry’s timidity and loquacity are frequently remarked upon: the future Richard III notes that if they raise the “drums and trumpets” of war the sounds will make the king “fly” (3 Henry VI, I.1.118), while Exeter chides that, unlike Henry VI, he will “stay not to expostulate” (II.5.135). Henry’s own son grows weary of his father’s garrulous inaction:

Henry: Stay gentle Margaret, and hear me speak.
Margaret: Thou hast spoke too much already. [To Edward] Get thee gone.
Henry: Gentle son Edward, thou wilt stay with me?
Margaret: Ay, to be murdered by his enemies.
Edward: When I return with victory from the field
    I’ll see your grace. Till then, I’ll follow her. (3 Henry VI, I.1.257-263)

In this family tableaux, the “husband goes to war” trope is reworked. Henry assumes the part usually reserved for wives, the spouse pleading that husband and son will remain. Margaret rejects the implorations to stay, tired of speeches and ready to get “gone.” Henry’s speech is not merely “too much,” it is ineffective: for Edward to remain would mean his certain murder. Unlike the King, Edward understands that victory waits in the battlefield. The problems posed by Henry’s propensity for discussion over execution are compounded by his lack of emotional restraint,
qualities generally gendered feminine. The response to moments of crisis is where the King and Queen’s gender performances appear most distinctly non-normative. Stress collapses Henry, rendering him unable to function: at 2 Henry VI III.1.198, he hurriedly leaves the Parliament meeting, his heart “drowned with grief […] his body round engirt with misery” at the thought of Gloucester’s treason, and in the next scene faints upon learning that Gloucester has died. (2 Henry VI III.2.33). In contrast, news of Suffolk’s death infuses Margaret with a steely resolve to vengeance: “Oft have I heard that grief softens the mind,/ And makes it fearful and degenerate;/ Think, therefore, and cease to weep […]/ No, my love, I should not mourn, but die for thee” (2 Henry VI IV.4). While Henry’s sorrow allows him to distance himself from the demands of court politics, Margaret channels her grief into a call to arms. She is an actor who moves, advances and attacks: Henry is acted upon, “engirt” and “drowned” by his emotions.

Because the Queen controls the King’s emotional and intellectual terrain as well as his geographical movement, her actions propel the plot. With York’s troops victorious at the conclusion of 2 Henry VI, Henry argues that they should stay and face their fate, they cannot “outrun the heavens.” Margaret accosts him: “What are you made of? You’ll nor fight nor fly./ Now is it manhood, wisdom, and defence,/ To give the enemy way, and to secure us/ By what we can, which can no more but fly” (2 Henry VI V.4.2ff). Henry has already given up, forgotten about “London where [he is] loved” and resigned to defeat and death. Margaret’s decision to flee London allows the play’s story to go on into Part 3; left to Henry, the drama would conclude
at this point, as he would rather just “stay.” Margaret forces a King previously static into motion, an act that signals her total assumption of authority over Henry. From here on, she will issue orders and Henry will follow them without dispute. The King does not merely acquiesce to Margaret’s commands, he actively seeks them, ordering Exeter to “take me with thee, […] Not that I fear to stay, but love to go/ Whither the Queen intends” (3 Henry VI II.5.137-9). The matter of Margaret’s wishes dictating Henry’s movements is emphasized when Clifford asks “your highness [to] depart the field—/[as] The Queen hath best success when you are absent” (3 Henry VI II.2.73-4). Henry proves a bother in battle: Margaret, and the throne, are best served when the King remains “absent.” At this moment, the inversion of gender roles is complete; the warrior-king wife battles while a weeping bride-groom remains behind fortified walls.

The surrender of his throne proves Henry’s most egregious act as king (particularly given the political practice of primogeniture) and his worst crime as parent. Henry’s agreement with York that he will remain king for the rest of his lifetime yet “confirm the crown to [York] and to [his] heirs” means he has dispossessed his son, Edward (3 Henry VI I.1.172-3). This is in some ways the most profound act of anti-historicism in the play: Henry not only breaks the lineal succession, but cedes to a new narrative that rewrites the actions of Henry IV, his grandfather, as unjust. Henry cuts off his bloodlines past and future, disinheriting the latter and disowning the narrative of the former. The attack on her son’s economic
and titular stability sparks the Queen’s rage against the king who has “proved so unnatural a father:”

Ah, timorous wretch,  
Thou hast undone thyself, thy son, and me [...]  
Had I been there, which am a seely woman,  
The soldiers should have tossed me on their pikes  
Before I would have granted to that act.  
But thou preferr’st thy life before thine honour.  
And seeing thou dost, I here divorce myself,  
Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed,  
Until that act of Parliament be repealed  
Whereby my son is disinherited.  
The northern lords that have forsworn thy colours  
Will follow mine, if once they see them spread—  
And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace  
And the utter ruin of the house of York.  
Thus do I leave thee. Come son, let’s away.  
Our army is ready—come, we’ll after them. (3 Henry VI I.1.230-250)

This speech, coming on the heels of Henry’s act of disinheritance, explicitly depicts how Henry’s speech (both his preference for words over action and his verbal act of forfeiture) forces Margaret into her role as a defender of the throne. Because Henry chooses his own life over his son’s future, Margaret must take up the charge. She attempts to force Henry to action through a number of strategies: questioning his manhood, attacking his reputation, divorcing him and promising violence. She starts by calling him a “timorous wretch,” a phrase laden with more contempt than pity, and emphasizes the failures of Henry’s performance as father and king through a comparison to her hypothetical response. Referring to herself as an innocent and helpless (seely) woman, Margaret figuratively proffers her body to the cause, declaring that she would let the soldiers toss her “on their pikes before [granting] to have that act” enforced upon her. This sacrifice, allowing herself to be impaled (with
intimations of rape) upon the pikes of the enemy, stands in sharp contrast to Henry’s wish to “for this [his] lifetime reign as king” (1.1.172). Unlike Henry, Margaret places honor above life, and so divorces herself from her husband’s table and bed. With a short declarative phrase and a remarkable degree of agency, Margaret leaves (this also represents a second instance of Margaret dictating her own romantic fortunes). This act of political and personal separation speaks to the reality of a royal marriage: this relationship has been influenced by the political throughout; from hereon, Margaret will wield the power that Henry has refused. Margaret claims control of “our army” and exclusive ownership of “my son.” All attempts fail to sway the King, and it is only after Margaret’s defeat of York (and after much urging by Clifford) that Henry changes his mind. Clifford compares Henry to “unreasonable creatures [who] feed their young,/ And though man’s face be fearful to their eyes,/ Yet in protection of their tender ones,/ […] /Make war with him that climbed unto their nest/ Offering their own lives in their young’s defence” (3 Henry VI II.2.25-32). Even the basest of creatures, those that do not merely lack reason but act against it, defend their young, fighting to the death against those they most fear. Henry’s acts are not simply un-paternal: they are unnatural and “unreasonable.” Instead, Margaret must work alone to ensure the stability of the nest, the stability of the line established by Henry IV, and the stability of the nation.

Henry’s monarchical failures result in Margaret’s enactment of many of the rituals of kingship. In 2 Henry VI 2.3.31, she demands that the regent Gloucester “give up [his] staff,” a phallic symbol of monarchical power. Gloucester lays the
scepter in front of Henry’s feet, whereupon Margaret picks up the “staff of honour raught” and places it “where it best fits to be, in Henry’s hand” (2 Henry VI 2.3.43-4). It is Margaret who demands the regent resign, and it is Margaret who presents Henry with the icon of authority: she is the setter up and plucker down of kings, the ultimate kingmaker as “coronator” of Henry and mother of the next in line. In a perversion of the coronation ritual, Margaret later places a paper crown on the head of the imprisoned York in 3 Henry VI 1.4. Mocking his grief, she strips him of the crown and then, with Clifford, stabs her longtime enemy and revels in his death. When she returns to the King her grip on power is reiterated, as she reminds the wistful Henry that he “promised knighthood to our forward son” and orders the king to “unsheathe [his] sword and dub him presently.” Though Henry titles him, it is Margaret who commands Edward to “kneel down.” When Henry cautions Edward only to “draw thy sword in right,” Edward says he obeys his mother’s credo to “draw as [heir] apparent to the crown,/ And in that quarrel use it to the death” (3 Henry VI II.2.64-5). Margaret acts the king; Henry merely plays it. She removes power and dispenses titles, dictates Henry’s movement, holds her son’s allegiance and leads troops, and does all of this in the name of her son’s claim to the throne. Her refusal to adhere to Yorkist narratives and her insistent assertions of authority over her monarchical mate might be anti-historical, but her voice in favor of English primogeniture reveals a conservative figure who defers to normative, non-violent acts of succession, someone who wants history to progress as genealogy dictates it.
Margaret is the frequent target of invective from the men in the plays. The attacks increase in their vitriol the greater her distance from expected performances of femininity. While the critiques initially remain limited to the dowry situation (with a few references to adultery) in 2 Henry VI, the attacks of 3 Henry VI grow increasingly spleenful and directed toward her performance as a woman. Margaret taunts York with a kerchief covered in the blood of his slain son Rutland and then stabs the grieving father. In the moments leading up to his death, York assails her at length as a

She-wolf of France, but worse than the wolves of France
Whose tongue more poisons than the adder’s tooth—
How ill-beseeming it is in thy sex
To triumph like an Amazonian trull
Upon their woes whom fortune captivates!
But that thy face is visor-like, unchanging,
Made impudent with use of evil deeds,
I would essay, proud Queen, to make thee blush.
To tell thee whence thou cam’st, of whom derived,
Were shame enough to shame thee—wert thou not shameless.[…]
'Tis beauty that doth oft make women proud—
But, God he knows, thy share thereof is small;
'Tis virtue that doth make them most admired—
The contrary doth make thee wondered at;
'Tis government that makes them seem divine—
The want thereof makes thee abominable.
Thou art as opposite to every good
As the antipodes are unto us,
Or as the south to the septentrion.
O tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide![…]
Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible—
Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
That face of [Rutland’s] the hungry cannibals
Would not have touched, would not have stained with blood—
But you are more inhuman, more inexorable,
O, ten times more than tigers of Hyrcania. (3 Henry VI I.4.110ff)
York’s denunciation of Margaret encapsulates many of the traditional early modern attitudes about women and female nature. He calls her out as a female, foreign animal whose speech proves more poisonous than a snake’s bite. The she-wolf is emblematic of (among other things) greed and female sexual excess, and York couches Margaret as viciously driven by desire for power and sex.\textsuperscript{276} He also attacks her speech. In an odd oxymoron, York compares Margaret to an “Amazonian trull,” making her both a violent woman who scorns male society and heterosexuality and a prostitute dependent on the traffic of men in her body.\textsuperscript{277} She is both combatively non-sexual and willingly proffering her sex. Within four lines, York evokes three standard characteristics of “bad” women: greed, lust, and verbal deceit. Alternatively animal, reptile, and single-breasted warrior streetwalker, Margaret lacks all shame, her face like the masks worn by some prostitutes.\textsuperscript{278} The Queen’s flinty obduracy is made possible by a lifetime of evil deeds, her unchanging expression the ultimate marker of her lack of compassion and inhumanity. Margaret’s inability to blush is an extremely damning comment regarding her femininity. Reddening of the cheeks was seen as a reflexive expression of female modesty, a physiological sign that spoke to inner morality. Margaret’s perceived inability to blush is the first in a series of comparisons

\textsuperscript{276} For more discussion on the semiotics of the she-wolf in the Renaissance (as allegory for greed, as image of fierce maternity, as representative of the prostitute) see Cristina Mazzoni, \textit{She-wolf: The Story of a Roman Icon} (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 123-37.

\textsuperscript{277} Ironically, Margaret actually enacts a role completely antithetical to that of the Amazon; rather than killing or abandoning her son, she relentlessly fights for his right to the crown.

\textsuperscript{278} See the footnote on “masklike” in Shakespeare, et al., \textit{The Norton Shakespeare}, 312.
York establishes about what a female is supposed to be and the ways in which Margaret proves “ill-beseeming.” “Beauty” makes women proud, but her share of beauty “is small.” “Virtue” makes women “admired,” yet her lack of virtue makes her “wondered at.” Finally, good “government,” or self-control, is what makes women “seem divine,” while “the want thereof makes [Margaret] abominable.”

Though the structure of the three comparisons points to the reading of “government” as self-restraint, seeing “government” as the bureaucracy of the country creates a subtly different interpretation. While York is no doubt critiquing Margaret, his reference to government can also speak to Henry’s failures to “govern” his state. If Henry had proved a successful king, this mannish-woman would not have to seize power. York succinctly articulates his diatribe against Margaret, essentializing female gender as “soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible” next to the “stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless” Margaret. The opposite of good women, Margaret is morally different as well, as far distant from English morality (and society) as those who live on the opposite end of the earth (antipodes), or to the northern most regions of the world (the septentrion). While the mainstays of misogynistic invective make an appearance here, Margaret’s aberrance remains unique, not only to her character but to the entire Shakespearean corpus. Two terms, “she-wolf” and “septentrion,” are present only in

this speech. Her feminine aberrance translates into the speeches of others, creating lexical anomalies.

As York’s speech continues, so does the animalizing of Margaret. Margaret’s beauty conceals her vicious and calculating deception: she is a “tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide.” This animal skin hides a ferocity nastier than that of the tigers in Persia. Margaret’s trickery is as “inhuman” and “inexorable” as that of the dominant predators in nature, her duplicity surpassing the traditional female deceptions made possible by false modesty or acts of cuckoldry. Comparisons to animals ultimately prove inadequate, as York soon renders her a threat to the survival of civilization and humanity. In the same way she blots out names from the history books, Margaret destroys the building block of society, human relationships. York severs all ties Margaret shares with mankind, a “hungry cannibal” desecrating the body and throwing all norms of civility and culture aside. Far from the virtuous and admired woman she should be, Margaret is a cannibalistic prostitute and an animal, a figure lacking modesty, beauty, morality and shame.

Margaret as warrior is her most troubling and non-normative gender performance, and the one that aligns her most with Joan Puzel. Like Joan, Margaret successfully operates in the most masculine of spheres, assumes militaristic titles and speaks in the language of war. The militant Margaret is initially dismissed as irrelevant (“A woman’s general, what should we fear?” at 3 Henry VI I.2.68), but her martial successes soon elevate her to “Captain Margaret” (3 Henry VI II.6.75). She

Wolves appear in a number of Shakespeare’s plays, but only gendered as female on this occasion. Schmidt and Sarrazin, 1386.
lays her “mourning weeds” aside so that she may “put [her] armour on” (3 Henry VI III.3.229-30) and moves to the head of her army: “The Queen, with all northern generals and lords,/ Intends here to besiege you in your castle./ She is hard by with twenty-thousand men” (3 Henry VI I.2.49-51). The Queen herself leads the siege, riding at the head of a huge army.

In the creation of a martial Margaret her most laudatory and her most vile characteristics are represented. As Shakespeare takes liberties with the chronicle sources in depicting Margaret as literally killing Richard of York, he also renders her heroic and rhetorically skillful in her “exhortation to action” speech before her amased fighters. This portrait, particularly the image of her rallying her troops is drawn from two major sources. The first source is from Pope Pius II, whose Commentaries record this speech from 1469 where Margaret speaks of how she has

often broken [the English] battle line. I have mowed down ranks far more stubborn than theirs are now. You who once followed a peasant girl, follow now a queen. I will either conquer or be conquered with you.” […] All marveled at such boldness in a woman, at a man's courage in a woman's breast, and at her reasonable arguments. They said that the spirit of the Maid, who had raised Charles to the throne, was renewed in the Queen.281

In an attempt to inspire French troops to victory over the English, Margaret invokes the memory of French military victories over English troops forty years prior under Joan of Arc. Margaret casts herself as a warrior engaged in hand-to-hand combat. She herself has “broken” the English line, “mowing” down numerous contingents of soldiers. Margaret does not merely oversee the battle; she executes it. She also speaks to her community with the troops; she will not flee the field (or be taken like King

Henry has); she will either achieve victory or be “conquered” with the rest. In an adept act of propaganda that spurs her listeners to action, the deposed queen evokes the memory of Joan of Arc and of one of the most stunning French military victories of the last fifty years. It works: they “marvel” at her masculine performance. She possesses the boldness and courage of a man as well as his reason, all despite her “woman’s breast.”

The second, and more important, source may be the apocryphal tale of Queen Elizabeth I’s speech in full armor at Tilbury, an event undoubtedly familiar to Shakespeare’s contemporary audience as a result of royal propaganda. According to the mythic narrative, and an iconography Elizabeth cultivated and encouraged, the Virgin Queen appeared in full armor before her assembled troops at Tilbury in 1588. With an impending battle against a Spanish fleet that vastly outnumbered that of the English, Elizabeth delivered a rousing speech to rally the troops.

“We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already, for your forwardness you have
deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you…”

She comes before these troops, not for her own “recreation and disport,” but to join in the battle itself, casting herself in the model of martial monarch in a decidedly masculine gender performance. Elizabeth does more than just oversee; she takes part “in the midst and heat of the battle,” either to live or die amongst her men, much the same way that Margaret stands at the front of her own troops. The Queen employs the language of hand-to-hand combat, promising to lay down her “honor and her blood” in the dust itself should it become necessary. Vowing that she herself will prove “general, judge and rewarde” of every virtue in the field, Elizabeth swears to “take up arms” against the sea of troubles posed by the Spanish enclave and to fight on the field.

Elizabeth repeatedly speaks of herself in masculine terms. While she briefly calls attention to her “weak and feeble” feminine body, she immediately contrasts this traditional language about her external female frailties with a description of her internal body, her possession of a masculine and monarchical “heart and stomach.” Elizabeth invokes the English past of kings like Henry IV and V, arguing that she possesses not just a monarch’s fortitude, but a specifically English monarch’s fortitude. Elizabeth recalls the myth of an English martial history in order to celebrate (and assert) her own greatness, and (by extension) the supremacy of her England. If this speech was delivered before congregated troops at Tilbury it was likely not read

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by Elizabeth but by one of her courtiers (perhaps Essex, who would lead his own rebellion a decade later). However, following the success of the English in this battle, the speech was glorified, and the myth of an England unified for the first time under Elizabeth was born, as demonstrated in a number of artistic representations from the years following the Armada. George Gower’s “The Armada Portrait” depicts the victorious English queen with “before” and “after” images of the naval battle framed in the windows behind her. In the left window panel, the sun shines on the victorious English fleet, while a tempestuous scene of ships crashing on rocks under dark clouds reveals the fate of the Spanish navy. Elizabeth’s hand sits upon the globe, alluding to the growing global supremacy of the English nation.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 1**

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283 Reproduced in Montrose, 146. “Elizabeth I,” attributed to George Gower; 1588(?). Oil on Panel. © His Grace the Duke of Bedford and the Trustee of the Bedford Estate.
While this image posits Elizabeth as a queen overseeing but removed from the battle, other representations produced in the years following the victory show a monarch on the ground, riding a horse, engaged in the business of war as the Armada burns in the background. In the painting (and detail) below from St. Faith’s Church (c.1588) the Spanish fleet is engulfed by flames while a victorious Elizabeth sits astride her horse.

Figure 2284

Accompanying the Queen is an angel holding a laurel wreath and a banner quoting the Latin poet Claudian, informing the viewer that the winds come when the Queen beckons, proof that God himself is on the English side.

Elizabeth’s urgings toward vigilance and valiance are reflected in Queen Margaret’s speech before her amassed troops in Act V of 3 Henry IV. Her husband has failed on a number of levels; in willingly ceding his son Edward’s claims to the throne in order to spare his own life Henry has forfeited his family and the traditional narrative of masculine succession. Confronted with this act of cowardly disowning,

284 “The Arrival of Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury;” 1588. Oil on Panel.
Margaret dons armor to secure her son’s claims to the throne, but more importantly, to ensure the orderly and expected procession of monarchical history. Margaret becomes a defender of the masculine narratives of history that men like her husband and the Yorkists are trying to rewrite. In front of an amassed army of French supporters, she delivers a rallying cry that carries echoes of Elizabeth’s speech, and one that explicitly invokes naval imagery, an imagery that, given the speaker, the situation, and the recent history, would undoubtedly evoke memories of the Spanish Armada for Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Aside from two soliloquies delivered by men, Margaret is given the longest speeches in the play that are not monologues. This speech is the second of her lengthy orations:

Great lords, wise men ne’er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot still. Is’t meet that he
Should leave the helm and, like a fearful lad,
With tearful eyes add water to the sea,
And give more strength to that which hath too much,
Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock
Which industry and courage might have saved? […]
And, though unskilful, why not Ned and I
For once allowed the skillful pilot’s charge?
We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,
From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.
As good to chide the waves as speak them fair.
And what is Edward but a ruthless sea?
What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?
And Richard but a ragged fatal rock?
All these the enemies to our poor bark.
Say you can swim; alas, ’tis but a while!
Tread on the sand; why, there you quickly sink:
Bestride the rock; the tide will wash you off,
Or else you famish; that's a threefold death.
This speak I, lords, to let you understand,
In case some one of you would fly from us,
That there's no hoped-for mercy with the brothers
More than with ruthless waves, with sands and rocks.
Why, courage then! What cannot be avoided
’Twere childish weakness to lament or fear. (3 Henry VI V.4.1-30)

The extended metaphor of seamanship Margaret employs anachronistically recalls the disastrous losses suffered by the invading Armada of 1588, as well as English anxiety about another Spanish attack. The Spanish may have been defeated, but those living in the 1590s had no idea that another attack was not imminent. The shipwreck imagery of this speech points to these very threats. The Battle of Tewkesbury (1471) was fought on land, yet Margaret repeatedly turns to descriptions of “sailors swallowed in the flood” and “shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.” In her reminders of the “ruthless waves, with sands, and rocks,” Margaret speaks to the greatest of English military successes, an evocation that also aligns her with Elizabeth. This correlation of Margaret with Elizabeth validates the non-normative gender performance in which Shakespeare’s Margaret engages. When the nation is at stake, the monarch, even a queen, must go to battle for god, kingdom, the people and honor. If these are in fact allusions to Elizabeth at Tilbury, the case can be made for a more celebratory perspective on Margaret than Shakespeare’s chronicle source texts allow. Prince Edward even speaks to the invigorating power of Margaret’s oration: “Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit/ Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,/ Infuse his breast with magnanimity/ And make him, naked, foil a man at arms” (3 Henry VI, V.4.39-42). Valiance is a term almost exclusively applied to
descriptions of military bravery and personal velour; it is a decidedly masculine term that the OED notes as “very common in the 16th century.” However, in this play full of future English kings and incredibly successful military figures, it is Margaret alone who possesses a “valiant spirit.” The word only appears here, in this play in this scene, and both times around Margaret. Valiance is the character trait bestowed by the would-be English king (Edward) on his French mother (Margaret) who has been forced to take up a martial charge abandoned by his English father (Henry). Margaret is valiant: this queen, this Frenchwoman and this warrior who regularly asserts herself as a leader. Margaret too, in the final part of her speech, exhorts her men to valiance, here imparting the title on the men who clearly serve her and not the king. In these subtle yet frequent constructions of Margaret as non-normatively feminine yet celebrated, Shakespeare makes space for the feminine voice in a genre, both the history plays and history itself, that has excluded that perspective.

Queen Elizabeth’s reference to the interior male/exterior female dichotomy is mimicked in Margaret’s calling attention to gender conventions. She employs the same discourse of feminine frailty rectified by monarchical martiality, referring to herself as “unskillful” but one who “will not for the helm to sit and weep” now that she is the pilot. While Elizabeth contends only with external foes, Margaret must confront the reality of a king who has abandoned his monarchy and his masculine performance, in other words, a sort of traitor within. As becomes evident in the speech, the truly frail and feminine figure in this equation is not the queen or her son, but the king, the “fearful lad” who has abandoned his charge until the “ship splits on
the rocks.” By comparison, “great lords [and] wise men” with “courage” spring to action and face what “cannot be avoided.” So too will Margaret face “all the enemies to our poor bark,” including “the ruthless sea…the quicksand of deceit…and the ragged fatal rocks” represented by Edward, Clarence and Richard.

Margaret begins her oration with a reference to wise men who, rather than sitting passively and lamenting their losses instead become active participants in seeking to redress the harms against them. The actions of wise men are soon contrasted with those of her husband, the “fearful lad” who has with “tearful eyes add[ed] water to the sea,” thereby strengthening the enemy. Instead of employing “industry and courage,” Henry has “moaned,” a passivity that has brought about the current situation. Margaret contrasts Henry’s passivity, if not femininity, with her own willingness to act. Instead of adding strength to the waves with her tears, Margaret promises that she will resist those natural forces that stand in her way, keeping her “course, though the rough winds say no.”

Margaret fights for the throne in the name of her English son and her English husband, not for her own claims to power, as the Yorkist propaganda might have one believe. Perhaps more intriguing is the commentary by other characters that follows Margaret’s speech, offering compliments on her resolute and reasonable nature despite her being the weaker sex. The Earl of Oxford (a member of Henry’s court) praises such “women and children of so high a courage/ [when] warriors faint” at lines 50-51. Margaret closes her exhortations to her troops with a furious battle cry: “Henry your sovereign/ Is prisoner to this foe, his state usurped,/ His realm a
slaughterhouse, his subject slain,/ His statutes cancelled and his treasure spent/ And yonder is the wolf that makes this spoil./ You fight in justice; then in God’s name, lords,/ Be valiant, and give signal to the fight (73-82). Over the course of Margaret’s fifty or so spoken lines in this scene, more than half a dozen caesuras and a dozen rhetorical questions appear, both markers of sophisticated speech; her rhetorical skills rival those of any male character in the play. The succinct chain of clauses she employs gives the oration a rhetorical force, each described offense building on the prior one. Margaret provides a number of motivations for her listeners to act: the king’s throne is usurped, the lands are a place of civil butchery, loyal subjects are murdered, the laws of the realm cancelled, the nation’s resources squandered. Finally, justice itself is at stake in this conflict. Margaret succeeds at rallying the troops, but unlike Elizabeth, not at defeating the enemy. The Yorkists take the crown, though they will lose it within twenty years to the Tudors, events depicted in the play that follows 3 Henry VI in the first tetralogy, Richard III.

Prophecy, Laughter and Departure
Margaret’s anomalousness proves most pronounced in her performance in Richard III, where she becomes a prophet who exits the action after she has witnessed her vengeful success. At the end of 3 Henry VI, Clarence asks King Edward IV (son of the slain Richard Lancaster, Duke of York) what should be “done with Margaret?/ Reignier her father, to the King of France/Hath pawned the Sicils and Jerusalem,/ and hither have they sent it for her ransom.” Edward banishes her, ordering Clarence to
“waft her hence to France,” ostensibly to be heard from no more (3 Henry VI V.7.37-41). Margaret refuses to adhere to this order, remaining to curse the York family in Richard III. In I.3, the first scene in which the full court appears, Margaret delivers a series of scathing asides and the longest speech (27 lines) in the scene: her voice and vitriol dominate. Lord Rivers comments on her presence, “mus[ing as to] why she’s at liberty,” a valid question considering her status as deposed queen of a dead king (Richard III I.3.303), while Buckingham orders her to “have done, have done” with her speech (279). Decreed as a “foul wrinkled witch” and “banished on pain of death,” Margaret remains in the court to wander the halls and spew invective against those in power, despite repeated attempts to silence or marginalize her (Richard III I.3.164-166). Men, even those at the pinnacles of power, cannot contain her. She leaves the scene as she leaves the play—of her own accord. Margaret serves a more important dramatic purpose than simply that of an object to be exorcised: her status as the voice of Lancastrian and Tudor history, as she who “remember[s] too well” the past, demands her continued presence (I.3.118).

Margaret’s presence also initiates recollections and critiques of history. I.3 gives the audience a back-story of the York family’s ascent to the throne, a tale provoked by Margaret’s entrance. The lone representative of the Lancastrian past and passed away, Margaret’s role is that of solicitor and repository of historical

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285 On a separate note, with Reignier’s payment of land in exchange for Margaret’s return the English have finally received a dowry, though not the lands given in the marriage contract.
286 All quotations from Richard III are taken from the Norton Shakespeare.
An important function of her character in this play is to recall and retell, to offer “repetition of what thou hast marred” (I.3.163). Margaret’s retelling of the past prompts the construction of a historical narrative in which Richard, Duke of Gloucester (soon to be Richard III) and others give brief recapitulations of events from previous plays (specifically recalling Margaret’s vicious behavior in the Rutland episode of 3 Henry VI), and she details the culpability of everyone on stage. She will later call attention to the subjectivity of historical narrative. In IV.4, as Queen Elizabeth (Edward IV’s consort Elizabeth Woodville) and the Duchess of York (Richard III’s mother) lament their fates, Margaret gives advice on how to re-narrativize the past in order to survive (and perhaps seek revenge):

Forbear to sleep the night and fast the days;
Compare dead happiness with living woe;
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were
And he that slew them fouler than he is.
Bett’ring thy loss makes the bad causer worse.
Resolving this will teach thee how to curse. (IV.4.118-23)

Margaret thrives in a state of sleeplessness and hunger, surviving through a consumption of past memories. Margaret’s lesson on how to grieve and curse depicts a process of memorializing similar to that taking place in the history texts of the time. Histories are not objective reproductions of the events they describe but accounts consisting of specific authorial choices about what events or people are most relevant to the larger arc of the narrative. In the case of Tudor histories, this goal is the celebration of England in the late 16th century, but it is a commemoration that

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287 Richard dominates the narrative, but Margaret prompts its retelling.
288 Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” in Adams and Searle, 402.
regularly idealizes masculine greatness through the degradation (and exclusion) of women. Margaret’s narrativizing of the past is driven by a telos of vilification and idealization, and by exposing the nature of her own subjective acts of memorializing she calls attention to the way such biases appear in early modern English histories. Margaret’s instructions on how to curse and how to remember are also instructions on how to create a Tudor historical narrative: exaggerate the glory of some (“think that thy babes were sweeter than they were”) while hyperbolizing the depravity of others (“and he that slew them fouler than he is”). Margaret’s lesson is an ironic moment in the play that calls attention to prejudicial narrativizing within the tetralogy itself, a bias best embodied in this play’s representation of Richard III and Shakespeare’s choice to attribute crimes and deformities to the King not noted in source texts. Particular emphasis is placed on Richard’s physical malformations, an external monstrosity to mirror his moral degeneracy. The stories of the infant Richard’s being born with teeth (Richard III IV.4.49 and 3 Henry VI V.6.53), “bunch backed” (Richard III 1.3.244) and misshapen are all derived from passing references in the chronicle sources, but these are repeatedly elaborated upon in order to frame Richard as grotesque. Just as Margaret is dramatized performing acts not found in the source texts (i.e., the affair with Suffolk, the participation in the murder of York), so too are Richard’s murder of the princes in the tower and his increasingly monstrous deformity a creation of Shakespeare. In this moment of teaching grief Margaret

reveals the role of authorial intervention within the making of history, describing an act the tetralogy itself participates in.

In the midst of I.3’s retelling of the Wars of the Roses back-story, Margaret stops the action to curse and prophesy the coming destruction of the York regency. Already a voice of history and of woe, she here becomes the voice of vengeance:

Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses! 
Though not by war, by surfeit die your king, 
As ours by murder to make him a king. 
[To Elizabeth] Edward thy son, that now is Prince of Wales, 
For Edward my son, that was Prince of Wales, 
Die in his youth by like untimely violence. 
Thyself, a queen, for me that was a queen, 
Outlive thy glory like my wretched self. 
Long may’st thou live—to wail thy children’s death, 
And see another, as I see now, Decked in thy rights as thou art ’stalled in mine. 
Long die thy happy days before thy death, 
And after many lengthened hours of grief 
Die, neither mother, wife, nor England’s queen. 
[You who were standers by…] when my son 
Was stabbed with bloody daggers. God I pray him, 
That no one of you may live his natural age, 
But by some unlooked accident cut off. 
[…and to Richard] The worm of conscience begnaw thy soul. 
Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv’st, 
And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends. 
No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, 
Unless it be while some tormenting dream 
Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils. (Richard III 1.3.193ff)

Margaret identifies her enemies and precisely outlines their fortunes. This is a house that will be brought down not by war, but by civil strife. Margaret employs a set of syntactical parallels to emphasize her similarities with the newly widowed Queen

290 Though the act of curses and prophesying are not the same thing, in this tetralogy (and particularly in the mouths of women), the two are one in the same, an overlap that gives female speech a particular potency.
Elizabeth: “Edward thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,/For Edward my son, that was Prince of Wales” and “Thyself, a queen, for me that was a queen./ Outlive thy glory like my wretched self.” By looking to the past to reveal its inverted parallel with the present, Margaret predicts doom. This far-reaching curse that encompasses the entire household proves true: Elizabeth’s husband, King Edward, dies from illness and heartbreak over his part in Clarence’s death; the queen’s sons are killed, and she loses her title when Richard ascends the throne, remaining to “outlive her glory” and lament the loss of her children. In IV.4, Elizabeth appears, “neither mother, wife, nor England’s queen,” a figure who begs Margaret to “teach me how to curse my enemies” (IV.4.117).²⁹¹ Lords Rivers and Hastings, men who failed to stop the slaughter of Margaret’s son in 3 Henry VI, both die upon the orders of a paranoid Richard. On the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field, Richard is visited by a ghostly parade of his many victims who refuse to let his “deadly eye” be “close[d] up” with sleep. Driven to distraction by suspicion, insomnia and “devilish” torment, Richard alienates his supporters through a series of rash decisions.

Margaret’s departure provides the former queen with both vindication and revenge; she leaves on her own terms, much as she seems to have remained on them. Having watched “the waning of mine enemies” Margaret “will [now go] to France, hoping the consequence/ Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical.” The figure who has

²⁹¹ Caliban’s “you taught me language, and my profit on’t/ Is I know how to curse” seems to contain echoes of this line (The Tempest, I.2.366-7) in William Shakespeare, Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus and Andrew Gurr, The Norton Shakespeare, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 3066.
been a spectacle for the last three plays now leaves as spectator, watching and predicting the outcomes of the dismal scene before her. When Elizabeth turns to her to learn the art of cursing, Margaret shuns the one-time queen: “For she that scorned at me, now scorned of me/ Thus hath the course of justice whirled about,/ And left thee but a very prey to time./ […] Farewell, York’s wife, and queen of sad mischance./ These English woes shall make me smile in France” (IV.4.102ff).

Margaret’s final speech details the grim fate that awaits these women, confident in the process of justice to “whirl about” and render all prey to time. She lives to see her enemies vanquished and degraded, and will now travel to France smiling. This last point is key: in a bloody play full of court intrigue, Margaret is the only character who smiles. Elsewhere in the play, smiling is a result of either ignorance (III.4.107) or deception (III.5.9). In contrast, Margaret’s is the smile of the vindicated, a moment of Schadenfreude that silences her raging and grief-filled curses. Margaret departs the play in a moment of triumph, an honor rarely granted in the tetralogy, a world in which most characters are killed or die. Margaret’s words linger beyond her life in the play: they echo in the mouths of others. As she departs, she prays to God that she “may live and say, “the dog [Richard III] is dead’’” (IV.4.78). Though she will not physically reappear, her language will reverberate in Richmond’s (soon Henry VII) announcement that “the bloody dog is dead” (V.8.2). Margaret does not verbalize the moment of death, but her language does, bearing a (distant) witness to her victory.

Margaret’s exit after witnessing the demise of her foes is another instance where the play diverges from the narrative of the source texts. The events of Richard
III date to 1481, and Richard becomes King in 1483. Hall and Holinshed both depict Henry’s widow as destitute, detailing her imprisonment after Henry’s death in 1471 and her eventual ransom to the French in 1475. When Margaret returned to Gallic land she lived in relative poverty until her death in 1482. Georges Chastellain, Margaret’s contemporary, records the Queen’s sorry state upon her 1475 arrival in France:

> [Margaret of Anjou arrived in Burgundy] poor and alone, destitute of all goods and all desolate. [She] had neither credence, nor money, nor goods, nor jewels to pledge. [She] had no son, no royal robes, nor estate, and her person without adornment befitting a queen. Her body was clad in one single robe, with no change of clothing. [She] had no more than seven women for her retinue, whose apparel was like that of their mistress, formerly one of the most splendid women of the world and now the poorest. And finally she had no other provision, not even bread to eat, except from the purse of her knight...It was a thing piteous to see, truly, this high princess so cast down and laid low in such great danger, dying of hunger and hardship...\[292\]

Providence and the Yorks have finally contained Margaret and the threats she posed, the former queen returning to France alone and destitute. Chastellain details the extent of her lack: no son, no robes, no estate, no adornment, no change of clothing, no provision, no bread. She has rounded the journey of Fortune’s wheel, once the “most splendid woman of the world and now the poorest.” Laid low by poverty and her years of English exile, the queen who had arrived in London for her coronation thirty years earlier “in a horse-bier, with two steeds decorated all in white damask powdered in gold, as was the clothing she had on; [her hair] combed down about her shoulders, with a coronel of gold, rich pearls and precious stones; [accompanied by]  

\[292\] Georges Chastellain, quoted in Dockray, Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book, 17.
nineteen chariots of ladies and their gentlemen” returned to France lacking a change of clothes and presiding over a ragged retinue.\textsuperscript{293} The will left at her death in 1482 further attests to her impoverished status. The English queen implored the French King Louis to cover her outstanding debts:

\begin{quote}
And it is my will and desire that I be buried and interred in holy ground according to the goodwill and pleasure of the king [Louis XI], and, if it pleases him, I elect and choose to be buried in the cathedral church of Saint Maurice d’Angers….My will is [that] the few goods which God and he [Louis XI] have given and lent to me be used for this purpose for the paying of my debts as much as to my poor servants [as] to other creditors to whom I am indebted….And should my few goods be insufficient to do this, as I believe they are, I implore the king [to] meet and pay the outstanding debts as the sole heir of the wealth which I inherited through my father and mother and my other relatives and ancestors….\textsuperscript{294}
\end{quote}

Margaret dies, a figure at the mercy of others and totally without power, aware that she leaves behind unpaid debts. No record of her funeral survives, and the tomb in which she requests burial was destroyed during the Revolution more than 300 years later, leaving the outcome of her entreaties unknown.\textsuperscript{295} The Margaret of the source texts comes to a pathetic end, disempowered and unheard. By contrast, Shakespeare’s Margaret smiles as she walks offstage, a queen that goes to France confident in the demise of her enemies. A penniless historical figure is transformed into a potent voice of victimhood and retribution who offers a critique of the genre of history and refuses to cede her narrative to the dominant political power. Derided by the Yorks and bereft

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{293} Brut’s Chronicles, quoted in Dockray, Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book, 14.
\textsuperscript{294} Dockray, Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and the Wars of the Roses: A Source Book, 17.
\textsuperscript{295} Laynesmith, 122.
\end{footnotes}
of her family and fortune, Margaret nevertheless laughs last, her smile a subtle but powerful sign of her victory.

In a tetralogy with a huge cast of characters, only one female figure repeatedly makes herself known: Margaret. For the male *dramatis personae*, individual identity seems less important than one’s office. The men often act as placeholders, known by their titles rather than by individual names and identities; the murder of one Prince Edward by a York in the Tower is soon followed by the murder of another young Prince Edward by another York. Margaret, however, retains the identity of queen throughout, referred to in *Folio* and *Quarto* line cues as Queen Margaret. Margaret challenges conventions: of queenship, of gender, of historical narrative. Her greatest danger (in the eyes of her enemies) lies in her effectiveness as a leader, particularly her ability to successively wield power at court and in combat. While Joan Puzel’s rhetorical and physical skills are successful to a point, Margaret is able to exercise influence across national lines: she secures French and English political support, she leads French and English troops into battle, and she serves as *de facto* king when Henry fails to take up the charge. The tetralogy offers a character both castigated and celebrated, her early indiscretions with Suffolk replaced by struggles to maintain the crown and the integrity of its succession.

I now return to the title of this chapter and the ways Margaret troubles. While the Yorkists of the play see her as negating their historical presence in the record books, her role as historian and anti-historian are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In my reading, Margaret’s role as an anti-historian co-exists with her status as
defender of Lancastrian (and by extension, Tudor) history. While the threat Margaret poses to Yorkist history results from her skills as monarchical and martial leader, critiques about these activities are typically focalized through attacks on Margaret’s gender performance. The breaking of gender conventions, however, is not Margaret’s alone: the play frames her gender failures as, at least in part, a result of Henry’s. Margaret’s most “unfemale” act is her refusal to submit: she explicitly challenges the Yorkist perspective on history, insisting that the narrative of Henry IV’s assumption of the throne from Richard II (and Henry V’s work to keep it) cannot be rewritten as an act of illegitimate usurpation.296 As mother, she will not allow her son’s claims to the crown go ignored. This last element, her assertion of a masculine genealogy (and the ultimate anti-Amazonian act), makes her an advocate of the project of early modern history, specifically of Lancastrian (and eventually Tudor) masculine history. Margaret challenges the narrative of history laid out in the chronicle sources, but that does not render her an anti-historian. Her indomitable presence reinserts the voice of femininity into a genre that seeks to exclude it; she fights for her maternity (i.e. Edward’s legitimacy and claims to the throne) even as she fights for the narrative of English historical succession. She acts the role of memory, while making history in her acts of cursing prophesy.

Though not a mirror for Queen Elizabeth, Margaret’s presence seems to contain echoes of the English queen: both women rule the realm in the absence of a

296 In 1 Henry VI, Joan’s “refusal to be captured” by Talbot renders her “unfemale,” transforming her into a “devil” and a “strumpet” in the minds of the English. Jankowski, Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama, 2.
(capable) male heir, continuously struggling against would-be usurpers (in the case of Elizabeth, rebels like Essex or the pressure to enter into marriage agreements) to maintain their hold on the throne. In Elizabeth and in Shakespeare’s portrayal of Margaret, an alternative model of queenship, and leadership, are provided. Margaret’s continued presence gives her historical voice an authority unrivaled in the tetralogy, made particularly vivid in Richard III. No English queen appears in 1 Henry VI, save Margaret as Henry’s fiancé. Since Edward IV rises to a throne without a bride, Margaret is the only queen the audience knows outside the brief reign of Elizabeth Woodville as queen consort late in 3 Henry VI and in Richard III. In a series of plays about war, where one murdered king gives way to another, Margaret maintains her hold on the title of queen and remains a woman who is heard. Time and again, her voice, despite the attempts of those on stage, will not be silenced, demonstrating the agency she wields: over the king, the narrative, and the future. She outlives her competitors, both aberrant and applauded in her performance of roles both female and male. Though morally worse than in the source texts, Margaret is also permitted a fate superior to the one detailed by Hall and company.297 Her greatest vindication in the tetralogy results from her most aberrant gender performance: the historian. As both creator and subject of narrative, Margaret leaves her mark, engaging in a uniquely maternal and feminine act of history. Her presence does not produce erasure (as York and Humphrey Gloucester had so feared) but rather prevents the erasure of the Lancastrian historical narrative and the futures the lineage might produce. By

297 Howard and Rackin, 72.
predicting the future, calling attention to the past, and critiquing the selective amnesia that characterizes constructions of historical narrative, this queen is given the last word on history.
Chapter 4
Misogyny and the Mistress: Reconsidering Mistress Quickly and Banishing Plump Jack

The second tetralogy, also known as the Henriad, depicts the assumption of the throne by the Bolingbroke line. While Henry IV’s name serves as the title for two of the four plays, the Henriad is, in fact, a sort of Bildungsroman tracing the youthful indiscretions of Prince Hal as he transforms into the martial monarch Henry V. London itself becomes a type of character in these plays, with the middle class and middle-class spaces taking a more prominent role than in the Henry VI cycle. The middle class woman--a figure virtually unrepresented in the history genre and the chronicle play--finds a voice in the Henriad in the character of Mistress Quickly, alewife and proprietor of the Boar’s Head Tavern. Mistress Quickly lives in the bodily and bawdy realms, her speech colored by sexual innuendo and a breathless excitement. Joan of Arc and Margaret of Anjou, the figures under consideration in the two previous chapters, possess a rhetorical heft and ability to compel men (into battle, into switching allegiances, into courage) via their speeches. These women are often read by the men within the play and the critics outside it as threats to English masculinity and monarchical stability. Joan rallies Frenchmen to victory, but her speech fails her in the end, as her invocations of devils and pleas for mercy from her

298 Quickly could be considered a Bakhtinian figure of grotesque realism, a woman whose “bodily life, fertility, growth and brimming-over abundance” makes her “grandiose, exaggerated and immeasurable.” M. M. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), 19. Her speech might also be thought a type of grammatica jocosa, a transgressing of the grammatical order wherein the “erotic and obscene or merely materially satisfying counter-meaning” appears, as discussed by Stallybrass and White, 10-11.
jailors fall on deaf ears. Margaret proves more verbally adept, rallying French and Englishmen both to her cause in 3 Henry VI, while prophesying and cursing her enemies in Richard III. By comparison, the middle class Mistress Quickly (the only Englishwoman under examination in this dissertation) operates in a different sphere, existing at the periphery of wars rather than entering them clad in armor like Joan or Margaret (or Queen Elizabeth). Quickly does not threaten the monarchical hierarchy or the transmission of national power like Margaret and Joan; Hal may “go slumming” in her tavern, but as he tells us in 1.2 of 1 Henry IV, he permits the “base contagious clouds” of bad reputation to sully his current glory “so he may be more wondered at” later (I.2.295). While Quickly may not assert her authority the way Joan and Margaret do, she achieves influence in other ways: she disrupts speech through her malapropism and sexual innuendo, she refuses to retreat in the face of the aristocratic Falstaff (even overseeing his public humiliation in the final scene of The Merry Wives of Windsor), and she appropriates the language of historical myth—seemingly only reserved for men—to serve her own narrative purposes.

Mistress Quickly appears in 1 and 2 Henry IV and Henry V, three plays that, with Richard II, make up Shakespeare’s second tetralogy. The source and subject of extensive comedy in Henry IV 1 and 2 and Henry V, Mistress Quickly has proven of minimal interest to critics in studies of the plays specifically and the genre generally. Quickly is read by critics almost exclusively for her malapropism, a

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299 The Quickly of the Henriad is a character that has largely gone unmentioned, save for reference in editorial glosses about her incessant malapropism. She lives at the peripheries of both the play (as widow, as woman, as alewife, as middle class) and in
character neither contentious enough toward Falstaff nor relevant enough to the historical project of the plays to warrant significant consideration. What is written about the character revolves primarily around her failures: of speech, of dignity, of sophistication, and the function of these as comic elements in the plays. In their landmark work on gender in the history plays, *Engendering A Nation*, Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin emphasize Quickly’s function as a comic subaltern, while also cautioning against probing too deeply for this character’s psychology:

Quickly’s language is, of course, a means of marking her social unimportance and transforming her into an object of fun. In the Henry IV plays, and *Henry V*, the distance of various characters from the culture’s center of power and importance is marked by their linguistic distance from perfect command of the King’s English. […] It is not necessary, in fact it would be unwise, to impute the critical literature. In Rackin and Howard, Quickly receives more analysis than in any other work on gender issues in the histories, an analysis that runs eight pages. A discussion of Quickly’s role in the oral-storytelling tradition, and her part in the creation of a larger “memory-history” (a type of history killed off by Hal when he become Henry V), is mentioned in Allison Thorne’s “There is a history in all men’s lives: reinventing history in 2 Henry IV” in Cavanagh, et al., 58-60. When Quickly is discussed in critical literature, it is usually as a passing reference within a larger examination of Falstaff, such as a description of her “proverbially unstoppable female tongue” by Patricia A. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London; New York: Methuen, 1987), 21. (It should be noted that Parker discusses the Quickly of *Merry Wives* at length.) While there has been extensive editorial debate over Quickly’s “eulogy” of Falstaff in *Henry V* (specifically the use of the word “table” in Folio versus “babbled” in Quarto), this is a debate concerned with issues of textual variants rather than interpretations of the Mistress (see the note for line 16 for a sense of the table/babbles question in Shakespeare and Craik, *King Henry V*. Searches for monographs with the phrase “Mistress Quickly” as a key word yield mainly performance reviews or deal with the figure from *Merry Wives* (and her place in IV.1 or V.2). In sum, the Quickly of *Merry Wives* is a figure much discussed, but her Henrician counterpart is not. To the best of my knowledge, the only journal article in any major publication that actually bears her name in the title was written in 1985 and details the type of coal she burns in her “dolphin chamber.” See David-Everett Blythe, "Mistress Quickly's Sea-Coal," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35.4 (1984): 462-63.
to Mistress Quickly an oppositional, politicized consciousness. She is a fictional creation written to be a humorous butt. 300

Pamela Allen Brown’s more recent study of gender and jest in early modern England dismisses Quickly first for her inability to keep up with Falstaff’s verbal sparring, and then for failing to amuse when she nurses the dying man:

Probably the best known tavern scenes in early modern drama are in Shakespeare’s Henry plays, making Mistress Quickly of the Boar’s Head Tavern the most famous stage hostess. […] When the Hostess trades barbs with Falstaff, she hasn’t got a chance, undermined by her own romantic credulity and verbal fumbling. In I Henry IV, Shakespeare makes Quickly a laughing spectator to the witty plays of Falstaff and the Prince. […] When it comes to pass in Henry V, the Hostess (now married to Pistol) is no longer funny, nursing Falstaff in his illness and witnessing his death. 301

Also known as the Hostess, this major character in the “best known tavern scenes in early modern drama” appears to most critical readers as little more than comic relief, and the non-comedic scenes in which she does appear continue to be interpreted relative to her linguistic failures rather than the substance of the scene under consideration. 302 Even more striking, the above quoted readings of Quickly represent the majority of the critical perspective on the figure, speaking to the limited scope of available interpretation and the general lack of analysis about this memorable Shakespearean character. This chapter offers a consideration heretofore absent about this middle-class woman in a genre that traditionally revolves around male members of the upper social echelons.

300 Howard and Rackin, 182-3.
302 This is particularly egregious in interpretations of the eulogy in Henry V.
Aside from her socio-economic status, Quickly is distinct in the tetralogies for her control over the economies of the alehouse and her body. She moves through a number of social (and by extension gender) positions, serving at different times as wife, bride, widow/dowager and mother. She is, most importantly, a woman who holds the keys to her body, her fortune, and her future. Quickly develops from a relatively marginal position in 1 Henry IV to become one of Sir John Falstaff’s most-notchable antagonists in 2 Henry IV (and The Merry Wives of Windsor) and eventually eulogizer of Sir John in Henry V. As a widow she carries the most relevance to the play’s action, her elevation in dramatic importance linked to her marital status. In the course of the three histories, Mistress Quickly marries or agrees to marry multiple men, pointing to both her desirability as a mate and the situational realities of an unmarried and successful businesswoman. In Part 1, she twice mentions her husband, but in the interval between Parts 1 and 2, this man (presumably the Vintner, who leaves to answer the door in 1 Henry IV II.4.70) has died, leaving her a widow and dowager.

It is as a widow in Part 2 and at the beginning of Henry V that Quickly appears most prominently, a result of her status both as an independent woman and as a figure open to proposals of marriage. She is on the lookout for a husband, and as a successful business owner and member of good standing in the community she would undoubtedly have proven an attractive mate. In the period of this play’s composition, widows typically remarried nine months after the death of their spouse (compared to four months for widowers), despite declarations from the Church of England that the
female bereaved should wait at least one year lest problems arise over the paternity of posthumous offspring.\textsuperscript{303} The audience hears of two marriage proposals in 2 Henry IV and Henry V: the first from Falstaff (2 Henry IV 2.1.89) and the second from Nym, who Bardolph reveals was once “trothplight” to her (Henry V 2.1.18). Neither engagement reaches legal consummation. Falstaff denies the occurrence of (or at least reneges on) the first, while the Hostess apparently ends the second, as Bardolph comments that “she did [Nym] wrong” (V 2.1.17). By the final play Quickly marries Pistol, the ribald taverner who once threatened to “shoot” upon her.

Falstaff and his companions read Quickly as a sexually exchangeable commodity that many of the men have “had.” This reading derives from her marriages and engagements, but it is supported by the rampant sexual puns and (as I argue, perceived) malapropisms that permeate her language. Falstaff’s accusations of impropriety extend beyond the sexual and into the linguistic. The double entendres in Quickly’s speech are assumed to indicate her sexual availability: since she lacks control of her tongue, she must also lack control of her chastity.\textsuperscript{304} However, characters aside from Falstaff permit her speech to be more than just malapropistic


\textsuperscript{304} The parallel of speech (the closed mouth) with chastity (the closed legs) is a mainstay of early modern discourses about women. Quickly, as a character of “linguistic fullness,” is often accused of sexual impropriety, accusations usually voiced by Falstaff and as a means of undermining her authority. For more on the link between speech and chastity see Peter Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed” in Ferguson, et al., 123-42.
and bawdy; the interpretation that it is only ignorant double entendre is the doing of Sir John, her main antagonist and scene partner. Additionally, Quickly exercises a measure of agency and independence unlike other women in the tetralogies; details such as her status as mother, the reports of her good social standing, the interactions she has with other men in the plays, and the repeated challenges she poses to Falstaff’s linguistic dominance all underscore her potential for autonomous action. In order to appreciate the Mistress’s role in these plays we would therefore do well to recall the activities of women in the ale industry of Shakespeare’s England.

Ale and Alewives

The complicated economy of alework included members of every social station, from the farmer who grew the grain to the merchant who “bottled” and sold it to the nobility who consumed it. While Mistress Quickly is the most famous dramatic representation of an alewife, both visual and poetic depictions of this figure abounded. Though the prevalence of these representations speaks to the importance of the alewife’s work in the society, they often reveal an anxiety about her body and her labor. Ale, the tavern, and the alewife were essential to English gastronomic life yet viewed with trepidation due to the intoxicating properties of the beverage. This tension is apparent in the characterization of Quickly. Mistress Quickly runs the Boar’s Head Tavern, the primary setting for interactions between Prince Hal (future King of England) and the bawdy ruffian Falstaff, a location that markedly contrasts with the martial and monarchical locales evoked elsewhere in the text. Taverns and
inns were viewed by church and legal authorities of Shakespeare’s day as spaces occupied by vagabonds where drunken debauchery, gambling, and late night cavorting took place. Henry IV verbalizes this attitude in Richard II when he orders his aides to locate his “unthrifty son” Hal by:

Inquir[ing] at London, ‘mongst the taverns there,
For there, they say, he daily doth frequent,
With unrestrained loose companions,
Even such, they say as stand in narrow lanes
And beat our watch and rob our passengers,
Whilst he, young wanton and effeminate boy,
Takes on the point of honor to support
So dissolute a crew. (V.3.5-11)

The early modern alehouse was a raucous and suspect environment. Besides the violence and unruly behavior that can accompany alcohol consumption, alehouses were frequently sites for gaming and prostitution. Henry IV characterizes them as spaces of unrestrained immorality and sexual license. Among these companions, the “wanton and effeminate” Hal flouts the law, attacking those tasked with protecting the streets and robbing those who walk them. As Hal’s presence demonstrates, these spaces host customers from all social strata and members of both sexes. This is

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306 Effeminacy here refers to capricious behavior, but is also inflected with the sense of cowardice or unmanliness that can come from over-familiarity with women. Alexander Schmidt’s Lexicon identifies this use of effeminate as meaning capricious or humorous, but the other possibilities of the term, including effeminacy as un-masculine behavior or as over familiarity with women, emphasize one of the major critiques of the alehouse. Because these were spaces often run by women (as in the case of the Henriad), they were places where women came to exert potentially corrupting power over men, whether the prostitute proffering extra-marital sex or the alewife selling inebriating drinks that put the buyer in debt and caused him to neglect work, faith or family. Schmidt and Sarrazin, 352.
due in part to the fundamental place ale had in the early modern diet, with some estimates putting consumption at 1-1.5 gallons per person per day.\textsuperscript{307} These were not merely mercantile spaces, but major gathering places of the neighborhood, where women met and exchanged gossip while men threw jokes and occasionally fists.\textsuperscript{308}

The early modern alewife appears regularly in dramas and ballads, as well as visually in manuscripts and on medieval church walls, in part because she plays such an essential social function. Though few women populate the alehouse, or world, of the Henriad, the literary and artistic representations of the early modern alehouse are dominated by female figures. Drink work was the primary way women entered the market economy, and women controlled over 65% of the market in some locales.\textsuperscript{309} A detail from a 1600 woodcut (part of a larger depiction of female gossip in a number of situations) shows a group of women at the bake house and the alehouse.


\textsuperscript{308} Brown, 72.

\textsuperscript{309} McIntosh, 157, 40. Some brewing guilds even permit women to join their ranks.
Three women stand near a hearth on the left of the image, one animatedly gesturing while another leans in (perhaps in preparation to respond?) and a third stands casually a bit farther off, hand resting in the folds of her dress or in a pocket. On the other side of the frame several women sit by a fire outside an alehouse, gossiping and drinking. The script (not pictured) beneath the woodcut notes that “At Alehouse you see how jovial they be/ With everyone her Noggin:/ for till the Skull and Belly be full/ None of them will be jogging.” As the verse makes clear, this is a space women visit to fill their bellies and their brains, something the poet and artist seem to frown upon. In this world largely without men (only one man appears in this detail), women are found idly laughing, gorging themselves, and talking.

While Figure 3 shows an alewife and her customers in the quotidian world, the more common image of the time is of the morally corrupt alewife on the day of

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310 “What news?” Gossips at bakehouse and alehouse. Detail from Tittle-Tattle: or, the several Branches of Gossiping (1600). © Copyright The British Museum. Reproduced in Brown, 82.
the last judgment. Alewives are featured in church dooms (wall paintings) more than any other type of trader or food worker and are shown in a number of extant paintings proffering their wares among the devils and other sinners in hell.\textsuperscript{311} Church authorities declared alehouses bastions of sin that encourage gluttony and turn people away from the faith, an attitude that accounts for the presence of alewives in monitory dooms and other church art.\textsuperscript{312} One detail (Figure 4) from the Holy Trinity church in Coventry, Warwickshire (about 20 miles from Shakespeare’s birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon) shows a trio of alewives peddling drinks to devils, identifiable by the noggins (small drinking cups) they carry. The women wear large headdresses and nothing else, a nod to the sumptuary laws that middle-class merchants such as these women might have violated. The central figure physically engages with the demon, grabbing him by the arm, adding an element of the erotic; she is not merely peddling her drink, she is peddling her self. The devil has none of it; he looks back, but continues to tug the chain binding the women, leading them toward a group of sinners outside the frame. Figure 5, a detail from St. Thomas church in Salisbury, shows an alewife carried away toward a cluster of the damned, who include monarchical and religious figures. The clothed alewife appears to have inebriated her demonic captor and seeks to do the same (or has already) with the demon that turns his back to her. The alewife is held by the demon but she seems to embrace him as well, her left arm wrapping around her jailer’s neck. Her knees are bent, but it is unclear whether her\textsuperscript{311} Bennett, 125-6.\textsuperscript{312} Bennett, 132. This critique of alehouses is similar to the ones levied against the early modern theater, such as in Stephen Gosson’s 1577 \textit{The School of Abuse: Containing a Pleasant Invective Against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters &c.}
legs remain closed or straddle around the demon’s back leg, perhaps suggestive of the doomed woman’s sexual availability. Surrounded by faces of agony, the alewife figures in these images continue to engage in the profession that sent them to hell.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Alewives dragged to damnation are also featured in misericords. The undersides of some of the seats provided for those at prayer are carved with scenes on a number of topics, ranging from images of domestic violence to scenes of pagan gods. The misericord below (Figure 4) comes from St. Laurence church in Ludlow. As a demon plays the bagpipes, one alewife is carried to the mouth of a monster as another one is devoured by it. Even as the horned demon reads off her list of crimes, the alewife continues to present her drinking cup, engaged to the end in the wages of sin.

The alewife occupied an ambiguous social place, necessary yet frequently derided. A seller of commodities, she was frequently feared to herself be a commodity, something akin to a prostitute. Coupled with traditional anxieties about female

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314 Small “mercy seats” provided for the faithful to lean against as they stood in prayers.
fidelity and forthrightness, the dishonest alewife as a figure likely to deceive (by adulterating her product) or seduce her customers became a mainstay of representations of the profession.\textsuperscript{316} Suspected of peddling low-quality food and drink and of using inaccurate measures to cheat and overcharge their customers, alewives are portrayed as both corrupting and corrupt in the c. 1545 poem The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng.\textsuperscript{317} This poem features an unscrupulous alewife and encapsulates the anxieties that surrounded the profession, the space of the tavern and the participation of women within it.\textsuperscript{318} Elynour the alewife is a morally debased and physically vile figure that runs a business where lust and deception prevail. The characters that populate Rummyng’s tavern are nearly all female, and an indecorous and profligate bunch at that (“Thyther comesth Kate,/Cysly, and Sare,/With theyr legges bare […] Some wenches come unlased,/Some huswyves come unbrased,/Wyth theyr naked pappes,/That flyppes and flappes”). Women come with their legs bare of stockings, and with dresses unlaced and unfastened, leaving their breasts exposed and flopping about. All rules of female modesty are broken in this space, where women may be “loose” in dress and in morals. The alewife who prevails over this world is an object of repulsion: her skin is covered with scabs and eczema, her head is full of lice (“scuruy with scabs” and lows’y”), her face scares the bravest of men (her “visage/ would aswage/ A mannes courage”) and she is “syb” with the devil. Her physical monstrosity is mirrored by her moral depravity. She encourages spendthrifts by

\textsuperscript{316} Bennett, 133.
\textsuperscript{317} Bennett, 131.
accepting a “husbandes hood” (a covering for the head and neck usually worn under a hat) or “a weddynge rynge” as payment for her product. This willingness to accept pawned products shows a society driven to debt and desperation for her product, with symbolic and sentimental objects such as wedding rings sold for one more sip. Suspicion of adulterating ale regularly follows the alewife; in Elynour’s case she does so by including “the donge of her hennes” in her drink. She encourages female immodesty, is aesthetically repulsive, facilitates financial insolvency and, as a final act of indignity against her patrons, mixes her beverage with animal feces. Skelton’s Elynour is in fact married, but by the time of the Henriad’s composition the majority of women involved in selling and running small alehouses were widows, no doubt adding to the aura of suspicion surrounding the profession.319

Shakespeare’s Mistress Quickly is recognizable as part of this long popular tradition representing alewives and taverns. In the second tetralogy, the majority of complaints about Quickly and the Boar’s Head come from Falstaff, and they parrot the standard argument that alewives are disreputable thieves who facilitate or participate in sexual immorality. The Henriad, unlike the works discussed above, provides a defense of this often maligned character type through several socially respected men who comment on Quickly’s status as an honest woman and warn her against keeping bad company. Quickly does not serve an essential purpose in the plot; the rebellions and battles that direct the action of the play happen well outside the tavern. She is neither necessary to facilitate encounters between Hal and Falstaff

(meetings that could easily take place in Hal’s apartment shown in 1 Henry IV 1.2),
nor required for Falstaff’s comic relief (his hyperbolic retelling of the Gadshill
robbery in 2.4 shows that he is all too capable of doing this on his own).
Nevertheless, this woman repeatedly appears, defending herself and her business
against Falstaff’s narratives of her indecency and dishonesty. In the course of the
Henriad, Mistress Quickly speaks 234 lines, more than any other woman.320 Her
ongoing presence in the world of the Henriad serves functions well beyond comedy.
The alewife and the tavern are important to the early modern era, as are the women
and the middle-class merchants for which they metonymically stand. Through
Quickly, a class, a profession, and a gender that rarely appear in early modern
histories are given voice.

1 Henry IV

1 Henry IV, the second play of the second tetralogy and the first drama that
traces the transformation of Prince Hal into King Henry, focuses primarily on two
rebellious Harrys: Percy and Monmouth. Henry Percy (known as Harry and Hotspur)
leads a rebel army against Henry Bolingbroke (King Henry IV), while Henry
Monmouth (the son of King Henry IV and known as Hal, Harry and Henry) runs
around London with a dissolute crew of thieves and drunkards, most notably the

320 While some of Quickly’s status as female character with the most lines in the
Henriad comes from her appearance in three plays, she speaks more lines (144) than
any other women in 2 Henry IV, and only seven lines fewer (49) than Lady Percy in 1
Henry IV. Though she speaks more than any other woman in the play, she is vastly
“outnumbered” by her male stage companions: in the first scene in which he appears
in 2 Henry VI Falstaff speaks 138 lines.
aristocratic scoundrel Falstaff. Henry IV’s kingdom is under political and personal attack; Hotspur allies with the Welsh and threatens to take the throne, while Hal’s disobedience, his “barren pleasures [and] rude society” demean the stature of his father the King and the stability of monarchical succession (III.2.14). The play’s denouement comes when Hal kills Hotspur on the field of battle, an act that should result in the Prince’s leaving behind his unruly ways in preparation for assumption of his royal mantle. Falstaff, however, claims credit for Hotspur’s death, and Hal continues his youthful debauchery into 2 Henry IV. Mistress Quickly’s tavern is a meeting place for Falstaff, Hal and their crew of Bardolph, Poins and Peto. This is a space full of middle- and lower-class characters where prose (rather than verse) dominates and drunken bawdy prevails. Mistress Nell Quickly (referred to as Hostess in the line cues) enters the world of the Henriad at 1 Henry IV II.4.272 in the midst of an adolescent-minded “play extempore” between Hal and Falstaff, where each man takes turns imitating Hal’s father, King Henry IV. In the scene that follows she remains largely peripheral to the banter between Hal and Falstaff, and it is not until III.3.40 that we see the first substantive encounter between Quickly and the Knight. Falstaff badgers the Hostess about a ring he believes has been stolen from him while he has drunk at the Boar’s Head:

Falstaff: How now, Dame Partlet the hen? Have you enquired yet who picked my pocket?
Hostess: Why, Sir John, what do you think, Sir John? Do you think I keep thieves in my house? I have searched, I have enquired, so has my husband, man by man, boy by boy, servant by servant. The tithe of a hair was never lost in my house before.
Falstaff: Ye lie, hostess. Bardolph was shaved and lost many a hair, and I’ll be sworn my pocket was picked. Go to, you are a woman, go!
Hostess: Who, I? No: I defy thee! God’s light, I was never called so in my own house before!
Falstaff: Go to, I know you well enough.
Hostess: No, Sir John; you do not know me, Sir John. I know you, Sir John. You owe me money, Sir John, and now you pick a quarrel to beguile me of it. I bought you a dozen of shirts to your back. (III.3.40-52)

Falstaff calls Quickly “Dame Partlet, the hen” an allusion to Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest’s Tale. According to Falstaff, Quickly acts hen-like when she enters, and is prone to fluster as seen at II.4.221 (“O Jesu, my lord the Prince!”). Falstaff is not simply employing allusion; he is dehumanizing the hostess as part of an ongoing strategy to diminish her in front of Hal and others, a strategy he will use two more times during the scene. Quickly responds aggressively, the name “Sir John” taking on an accusatory tone in its repeated use to punctuate her speech (six times in this section), perhaps also including a bit of an ironic commentary on the “noble” status of such a depraved and indebted figure. She insists that she is the proprietor of an honest house, and a sizeable one at that; aside from the customers she has “enquired” upon (“man by man, boy by boy”), she refers to searching “servant by servant.” The use of several servants, coupled with the employment of the drawer Francis (introduced in II.1), point to a fairly substantial operation. Nell Quickly reveals her marital status, referring to her husband (presumably the Vintner who briefly enters and exits at II.4.66, never to be heard from again), who has made inquiries about the ring as well. It is only her last hyperbolic assertion of uprightness that goes acknowledged by Falstaff. In his reply of “Ye lie, hostess,” Falstaff disputes her honesty, but more importantly, he introduces the bawdy into the dialogue, his second, (though primary) strategy for diminishing and agitating Quickly. Casting her as a prostitute who “lies”
down, he implies that Bardolph contracted syphilis from a prostitute in her house, as a result of which the man was “shaved and lost many a hair.” Sir John then dismisses her as a “woman,” an object to be ignored. Quickly’s apparent offense at being called a woman serves as a moment of great comedy while also pointing to the latent misogyny that pervades the world of the play and that of early modern England. As I discuss in chapter 1, given dominant attitudes about feminine inconstancy, incontinence and insufficiency, Falstaff intends this as an insult and Quickly rightly reads it as such. Her huffy response (“I was never called so in my own house before”) also marks Quickly’s first opportunity to respond to Falstaff’s accusations—she has been insulted as a liar, a whore and a spreader of disease, and she responds logically. Though Falstaff again dismisses her as someone he knows “well enough,” the Hostess refuses to interpret his claim in a sexual manner. Quickly instead turns his words in another direction, asserting that he does not “know” her sexually but that she in fact “knows” his methods for getting out of repaying debts: she turns a once-negative connotation into something neutral.

Though frustrated by Falstaff’s slipperiness, Quickly rarely resorts to name-calling. She is attempting to collect a debt: she has purchased him “a dozen shirts” (52) out of “holland [linen] of eight shillings an ell” (55), lent him “four and twenty

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321 Given Falstaff’s attacks in prior lines, however, the implication seems clear.
322 Refusal to repay debts was a problem that particularly plagued single women who acted as moneylenders such that they would frequently subcontract collection work. See McIntosh, 107. The practice of widows and loans will be discussed further in relation to the “court scene” of Part 2, where the issue of moneylending first raised here comes to a head. This passing allusion to Falstaff’s debt to Quickly also demonstrates her agency; though married, she (and not her husband) has lent the Knight funds, and she is the party responsible for recouping them.
pound” (57), and allowed him to amass a tab of “diet and by-drinkings” (56). Falstaff never denies Quickly’s claims against him, he just uses slander to change the topic and agitate her. When Hal enters, she turns to him instead, engaging with the Prince who listens, responds, teases, and ultimately takes her side. She is the only woman Hal (or Falstaff, for that matter) speaks to in *Henry IV*. There are no wives and mothers in Henry IV’s court, only the voice of a middle-class businesswoman regularly mocked by the aristocrat Falstaff:

Hostess: My lord, I pray you hear me.
Prince: What say’st thou, Mistress Quickly? How doth thy husband? I love him well; he is an honest man.
Hostess: Good my lord, hear me.
Falstaff: Prithee let her alone and list to me.
Prince: What say’st thou, Jack?
Falstaff: The other night I fell asleep here behind the arras and had my pocket pick’d. This house is turn’d bawdy house; they pick pockets.
Prince: What dids’t thou lose, Jack?
Falstaff: Wilt thou believe me, Hal, three or four bonds of forty pound apiece and a seal ring of my grandfather’s.
Prince: A trifle, some eightpenny matter.
Hostess: So I told him, my lord, and I said I heard your grace say so; and, my lord, he speaks most vilely of you, like a foulmouthed man as he is, and said he would cudgel you.
Prince: What! He did not?
Hostess: There’s neither faith, truth nor womanhood in me else.
Falstaff: There’s no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune, nor no more truth in thee than in a drawn fox; and for womanhood, Maid Marion may be the deputy’s wife of the ward to thee. Go, you thing, go!
Hostess: Say, what thing? What thing?
Falstaff: What thing? Why, a thing to thank God on.
Hostess: I am no thing to thank God on, I would thou shouldst know it! I am an honest man’s wife, and setting thy knighthood aside, thou art a knave to call me so.
Falstaff: Setting thy womanhood aside, thou art a beast to say otherwise.
Hostess: Say, what beast, thou knave, thou?
Prince: An otter, Sir John? Why an otter?
Falstaff: Why? She’s neither fish nor flesh; a man knows not where to have her.
Hostess: Thou art an unjust man in saying so. Thou or any man knows where to have me, thou knave, thou!
Prince: Thou say’st true, hostess, and he slanders thee most grossly. (III.3.71-103)

Hal, who addresses Quickly as “my lady” in their first encounter at II.4.273, again greets her with some measure of respect and deference, referring to her husband as an “honest man” whom he loves. Though he expresses a willingness to listen to Quickly’s story, Falstaff’s interruption draws his attention, and the Knight delivers his side of the story first, claiming he has lost several bonds and a family heirloom worth “forty mark.” When the Prince dismisses the seal ring as a “trifling” matter (III.3.64), Quickly sees her chance to intervene, detailing the “foulmouthed” Falstaff’s indecorous speech about the Prince Hal. Regaining a foothold in the conversation, she vows that she speaks true lest she lose her faith, truth or womanhood, here reclaiming “womanhood” as a positive quality associated with morality and integrity. Directing the conversation to her integrity, both morally (faith, truth) and physically (womanhood), allows Falstaff to seize the opportunity to change the subject to Quickly’s body rather than his crimes. In comparing her faithfulness to that of a stewed prune (a dish served in whorehouses), Falstaff subtly returns to his earlier accusations of prostitution. He likens Quickly to the food consumed by those engaged in immorality, her body condoning and fueling the carnality of sinners. He continues, equating the Mistress’s truth with that of a fox “drawn” out of cover that must outwit hunters in order to survive. Falstaff compares Quickly’s “womanhood” to
that of Maid Marion, a disreputable woman and strumpet that appeared in morris dances and May games. A caricature of femininity played by a man in drag who performs acts of slapstick buffoonery, Maid Marion would be a recognizable figure to the audience. In this analogy, Maid Marion is the paragon of modest femininity (the ward deputy’s wife) when compared to the dissolute hostess. Quickly is therefore not merely a whore; she is the worst of whores. Falstaff concludes his speech with a final objectification: “go, you thing, go.” In the space of three lines, Falstaff casts Quickly as a corrupting food, a fox, a whore, and, finally, a “thing.” Quickly has been degraded even from her lowly status of “woman” at line 46; she has become an object not even worth acknowledging.

The Mistress refuses to back down. Taking issue with Falstaff’s insults, she asserts her own decency and femininity as “an honest man’s wife” (here also echoing Hal’s words from earlier in the scene). Falstaff is relentless, repeating his characterization of her as a “thing” and following it up with calling her a beast and an otter. The “otter,” a hapax legomenon in the Shakespearean corpus, is offensive primarily for its hybridity; as a creature neither fish nor flesh, this animal’s ambiguity makes it indecipherable both in species and in sex. Quickly is objectified anew as a monster, a beast whose body cannot be read. For a third time in this tableaux,

324 The otter is an example of the indecipherable nature of the hybrid animal. Ambroise Paré’s 1573 work On Monsters and Marvels begins with an emphasis on the importance of sexual identification and proper reproductive function. The third paragraph of the Preface concludes with a discussion of one type of maimed body as
Falstaff thrusts the conversation toward Quickly’s body and its availability, or in this case, its frightening unavailability. The hybrid, as the unknown, the mutant, the monstrous, held a particular fascination for early moderns. In defending against the charge of beastliness, a possibly flustered Quickly contends that “any man knows where to have” her. The sexual connotation of “know,” left unexplored earlier in the scene, is here made explicit, as Quickly seems to declare her body open to all comers. This, however, is not simply a comedic throwaway line; from her perspective it is an assertion of humanity, and a rejection of the hybrid image Falstaff has just evoked.

Until this point a neutral observer, Hal joins with Falstaff in the sexual chiding, agreeing that “any man knows where to have” the Hostess, but also rejects Falstaff’s reading of her as hybrid. In agreeing that Falstaff “most grossly” mocks her, Hal displays some degree of support for Quickly, and like the Chief Justice in 2 Henry IV, does not believe Falstaff’s claims, instead siding with Quickly who “say’st true.”

This scene sets the tone for encounters to come between Falstaff and Quickly in 2 Henry IV. Falstaff abuses the Hostess, employing the standard critiques of women at the time: Quickly is promiscuous, diseased, corrupt and monstrous. Not to be trusted, she is a wily drawn fox that deceives without remorse to avoid capture. She is a thief, or at least houses them, and while she may or may not be a prostitute, those with “a closure of the genitals in girls, because of the hymen; or because of a more than natural amount of flesh, or because they are hermaphrodites; or those having spots or warts or wens, or any other thing that is against nature.” (Paré, 1.) The otter, as a “fusing together of strange species” is “not only monstrous but also to be marveled at, that is to say, which is completely abhorrent and against Nature.” Paré, 5. While I am unsure if On Monsters was known in England, Paré’s treatise on childbirth was translated into English in 1612.

325 Such as the aforementioned On Monsters.
she facilitates the practice in her business. Even worse, as she employs diseased prostitutes, she threatens the public health. These discourses of prostitution and shady business practices recall those surrounding alewives in works like the church dooms and poems such as *Elynour Rummyng*. Falstaff’s claims against Quickly go ignored or denied by those in power (in this case Hal), despite the differences in status and gender that should give the social and legal advantage to Sir John. This is not simply a rejection of Falstaff’s narrative, but an acceptance of Quickly’s. This scene marks one of the few times Hal engages with a woman, and in the course of both parts of *Henry IV* the only woman he speaks to is Quickly. In *Henry V*, when Hal becomes Henry, he exclusively engages with women on the other end of the class spectrum, the French Queen Isabel and her daughter Princess Katherine. The latter is Henry’s fiancée, with whom he has an awkward public engagement ceremony at the play’s conclusion (a wedding, and a Queen, to which the audience is not privy). Quickly is the only English woman Hal interacts with: she is more than just a representative of middle-class women, she is the lone voice of English femininity in Hal’s world. She might mangle the King’s English with speech that at times betrays a lack of sophistication, but she is a speaker who won’t be silenced. Needless to say, there are no alewives in Shakespeare’s source texts; such women do not make (or threaten) history. Perhaps Quickly’s inclusion is not merely about adding comedy, but about including a new voice to the narrative of history: the voice of those in the audience.

As merchant, as middle class, as English, Quickly shares several ways of framing

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326 He does refer to Doll Tearsheet when she is present, but she does not converse with him in the way Quickly does.
identity with the audience, in essence giving these spectators purchase (albeit a small one) in historical narratives from which they are largely omitted.

2 Henry IV

2 Henry IV recounts the death of Henry IV and Hal’s rise to power as King Henry V. A principal feature of Hal’s emergent maturity as a statesman is his repudiation of Falstaff and all his companions from the reveling days at the Boar’s Head. The play picks up where Part 1 leaves off: rebels still threaten while Falstaff and Hal still live profligately in the taverns of Eastcheap. While Hal and his father appear to reconcile in the final scenes of Part 1, they are again estranged in Part 2. This is a play that pivots around rejections and reconciliations. After prolonged gnashing of teeth by the father and acts of prostration by the son, Hal and Henry make peace. Henry dies soon after, and Hal becomes King Henry V. Falstaff, a pseudo-father figure to Hal, presents himself at court and is publicly rejected by the newly anointed Henry; a king can have no fathers, even figurative. Despite what the epilogue promises, we will not see Falstaff again; he dies, offstage, early in Henry V. 2 Henry IV has a more somber tone than 1 Henry IV, a sequel that charts the deaths of kings and fathers and rebellions inside and outside the court. The dis-ease afflicting the kingdom is everywhere, from a corrupt legal system to aristocratic abuses of women and the poor. Predictably, Mistress Quickly is among those who suffer from such abuses, but she is also a character in possession of greater linguistic facility than
the figure from Part 1, and one who asserts herself in spaces beyond the confines of the tavern.

Mistress Quickly’s prominence increases in 2 Henry IV, a play in which she speaks more lines than any other woman. Through her engagements with those outside of Falstaff’s orbit, she becomes fleshed out, with details such as her status as widow and mother revealed. Perhaps because she is a widow, Quickly possesses a greater level of agency in this play than in 1 Henry IV. This is a moment in which art imitates the reality of female life; most, if not all, early modern women occupied the position of widow at some point in their lives, and census records show that widows ran around twenty percent of English households. The language of the widow as a weak figure in need of assistance is a mainstay, and a discourse to which widows across class lines appealed, including Mistress Quickly. She is three times referred to as a “poor widow,” emphasizing her role in these plays as a social signifier. Though poor, English widows could exercise some authority; they were allowed to hold private property, continue to run family businesses, and execute wills, making them a group significantly better off than other single adult women. Predictably, female agency evokes suspicion: the widow’s control over her body, her finances and her property allows her to escape many of the traditional means of male control.

327 Mendelson and Crawford, 174. See also O'Day, 282.
328 Mendelson and Crawford, 175.
329 Mendelson and Crawford, 175. Widows were “very disturbing to notions of male authority […] both because they were economically independent and because they were sexually experienced women not under the tutelage of a man.” Wiesner, 90-91. For more on the social ambiguity of widows, and the strategy of controlling them by
The widowed Quickly has more freedom to speak than the married one: she not only delivers more lines, she does more, engaging with officers of the law (the Chief Justice, Officers Fang and Snare) and with figures in the community aside from Falstaff. Quickly actively defends her honesty by reporting conversations with others that confirm her good character:

**Hostess:** Tilly-fally, Sir John, ne’er tell me. Your ancient swaggerer comes not in my doors. I was before Master Tisick, the deputy, t’ other day, and, as he said to me, ‘twas no longer ago than Wednesday last, “I’ good faith, neighbor Quickly,” says he - Master Dumbe, our minister, was by then - “neighbor Quickly,” says he, ‘receive those that are civil, for,” said he, “you are in an ill name.” Now a said so, I can tell whereupon. “For,” says he, “you are an honest woman, and well thought on; therefore take heed what quests you receive. Receive,” says he, “no swaggering companions.” There comes none here. You would bless you to hear what he said. No, I’ll no swaggerers. (II.4.78-89)

Though Falstaff and his crew create a negative image of the widow, Quickly insists that this is not a universally held opinion by citing recent encounters with her neighbors to prove her point. Quickly relates her encounter with the ward deputy, who warns her to watch the company she keeps because she is garnering an “ill-name” as a result. The deputy is not haranguing Quickly for bad behavior, but informing her of the gossip because he knows her as “an honest woman and well thought on,” indicating that the locally elected male officials value her place in the community. The fault, at least as Quickly reports, lies not in the Mistress but in her patrons, specifically men like Sir John’s “ancient” swaggering (quarrelsome, fighting) companion Pistol (II.4.77). The Deputy appears to have approached Quickly directly, branding them as “hypersexual” whore, see Jankowski, *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama*, 35-36.
an important detail because it demonstrates her agency as a widow: as the sole owner of her business, she alone is in charge of her reputation and affairs. She mentions the presence of “Master Dumbe, our minister” as a further witness to her good name and moral character. Quickly (at least according to her narrative) meets with positive acknowledgment from the men who hold power in this society.\textsuperscript{330}

Falstaff’s readings of her promiscuity, dishonesty and insignificance dominate in interpretations of this Quickly. He is a character who, like Hamlet, seems to have a life beyond the play. Harold Bloom argues that Falstaff and Hamlet transcend the page and stage, coming to possess a type of humanity that has deeply shaped our own.\textsuperscript{331} Falstaff’s theatrical presence cannot be denied; his exuberance, both in body and speech, is always apparent. He engages the audience with his comedic skills and linguistic acumen, pulling us toward his narrative in the same way he compels Hal’s attention away from Quickly in \textit{1 Henry IV} III.3. Falstaff draws us in, but we should not be so quick to believe the degrading reading of Quickly he provides, particularly given what we have seen of his character to this point.\textsuperscript{332} Falstaff is far from a

\textsuperscript{330} A respect that is also apparent (in some measure) in her interactions with Hal in \textit{1 Henry IV} III.3 and with the Chief Justice.

\textsuperscript{331} This is a concept articulated in Harold Bloom’s \textit{Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human}. Bloom contends that figures like Hamlet and Falstaff have achieved a type of humanity that actual humans can rarely achieve. These characters engage in a self-awareness (characterized by the act of “over-hearing”) that gives them a humanity akin to our own, if not surpassing it. In sum, Falstaff possesses a physicality, a jubilance and a psychology that makes him “real” despite his origins in theatrical fiction. Bloom.

\textsuperscript{332} I think Falstaff has “seduced” editors and audiences into adopting a portrait of Quickly that is often challenged by other figures in the play. Falstaff’s claims should be taken for what they are: the speech of a liar. However, the near universal credulity regarding Quickly that has been extended to this renowned liar speaks exactly to this
paragon of honesty: he steals from religious pilgrims, conscripts those too poor to buy their way out of military service, takes undeserved credit for the killing of Percy, fakes his own death on the field of battle when he fears for his life, and tells lies time and time again, just to name his crimes in *1 Henry IV*.

In II.1, Mistress Quickly seeks justice and recompense for crimes committed by Falstaff. The debts he owes from Part 1 have apparently gone unpaid (or accumulated anew), and Quickly employs the services of (the fiercely named) Officers Fang and Snare to arrest him.

Hostess: Master Fang, have you entered the action?
Fang: It is entered.
Hostess: Where’s your yeoman? Is’t a lusty yeoman? Will a stand to’t?
Fang: Sirrah, where’s Snare?
Hostess: O Lord, ay! Good Master Snare.
Snare: Here, here.
Fang: Snare, we must arrest Sir Falstaff.
Hostess: Yea, good Master Snare, I have entered him and all.
Snare: It may chance cost some of us our lives, for he will stab.
Hostess: Alas the day! Take heed of him. He stabbed me in mine own house, and that most beastly. In good faith, he cares not what mischief he does, if his weapon be out. He will foin like any devil; he will spare neither man, woman, nor child.
Fang: If I can close with him, I care not for his thrust.
Hostess: No, nor I neither. I’ll be at your elbow.
Fang: An I but fist him once, and a come but within my vice – (II.1.1-21)

The Mistress Quickly of Part 2 is less deferential than the character of Part 1: she aggressively seeks financial restitution and asserts her legal rights. This is a scene in which Quickly appears to be repeatedly guilty of malapropism and ignorant of her own innuendo. She introduces the bawdy, inquiring as to the lustiness of the yeoman seduction. My reading of the seductive qualities of Falstaff is derived in part from the discussion of Hal’s similar abilities in “Desiring Hal,” found in Goldberg, 145-75.
“Lusty” carries a number of connotations: lively action, spiritedness, stoutness and vigor, and quarrelsomeness; it also has the obvious associations with carnal desire. Quickly begins this scene by asking about both the yeoman’s sexual virility and his ability to fiercely enforce the law. While the audience might hear the innuendo, those on stage do not: neither Fang nor Snare takes the opportunity to advance the joke. This is characteristic of the remainder of the scene: save Falstaff, no other character mines Quickly’s language for the bawdy. Perhaps this absence of derogatory language play on the part of the other characters points to an alternative way to read this interaction and Quickly’s speech in general.

While this scene can be read as another example of Quickly’s malapropism and lack of control, it also reveals a more verbally sophisticated character than we have witnessed elsewhere in this play or its prequel. One way to stage this vignette is for pure comedy, with Quickly naïve about the bawdy inflections of her speech. This interpretation works well, playing into Falstaff’s reading of her insignificance. An alternative possibility, however, and one that maintains the bathetic richness of the scene, is to read Quickly as actively engaging in the creation of double entendre, using this innuendo to construct a subtle extended metaphor of sexual intercourse in which she is the male, a sexually penetrating figure to a passive and female Falstaff.

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333 We see Quickly initiate double entendre elsewhere in the play. At II.4.48ff, when teasing Doll and Falstaff for their bickering, Quickly turns to Tearsheet and notes that “what the goodyear, one must bear, and that must be you. You are the weaker vessel, as they say, the emptier vessel.” Quickly is punning with the different meanings of bear: to endure, to carry a weight, to carry Falstaff’s weight during intercourse, and to give birth to a child. She intentionally employs this pun to tease Doll. Given her ability to do this in II.4, it seems plausible that she is capable of doing it elsewhere.
Rather than being deaf to the intonations of her speech, Quickly establishes herself as phallic aggressor early on. By line 9, she has already twice evoked the erotic in her questions about the yeoman and now reports that she has “entered [Falstaff] and all.” Fang and Snare take her to mean that she has entered a legal claim against Falstaff, but this statement also situates the Mistress as physically entering Falstaff, suggesting sexual, perhaps sodomitical, penetration. This line creates a pun both through its use of “entered” and also through its exclusion of the direct object “case.” Case (as a legal term rather than slang for vagina) is read implicitly by those on stage, but its slang reading also works to feminize Falstaff. Quickly has not only entered her case against him, she has “entered [his case] and all.” Her deliberate withholding of such explanatory nouns preserves them for future use, while showing a character who is herself playful with language. If she artfully withholds predicate nouns, perhaps she also deliberately employs the diction of sexual aggression to cow or dominate her comparatively bland stage companions, exercising a verbal agency the malapropistic reading denies.

The innuendo continues as Quickly details Falstaff’s violent nature. Snare is wary that Falstaff will stab those who try to arrest him. The connotations for stab includes a fencing thrust, a movement toward stabbing, and (obscenely) for male

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334 Several critics have detailed the feminization of Falstaff in the Henriad, a gendering that the Knight participates in at 2 Henry IV IV.1.373 when he refers to “my womb, my womb, my womb.” For analysis on the feminizing of Falstaff see “Prince Hal’s Falstaff: positioning psychoanalysis and the female reproductive body” in Traub, Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama, 50-70. This is also discussed in Katherine Eggert, Showing Like a Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 79-80.
penetration during intercourse. Quickly, too, expresses concern, having been stabbed “in my own house” by him, and is witness to “what mischief he does if his weapon be out.” Quickly could mean that Falstaff literally cut her with his knife, that he made a movement to harm her with a knife, or that he sexually penetrated her. Snare’s use of the word points to fear rather than sexual jocularity, and from the following lines it seems that Quickly (et al.) take “stab” in the literal (or attempted literal) sense rather than the sexual. Either image is damning: one sense makes Falstaff a madman willing to attack any “man, woman [or] child,” the other describes a sexual predator open to hetero-, homo- and pedophilic sexual encounters. As supplier of malapropistic comic relief, Quickly creates a vivid image of the Knight, running around with “weapon” in hand trying to “stab” anything that moves. As expression of genuine anxiety regarding Falstaff’s violent temperament, these lines depict an irrationally aggressive and violent figure. Finally, if read with an eye for pathos rather than bathos, Quickly’s charges paint a frightening portrait of Sir Sack as domestic abuser, offering a glimpse into the collateral damage caused by his revelries.

Quickly continues her lament, moving from accounts of acts of violence to Falstaff’s financial crimes. Falstaff is successful at reinventing failures and turning faults into testaments of his own grandiosity (in 1 Henry IV see the events of the Gads Hill robbery in II.2 and Falstaff’s retelling of it in II.4), but when he is not around to defend himself by diversion the extent of Falstaff’s crimes against Quickly becomes clear as he exclaims:

I am undone by his going. I warrant you, he’s an infinitive thing upon my score. Good Master Fang, hold him sure. Good Master Snare, let him not
scape. A comes continually to Pie Corner – saving your manhood – to buy a saddle; and he is indited to dinner to the Lubber’s Head in Lumbert Street, to Master Smooth’s the silkman. I pray you, since my exion is entered and my case so openly known to the world, let him be brought in to his answer. A hundred mark is a long one for a poor lone woman to bear, and I have borne, and borne, and borne, and have been fubbed off, and fubbed off, and fubbed off, from this day to that day, that it is a shame to be thought on. There is no honesty in such dealing, unless a woman should be made an ass and a beast, to bear every knave’s wrong. Yonder he comes, and that arrant malmsey-nose knave, Bardolph, with him. Do your offices, do your offices. Master Fang and Master Snare, do me, do me, do me your offices. (II.1.22-41)

The longest of any of Quickly’s speeches in the Henriad, this passage details Falstaff’s injustices while also brimming with sexual subtext. Quickly is financially “undone” by Falstaff, her money gone toward purchase of a “saddle,” a term that could refer to a horse seat, a piece of mutton or a prostitute.\(^\text{335}\) Given Falstaff’s girth and (sexual) appetite (he is described as “fat as butter” at 1 Henry IV II.4.505), the mutton or the prostitute seem the most likely choices. Falstaff’s debt of one hundred marks equates to £66 in contemporary currency. By comparison, female servants who received room and board were paid a salary of £1 to £2 per annum.\(^\text{336}\) With the funds she loans Falstaff, Quickly could pay the annual wages of anywhere from thirty to sixty female employees. This speech, while revealing the substantial sum of money she has lent Falstaff, also points to the historical practice of widows as moneylenders. Money lending in this era was primarily done among family, friends and local acquaintances.\(^\text{337}\) Widows were among the few women who could employ cash on hand, and lending money at interest and providing investment capital was one of the

\(^{335}\) Shakespeare and McEachern, The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, 28.

\(^{336}\) Amy Louise Erickson, Women and Property in Early Modern England (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 85.

\(^{337}\) McIntosh, 103.
few ways that single women could make money. Widows proved a major source of capital in both urban and rural settings. Falstaff’s borrowings underscore the importance of the rising middle class to the economic solvency of the kingdom, and the aristocracy in particular; with a nobility in crisis, the middling sort like Quickly were necessary to prop them up. The availability of money to loan also attests to Quickly’s success as a businesswoman and financial planner.

In this double entendre-rich passage, Quickly’s diction and syntax mimic an orgasmic climax, perhaps a natural outcome of having previously “entered him and all.” She declares her “case” to be “openly known to the world,” an instance of malapropism that makes Quickly out to be a promiscuous woman rather than a party whose suit is well documented. She cries out that she has long “borne and borne and borne” Falstaff’s debts, which have been repeatedly “fubbed off and fubbed off and fubbed off” in her attempts at collection. “Borne” offers several denotational possibilities: a weight carried (during copulation, or in other situations), a financial burden, and the birthing of a child. “Fubbed off” refers to being cheated or tricked. From lines 31-35, Quickly’s pace speeds up, creating a pounding, copulatory rhythm via the combination of conjunctions and repetition. The quickening of the speech’s pace occurs through her diction and syntax: a long sentence (forty-nine words, compared to the twenty-five- and twenty-three-word sentences that precede and follow it) contains a chain of thirty-seven monosyllabic words. This is a forceful sentence, full of sharp, blunt staccatos that punctuate her grievances. The repetitive

338 Mendelson and Crawford, 336. For more on widows’ participation in capital investment and commerce see Wiesner, 130-34.
movement of intercourse is aurally evoked through Quickly’s being “borne and borne and borne” and “fubbed off and fubbed off and fubbed off” by Falstaff. The tempo slows for a moment at line 35 (multisyllabic words reappear, but only momentarily), until her report of Falstaff’s entrance at line 37 (“Yonder he comes”). Falstaff’s “coming” pushes Quickly to her own (sexual or ethical) climax, in a series of exhortations to “do your offices, do your offices. Master Fang and Master Snare, do me, do me, do me your offices.” The comic possibilities for a harried boy-actress pleading for two other men to “do me, do me” seem numerous, but the rendering of Quickly as agent of her language, someone engaging in the creation of an extended metaphor that attempts to reframe the power relations between her and Falstaff, works just as successfully, taking the bawdy to an additional level. In spite of the rampant double entendre, Quickly’s sexual aggression and/or malapropism does not diminish her intelligibility or her credibility; she is still taken seriously by those on stage, and her language and social status do not undermine her claims. Perhaps the men on stage are in on the joke, and perhaps Quickly is, as well.

Falstaff, his page and Bardolph enter the scene and, true to form, Falstaff responds with threats of violence and slanderous attacks.

Falstaff: How now! Whose mare’s dead? What’s the matter?
Fang: Sir John, I arrest you at the suit of Mistress Quickly.
Falstaff: Away, varlets! Draw, Bardolph. Cut me off the villain’s head. Throw the quean in the channel.
Hostess: Throw me in the channel! I’ll throw thee in the channel. Wilt thou? Wilt thou? Thou bastardly rogue! Murder, murder! Ah, thou honeysuckle villain! Wilt thou kill God’s officers and the king’s? Ah, thou honey-seed rogue! Thou art a honeysseed, a man-queller, and a woman-queller.
Falstaff: Keep them off, Bardolph.
Fang: A rescue! A rescue!
Hostess: Good people, bring a rescue or two. Thou wo’t, wo’t thou? Thou wo’t, wo’t ta? Do, do, thou rogue! Do, thou hempseed!


Falstaff reverts to *ad feminam* attacks calling his accuser a prostitute (“quean”), and ordering her thrown into the gutter (“channel”). He designates an assertive woman seeking justice a whore, ordering her discarded; the only strategy he has to engage with women is to degrade or exploit them. The Hostess comes out firing, naming Falstaff a “bastardly rogue” and “honesuckle [homicidal] villain” who kills both men and women (“man-queller” and “woman-queller”). The accusatorial stakes rise significantly, expanded to include murder. The Page takes a cue from his Master and begins hurling names at the Plaintiff, at which point the Chief Justice enters:

Chief Justice: How now, Sir John! What are you brawling here?
Doth this become your place, your time and business?
You should have been well on your way to York.
Stand from him, fellow. Wherefore hang’st upon him?
Hostess: O my most worshipful lord, an’t please your grace, I am a poor widow of Eastcheap, and he is arrested at my suit.
Chief Justice: For what sum?
Hostess: It is more than for some, my lord; it is for all, all I have. He hath eaten me out of house and home; he hath put all my substance into that fat belly of his. But I will have some of it out again, or I will ride thee o’ nights like the mare.
Falstaff: I think I am as like to ride the mare, if I have any vantage of ground to get up.
Chief Justice: How comes this, Sir John? Fie! What man of good temper would endure this tempest of exclamation? Are you not ashamed to enforce a poor widow to so rough a course to come by her own? (II.1.57-76)

339 “Women-queller” (cf. “Lady killer”) also refers to a seducer of women, a meaning that perhaps colors the term into “man-queller” as well. Either account squares with Quickly’s earlier testimony that Falstaff is a madman “if his weapon [sexual or martial] be out.”
Like Fang and Snare, the Justice immediately accepts the validity of Quickly’s claims against Falstaff. The readiness to believe Quickly suggests that outside of the tavern she enjoys some degree of respect (a point reiterated in II.4), and that it is primarily Falstaff who holds her in such disdain.\footnote{It also suggests Falstaff’s notoriety.} Falstaff tells us to disregard Quickly; other characters tell us not to. Taken aback by Falstaff’s behavior, the official asks if these sorts of actions befit the Knight’s place, “time and business.” Quickly (expertly playing the role of the bereaved) appeals to her status as a poor widow (language the Justice echoes) and pleads her case, arguing that while the amount of money lent may not be significant, it is all she has.\footnote{Quickly appeals to her weakness as a mode of agency, an act akin to “pleading the belly” (seeking to delay punishment or execution as a result of pregnancy). Since women in this time were innately conceived of as the “weaker sex,” the use of the discourse of feminine insufficiency could prove useful to acquiring assistance or justice, as apparent in this scene. See Oldham: 1-64.}

The Chief Justice refuses to pick up on (or does not hear) Quickly’s sexual puns. Falstaff’s joke about “riding the mare” offends this official, and when it is clear that the Justice is not game the Knight turns to Quickly and asks her what “gross sum” he owes:

Falstaff: What is this gross sum that I owe thee?
Hostess: Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my dolphin chamber at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor, thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Can’st thou deny it? Did not Goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly? Coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar, telling us she had a good dish of prawns, whereby thou dids’t desire to eat some, whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And dids’t thou not, when she was gone downstairs desire me to be
no more so familiarity with such poor people, saying that ere long they should
call me madam? And did'st thou not kiss me and bid me fetch thee thirty
Falstaff: My lord, this is a poor mad soul, and she says up and down the town
that her eldest son is like you. She hath been in good case, and the truth is,
poverty hath distracted her. But for these foolish officers, I beseech you I may
have redress against them.
Chief Officer: Sir John, Sir John, I am well acquainted with your manner of
wrenching the true cause the false way. It is not a confident brow, nor the
throng of words that come with such more than impudent sauciness from you,
can thrust me from a level consideration. You have, as it appears to me,
practiced upon the easy-yielding spirit of this woman, and made her serve
your uses both in purse and in person. (II.1.77–106)

Falstaff’s admission of guilt prompts the widow’s account of a past meeting in which
he proposed marriage and borrowed money. Quickly describes the events by
employing standard legal discourse to plead her case, first noting the location of the
crime (“sitting in my dolphin chamber at the round table, by a sea-coal fire”), the date
of the event (“upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the prince broke thy head
for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor”), and witnesses willing to testify in
her favor (“Goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife […] coming in to borrow a mess of
vinegar”). She summarizes her entire grievance in the opening line of her speech: the
“gross sum” which Falstaff owes is “marr[iage, of him]self and the money too.” This
scene reveals an intimate and friendly relationship not regularly seen in the
interactions between Falstaff and Quickly, while also detailing Sir John’s cruel
manipulation and exploitation of others. Falstaff appealed to Quickly both as a widow
and as a member of the rising middle class, promising to marry her and make her a
“lady” (a knight’s wife) as she tended to his head wound. He “desire[d]” that his
fiancée become less familiar with “poor people,” those of both lower class and
reputation, and he professed concern for her standing, warning her against growing
too familiar with the low company, for she would soon be called “madam.” Madam
works two ways: as procuress of prostitutes and as a title for a knight’s wife. Quickly,
and the Chief Justice, clearly take it in the latter sense, and she attests that after
receiving a kiss from Falstaff she went to “fetch him thirty shillings.” The Chief
Justice levels his judgment—Falstaff has exploited the “easy-yielding” (naïve)
Quickly, and has “made her serve your uses both in purse and in person.”
This is a bleak image of an abusive man who exploits women physically and financially by
promising marriage and, when exposed, responds with slander and threats of
violence. Falstaff is ordered to “pay her the debt [he owes] her, and unpay the villainy
[he has] done with her. The one [he] may do with sterling money, and the other with
current repentance.” (II.1.108-111)

Rather than refute Quickly’s case, Falstaff resorts to slander and attempts to
change the subject. Bringing her financial and social status to the fore, he refers to her
as “poor” and in “poverty” (perhaps as result of the money lent to Falstaff) to
emphasize her place as inferior to him mentally, fiscally, and socially. Once
prosperous (“in good case”), she is now driven “mad” and to distraction. Falstaff’s
third attack, that she levels false paternity claims against the Chief Justice, reveals not
only a last-gasp attempt to appeal to male anxieties about bastard children, but an
intriguing fact about Quickly: she is a mother. Falstaff refers to her “eldest” son, and
so we learn that Quickly has two and perhaps three sons. Maternity is a rarity in the

While “easy-yielding” could carry sexual connotations, given the Chief Justice’s
lack of participation in the games of word play to this point, I find it unlikely.
second tetralogy. Only two other mothers appear across the four plays: the Duchess of York in *Richard II* and Queen Isabel of France from *Henry V*. Maternity is also a rarity in the history genre of this period; there are only passing references to mothers at moments of marriage, birth and death. Shakespeare thus confers a biography on this minor character that includes romantic entanglements, professional obligations, and children.

Falstaff vows to the Chief Justice that this will not be the last word on the matter and proceeds to take Quickly aside. When the two return to the stage, the extent of Quickly’s “easy-yielding” nature and of Falstaff’s seductive abilities become clear; he has convinced Quickly to withdraw the action against him and to pawn more goods. The gullible Hostess asks him if he “will pay [her] altogether” at supper, to which he replies that he will, and she departs with Bardolph, the Page, Fang and Snare. When we see them again in II.4 (where Quickly offers the reports of her good character), the two appear to be friends again, and Falstaff instead fights with the prostitute Doll Tearsheet. We will not see Quickly and Falstaff together again, as Falstaff and his crew are banished from the orbit of the new King and the Knight will die without our seeing him in the next play. Quickly and Doll are last seen accompanied by two beadles, en route to a hearing before a justice:

Hostess: No, thou arrant knave! I would to God that I might die, that I might have thee hanged. Thou hast drawn my shoulder out of joint.
Officer: The constables have delivered her over to me; and she shall have whipping-cheer, I warrant her. There hath been a man or two killed about her.

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343 The mothers that appear in the first tetralogy are also of the upper classes.
Doll: Nut-hook, nut-hook, you lie! Come on, I’ll tell thee what, thou damned tripe-visaged rascal, and the child I go with do miscarry, thou wert better thou had’s’t struck thy mother, thou paper-faced villain.

Hostess: O the Lord, that Sir John were come! He would make this a bloody day to somebody. But I pray God the fruit of her womb miscarry!

Officer: If it do, you shall have a dozen of cushions again; you have but eleven now. Come, I charge you both go with me, for the man is dead that you and Pistol beat amongst you.

Doll: I’ll tell you what, you thin man in a censer, I will have you as soundly swunged for this, you bluebottle rogue, you filthy famished correctioner! If you be not swunged, I’ll forswear half-kirtles. (V.4.1-20)

Who is charged with what remains unclear (the referent of the charge goes unstated), as the beadle notes that “she shall have whipping cheer,” alluding to the use of whipping as a standard punishment for prostitution. Doll answers first and with the most vitriol, perhaps indicating that this charge is directed toward her. The second part of the charge stems from “having a man or two killed about her,” as well as the death of the man that “you and Pistol beat amongst you.”

I read both of these charges (prostitution and murder) as leveled against Doll, with Quickly pulled into the action as a result of her ownership of the space where the crimes likely taken place. It is Doll that responds, and with great vitriol, to the charge of men “lately killed about her” (“about” pointing to either in her presence or because of her), while Quickly calls out for help (similar to her response in II.1 and II.IV when confronted with violence). The fact the Doll also attempts to plead the belly (insincerely) by using cushions in order to escape punishment further indicates that it is Doll and not Quickly against whom these charges are leveled. For more on “about her” see note 7 in William Shakespeare and A. R. Humphreys, The Second Part of King Henry IV, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare (London: Cenage Learning, 2007), 177. See also note 6 in William Shakespeare and René Weis, Henry IV, Part 2, Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1998), 265. For more examples of abusing the privilege of “pleading the belly,” see Oldham: 33.
chaps” of Pistol should he continue to accost her. Doll is a girl who brings a knife to the fight, a contrast with Quickly’s attempt to stop violence in the tavern at II.4.184. Quickly’s responses to the arrest are mild; where Doll curses the triple visaged, paper–faced villain, Quickly primarily invokes the “lord” and “God” that Falstaff might appear to make a “bloody day to somebody.” Doll’s responses are violent—she lashes out, promising vengeance and attempting to gain her freedom from this “filthy famished correctioner.” Quickly turns heavenward, relinquishing her agency to God or her hierarchical superiors. The respective responses reveal differing levels of physical aggression: where Doll is ready to spar, Quickly loudly complains and then retreats. The differences are significant in considering the charges; Doll, the choleric and fighting prostitute, seems a more likely culprit than the “honest man’s wife” who seeks out the law when her other recourses fail. The women are led offstage, and the outcome of the hearing unknown. What is known, however, is this: Quickly appears in Henry V; Doll does not. This brief scene, appearing right before the rejection of Falstaff, seems to represent another moment where Hal is metaphorically killing off the people of his past. However, this is a failed act of silencing, since Quickly (and her tavern) persist into the next play, a woman who continues speaking despite attempts of authority to quiet her.345

The Quickly of Part 2, a woman repeatedly seen in public defending her reputation and her finances, is a far more multifaceted figure than that of Part 1. While the Mistress of 1 Henry IV is confined to a function of mostly malapropistic

345 Perhaps similar to the inability to silence Joan and Margaret.
comic relief or serves as a minor participant in the games between Hal and Falstaff, the character of 2 Henry IV is granted a greater physical (and I argue, linguistic) mobility, as well as having her own subplot that entails several engagements with legal authorities. Quickly, while still the alewife of Part 1, has experienced a number of life changes in the narrative time between the plays. She has been widowed and is now a mother with multiple children running a family business; she is forced to confront legal authority and struggles to maintain her reputation in light of the suspicions that often accompanied those of her marital status and profession. Quickly’s character provides a brief look into the middle class traditionally absent from the genre, and in the midst of her mispronunciations and bawdy comedy she provides insight into some of the realities of female life in the mercantile economy of Shakespeare’s time. In the history plays, women typically fall silent when their husbands die. The widowed Queen Katherine has no voice (or character) in Henry VI, and Richard II’s unnamed Queen is silenced following his deposition. Lady Percy briefly enters 2 Henry IV at II.3 to praise her dead husband Hotspur (and to remind the audience of his noble exploits), but then is heard no more. Unlike queens and women of the upper class, Quickly (and most middle-class women at the time)

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346 Interestingly, Quickly engages with both the highest representative of the Law (the Chief Justice), and the lowest (the beadles, who are minor parish officers). The reported speeches of the Deputies could also fall into this subplot.
347 Perhaps Quickly’s appearance in V.4 with Doll is emblematic of exactly these types of suspicions regarding widows and alewives/tavern keepers, and the serious legal implications such attitudes might translate to.
348 A number of widows appear in Richard III (primarily because Richard III has killed off their husbands), but their chorus of “wailing women” is the exception in the history plays.
becomes more relevant when she is widowed, exercising a power over her reputation and assuming a legal agency not available to the wife in Part 1. Degraded by Falstaff within the play and dismissed by editors from the 19th century on, Quickly in Part 2 sheds light on the more nefarious elements of Sir Jack’s character. Though Falstaff maligns her, several important men hold her in high regard, speaking to her good reputation and siding with her in actions against Falstaff. Save for her last engagement with the beadles, a scene that reveals more about Doll’s duplicity than Quickly’s, the Mistress of Part 2 achieves the status of a successful, and at least somewhat respected, businesswoman. This reading, however, only becomes evident through paying attention to what those other than Falstaff have to say about her.

**Henry V**

*Henry V*, the final play of the second tetralogy, recounts Henry V’s reign as king, a drama framed around his decision to resume fighting in the Hundred Years War and the stunning military successes in France at the siege of Harfleur and the Battle of Agincourt. Henry rallies the nation to his cause, and comes close to conquering France. As part of the Treaty of Troyes, Henry woos the French princess Katherine, and their children are poised at the end of the play to inherit the throne of France. Though this play focuses on a king at war, there is a distinctly middle-class voice in the multi-cultural “band of brothers” that makes up Henry’s army. The world of the tavern appears briefly in the play’s opening acts before the scene shifts to France, and then it isn’t heard from again. While *Henry IV* focuses on domestic
rebellions, *Henry V* throws the audience into the world of international diplomacy and foreign expansion, concerns no doubt familiar to an English audience in the nascent stages of nation building. Falstaff’s companions Bardolph and Pistol are present, first in the tavern and later at war in France. While the epilogue of *2 Henry IV* promises that “our humble author will continue the story with Sir John in it and make you merry” (Epilogue, 20-21), Falstaff does not appear. Instead of the Knight the audience receives report that he has died, a narrative delivered by Mistress Quickly.

Quickly has remarried, this time to Pistol, Sir John’s “ancient” who vows to “discharge upon her” in *2 Henry IV* (II.4.97). Bardolph reports that Quickly was also engaged to Nym but broke it off, something about which Nym remains aggrieved. The engagements (if Falstaff’s proposal from *2 Henry IV* is included) and marriages emphasize Quickly’s desirability as a mate and represent a common event in the lives of women at the time, i.e. remarriage. Newlyweds Nell Quickly and Pistol enter in II.1, almost straight from their wedding vows. A boy arrives to deliver news that Falstaff is “very sick, and would to bed” (II.1.74). Falstaff is dying, “the King [having] killed his heart” (II.1.79). When Quickly and Pistol return two scenes later, they bring news of Falstaff’s passing:

> Pistol: ….my manly heart doth erne. Bardolph, Be blithe; Nym, rouse thy vaunting veins; boy, bristle Thy courage up for Falstaff he is dead. And we must earn therefore.

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349 Quickly’s name is revealed for the first time in the Henriad, referred to by Bardolph at line 15 and again by Pistol at 27 as Nell.
Bardolph: Would I were with him, wheresoe’er he is, either in heaven or hell. Quickly: Nay sure, he’s not in hell! He’s in Arthur’s bosom, if ever man went to Arthur’s bosom. ‘A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any chrostom child. ‘A parted ev’n just between twelve and one, ev’n at the turning o’ th’ tide. For after I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers end, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and ‘a babbled of green fields. “How now, Sir John?” quoth I. “What man? Be o’ good cheer.” So ‘a cried out “God, God, God!” three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him ‘a should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. So ‘a bade me lay more clothes on his feet. I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as stone. Then I felt to his knees, and so upward and upward, and all was as cold as any stone. (II.3.3-23)

Pistol’s declaration that “he is dead, and we must erne therefore” is the announcement that “kills” Falstaff and any hope of his return, but Quickly describes his final moments and offers the closest thing to a eulogy the Knight will receive. Highly sentimental, Quickly couches her description of Falstaff’s death in biblical imagery of verdant fields and Arthurian folklore. Quickly’s speech alludes several times to Psalm 23, a prayer Falstaff recites when he “babble[s] of green fields.” She re-baptizes and recasts the robust, bawdy Falstaff as a babbling infant (“christom child”) smiling and playing with flowers. The passage continues with a description of his time of death between midnight and one “at the turning o’ th’ tide.” Apparently forgiven by one of his fiercest detractors, Quickly insists that Falstaff is in “Arthur’s bosom”

350 Psalm 23: The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou are with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with old; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
(almost always glossed as a mispronunciation of Abraham) and now in heaven. This speech contains echoes of her once accusatory use of “Sir John,” though she now speaks his name to evoke a sense of comfort and normalcy as she makes calming small talk with the dying Falstaff. Quickly’s report of her spoken words to Falstaff sounds cooing, like the words of a mother to a feverish child. Since Falstaff has been born again as a newly baptized infant, he must be spoken to (and) as such; she tenderly addresses him “what now, Sir John….what man? Be o’ good cheer.” Falstaff cries out for God and asks to have blankets placed around his feet and he soon dies. Falstaff’s death depicts a humanizing moment of intimacy between the pair while providing a gentle departure for a beloved character.

The quality of Quickly’s speech differs in this scene, her words more fluid than in the speeches of 1 and 2 Henry IV. The elision and syncope make the speech sound breathless, giving it the feel of an off-the-cuff report; she does not have the time to say the complete words, as the story she must tell is too important, too immediate, for full enunciation. She must tell the audience that the Falstaff they hoped to see, indeed were promised in Part 2, will not arrive. The speech itself speeds by, as the Mistress moves from an assertion of Falstaff’s place in heaven, to an encomium where she reworks The Lord’s Prayer and relates the man’s dying words. The repeated use of the pronoun “a” (carrying a number of definitions but here

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meaning “he”) further quickens the pace. The pronouns string together sentences and render the speech informal; the audience becomes a type of confidant. These rhetorical devices create a sense of windedness and of a speaker who is trying to recount quickly. The Mistress is an appropriate messenger of Falstaff’s closing actions; she was his most energetic (and in many ways only) companion and antagonist outside the Prince, now King.

Mining this speech for malapropism and the bawdy makes for a potentially comedic scene, but one far less emotionally affecting than its content requires. Quickly describing how she “felt up and up” Falstaff’s legs, which were as cold as stone, can be read as a sexual pun with “stones” as testicles. Though this is an interpretation consonant with the figure from the previous plays, it seems to be based primarily on a (mis)reading of her earlier diction. Quickly’s unintentional puns are no longer funny, they are poignant: Falstaff is now a dying man, not hot with temper and passion but cold in his bed. None of the other characters treats the line as a sexual pun, so it is curious that editors do, and it is a reading that potentially corrupts the elegiac beauty of the speech. Another malapropistic element typically cited from this speech is Quickly’s allusion to “Arthur’s bosom,” ostensibly a garbled reference to the Biblical Abraham. Rackin and Howard extend a measure of linguistic agency to Quickly here, seeing her insistence that Falstaff is in “Arthur’s bosom” as a moment where she usurps the “legacy of this mythic Welsh forefather” previously available.

352 The editors of the Arden edition discuss this as “unintentionally suggesting testicle,” as do the editors of the Pelican.
only to Hal/Henry V. By placing Falstaff in “Arthur’s bosom” the Mistress and the middle-class female voice she represents takes ownership of a mythic tradition invoked by only male (and traditionally aristocratic) voices. More importantly for the purposes of my discussion, this is a moment where a woman invokes a historical figure, an invocation that reveals earlier parts of the Henriad where Quickly’s agency and Arthurian legend coincide.

I read this moment of allusion to “Arthur’s bosom” as part of the Mistress’s broader engagement with this mythic tradition, an engagement that elevates her intellectual status while facilitating her participation in (however briefly) the masculine act of historiography. We find a new Arthurian resonance in Quickly’s

353 Howard and Rackin, 184. It seems that this mythic tradition is not actually limited to Hal, as at least three other male characters allude to King Arthur (and his court) in the second tetralogy: see Hotspur’s “dreamer Merlin” in 1 Henry IV, 3.1.148, Falstaff’s “When Arthur first in court […] and was a worthy king” in 2 Henry IV, 2.4.37-9, and Shallow’s “I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur’s show” in 2 Henry IV, 3.2.280. The editors of the Arden edition mention the appearance of Arthur in the speeches of Falstaff and Shallow from 2 Henry IV in the gloss of “Arthur’s bosom,” Shakespeare and Craik, King Henry V, 181. Arthurian legend at this time has a symbolic resonance in both cultural and historical narratives. Throughout medieval romance literature, Arthur was immensely popular. The chronicle histories of the 15th-century employ him as an historical exemplum: he operates both as historical figure and cultural figurehead, a conquering king and a paragon of chivalry. See Christopher Dean, Arthur of England: English attitudes to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 163.

354 As chapter 1 discusses, the genre of history is a masculine one, written by and about men as an attempt to reinsert the male voice into the narrative of English greatness being constructed under a virgin Queen. Though Queen Margaret narrativizes history (as discussed in the last chapter), she is one of the few women in the tetralogies to do so: narrating history is a privilege almost exclusively reserved for men.
speech detailing Falstaff’s proposal in 2 Henry IV II.1 by “reading backwards” from “Arthur’s bosom.”

Hostess: Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my dolphin chamber at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor, thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Can’st thou deny it? Did not Goodwife Keech, the butcher’s wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly? Coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar, telling us she had a good dish of prawns, whereby thou dids’t desire to eat some, whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And did’st thou not, when she was gone downstairs desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people, saying that ere long they should call me madam? And did’st thou not kiss me and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath. Deny it, if thou canst. (II.1.78ff)

This passage contains several references to England’s Arthurian romance tradition; in describing the marriage proposal, Quickly speaks of her and Falstaff sitting at a “round table” while drinking from a “gilt-goblet,” terms evocative of the Arthurian myths of the round table and the search for the Holy Grail. This meeting takes place in her “Dolphin chamber,” glossed as a room decorated with dolphins, but (as shown in the first tetralogy) the word “dolphin” is also the English pronunciation of the French Dauphin or princely heir apparent. Perhaps Quickly is holding court in her own royal chamber, creating her own Arthurian romance around the knight, Sir John.

355 While this may challenge the linear order of the plays established by chronology, I find this type of “preposterous” reading appropriate for a character who so regularly confuses linguistic and social expectations. I borrow my notion of the preposterous, particularly its ability to “disrupt the linear orders of succession and following” from Patricia A. Parker, Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 20-55. See also Goldberg, 180-92.

356 As noted in chapter 2, acceptable forms of the French “dauphin” in English include “dolphin” and “dolphyn,” but these uses fall out of favor by the end of the 17th century. See “Dauphin,” entry “B” in Simpson, et al.
This possibility would suggest that her use of “Arthur’s bosom” is an act of narrative agency rather than allusive error. Quickly’s use of the medieval myths of early English history in her “eulogy” for Falstaff gives it a heroic undertone, one that a solely sexualized and malapropistic reading of her speech misses. Following Falstaff’s death, the action of the play moves entirely to France; the women (and most of the men) of Eastcheap are never to be heard from again. Pistol reports, “news have I that my Nell is dead” (V 5.1.82), Mistress Quickly’s death left unstaged and mentioned only in passing. The Quickly of the Henriad is a character rich in speech and action. If we see her speeches as more than malapropism, a complicated vision of the Mistress emerges as does a more sinister interpretation of Falstaff. A “more-than-malapropism” Quickly is a character who asserts a significant measure of linguistic agency, drawing on the discourses of the bawdy, the mythic and the historic in her self-presentation. In

357 The full line reads “news have I that my Nell is dead/ I’th’ spital of a malady of France” (V 5.1.82-3). “Nell’s” death from syphilis (also known as the French disease) is in some ways an editorial choice; both Folio and Q1 read “Doll,” but later editors thought this to be the result of compositor error and that Pistol would never refer to Doll Tearsheet as “my Doll” given his disgust with her at 2.1.72 (the emendation recalls Pistol’s earlier advice to Nym to “to the spital go” and find the syphilitic Doll Tearsheet). For more on the case for Nell versus Doll, see the note for line 82 in Shakespeare and Craik, King Henry V, 181. Regardless of who the actual referent is, this is a moment of anachronism given that the first major outbreak of syphilis in Europe does not occur until 1495-1496, nearly eighty years after the events of Henry V. Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and R. K. French, The Great Pox: The French Disease in Renaissance Europe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 24.
this reading of Falstaff through his treatment of Quickly, the extent of his preying
upon (and its damage to) the middle classes acquires a significance lost in the purely
bathetic interpretation of the Eastcheap alewife. Through promises of financial and
social elevation Falstaff manipulates and exploits the lower classes, convincing
Quickly (and Shallow) to loan him money. Quickly’s relationship with Falstaff
further reveals the varied threats faced by women (widows in particular) of the
merchant middle class, ranging from issues surrounding debt collection to the attacks
posed by rumor on her reputation. What is at stake in this reading is not only the
image of the Mistress, but also that of Falstaff; her struggles highlight his nefarious
acts, despite her rehabilitation of his reputation at the moment of his death. Though
both characters die in the last play of the tetralogy, their bawdy banter lives on in The
Merry Wives of Windsor, a world where Quickly again transgresses linguistic and
social boundaries, this time in her movement from domestic servant to Fairy Queen.

Merry Wives of Windsor

The Merry Wives of Windsor is set somewhere in the temporal world between
Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, a moment in which Falstaff is still alive (and on the prowl)
and Hal has yet to become king. A comedy lying outside the history tetralogies,

358 The date of the play’s composition is a contested issue, with allusions to
contemporary events pointing to a number of possible years. As the Cambridge
editors note, this play was written “somewhere within the sequence of histories [the
Henriad], either before, during or after the writing of Henry IV Part Two.” For a
summary of the dating controversy, see William Shakespeare and David Lisle Crane,
The Merry Wives of Windsor, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge
England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-5, quote from 4. The
Merry Wives depicts the machinations of two middle-class women, Mistresses Ford and Page, as they punish Falstaff for trying to seduce them (married women, both), while also teaching their husbands a lesson that “wives may be merry, and honest too” (IV.2.89). During the play Falstaff is subjected to a number of public humiliations, culminating with a shaming ritual in which he is made to wear cuckold’s horns while the townspeople mock him. Though a decidedly middle-class play full of romantic and bawdy comedy, Merry Wives is never far removed from the world of monarchy, specifically the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The play features many of the middle-class figures from Falstaff’s cohort in the histories, including Bardolph, Shallow, Pistol, Nym, and Mistress Quickly. The Quickly of Merry Wives, sometimes read as a young cousin or sister/sister-in-law to the Mistress of the second tetralogy, possesses many of the same verbal and character traits as her history-play relative. While I extend to the Quickly of Merry Wives the same character “origins” of the drama are themselves as debatable as the date of composition, with one (likely apocryphal) narrative ascribing the play’s creation to a request by Queen Elizabeth to see Falstaff in love. See Shakespeare and Crane, The Merry Wives of Windsor, 7. All quotes from the play are taken from the New Cambridge edition. 

359 The presence of Queen Elizabeth and the monarchy is far more pronounced in the Folio text than the Quarto, a presence made explicit via the inclusion of additional references to Windsor and the court, as well as the blessing for the Order of the Garter. These differences, as well as a case for the publication of a parallel text, are discussed in Leah S. Marcus, "Levelling Shakespeare: Local Customs and Local Texts," Shakespeare Quarterly 42.2 (1991): 168-78.

360 This reading is based on Quickly’s close relationship to Anne Page, the lack of recognition between her and Falstaff in their first meeting at II.2.30, and her status as housekeeper to Dr. Caius rather than the alewife and tavern hostess of the Henriad. I make the case that this Quickly is the same as that of the histories, albeit a Mistress Quickly significantly younger than the alewife of the Henriad, with the scenes depicted in Merry Wives predating those in Part 1 and in a time before she has married the vintner or established a business. Historical time, as is evident in the first
coherence as that given Falstaff and his motley crew, the similarities between the two women, particularly their tendency toward malapropism and the bawdy, render them the same comic-relief type, a member of a bumbling middle-class. The Quickly of the Henriad moves through a number of social and life positions (widow, bride and mother) just as the Quickly of *Merry Wives* undergoes a radical (even if only temporary) social promotion, with Dr. Caius’ domestic servant becoming the voice of social justice in her role as leader of the skimmington. In a radical disruption of the linguistic and social hierarchy, the lowest-class and bawdiest character becomes a pseudo-Elizabeth in the play’s final scene, a movement that reveals an intellectual and verbal capacity not previously accorded to the Mistress.

Though populated largely by the middle class, Windsor signifies monarchical power, a power that comes to be embodied by Quickly as a Fairy Queen. The seat of one of many royal residences, Windsor is on some level metonymically linked with the authority of the crown, and the world of *Merry Wives* is infused with the rites of monarchy. Aside from the location of Windsor, the primary allusion to monarchical rites (and rights) is conveyed through the setting of scenes at the Garter Inn and the tetralogy, operates differently in these plays, with decades compressed into moments and years elided without explanation. Proceeding from the assumption that the two women named Quickly are the same figure (or, at a minimum, represent the same type of middle-class woman working outside the home) facilitates a more nuanced reading of her character and the play’s final scene. The reading of Quickly in *Merry Wives* as a relative can be found at Stokes, 272.

Parker sees these malapropisms as vital acts of “verbal errancy” within the play, making Quickly an “outrageous transporter of meaning.” See Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*, 28. See also Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*, 125.
references to the Order of the Garter in the play’s final scene. While Prince Hal is only briefly alluded to (Mistress Page notes Fenton’s time with “the Prince and Poins” at III.2.61), the combination of geography, allusion, a shared cast of characters from the Henriad, and Mistress Quickly’s role as the Fairy Queen in V.5 make for a middle-class space inflected with an Elizabethan royal presence.

Mistress Quickly is an anomalous character in this comedy, playing a number of parts as her speech moves from the earthiest of bawdy prose to formal verse. Her first entrance establishes her place in the middle class, a woman working outside of her own home and in that of Dr. Caius. She details the domestic duties she performs for Dr. Caius (“I/ keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake,/ scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds and do/ all myself” I.4.84-85) that (apropos of alewife Quickly in the Henriad) includes brewing. Quickly’s far more important role in the plot, however, is in her service as a go-between, aiding the machinations of Mistresses Page and Ford’s vengeance against Falstaff. She is the primary means by which messages are delivered to Falstaff, and is essential to convincing the Knight to continue his pursuits of Page and Ford, thus enabling the jests to go on (see II.2.26ff and III.5.20ff for examples of her encouraging Falstaff to persist in his affections).

362 Founded in the mid-14th century by Edward III, the Knights of the Garter is a chivalric order whose numbers include the monarch, the Prince of Wales, and twenty-four others, as well as various supernumerary members. Intended to revive the traditions of the Arthurian Round Table, it also served a practical role for the monarch by solidifying aristocratic support for various political ventures. For a full discussion of the Order’s founding and early history, see Hugh E. L. Collins, The Order of the Garter, 1348-1461: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2000), 20.
Indeed, it is Quickly herself who outfits Falstaff in his cuckold’s horns, the pivotal visual and metaphorical joke of the play’s concluding scene.\(^{363}\)

Quickly’s speech, particularly her malapropism and bawdy language, also identify her as a member of the middle class. This is most evident in IV.1, when the Mistress injects herself into the Latin lesson William Page receives from Sir Hugh Evans. The gap between the question and answer pedagogical method permits Quickly to provide her own translations and bawdy interpretations of the Latin nouns Evans seeks to teach. This is a scene not present in Quarto, and one that editors since the 19\(^{th}\) century have deemed irrelevant to the advancement of the plot and derided as largely superfluous. Contemporary scholars such as Patricia Parker, Elizabeth Pittenger and David Lambeth have attributed more significance to this scene (particularly Quickly’s role within it), and read this Latin lesson as reflective of the larger issues of wordplay, language and translation at work throughout the drama.\(^{364}\)

In the mouth of the “she-Mercury” Quickly, words and their meanings are translated (a word that includes the sense of “conveying, transporting and carrying”) out of their Latin solemnity and “Englished.”\(^{365}\) This scene becomes a microcosm of the male

\(^{363}\) At V.1.5-6, Quickly says she will “provide [him] a chain, and I’ll do what I can to get you a pair of horns.”

\(^{364}\) For a summary of the largely derisive reading of the scene by critics (Northrop Frye described it as “dragged in merely to fill up time”) see Parker, Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context, 117. See also Elizabeth Pittenger, "Dispatch Quickly: The Mechanical Reproduction of Pages," Shakespeare Quarterly 42.4 (1991): 396.

\(^{365}\) Parker details the ways in which early moderns heard the “literal resonances” of the word translation, one that equated the “transporting or translating of words […] with the transfer, conveying or stealing of property.” Translation as a potentially threatening act, particularly in its enabling of “adultery” (both adulteration of
anxieties about female honesty and fidelity that underpin the plot, with Quickly’s acts of bawdy mistranslation likened to the misreading of the fidelity of Mistresses Ford and Page by their husbands and Falstaff. In calling attention to the genital in the genitive case (53), the fuck in “focative” (Evans’s Welsh accent turns “vocative” into “focative” at 45) and the “whore” in horum (54), Quickly’s “loose-lipped interventions” highlight the excess (and openness) of meaning made possible by the lacuna that inheres in the act of translation. Quickly’s insistent bawdy play in this scene (as well as her malapropism earlier in the drama) serves purposes beyond the comedic: it reveals the mutability of language, but more importantly, it makes her subsequent transformation into a Fairy Queen who speaks exclusively in “proper” English (a series of metrically regular rhymed couplets) all the more striking.

language and marital infidelity), a theme that appears throughout the play. See Parker, Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context, 122-27.

366 “In the grammar scene […] a female character translates or Englishes words, from Latin or the sermo patrius, and something gets translated out of a double-meaning “honesty.” In the plot of the merry wives, two burgher wives whose honesty Falstaff [conspires] to traduce or translate, prove that, contrary to the stereotypes of unfaithful women, wives ‘may be merry, and yet honest too.’” Parker, Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context, 139.


368 Editors often attribute the lines of the Fairy Queen to the actor who played Quickly rather than the character of the Mistress disguised as the Fairy Queen. This reading means that the stage directions that indicate the entrance of “Quickly” in Folio and “mistresse Quickly” in Quarto (as well as the line cues that read “Qui.” Or “Qu.” in Folio and “Quic.” in Quarto) do not indicate the Mistress but are instead convenient shorthand that resulted from the practice of having actors play multiple parts. Though this could be the case, I find the argument that the Mistress would not be present in this scene (she has “no dramatic function” here, as the Cambridge editors put it) problematic for several reasons: Quickly has served as the primary go-
The conclusion of the play presents a shaming ceremony likely recognizable to the audience as a skimmington or charivari, a practice intended to humiliate social offenders as a means of maintaining sanctioned power relations. Natalie Zemon Davis’s Society and Culture in Early Modern France discusses the practice of charivari, a carnival-esque procession “used to mark other affronts to the sense of order or justice of the neighborhood […including] thefts, murders, bizarre marriages, [and] seductions.” In order to punish adultery (and shame the husband) cuckold horns were placed on display during the procession. The play is largely made up of one form of skimmington after another as Falstaff is repeatedly punished for his between for the Mistresses and Falstaff, making her an active participant and facilitator of this jest. She has also served as intermediary for several of Anne Page’s potential suitors (the play’s major subplot), a dramatic line that is resolved in this scene as well. This leads me to wonder why a character so involved in advancing the shaming of Falstaff would be missing from the final moment of comeuppance, a moment that comes with Falstaff wearing a costume that she has outfitted. The insistence that the character of the final scene is not Quickly but instead the actor who played her seems part of a larger editorial tradition of assigning Quickly only one possible reading in the plays where she appears, that of the linguistically insignificant comedic vessel. For the arguments against Quickly as Fairy Queen, see note 29 in Shakespeare and Crane, The Merry Wives of Windsor, 140-41.

369 Marcus briefly discusses this scene as part of the charivari/skimmington tradition, albeit one with a twist: while a traditional charivari would feature a symbolic representation of the figure to be shamed, Falstaff becomes “both symbolic victim of the ritual and its real target since he is the one who has assailed the virtue of the wives.” Marcus, "Levelling Shakespeare: Local Customs and Local Texts," 175.

370 Davis, 117.

attempts to undermine the marriages of the protagonists. For the play’s
denouement, the neighborhood’s shaming ritual is relocated to a midnight meeting in
Windsor forest, where Falstaff is “made an ass” in front of the townspeople and
forced to endure physical torture at the hands of the “fairies.” As Quickly the Fairy
Queen instructs:

> With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:
> If he be chaste, the flame will back descend
> And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
> It is the flesh of a corrupted heart […]
> Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!
> About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;
> And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.
> Fairies: Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
> Pinch him for his villainy;
> Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
> Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out. (V.5.81-99)

The “fairies” burn Sir John with torches and candles, pinching, poking, and chastising
the Knight with a “scornful rhyme,” using corporal and verbal punishments to
circumscribe the too-bawdy Falstaff.

While the Fairy Queen is a traditional figure from English folklore, post-1590
the character has significant literary and popular culture resonances as well. Spenser’s
heroic romance *The Faerie Queene* alludes to and allegorizes Elizabeth in a number
of characters, most prominently in the figure of Gloriana, the Faerie Queene of
Spenser’s text. Elizabeth’s appreciation for Spenser’s work is well documented, as is

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372 For the motif of scapegoating as ritual in this play, see Jeanne Addison Roberts,
*Shakespeare's English comedy: The merry wives of Windsor in context* (Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 78-83.
her cultivation of the image of Gloriana as a public persona. Based on the popularity of the text and Elizabeth’s use of it, the appearance of a Fairy Queen on stage could be taken, at least in part, as reference to Queen Elizabeth. While Quickly is not acting as a one-to-one analogy with Queen Elizabeth (she is not portraying Elizabeth in her persona as monarch or as Gloriana), the monarchical referents hovering at the edges of the play come to fruition in the Mistress’s acts and speeches as Fairy Queen. If this allusion would indeed occur to the audience, then a radical hierarchical shift is occurring, with the lowest-status character moving to the top of the local and national pyramid. Quickly directs her followers:

About, About!  
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.  
Strew good luck, oafs, on every sacred room,  
That it may stand still the perpetual doom  
In state, as wholesome as in state ‘tis fit,  
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.  
The several chairs of Order look you scour  
With juice of balm and every precious flower.  
Each fair installment, coat, and sev’ral crest  
With loyal blazon evermore be blessed;  
And nightly, meadow fairies, look you sing,  
Like to the Garter’s compass, in a ring.  
Th’expressure that it bears, green let it be,  
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;  
And ‘Honi soit qui mal y pense’ write  
In em’rald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white,  
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,  
Buckled below fair knighthood’s bending knee—  
Fairies use flowers for their charactery. (V.5.52ff)

The Fairy Queen bids her minions perform a blessing on the space Elizabeth and the members of the Garter inhabit, praising Windsor Castle as a “sacred” place and

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Montrose, 106.
anointing the chairs of the Order with “juice of balm and very precious flower.” This act of unction renders Quickly a spiritual officiant, a figure delivering benedictions and serving as a protector of the Order. Besides declaring that the space will remain to the end of days (“the perpetual doom” of judgment day), the speech explicitly commends Elizabeth’s virtue at line 56, wishing that it will always be “worthy the owner, and the owner it.” Given Elizabeth’s status as leader of the Order of the Garter, Quickly’s assumption of the Order’s language (the motto, Honi soit qui mal y pense, or “shame to him who thinks it evil”) further aligns her with the monarch, while her discussion of the group’s emblem (the “loyal blazon,” “coat, and sev’ral crest”) and ritual (the “Garter’s compass” is the circular table around which they sit) speak to a cultural knowledge.

Quickly’s speech in V.5 shows a once middle-class figure elevated in status while subtly recalling the woman on the throne in an act “in loco monarchis.” As Fairy Queen, Quickly’s verbal presentation changes: she speaks only in rhymed couplets, while elsewhere she speaks exclusively in prose, an ability to versify now extended to all members of the middle class. While Quickly’s may not be the intricate verse of the sonnet, these passages show a character capable of speaking in multiple registers; she mangles (and maligns) Latin grammar in one scene while incorporating French into her verse with ease in the next. Her verbal abilities clearly link to her social status: as servant to Dr. Caius she mars speech; as Fairy Queen she embellishes it with rhyme, imagery and simile. Also significant is the fact that

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374 As Pittenger notes, “everyone in the masque of the Fairy Queen speaks standard English. The monarchy transforms all differences into uniformity.” Pittenger: 402.
Quickly remains in character as Fairy Queen through the end of the play. During the “reveal,” Evans leaves behind his persona as fairy in order to tease Falstaff, yet Quickly (onstage or not) does no such thing. Quickly remains, linguistically at least, in her fairy-queen character through the play’s end, never returning to prose.

The last time we see and hear Quickly in *Merry Wives* she is simultaneously the physical arbiter of social justice and a queen raining her monarchical blessings upon Windsor Castle. She moves from speaking bawdy prose into a character who speaks only in rhymed couplets, speeches that reveal a figure with an intellectual capacity that Quickly not been previously accorded. This indicates at least one of the following things: she is capable of impromptu acts of metrical composition, she is savvy enough to memorize lines from verbal instruction, or she possesses a relatively high level of literacy and can study a script. Crucially, this is the only scene in which Quickly appears that she does not engage in malapropism. This shift is significant, not only for the Mistress but for the play as well. If a pseudo-Elizabeth is inserted into the play via Quickly, the presence of monarchy grows further pronounced. So too does Quickly, with her character taking on a role greater than just that of a comedic abuser of language. This is important beyond the space of *Merry Wives*: if this middle-class character possesses such a range of mental and linguistic mobility, perhaps others do as well, particularly the Mistress Quickly of the histories. The

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375 Some editions (such as the *Norton*) cue her to exit before Page speaks his lines, but the *Folio* text is silent on the matter.

376 For more on Elizabeth’s place in the play, see Peter Erickson, “The Order of the Garter, the Cult of Elizabeth, and Class-Gender Tension in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*” in Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O’Connor, *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 116-42.
Quickly of *Merry Wives* is malapropistic but also verbally playful, particularly in IV.1’s language lesson. Perhaps the power that critics find in the “verbal errancy” of the character from *Merry Wives* can also be applied to the figure of the Henriad, seeing in the latter’s malapropism the potential to make meaning rather than merely mangle it. Quickly’s speech in *Merry Wives* is able to transgress and translate into something more than malapropistic error, an adaptability that permits her to move from ribald to royal. I seek to extend this capacity of simultaneity (i.e. Quickly’s acting as both servant and Fairy Queen) to the alewife of the first tetralogy, a reading that permits the existence of a bathos from a bawdy of her own making while also revealing the pathos of her treatment by Falstaff, a woman who speaks in multiple registers and is also able to lay claim to (and assert her part in) the larger historical narrative under construction.

**Re-articulations**

Mistress Quickly operates in a liminal space between the mercantile economy and the monarchical history of England, a character socially, verbally, and sexually distinct. As the only female business owner to appear in Shakespeare’s tetralogies (and among the few to appear in any of his works), she reveals worlds largely unrepresented by the history genre as a whole, i.e. the female, the middle class, and the mercantile. Generally regarded as merely a bawd and a comic prop, Quickly is often read as a hapless object of Falstaffian derision and little more. Her repeated presence over the course of the Henriad and *Merry Wives*, however, creates a
character with biographical and linguistic depth that warrants more than a simply malapropistic reading. This “aggregate” Quickly undergoes changes in marital and social status while enduring attacks on her moral character, reflecting experiences shared by any number of women from the period.

My reading of the Mistress expands the dramatic possibilities for the Mistress beyond those permitted by the existing critical tradition. Although she is the subject of many jokes and critiques during the plays, Quickly is not ignorant of this fact, and the comedic possibilities that derive from her linguistic ignorance are still available when she becomes an active participant in creating the bawdy humor. While Quickly is often seen as unaware of the implications of her diction and syntax, a case can be made that at times she knowingly engages in verbal play. A reading wherein Quickly is more linguistic aggressor than hapless victim of her speech preserves (if not deepens) the bathetic quality of her scenes. This interpretation also assigns a dramatic heft to her acts of speech, according her the ability to mourn and celebrate Falstaff through an act of historiography. As recent work on *Merry Wives* has shown, there is a place for meaning in Quickly’s malapropism: the Mistress of *Merry Wives* participates in a broader critique of translation and fidelity (among other things), and I seek to extend to the character of the Henriad this same potential to critique, finding in her language challenges to the authority of narratives (about women and about history) generated by the likes of Falstaff and Hal. From a reading of Quickly as more than what Sir John constructs her to be, particularly by looking at her engagements

377 I think this is particularly evident when reading Quickly as the sexual aggressor describing her own penetration of Falstaff in *2 Henry IV* II.4.
with other men in the plays, it appears that the problems in her speech, the perceived malapropisms through which Falstaff justifies her dismissal and degradation, are readings generated by Falstaff himself. This reading further reveals a character that works across a range of vocabularies. She does not “mutilate speech,” she plays with it: the combination of her double entendre of 2 Henry IV, her acts of pseudo-eulogizing in Henry V, her interventions in the Latin lesson and her shift into rhymed couplets as a Fairy Queen in Merry Wives reveals a linguistic dynamism on Quickly’s part. Her use of Arthurian allusion, and the alternative narrative possibilities it creates, also makes the Mistress someone who engages with the historical record. Quickly lays claim to her own piece of English history, a moment of authorship that also proves to be the last word on Falstaff.

My reading is that of a character rather than simply a comedic type; Quickly manages a business, but more importantly, manages repeatedly to be heard. She is a middle class “success” story in a genre dominated by aristocracy, and a figure that refuses to be silenced even as she squares off against one of the most “human” of all of Shakespeare’s creations, Falstaff. What we have in Quickly is a heteroglossic figure able to move through the languages of varied professions, social classes, and forms of speech. Whether as legal plaintiff, hard-nosed merchant, sentimental eulogizer or Fairy Queen, Quickly operates across a number of discourses and adds voice to a genre that would otherwise exclude her. Figures like the Mistress may be

marginal to “history,” but not to the plays. When read as more than comic afterthought, she achieves a depth and an authenticity; she represents a visible social type (the widow and female merchant) who struggles to maintain her reputation while managing her business and investments. Quickly makes room for an entire social class in the drama, and in her repeated engagements with Hal she manages to give this middle-class group a voice heard by the (future) King. Quickly is also relentlessly present in these plays: active, vocal and repeatedly appearing onstage. This presence speaks to her relevance as an alternative, female voice in the drama. The middle-class life goes forward despite the wars and political intrigues of the court, surviving through the death of kings and aristocrats. It is a world and an existence that persists, offering a measure of stability and coherence in a series of plays characterized by uneasy alliances, revisionist historical narratives, and competing claims to power.
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