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Essay 1.

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Title: Who is Richard II: Tragedy and the Antignome

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Essay 3.

Title: Beyond Eros: Shakespeare's Transfeminine Träume in Twelfth Night, Sonnet 20 and The Merchant of Venice

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1. The Measure of Villain: Shakespeare's Tragic Ontology

"Who calles me Villaine?"[1]

Reading many of Shakespeare's contemporaries, strangely often one is drawn to their villains. Something in Kyd's subtly domineering Lorenzo, or Webster's not-so-subtly rapacious Ferdinand is better fun than anything in their well-wishing counterparts. There is nothing remarkable, then, about the shameless appeal of "evil" in Shakespeare's plays; the remarkable thing is Shakespeare's attention to the space *around* evil. The question of who is there to be unvillainous, or to define villainy is one which Shakespeare seems persistently interested in negotiating. Between his parricidal outbursts of "Oh Villaine, Villaine, smiling damned Villaine!" (l.791) and "villaine, / Remorselesse, Treacherous, Letcherous, kindles villaine!" (l.1620-1621), Hamlet turns the question on himself: "Who calles me Villaine?" (l.1612). Attempting to substantiate his raving against Claudius, he puts faith in "villaine" as a speech-act: aslong as no one says it of him quite as much as he says it of Claudius, he has the high ground. The irony, of course, is that it makes no difference – to "fall a Cursing" (l.1627) is nonetheless to fall, to fail – to be a powerless "Drab" (l.1627). If he himself can't defeat the villain, the title is of no importance. The child-murderer in *Macbeth* is the play's first "villaine"[2] (l.1807), but the apparent antagonist, MacDuff, rejects the title: "I would not be the Villaine that thou think'st" (l.1851). By Act V, the mantle of villain is empty, and the King gives a desperate defence, flinging the title at an anonymous "servant" before he can even finish his line:

> "Ser. There is ten thousand.
> Macb. Geese Villaine?" (l.2228-29)

Naturally, this fails, and Macduff finally lays the title on the ostensible protagonist, in the play's final scene. Macduff openly imbues his sword with the sense of the word "villain":

> "My voice is in my Sword, thou bloodier Villaine
> Then tearmes can giue thee out." (l.2445-6)

Shakespeare ensures that the label and its narrative needs (here being slain by an agent of good) are never entirely distinct.

From this starting point, it is possible to draw out a new perspective on one of the perpetual questions in Shakespearean criticism: the relationship between Shylock's identity as a *Jew*, and as a *Villain*. While it

has been common practice (though not consensus) to see Shakespeare's attitudes towards Jewishness evidenced in the employment of villainy as conventional narrative framework, it is equally possible to read the inverse: that is, to read Shakespeare's attitudes towards villainy in his modification of Jewishness as a conventional narrative evil.

The first and most obvious point about Shylock's identity is that it is defined in opposition to a defined Christian group. Shylock's first substantial speech elaborates:

> "I will buy with you, sell with you, talke with you, walke with you, and so following: but I will not eate with you, drinke with you, nor pray with you."[3] (l.359-61)

Shylock *is* defined primarily as a Jew, but the identity "Jew" is defined primarily by the extent of its overlap with the identity of the non-Jew. Shylock will do a certain amount that a Christian does, but precisely that and no more. The calculation here (and its legalistic asyndeton in the exhaustive list of "will"s and "will not"s) is one which mirrors the exacting demand for the pound of flesh: the Jew will take a certain amount of the Christian, but no more. The minute mistake in the latter calculation, the "single drop of Christian blood" (l.2256) is its undoing, and Shylock's calculated Jewishness topples in the same way. Antonio's appropriate prediction that "The Hebrew will turn Christian" (l.507) is not a prophetic one by chance - the needle-thin point on which Shylock stakes his Jewishness is necessarily unsustainable. From Antonio's perspective, the "gentle" (l.506) and "kind" (l.507) aspects of Shylock are the drop of Christian blood that turns the scales, but of course these aspects are falsified. In reality, the failure of Shylock's set boundaries of Jewishness comes later in the play. The later, and more famous, enumeration of similarities between Jews and Christians is given as a defence by Shylock in Act III:

> "Hath not a Iew eyes? hath not a Iew hands, organs, dementions, sences, affections, passions, [...] if you wrong vs shall we not reuenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that." (l.1277-9)

What makes this speech so endlessly memorable is the apparent sympathy Shakespeare lends (ironically) to his Jewish antagonist, and while it is true that the Jew-Other is given a shockingly convincing voice in this scene, that doesn't quite explain the full purpose of the speech. What is often missed in this speech is the tremendous irony behind Shylock's claims. His promise to "resemble" a Christian in his answer is itself a dissemblance, given his refusal to acquiesce to Christian principles in the aftermath of the scene. It is clear in the Duke's speech at the start of the scene that he believes Shylock's pretence of sharing some common ground with the Christians in the room. "We all expect a gentle answer Iew?" (l.1939) is a marvellously crafty navigation of the foreigner's identity, setting the labelled minority "Iew" and the

unlabelled majority “we all” at opposite corners of the line, presenting a divide which can only be bridged by the “gentle answer” which would prove Shylock’s conformity to Christian expectation. The response, however, is one which completely reasserts the “Iew” as an Other:

> “And by our holy Sabbath haue I sworne
> […]
> Some men there are loue not a gaping Pigge:
> Some that are mad, if they behold a Cat:
> And others, when the bag-pipe sings i'th nose,
> [...]
> So can I giue no reason, nor I will not,
> More then a lodg'd hate, and a certaine loathing
> I beare Anthonio” (l.1941-66)

The suggestion of unity in the first person plural possessive “our” is frustrated by its relation to the specifically Jewish “Sabbath”. While “Sabbath” was contemporarily used in a Christian context (note Hastings’ line in *RIII* : “Come the next Sabboth, and I will content you”[4]), the Jewish biblical Sabbath is celebrated on Saturday, not the Christian Sunday. Given Shakespeare’s lack of interaction with Judaism in practice, it is possible that this detail was an unwitting one, but the following speech does enough to separate Jews and Christians in any case. The “Pigge”, “Cat”, “bag-pipe”, “rat” (l.1976) and later “serpent” (l.2001) are dehumanisations of the Christian victim to the point of absurdity. Shylock’s “lodg’d hate”, similarly an object of the main verb “beare”, refers back to the “ancient grudge” (l.371) he “beare”s (l.372) in the first act, which itself immediately follows the straightforward admission: “I hate him for he is a Christian” (l.366). It is only after the reinforcement of this division and dehumanisation by Shylock himself that Antonio berates him with similar force:

> “I pray you thinke you question with the Iew:
> You may as well go stand vpon the beach,
> And bid the maine flood baite his vsuall height,
> Or euen as well vse question with the Wolfe,
> [...]
> You may as well forbid the Mountaine Pines
> To wagge their high tops” (l.1976-82)

The parallel syntax of these lines is a rhetorical move to place the “Iew” and “Wolfe” in identical positions both in the court’s minds and the audience’s. Whatever resemblance to a Christian Shylock

attempts to assert so empathetically in Act III, the difference between the races* has widened, by Act IV, to a difference of species; according to both parties, it has become a difference between human and animal, or even human and object ("bag-pipe", "flood", "Pines").

This is the hamartia (in its original sense: a tragic mistake of fact, rather than a flaw) which defeats Shylock's calculated Jewishness. Unable to sustain his delusion of the measured overlap between Jew and Christian, he is narratively consigned either to be Christian or to be conquered. Because he is unable to show the Christian quality of mercy, the delusion of a measured overlap in his identity between Jew and Christian – and the "faire teames [terms]" (l.509) it once earned him in a Christian state – are broken down. Having drawn hard lines between races, the character of *Shylock the Jew* becomes one completely at odds with the state majority of Venice, and his narrative aberrance must be resolved.

Death or exile are generally the most narratively satisfying ends for a villain, but the poetic justice of death by mercy (the "font" rather than the "gallowes" (l.2320)) takes precedence in this particular case. If the absence of an identifiable Jewish presence in England, and the prevalence of literature figuring Jews as monstrous is evidence enough to see Shylock's Jewishness as an easy marker of the antagonist, the play gives a revealing perspective on Shakespeare's negotiation with villainy itself. Gloucester's hunchback in *RIII.*, Edmund's bastardy in *Lr.*, or Claudius' pseudo-incest in *Ham.* perform the same function: they mark out an obvious villain. These villain-markers allow Shakespeare to equivocate and problematise the villain archetype because they give the audience a consistent hold on who *is* a villain. Without these markers, villainy becomes fluid, and therefore de-problematised – a *villain who does good* is problematic, whereas an unmarked *character who does good* is trivial.

The plays' fixation on labels and markers generates a conflict between character and villainy which seems more interesting – both to Shakespeare and to the audience – than the conflict between villain and hero. Having seen Macbeth dubbed "villaine" in his final moments, it is no surprise that Shylock's narrative end is similarly one of naming; his final words: "send the deed after me, / And I will signe it" (l.2315-6) are an offering up of his Jewish name to the Christian naming sacrament of baptism. The conflict here is one between the villain and the category of villainy (in this case, Jewishness); the narrative arc of the villain is resolved only when the category of villain is static, and the villain is no longer able to manipulate its borders. Iago in *Oth.* and Gloucester in *RIII.* are both content to "proue" (*RIII.* l.32) or "play the Villaine"[5] in opposition to their rivals, but the battle is lost when they themselves profess that villainy. Iago calls three times for the "villains" (l.3152, l.3155, l.3168) behind the stabbing he himself

* A controversial term, but used here simply to mean peoples, gens, rather than any stricter theoretical definition

committed, and is condemned in the next scene to the nondescript "Censure of [a] hellish villaine" (l.3682). Gloucester, too, bargains with the title on his death-day, "I am a Villaine: yet I Lye, I am not" (l.3653) before succumbing to the delusion (much like Hamlet's) of "sand seuerall Tongues," (l.3655), finally judging him in one word: "Villaine" (l.3657). These violent labellings are a fixation of Shakespeare's, from Edmund's neurotic repetition of "basenes [and] Barstadie?"[6] to Romeo's reprehensible Montague "name"[7]. Romeo negotiates with the label "Romeo" just as Gloucester does with the label "Villaine", playing with it ("This is not Romeo", l.206)[7], and throwing it off for protection ("I neuer will be Romeo", l.846). Of course, the label remains, and drinking the poison which seals both their deaths, Juliet chants "Romeo, Romeo, Romeo" (l.2538), "As if that name shot from the dead leuell of a Gun, / Did murder her", l.1919-20.

It is clear that Shakespeare is concerned with problematising the relationship between character and villain-label. His characters are in constant negotiation with the category and label of villain (whether literally "Villaine", "Iew" or even "Romeo"), because decisive categorisation would sentence them to death. The dreaded label promises not only death, but narrative death, *resolution* – without fluidity, without equivocation, the character is *over*: complete, singular, and dead. Shakespeare's villains oppose the label above everything, defending themselves with details, disguises and obfuscations, against ontological justice – against being identified for what they are.

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2. Who is Richard II?: Tragedy and the Antignome

"Was Elizabeth I Richard II?" is the titular question of a brief essay by Dr Jason Scott-Warren, surrounding Elizabeth's I's alleged claim that she was Richard II. The essay concludes that not only was Elizabeth I not Richard II, she probably never claimed to be[1]. The "Elizabeth = Richard" comparison has suffered extensive critical debate, centred around Essex's revival of Richard II in 1601 (Scott-Warren, 208) and contemporary censorship of the deposition scene[2]. The debate, however, has been a short-sighted one – while these events are certainly compelling evidence that Richard II had been *used* as a depositionist call-to-action, they are no evidence of an underlying depositionist message in the playtext. In fact, the text is hugely resistant to politicisation; if Shakespeare had intended to write *Richard II* as a didactic history, he had failed – the play is neither convincingly didactic nor a convincing history. *Richard II* is one of the three Tragedie-turned-Histories, (coincidentally alongside two Richard Plantagenets*), but the first to live up to Shakespeare's later model of tragedy, in that it gives its hero unprecedented emotional space in which to anticipate, consider, waver and regret. The best accepted chronology of Shakespeare's works put Richards III and York before any of the tragedies except *Titus Andronicus*, while Richard II follows the pathetic breakthrough of *Romeo and Juliet*. Reading the Richards alongside each other, it seems hard to dispute that Shakespeare's writing in 1597 marked a change without which Hamlet would never have been written. Take for instance the climactic moment of each tragic arc: York is decapitated in Act I, after a soliloquy along the lines of:

"cannibals [...] stain'd with blood [...] tigers [...] ruthless [...] tears [...] blood [...] tears [...] blood [...] tears [...] tears [...] cruel hand! [...] blood upon your heads!"[3]

While Richard III spends his final moments demanding the "head" of an innocent child, the "spleen of fiery dragons" and most famously, "a horse"[4] – the shopping list of a deeply unsympathetic character. Richard II, in contrast, delivers his final soliloquy *to* a horse, but realising his impoliteness, apologises and begs forgiveness, exclaiming, in wonderfully direct terms: "Forgiueness, horse!" [5]. Giving a tragic hero the space to be misguided, rather than solely immoral or unlucky, is what sets Shakespeare's "great" tragedies apart from their contemporaries. But a side effect of this development in writing is that it makes *Richard II* far more resistant to political readings than the earlier histories. This is, from a theoretical

*Richard III was printed as a "Tragedie" in all 8 quartos and 4 folios, while "Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York" appeared only in the (possibly non-authorial) O1/Q2 title for *Henry VI part III*. Both were later included in F1 within the section of "Histories".

standpoint, a reciprocal consequence of Brechtian principles – if *Verfremdung* (distancing) is essential to *Lehrstucke* (didactic pieces), then empathy, *vereinigung* or *with-ness* are barriers to political effect. Whether or not this is a reasonable abstract (one could easily argue that empathy is the *only* way to effect political change), it certainly rings true in Shakespeare's case. Shakespeare's Richard is simply *too human* to be a symbol; his speech and character are so detailed, and non-idiomatic, that there is no instinct in watching the play to resolve them into a representative example. What's more, endowing a hero with reflection, fluidity and multifarity upsets the idea that the play has any monolithic truth to present – it's why dictatorships ban great art, and more relevantly, it's why Richard is not Elizabeth.

This raises the question, then, who *is* Richard? This question is interesting not so much within the conceit of the play, but outside of it – what role does his character play in the *idea* of the text, in the *supertext**? It is impossible to answer this question without considering the text in performance; it is the act of second-hand interpretation which draws such a clear line between the text and the cultural item, the supertext *Richard II*. The aim of this essay is an analysis of Richard's supertextual character, through the lens of his soliloquy from Act III Scene II.

The opening of the soliloquy is characteristically apophatic:

> "No matter where; of comfort no man speake:" (l.1504)[†]

But unlike many of Shakespeare's better known apophases (MV, 2095[6]; H5, 2267-21[7])[‡] , Richard's is imperative rather than informative. With the long vowel of the initial negator echoed in the fourth ictus position, it is a decisively controlling line. Placed in context:

> Aum. Where is the Duke my Father with his Power?
> Rich. No matter where; of comfort no man speake: (l.1503-4)

Richard's "No" takes the place of Aumerle's "Where", pushing "where" into the centre of the line. Richard denies the urgency of Aumerle's initial "where" – his own urgent concern *is* the denial itself, his "No". Beyond this, Richard's line is slow and heavy, with an early-medial caesura in the second

*A word enduring various critical definitions – it is used here to refer to the cultural idea of the play – the sum of all performances, notes and seminars in which it has grown beyond itself.
[†]Line number citations without further information henceforth refer to the Edition of Richard II cited (3)
[‡] Abbreviations for Shakespeare's plays used according to MLA guidance

masculine position, and a final spondaic substitution dragging the line out to unnatural length. Particularly

when Aumerle's line is performed as:

__ / ◡ __ /◡ __ ◡ /◡ ◡ __ (◡)
Where's the Duke my Father with his Power[†]

The contrast between the four-stress and six-stress lines becomes palpable. This exchange alone is enough to paint Richard as a melodramatic, self-indulgent figure who demands pity and obeisance in the same breath. These moments feed the cultural image of Richard II, ignoring all practicalities to throw himself into a sulk. In the RSC 2013 production, we hear Tennant's loveyish voice on the verge of breaking as he collapses and limp-crawls the stage like a wounded cat. The tragedy here is not in the hopelessness, but the irony: he demands to be considered weak, by way of his strength – a contradiction which soon reaches a conclusion:

"Couer your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemne Reuerence: throw away Respect" (l.1531-2)

Here is a king ordering his subjects to insist that he is powerless. Richard *is* a weak, ineffectual and out-of-touch monarch, but one who fights his delusions while clinging to them. Like the later tragic heroes, Richard is a well-spoken Janus whose progressing self-doubt is more compelling than any external conflict. This is what makes the play so apolitical: whether an audience support or oppose Richard, he agrees with them, and is thus able to become their surrogate.

What, then, do Richard's delusions achieve? Specifically, in the act of interpretation – what role does a "deluded king" *type* play in the supertext? The standard historicist approach has been to consider contemporary discourse on the divine right of kings, ignoring the fact that divine-right theory was not consolidated in England until the Reformation Parliament and therefore couldn't have been a primary factor in Richard's deposition over a century beforehand. In reality, the supertext Richard II has long outgrown any political context – nonetheless the supertextual tragedy endures, because Richard's struggle is not politically specific; it is, functionally, a struggle with the concept of conceptuality.

When Richard dismisses the abstract "comfort" in favour of concretes:

"Let's talke of Graues, of Wormes, and Epitaphs" (l.1505)

[†]See Tom Hughes' delivery, from *The Hollow Crown*[8]

his attempt is short-lived. "Graves" are too abstract to satisfy, but the physical threat of "worms" is quickly replaced by the more abstract threat of "epitaphs". Once again, Richard is pulled on two sides – one by a need to ground himself in the physical world†, and one by the lifelong fear of doing so: "epitaphs" immemorialising his fame and achievement are altogether more comfortable than "worms". His call to:

> "Make Dust our Paper, and with Raynie eyes
> Write Sorrow on the Bosome of the Earth" (l.1506-7)

is obsessively threatened by the real sensation of "dust", "earth" and tears, but the impossible demands to "make dust [...] paper" and "Write [...] on the Bosome of the Earth" are so grandiose and impractical as to make the threat seem abstract. Richard refigures crying as raining, expanding himself into some immense natural thing, so that the physical sensation of tears is reframed as pathetic fallacy: in his speech he is more a god metaphorising human emotion than a human himself. But just as his thoughts float up, they are pulled back down: the business of "Executors" and "Wills" (l.1508) is stopped in its tracks by a spondaic substitution: "and yet not so" (l.1509), spun by a rhetorical "what" (l.1509), pulled back down into the "ground" (l.1510), and buried under more concretes: "Earth", (l.1513) "Paste", "Cover", "Bones" (l.1514). The "ground" (l.1515) previously established as a physical threat soon becomes a springboard for "sad stories of [...] kings" (l.1516) – every one of Richard's attempts at grounding or physicalisation are deflected towards the grand concepts of Kingship, concepts which are quickly grounded by their incongruity with the situation. It is this incongruity which is summarised by the "little Pinne" (l.1529), which moves effortlessly through "castle walls" (l.1530) to meet the "king", its partner predetermined by assonance and line-position. This back-and-forth is symptomatic of Richard's tendency towards the very kind of palliative imagination Bollingbroke dismisses in Act I:

> "Oh who can hold a fire in his hand
> By thinking on the frostie Caucasus?" (l.558-559)

And yet the audience can't help but follow Richard – it is the conflict between the proverbial "fire" of Richard's mortality and the "frostie" comfort of kingship which defines the supertext of the play.

*The First Act of Succession, Act of Supremacy, Second and Third Acts of Succession, Catholic Restoration and Accession of Elizabeth I respectively. While the complicated relationship of Marian Catholicism with a Vatican which wouldn't confirm English bishops makes it difficult to call Mary's accession a restoration of authority to Rome, the liturgical (and later legal) changes under her reign were significant enough that the idea of a consistent divine intention behind her authority and Elizabeth's would have been implausible at best.

†Richard falling to the ground in this line, as Tennant does[8], is a very visible need to commune with what is *really* there.

This is something of an unsatisfying answer to the question "Who Is Richard?", but with a little explanation, we can give a more concise answer. Richard's inability to resolve the concept of his kingship into anything physical is the resounding image of the play, because it is the climax of an *artistic* struggle, and thus one which thrives in a supertext constructed by artists. It may be useful, if a little liberal in terms, to represent the struggle as an interplay between *gnome* and *antignome*. Gnomic literature creates conceptual figures, *gnomes*, to take the place of physical ones – moral directions, for instance, to take the place of physical instincts. The *antignome*, then, is a physical figure created to take the place of the conceptual – a heap of flesh to take the place of a king. A standard model would be conflict between antignomic tendencies and gnomic endeavours – for instance, the taming of hedonism by deontology, and were Richard II a *Lehrstuck*, this would be precisely the conflict. Shakespeare, however, endows Richard with gnomic tendencies and antignomic endeavours – he strives and fails to escape conceptual figures in pursuit of the bleakly physical. This form of conflict is given precedence because it is the same struggle as that of the author attempting to write a historical king as an empathetic human, or the director staging an archaic text as a real event. In a supertext shaped through the recursive interpretation, Richard naturally becomes the artist writ large. Richard's anxiety that implicit authority may never manifest in something real is the very anxiety of those who perform his role, and thus, inevitably, the enduring function of his character.

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3. Beyond Eros: Shakespeare's Transfeminine Träume in Twelfth Night, Sonnet 20 and The Merchant of Venice

In her essay "Remembering the Eroticism of the Shakespearean Boy Actress"[1], Roberta Barker aspires to "Remember the lost erotic potential of the Shakespearean boy-actress" (Barker, p.58) before describing the event that "Allowed [her] to remember the erotic potential of the Shakespearean boy-actress." (Barker, p.73) The event in question involves seeing the "long and elegant legs" of a secondary-school student "exposed", "fishnetted" under a "belt-sized mini-skirt" (Barker, p.73), indeed, the whole article treads the uncomfortable boundary of academic acceptability. Nonetheless, Barker's article seems to be in keeping with much contemporary criticism. There is (or was, 10-20 years ago) a reactionary compulsion among critics to tackle Shakespeare's problematic gendering simply by "remembering" homoeroticism – to declare that, despite the best attempts of Section 28, there was still such a thing as homosexual sex. The present issue is that this compulsion, in the context of rapidly changing gender politics, is reactionary to a mainstream that doesn't exist. Jardine's "contention [...] that [...] figures are sexually enticing *qua* transvestied boys" [2] is no longer fighting upstream against "every schoolchild" (Jardine, p.57). There are, in the western academic mainstream, few voices opposing the inclusion of queer sexuality and gender point blanc. Like the *alternative comic*, selling their tirade of offense as a noble opposition to an extinct brand of *traditional comedy*, Barker and Jardine's wave of shakespearean gender-erotics now finds itself stripped of revolutionary-shock factor, scrambling to justify its practical relevance. This essay's contention is that the memory of a sixth-former in fishnets is insufficient critical apparatus to deconstruct genderqueerness in Shakespeare's plays. That is to say: critical tendencies to filter genderqueerness through the lens of erotic fantasy are incompatible both with modern performance, and with contemporary gender theory. Though it would be misguided to ignore the context of the boy-actress convention altogether, this essay proposes that its relevance stops at convention: the boy-actress is an archetype through which genderqueerness could be made acceptable, not the sole cause and explanation of all Elizabethan gender confusion.

The appealing convenience of eroticising Shakespeare's genderqueer characters is manifold. Firstly, it provides the holy grail for a certain type of critic: the single historical dictum which reduces the turbulent interplay of textual patterns with the ideas they represent. So long as any appearances of gender trouble can be resolved by the "boy actress" factoid, the critic need never upset themselves with the *unresolved* melee of contemporary gender ideology. Secondly, it allows for the contradictory, nesting forms of *transing* in the plays to be considered under the single umbrella of its most culturally digestible form: fetish MtF transvestism. The overemphasis on this kind of *transing* is as old as trans studies itself, and for no greater reason than its simplicity: *Man desires Woman, therefore Man imitates Woman in order to produce object of desire*. It is also appealing as the most sensational kind of *transing*: where the hierarchical empowerment represented by woman-becoming-man is opposed by the debasement of misgendering, the debasement of man-becoming-woman is only compounded by it. Combined with the debasement of sexual *exposing*, the fetishised model of MtF transness becomes a powerful social phenomenon: the ritual shaming of a failed man, reminding participants to adhere to existing conventions of gender. It goes (one would hope) without saying that neither of these motivations have any place in a nuanced discussion of genderqueerness.

Having rejected these preoccupations, the surfacing of a genuinely *transgender* discourse within Shakespeare's works becomes not only viable, but inevitable. Though no single character represents a completely *transgender* archetype, there are patterns of character in the plays which align with the *Wunschträume* and *Angstträume* of the transgender *id*. Viola/Cesario, and Julia/Sebastian embody a straightforward trapped-in-the-wrong-body *Angst*, and fulfil the *Wunsch* of an eventual, climactic coming-out. Ironically, these instances of FTM cross-dressing are not in any earnest sense transmasculine, at least, not psychologically. They are women trapped in male bodies and expectations, not vice versa. This relationship between biology and identity is surprisingly nuanced. Viola's provocative "I am not that I play"[3] is restated in her Act II soliloquy with the trenchantly biological: "For such as we are made, if such we bee" (TN, l.688). Gender is tightly anchored, here, to the physical properties of sex. This fact initially seems to eliminate any queering of gender, but there are two pieces of context which open up a potential transfeminine reading. Firstly, Viola's frustration is with the "waxen hearts" (TN, l.686) and "frailtie" (TN, l.687) attributed to the female sex. Though presented as biological, both are, in fact, behavioural differences. The male-assigned "master mistris"[4] of Sonnet 20 has the same "womans gentle hart" (Son., l.287) that betrays Viola. The problematic link between sex and gender is navigated here in a creative way, whereby gender is tied to biological sex, but biological sex itself is defined by behaviour. The "master mistris" has the "face" (Son., l.286) and "hart" (Son., l.287) of a woman, as does Viola – the only difference between sexes is of sexual permission. The master-mistress is not *of men*, but "for

womens pleasure" (Son., l.298). Viola is similarly more concerned with being *desired* as a man, than with problems of identity, bemoaning "poor [...] poor Oliuia" (TN, l.682-95) and her "charmed [...] view" (TN, l.674-5) rather than the misgendering itself. This is a construction of transness which is based in binary, heteronormative and essentialist models of gender, but not in homoerotic archetype; it is traceable from a genuinely *transgender* id, not from a fetishised ritual of male debasement.

Though Viola and the Master-Mistress represent similar *Träume*, they are essentially different. The difference is one between a male-assigned *victā* (failed-woman), and a female assigned *victrix* (victorious-woman). Both represent a preoccupation with trapped femininity, but while the Viola (the *victrix*) is eventually liberated, realigning her appearance with her assigned gender, the Master-Mistress (*victā*) has no normalised escape-route. The division of form here is a good indicator of the difference in function between these two types: the *victā* belongs to the sonnets because her dysphoria is irresolvable: the male-assigned *victā* has no material option to *become woman*. The victrix is a modulation of the obviously genderqueer *victā* to allow for dramatic resolution. The "woman in a man's body" can't change her body, so she must be refigured as a "woman in a woman's body, which looks like a man's body", in order to fulfill the coming-out *Wunsch* within her generic and genetic framework. The *victrix* type is fitted to the dramatic form, and its demand for resolution, while the *victā* can remain in the sonnet in permanent conflict, as a static conundrum to be considered and admired.

This simple taxonomy of genderqueerness, however, struggles to explain Shakespeare's more unbothered crossdressers. Portia, for instance, gleefully becomes Balthasar for nothing but love of the game, placing a "wager"[5] on the accuracy of her male performance. The necessity of cross-dressing to save Antonio within the male-governed court, though inferred, is never mentioned by Portia herself. Mocking the "reede voice" (MV, l.1794) and "bragging Iacks" (MV, l.1804) of male adolescence, Shakespeare's intention may well be metatheatrical irony, with Portia's role being played by an adolescent boy-actress. Nonetheless, Portia's crossdressing is not externally fetishised, in fact, it is neither observed nor suspected by male characters. Portia cross-dresses for her own sake, on her own terms. Her experience may seem to be of transmasculine euphoria, or (as has been widely suggested[6]) simply ambition towards cisfeminist empowerment, but there is a third option. Portia's masculine performance can in fact be attributed to the transfeminine id, as a modulation of two separate *Wünsche*: *passing* and *performatising*. The first is simple: *passing* depends on the possibility that biological sex does not determine a person's apparent gender. In becoming believably male, Portia embodies this possibility. This raises the question of why the "passing" *wünsch* does not manifest in a directly transfeminine form (ie. a male character becoming believably female), to which there are three possible answers. One, that the transfeminine id figures itself

as originally female, two, that the secondary sex characteristics of adult men make transfeminine *passing* implausible, and three, that patriarchy engineers a narrative need to pose as male (for women wishing to enter any number of male-only careers and spaces,) far more often than the inverse. The "performatising" *Wunsch* is somewhat more complex: while *passing* is an idealised relationship with *transed* gender, *performatising* is an idealised relationship with *assigned* gender. Portia's delight is not transmasculine euphoria because it depends on the knowledge and eventual revelation of her female self. It is, rather, a delight in *performatising* masculinity: a drag act. Balthasar is, in Judith Butler's terms, a "parody [...] to further a politics of despair"[7]. The caricature is a catharsis (literally, expurgation) of the present male threat in Portia's life. She gives only a single example of the "quaint lyes" (MV, l.1976) with which she constructs Balthasar's masculinity:

> "How honourable Ladies sought my loue,
> Which I denying, they fell sicke and died."

From its inception, the idea of Balthasar is derived from imagining the mistreatment of women. Her final moments as Balthasar are no different; in taking the ring from Bassanio, she commits the symbolic act of masculine impropriety, as defined by herself. Moreover, she protests (with sporting misogyny) that only a "mad woman" (MV, l.2366) could object to such an act. Portia is not just performing masculinity as Balthasar, but dramatising the aspects of masculinity most opposed to her, and her femininity. It is a *performatising* act which destabilises the most dangerous aspects of prescribed gender.

The idea that Shakespeare's dramatisation of gender trouble presented a profound threat to a cisheteronormative establishment is not itself surprising, given the well-documented anti-theatrical presence in Shakespeare's England[8]. In one of his less logorrheic pamphlets, arch-antitheatricalist William Prynn gives a suspiciously narrow list of his objections to theatre. Beyond the brief and obvious censure of profanity, the seven charges levelled at theatre are almost identical; "Cozening, cheating, legedemain, fraud, deceit, jugglings [and] impostures"[9] all describe dissemblance, a sin which Prynn seems to abhor above any of the brutalities (torture, dismemberment etc.) on the Jacobean stage. Eroticists such as Barker have "decoded" this preoccupation with dissemblance into a fear of homoeroticism. Barker imagines critics such as Prynn, terrified of their own sexual arousal, blaming homosexual thoughts on the medium itself (Barker, here, draws an awkward parallel to her own sexualisation of a schoolchild). Unsurprisingly though, eroticism doesn't explain everything. Prynn openly objects to female players, specifying that cisvestite performance "is more wanton then if boyes acted womens parts, and more apt to ingender loose thoughts" (Prynn, p.7). For Prynn, boy-actresses are an *anti-erotic* measure. In reality, the prevalence of

his objection to “deceit” runs far deeper. It is an objection rooted in the analogy between performance and disguise. The “deceit” of a play is more troubling to Prynn than any physical violence because it is not contained within the drama – it is the substance of drama itself. The greatest anti-theatrical fear is not of homoeroticism, but of complication, multifarity and transition in the realm of hierarchical identities. There is no great divide, then, between Shakespeare’s plays and modern genderqueer discourse – Prynn’s objection to theatre is ontologically aligned with modern objections to genderqueerness. At a surface level, there is an objection to misplaced arousal and sexual deviance – this is as far as gender-eroticists such as Baker choose to look – but at a deeper level, there is an essential fear of upsetting rigid categories in which people find security. The dysphoric *Angstträume* and euphoric *Wunschträume* of Shakespeare’s cross-dressers represent a liberation from these categories that is no less troubling to eroticists such as Barker than it was to Prynn and the anti-theatricals. To ignore Shakespeare’s complex navigation of gender boundaries, through *passing* and *performatising*, is not only to ignore decades of modern gender studies, but to ignore the fundamental properties of theatre, as a liberated space for marginality and transition.

1. Roberta Barker: "Acting against the Rules: Remembering the Eroticism of the Shakespearean Boy Actress", *Shakespeare Re-Dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance Madison*, ed. James Bulman (NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008) pp. 57-78
2. Lisa Jardine, *“Boy Actors, Female Roles, and Elizabethan Eroticism.” Staging the Renaissance*, ed. David Kastan & Peter Stallybrass, 1st edn., (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 57–67, p.81
3. William Shakespeare, *Twelfe Night, Or what you will* (London: Hemminges & Condell, 1623), l.478
4. William Shakespeare, *Shake-Speares Sonnets* (London: William Aspley, 1609), l.287
5. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Hemminges & Condell, 1623), l.1789
6. Karen Newman, “Portia's Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange in The Merchant of Venice”, in *Shakespeare quarterly*, 38.1 (1987), pp.19-33
7. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2007), p.170
8. Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1981) p.83
9. William Prynn, *Mr William Prynn His Defence of Stage-Plays, or A Retractation of a Former Book of His Called Histrio-Mastix* (London, 1649), p.6