SHAKESPEARE AND FEMINISM:

A STUDY OF FOUR PLAYS

by

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ABSTRACT

Few authors of the Western stage have been as thoroughly investigated from a feminist perspective as Shakespeare. The ideological range of this debate is impressive indeed. It is a debate that has aroused emotions and that, up to the present day, continues to generate controversy. The first chapter of this thesis offers a critical survey of this discussion. Particular emphasis is given to the position taken by Juliet Dusinberre who ventures to claim that Shakespeare is close to being a kind of Eliizabethan feminist.

Chapters II and III investigate the role and fate of four women entrapped in the societal conventions of a patriarchal system. Two paradigms of behavioural response to this system are developed. While Imogen and Rosalind are willing to stay within the boundaries of their socially acceptable roles, thus retaining life at the cost of freedom, Juliet and Cordelia attain only a glimpse of freedom at the cost of life. Dusinberre's claim of Shakespeare as a kind of Elizabethan feminist is thus disputed and ultimately disclaimed.

A detailed bibliography on the issues raised by "Shakespeare and Feminism" concludes the thesis.

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Chapter I: Feminist Survey and Historical Perspective

The "woman problem" has a long history in the theatre, and in theatre studies. This has resulted in a wide variety of theories and opinions over which controversy rages up to the present day. Some critics see feminism as a movement that began in the 19th century; others base it much further back. Juliet Dusinberre, for example, supports the idea that feminism, or at least feminist sympathies, were extant in Shakespeare's time, and that "the drama from 1590 to 1625 is feminist in sympathy."[1] According to her view, Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries, including Heywood, Middleton, Jonson and Webster, shared feminist sympathies, and she claims that their plays reflect an awareness of inequalities between men and women. Whether or not these differences are acknowledged, condoned, or criticised is a question to be considered. While not openly calling Shakespeare a feminist, some critics feel that his audience influenced what was presented in the theatre, that women made up a large part of the audience and that Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights reflect this in their work.

Shakespeare's milieu, that is, the London audience of the early 17th century, comprised "an extremely diverse group of

people."[2] Not only gallants and courtiers, but tradesmen, merchants, workers and artisans, even wives and children regarded theatre as the most current and exciting form of popular entertainment. Therefore, Dusinberre argues, it was necessary that playwrights appeal to the widest cross-section of tastes. She believes that this very diverse audience was sympathetic to new ideas about women and their social context. According to her theory, audience attitudes had a distinct effect on playwrights: "One of the important areas with which the audience was concerned was ideas about women, and the dramatists could not afford *not* to be concerned also in a very positive way."[3] Dusinberre argues that, due to the social climate of Elizabethan England ("...feminism ...surrounded Elizabeth..."),[4] "Shakespeare's women are not an isolated phenomenon in their emancipation, their self-sufficiency, and their evasion of stereotypes."[5] I would argue, however, that this theory cannot be substantiated in Shakespeare's theatre, or in that of other playwrights of his milieu. Moreover, Queen Elizabeth I is the source of much disagreement within the ranks of feminism. Dusinberre argues that her "personality, power, and successful reign...influenced the period's conceptions of women's roles and potential."[6] Lenz, Greene, Neely, and myself, however, question the validity of such contentions.

Feminist historians Susan Groag Bell, Margaret L. King and Gloria Kaufman in fact argue that "in the Renaissance, as in

other progressive periods, women actually suffered a loss in status relative to men---that, for example, the humanist commitment to education for women was a profoundly qualified one."[7] As for Dusinberre's contention that "the feminism which surrounded Elizabeth...had by James I's reign moved down into the middle classes,"[8] Lawrence Stone counters that "from the Renaissance on, a gradual increase in affective bonding between husband and wife was accompanied by a decrease in the wife's autonomy, especially noticeable in the 'restricted patriarchal family' characteristic of Puritanism."[9] Overall, Lenz, Greene and Neely claim that feminist historians such as Gerda Lerner "doubt whether the presence of isolated 'women worthies' has much effect on the overall position of women or on attitudes toward them."[10] Historian C.H. Williams declares that "...Elizabeth I was a phenomenon---it is not too strong a word---in European history;"[11] she was a monarch and therefore above the customary roles of all other women of her era. Roger Ascham also sets Elizabeth apart from all other women when he says that "the constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness and she is endued with a masculine power of application."[12] One can only assume from this statement that femininity was considered a weakness by Elizabeth's contemporaries, so her attainment of power was considered an exception, not a sign that women were equal.

In direct opposition to Stone's observation that

Puritanism encouraged a decrease in women's autonomy, Dusinberre states that Puritanism provided "a period of concentrated moral energy which proved invigorating to the dramatists."[13] Thus she believes a forum for drama sympathetic to feminist concerns was born. If this is true, then why does Dusinberre feel it necessary to assert that "women are people and individuals; the creature evoked both by the courtly lover and by the satirist bears no relation to woman as a social being?"[14] Moreover, she then seems to contradict her argument when she states that satirists' caricatures of women adversely affected them: "The assertions of those writers influenced the treatment of women in society, and their stereotypes were considered valid."[15]

In fact, "protests about satire on women in the mediaeval tradition"[16] were voiced in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. These protests, by humanists like Agrippa, theologians like Bullinger, and by women themselves, "starting with Jane Anger's pamphlet in 1589, demonstrating against the denigration of women in Euphues,"[17] bitterly opposed the discrepancy between the portrayals of women in literature and women in real life. Meanwhile, the humanists Ascham, Erasmus, More and Vives decried courtly love as depicted in mediaeval romance, which portrayed women as "a symbol of lust".

Dusinberre's notion that women were understood and valued in early 17th century drama is not shared by everyone.

Linda Woodbridge claims that "the first decade of the 17th century had witnessed unprecedented misogyny in the drama."[18] She argues that early Jacobean drama, either because of literary fashion or because of historical attitudes, "...produced a body of plays (in) which...women had joined other character types as scapegoats for the ills of society."[19] It is unlikely, however, that a group of playwrights would mount a conscious conspiracy against women by portraying them in a negative or stereotypical way. What is more likely is that since citizen cuckoldry as a literary topos was gaining popularity during the first decade of the 17th century, any character, whether male or female, that could be portrayed simply and clearly was stereotyped, sometimes to a lasting and detrimental social effect. Woodbridge agrees with Dusinberre that there was a decline in antifeminist satire toward the end of the first decade of 1600, but feels the change owes more to the rise of Puritanism and its distaste for adultery, prostitution, and lechery, with which women were equated, than to a fair and balanced view of women.[20] Moreover, there was a decline in satire against all character types that delineated "the corrupt society of which such types were symptomatic (such as) prodigals, gamesters, usurers, panders, intelligencers, social climbers, smokers, or lawyers."[21] As "woman" was a caricature of corrupt society, the phasing out of bitter anti-feminist satire is seen by Woodbridge not as a tolerance for more realistic portrayals of women but as part of the decline of satire

against corrupt character types in general. Despite their differing viewpoints, critics on both sides of the issue seem to agree that the playwrights recognised a need to please the audience because they wanted the seats to be filled.

Another factor in the decline of antifeminist satire, according to Woodbridge, was the eclipse of private theatre toward the end of the first decade of the 17th century. Paul's and the Chapel Royal, or "the Children of the Revels of the Queen" as the company was known after 1603, were the two private companies specialising in citizen cuckoldry; Paul's disbanded in 1606, the Queen's Revels became defunct in 1610. Why did the two companies disappear? First of all, Woodbridge concurs with Dusinberre that the prudishness of the Puritans and distaste amongst the audience toward citizen cuckoldry was at least partly responsible for the disappearance of female caricatures of corruption from the stage. More importantly, the Queen's Revels eventually merged with Lady Elizabeth's Men, who played to both public and private theatres. This, it would seem, truly spelled the end for private theatre and therefore citizen cuckoldry as a literary topos:

> the majority of plays acted between 1610 and 1620...were the property of companies that played either exclusively to the public theatres or to both theatres; to be acceptable, a play had to pass muster at the public theatre, bastion of the citizenry.[22]

Since the topos of citizen cuckoldry was already out of favour with the increasingly puritanical public audiences, it is not difficult to understand why the form disappeared at both the public and private theatres. Ultimately, the disappearance of female caricatures from the Renaissance stage does not constitute an improvement in the contemporary attitude towards women, as Dusinberre suggests; it simply means that citizen cuckolds fell out of favour as a dramatic device.

One of the central questions in feminist criticism is to ask why women's work has been so much less visible than men's. There is no doubt that there are large gaps in history between the works of Sappho, Hrotswitha, and Wollstonecroft. As Clara Claiborne Park points out, "from Sappho...to Jane Austen, there were hardly any writers who were not male."[23] The point is that while women have always existed, a cultural tolerance for their education and freedom of expression has not. In 17th Century England, for example, "learning and authorship were (considered to be) dangerously unfeminine pursuits."[24] What is commonly shared by new critical documents is an avid interest in women, whether it be from a historical or demographic point of view or simply from a perspective that places greater emphasis on women in Shakespeare's plays. The aim of all of these efforts is towards "compensating for the bias in a critical tradition that has tended to emphasise male characters, male themes, and male fantasies."[25]

On the other hand, Carol Thomas Neely warns against the danger of compensatory criticism, which she claims can overcredit weak characters in an effort to compensate for the lack of attention or power attributed to women in plays. She specifies the "wishful thinking"[26] of Juliet Dusinberre's approach to Shakespeare. Neely clearly believes that Dusinberre's connection of Shakespeare with feminism is "wishful thinking" at best, and I tend to agree. She believes that compensatory critics *further* erode women's progress in the theatre by attempting to validate extant characters in Shakespeare that do not deserve to be validated in order to somehow "redeem" women. Neely argues that in our excitement at redeeming the female figure in literature, feminist critics may overcompensate for the injustices of traditional male criticism. Singling women out for attention and isolating them from the rest of the play and the culture in which the plays were written can only serve to isolate women further, not integrate them into the culture. "Thus the process by which women are singled out for attention, the characteristics attributed to them, and the framework within which they are valued...(is suspect and)...vulnerable to objections of ahistoricity and wishful thinking."[27] Therefore, it seems, compensatory critics may actually erode their progress by allowing their own battles for equality to lead them to initiate a course of overcompensation. Earlier female critics often applauded the wit and intelligence of Shakespeare's

women while defending their softness and criticising "bold language and overt expressions of sexuality."[28] Overzealous modern feminist critics may now have gone to the other extreme in order to make up for the slanted observations of the past. Instead of examining the characteristics that make women credible as individuals, such writers "attribute inappropriately or too enthusiastically to women qualities traditionally admired in men---power, aggressiveness, wit, and sexual boldness."[29]

Furthermore, Neely cautions that justificatory criticism analyses the stereotyping of women in Shakespeare's plays, but cannot decide whether the dramatist defends, attacks, or merely represents patriarchal structures. Neely denotes justificatory criticism as being written by critics who acknowledge the oppression of women as a system at work in the society and therefore in the theatre without offering solutions. Neely, in a logical move, aims for another approach. Instead of attributing power where none exists, as compensatory criticism all too often does, she aims for a transformational model, which examines the shape and meaning of female interactions and how they relate to gender.[30] Obviously, a certain measure of factual perspective must be attained concerning the origins of prejudice within both the society and the plays themselves. Thus, an exciting and diverse field of dramaturgical inquiry has opened up. Ultimately the transformational criticism that Neely hopes to achieve is based on

a "three-stage model of feminist history propounded by Joan Kelly-Gadol and Gerda Lerner," criticism that has

> moved from "compensatory" history (the study of "women worthies," achievers, by male standards, in a male world) to "contribution" history (the study of women's contribution to and oppression by patriarchal society) to the history of "the social relations of the sexes" (the study of the relative position of men and women in historical periods).[31]

My thesis correlates with this theory in that I do not intend to idealise women characters. Instead, I hope to objectively discuss the relative positions of women as they relate to men in the plays and in some instances relate the information in the plays to the milieu that was Shakespeare's time: The Renaissance. Therefore, the study of the four plays herein will deal predominantly with the *female* as protagonist while a secondary motif will be to relate the women to their co-protagonists where it is germane to the woman's role. For example, in King Lear, where Cordelia's chief antagonist, Lear, is part of the patriarchal structure that oppresses Cordelia, such a correlation is paramount. Where female and male co-protagonists are equally oppressed by a hostile society, as in Romeo and Juliet, the aspect of Juliet being antagonised by society, rather than by an individual, will be the focus.

Lisa Jardine has argued that in order to effect change, writers must stop writing exclusively about female characters. She

feels that continuing to focus on female characters and attacking chauvinistic attitudes incorporated in particular plays cannot be counted as progressive feminist criticism. The opposing faction believes that only by focusing on women and analysing the "nature and effects of patriarchal structures (will) Shakespeare's women (be liberated) from the stereotypes to which they have too often been confined."[32] The duality between men and women will be exposed: why are there no great female tragic figures, why no triumphant comedic heroines beyond the point of marriage? A compensation for the male bias that has thus far existed may not be possible, but an analysis of women's history in the drama is paramount. Women have much catching up to do that cannot be accomplished without placing a heightened focus on the women themselves.

Jardine notes a sense of hostility on the part of some critics who she alleges can best be described as using "lines of attack" to criticise "chauvinistic attitudes the plays incorporate."[33] She appropriately admonishes those critics who employ hostile lines of attack against chauvinistic attitudes in plays. Such critics are figuratively shooting the messenger and ignoring the larger issue of where these attitudes originate.

In some cases, however, the dramatist may be offering a critique. Coppelia Kahn, for example, sees Romeo and Juliet as "tragic scapegoats," and maintains that "...the play suggest(s) a critique of the patriarchal attitudes expressed through the

feud..."[34] Such writers are not only reacting against societal attitudes but against a society itself that condones these oppressive patriarchal structures. They react not with hostility but with curiosity about why such structures exist.

David Sundelson sees "the fears about the precariousness of male identity" and of the "destructive powers of women"[35] as closely linked together, as are anxieties about the loss of political and sexual power. There is a societal attitude concerning power and who should rightfully wield it that is only *reflected* in literature and criticism; it does, however, not originate from it.

The fact that female issues have too long been ignored or treated in a biased manner was systemic to a male dominated society. Any society reflects the attitudes of the dominant class in its art and integrates the same attitudes into its language. Whether acknowledged or not, the existence of such attitudes means they are condoned, even socially acceptable. Yet to consider this phenomenon a conscious male conspiracy seems neither fair nor realistic.

The mostly negative stereotyping of women in early 17th century drama shows the level to which the subordination of women must have been entrenched in the culture. There were, of course, negative portrayals of male characters too. But the male protagonists in the tragedies often rise to greatness and power, or at least fall from a great height. The female characters achieve

little if anything. Almost in a wistful way, Rosalind rises to greatness only while dressed in boy's clothing, in a play-within-a-play setting that does not really exist. The epitome of power is defined by gender alone.

Sue-Ellen Case argues that the practice of strictly defining women with and by gender originated with Athenian culture. Public life was deemed the property of men, and women were relegated to the home. Case credits Teresa de Lauretis' concept of "Woman" in explaining this packaging of female identity into a one-dimensional caricature:

> The result of the suppression of actual women in the classical world created the invention of a representation of the gender "Woman" within the culture. This "Woman" appeared on the stage, in the myths, and in the plastic arts, representing the patriarchal values attached to the gender of "Woman" while suppressing the experiences, stories, feelings, and fantasies of actual women.[36]

Yet just because women's energies were being discouraged during the classical period does not mean that powerful women did not exist. Evidently they did; this is how Shakespeare developed the prototypes for 'his' women.

In order to examine the actions and the language of Shakespeare's powerful women and their assertion of power in a world where they have no right to power, I will concentrate on four characters who have challenged male dominated social structures, either successfully or unsuccessfully: Juliet in Romeo and Juliet,

Cordelia in King Lear, Imogen in Cymbeline, and Rosalind in As You Like It. All of these four characters take actions which are beyond what is acceptable within their social roles as women. Mere triumph or victory is not their main concern; they are not driven by a lust for power as are Shakespeare's Macbeth or Richard III. These four women risk losing everything in their attempt to achieve their basic right to control their own destiny. For Cordelia, Rosalind, Imogen and Juliet, survival and the assertion of their female identity are the central issues.

New feminist critics enthusiastically examine the risks Juliet takes because they recognise, as if in a distant mirror, some of the risks they themselves face in what is still a male-dominated world. As a female reader I myself tend to identify or at least associate with the female characters: With Juliet rather than with Romeo, with Cordelia rather than with Lear, with Ophelia rather than with Hamlet, with Miranda, rather than with Prospero. From this point of view, it seems only natural for feminist writers to focus on those characters that more strongly interest them as individuals. This need to focus on female characters and the interest in the lack of "glory roles" for women, are, I feel, correlated. The dearth of powerful females accounts for the general need amongst feminist critics to compensate for the existence of "weak" female roles and the need to "catch up" to men in terms of the importance of the roles women play.

Many critics testify to the fact that Shakespeare's observations of his social milieu were the mirror from which his art sprang. Irene Dash maintains that "Shakespeare created several strong...women in his plays, women whose models must have existed in the Elizabethan world."[37] Robert Ornstein states:

> Shakespeare...depicted robust, strong-minded, and independent women who are unwilling to suffer any indignity at the command of their lords and masters...There were many women of like spirit in Elizabethan society who refused to accept the dependent, submissive roles which were conventionally prescribed for their sex.[38]

Shakespeare himself has reflected on this process through Hamlet's observation: "...the purpose of playing... both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature" (III, ii, 20-23). If this statement mirrors Shakespeare's method of characterisation, then it is unlikely that he developed his characters from imagination alone; rather, he held the mirror up to nature in order to create dramatic art, using both his imagination and the models observed in natural and social life. Sarup Singh also points out that Shakespeare based the characters of the women in his plays on models from his own, immediate world:

> (In the 17th century,) learning, especially learning leading to a profession, was clearly for men, not women. (Yet) Shakespeare could not have created learned professions for women if they did not exist in his society.[39]

Not only are these characters based on societal models, the main action often seems to be culled from society as well. Louis Adrian Montrose states that "action in Shakespearean drama usually originates in combinations of a few basic kinds of human conflict: conflict among members of different families, generations, sexes, and social classes."[40]

Generational and gender-based conflict could certainly be said to be the basis of Romeo and Juliet. As You Like It features a conflict between the male members of Rosalind's family that results in her being ostracised from court. Similarly, Cordelia is cast out of a patriarchal system she cannot placate because of generational and gender-based conflict, and Cymbeline's Imogen is involved in a gender-based conflict in a society that demands chastity of women. Therefore, even though strong-willed, intelligent women may have existed in the 17th Century, the social constraints that also existed at that time may have been responsible for the lack of powerful or dominant women in the culture and in the literature.

These conflicts all existed in the real culture of the 17th Century, a culture which demanded submission from women. One way in which this submission was elicited was in women's lack of education which was "discussed as an admitted fact, one side defending it as necessary in order to keep wives in due subjection...the other side, led by the chief literary men of the day, ascribed the frivolity and the gambling habits of ladies of fashion

to an upbringing which debarred them from more serious interests."[41] This attitude of cloistering women is shown in all its harshness in Romeo and Juliet, where Juliet is expected to submit to her father's choice in marriage. The men had to fight to the death in order to honour their families' names and prove their own manhood. Furthermore, 17th Century social norms considered a man who could not control his woman a cuckold; and a woman who would not submit to being controlled was severely ostracised.

The destructive force of male power and the control of women through social enforcement is portrayed in the four plays studied here. The castigation of women provides the central conflicts on which the main action turns. In Cymbeline, for example, Posthumus, thinking he no longer controls Imogen, arranges to have her killed; since Imogen is thought to be out of Posthumus' control, she is cast out from the safety of the patriarchal world and into the wild realm of the forest. In Romeo and Juliet, Capulet threatens to throw Juliet out in the street if she will not submit to his choice of marriage partner; while she is under his roof, she is Capulet's property and must be controlled by him until she is passed on to a husband, very much like an object or a market commodity.

Of course the control of women did not simply appear in the Renaissance; no one would accuse Shakespeare of originating such a trend. Sue-Ellen Case observes that, in Athenian culture, "...the

word for marriage, ekdosis, meant loan---women were loaned to their husbands by their fathers, and in the case of a divorce, they were returned to their fathers."[42] Reflecting the Athenian tradition, Capulet wished Juliet to be on loan to Paris, whom he thought the best match for her. Also certain is the fact that sexist attitudes did not spring spontaneously from the Renaissance stage. Sue-Ellen Case suggests that the Athenian tradition of banning women from the stage caused women to be perceived not as "real" but as "male-produced fiction."[43] Since women were also excluded from early Renaissance staging, the correlation between the two periods is clear. It is not difficult to imagine that the idea of this "male produced fiction" safely continued into the work of Shakespeare. It is more taxing to answer *why* this is so.

It would seem apparent that social practices which existed in Renaissance England must have decidedly coloured Shakespeare's dramatic vision. One way of ascertaining this correlation between the milieu of 17th Century London and fiction is to compare the characters themselves with historical studies relating to the period. Some feminist critics find that "a comparison of the plays with their sources and analogues can illuminate what is traditional and what unique in Shakespeare's portrayals of women."[44] And so the characters of Juliet, Cordelia, Imogen and Rosalind are juxtaposed in these studies with historical sources in order to provide a dialectic between the two.

Establishing a credible comparison between characters and historical data will show how much of the characters' language and actions we can accept as social reality and how much as dramatic invention. Only then can a female character's true role be defined to a satisfactory degree. Such a study of the relationship between poetic vision and social reality will be central to an understanding of where gender figures in the system of power. This understanding will help to unravel the historical forces that caused the uneven rationing of power, and will help to understand the moral and social conventions that shaped Shakespeare's plays. And so, in a nutshell, the short and difficult question is: How much of Shakespeare's characters are reflections of his physical world, of the social and intellectual climate of his time? And how much of it is based on fantasy and fiction?

In discussing this central issue of power balance between men and women it is important to keep in mind a number of facts. First of all: not only women, of course, are negatively portrayed in Shakespeare's plays. But in contrast to the female characters, male protagonists have, at some point in the plays, a secure sense of power, no matter how steep their fall is in the end. And ultimately, the male hero must have character flaws; he must be driven from the heights of fortune in order to qualify as a tragic hero. But unlike tragic flaws, power cannot be considered a universal human attribute. And herein lies the difference: tragic

flaws are beyond human control; they are not man-made, whereas power is a human characteristic applied to those men who earn it or who have forcefully gained it on their own. The term 'men' is used assuredly here: as far as western cultures are concerned, men hold the seat of power and dole it out accordingly.

Powerful women are portrayed as evil or destructive *because* they are powerful; such is not the case where men are concerned. Literature mirrors life to the extent that power is generally a male domain in both. In literature as in life, men may be portrayed as possessing negative character traits and still retain positions of power; this is not true of women. Myra Glazer Schotz writes: "Without the manly disguise or the mask of comedy, women who express 'masculine' traits are unequivocally threatening."[45] The literary purpose of such a portrayal is twofold: First, it portrays women as deficient, even deviant in their quest for power. Second, this portrayal entrenches their "femininity": women's limited and strictly enforced roles are dramatically encoded. A woman can be good and be powerless, or she can strive for power and be labelled a deviant.

"Femininity" is a man-made word, one of many which reflect the attitude of the maker of that language toward the minority he addresses. Those women who adhere to their appropriate roles are deemed "feminine", a socially acceptable label every woman should strive for in order to be considered successful

in her designated role in the society. The woman who attains power is not successful, she is masculine, overbearing, a shrew, a deviant. Theodora A. Jankowski describes an "early modern uneasiness regarding women in positions of power."[46] Ultimately, feminine attainment of power is an oxymoron and moreover a truly dual-edged sword, because even if a woman decides she can achieve power, it is rare for her to retain power for any length of time. Moreover, power is an exceptional quality in a woman and is usually gained through marriage, as in the cases of Lady Macbeth, Margaret of Anjou, and Volumnia. Theodora A. Jankowski further observes that "virtually no woman character of the drama of the (early 17th century) draws her power from politics directly, as her sovereign right."[47] Infrequently, because of the rules of primogeniture, females gain power through inheritance, although these cases are exceedingly rare. Queen Elizabeth I is one such example.

Conversely, power is a positive corollary to the male character, and is regarded as being separate from other attributes or flaws he may possess. Yet when power defines the woman, it does so as evil and is perceived as a threat to male dominance. Lenz, Greene and Neely state that "...powerful women are always threatening and often, in fact, destructive."[48] Destructive, that is, to the established ruling patriarchy. From a patriarchal perspective, women's power must be mitigated at the very least, and

preferably castigated. One way of diffusing female power is to portray it in a negative way. Madonne M. Miner categorises Richard III, the model of the forceful patriarch, as being "characterised by his determination to cast women in unattractive roles: As scapegoat for men, currency of exchange between men, and cipher without men."[49] In a 17th Century context, they were to be kept powerless as the pawns of men. Therefore, women who attempted to usurp power from its rightful place in the male domain signified a threat to male power and typically come to unfortunate ends.

In Rewriting the Renaissance, Jonathan Goldberg tells us that "fatherly authority reign(ed) supreme"[50] in Renaissance England. Goldberg cites many examples of systemic patriarchy in paintings by such artists as Rubens and Van Dyck which show fathers and their heirs in superior positions to those of the mothers and the female children. Typically, the male subjects, usually situated near patriarchal symbols of power such as crowns or sceptres, face one way, while the women, who stand or sit in front of scenes depicting nature, face the opposite direction; thus, the strict separation of the two genders and the superiority of the male is depicted. 17th Century landscape painting is equally revealing. Paintings such as those by Daniel Mytens depicting Charles I and Henrietta Maria, and Henrick Pot's depiction of Charles I and his family are good examples. Female subjects are

juxtaposed with illustrations of nature, such as woods and gardens. This juxtaposition symbolises the equation of the feminine with nature. Female subjects are separated from male subjects by large physical spaces. According to Goldberg "It is the gap between nature and power that patriarchal rhetoric transforms. It is the space in which patriarchal rhetoric is constructed, the space of the mystification of power."[51] Moreover, Goldberg states that these positionings show, in iconic terms, the superiority of men and the solidarity of the male head of the family with his male heir. Historically, the term 'head of the family' reflects the fact that the male is the head to the feminine body, just as the king is the head to his kingdom, his "body". Goldberg quotes from King James I's 1597 treatise of kingship: "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body."[52] Corroborating Goldberg's theory, the editors of Rewriting the Renaissance claim that "partly in reaction against Elizabeth, the Stuarts aggressively promoted the image of the monarch as a father and husband of his country."[53]

Examples of the subordination of women by men are not limited to Renaissance family life. Merry E. Wiesner observes that women were subordinated in the workplace as well. One example is the takeover of cloth and clothing production by men. Until the thirteenth century, "the production of cloth and clothing throughout most of western history...(was) a women's occupation."

[54] Wiesner tells of male artisans taking over different stages of production, eventually forming guilds of weavers and cloth cutters, which led to apprenticeship programmes from which women were systematically excluded. These examples show that autonomy and authority were not shared equally by males and females; indeed, female power is discouraged altogether in both the real world and in the world of literature.

The assertion of female power is treated as a fatal indiscretion in the eyes of male-dominated society; thus women who do not adhere to the marriage role causes them to be seen as damaged or an unfortunate burden to their families. A study of Shakespeare's strong women in the face of the adversity of the patriarchal system will show that the true potential of these women is not allowed to flourish so that the (male) status quo can be maintained. Therefore, any challenge to the system is quelled in order that the position of those controlling the power be guaranteed. Even at the cost of the death of loved ones, as exemplified in Romeo and Juliet and Cymbeline, the social power structure must be enforced.

It is important to note, as Lenz, Greene and Neely do, that "...artists do not necessarily duplicate in their art the orthodoxies of their culture; they may exploit them to create character or intensify conflict; they may struggle with, criticise, or transcend them."[55] But whether intended or not, an artist's work

is affected by the social climate in which he or she lives. Individual instances of human behaviour exhibited in theatre may be incidental; for example, a single incidence of an assertive female portrayed as a virago constitutes a conflict intensifier. But the phenomenon of women portrayed as either benign and powerless or powerful and societally disruptive cannot be mere coincidence. Stage portrayals grew out of contemporary attitudes which dictated that women should repress assertiveness in favour of social acceptability. Lawrence Stone found that "between 1560 and 1660 (in England) there was a sense of social and political crisis, a fear that the whole structure of social hierarchy and political order were in danger."[56] According to Stone, peasant revolts and religious feuds between the Calvinists and the Puritans were responsible for these fears. The result was that the "enforcement of patriarchy and obedience (was) stressed."[57] Social pressure in the culture forcefully dictated the entertainment of the day. Political machinations thus inevitably reflected onto the stage. In this sense, theatre may be regarded as a vital source which helps us to understand the history of humankind.

Knowledge is power, therefore, knowledge in women is considered a threat. John Webster's Ferdinand, in The Duchess of Malfi, describes the implications of the virgin-whore syndrome. A virgin is unknowledgable, innocent, socially acceptable. But sexual knowledge, especially in an unmarried woman is a negative: she is

not experienced, she has a reputation: "So you have some virgins, that are witches. I will never see thee more," and "you have shook hands with reputation." (III, ii, 140, 135). In the Renaissance a repression existed that seems to have been borne out of a fear of the breakdown of social hierarchies. It is not surprising that ignorance was paramount in a woman during the Renaissance, for the patriarchy depended on the ignorance of the masses in general, and women's lack of education in particular.

Lawrence Stone concurs that "there is (only) one socially very restricted, short-lived and paradoxical exception to the rule that literacy and classical education widened the gap between the sexes,"[58] this being the period between 1520 and 1560, well before the period of Shakespeare's writing. The idea that a woman's knowledge of the classics made her attractive to men was short-lived. Women's education was curtailed so that their social and economic lives would be limited, resulting in a less competitive workplace.

> During the 17th Century, (the) masculine literary education for noble and gentle women was replaced by ...traditional feminine accomplishments and graces needed to catch a husband, such as music, singing, dancing, needlework and embroidery, and no more than the basic elements of reading and writing in English and also French.[59]

The reasons why women are so often relegated to a subservient role are manifold and complex. Why does this role

surface repeatedly in literature? It is difficult to answer this question with any assurance, but from the above example we may glean that the attitudes originate within the culture. These attitudes are then reflected in art: "The plays are aesthetic creations as well as social documents."[60] A play attains some of its essence from the social reality that represents life.

For the purpose of this study, social reality is defined as the sum of all social circumstances that exist at a particular point in history at a particular place. This would, for example, include education, marriage, family traditions, work habits, housing, legal, religious, and domestic practices.

With regard to power, I primarily refer to the inherent power in everyday social reality, such as choice in marriage and the power in exercising domestic rule. Additionally, I speak of power within the community, including political and social standing. Possessing the power to move others is not the only relevant issue; empowerment over one's self is also crucial. Clearly, the males in the plays studied here enjoy a measure of empowerment in their lives, communities and families which their female counterparts do not enjoy. The common thread linking Juliet, Imogen, Cordelia and Rosalind, therefore, is not only a lack of power in their individual social realities, but the various conflicts with their families and communities which result from their powerless position as individuals. All four women lack power and therefore a true

identity as individuals, which many of their male counterparts share within their own families and communities.

With power comes control. An imposed rule on fidelity and chastity in women is a way of controlling women. The idea that women are responsible for keeping the family genealogy pure resulted in women's roles becoming more and more proscribed in relation to the social reality. And so the forced fidelity and chastity of women became the only way of guaranteeing purity of genealogy. It also kept women at home with the rest of the property: "Unchastity, in the sense of sexual relations before marriage or outside marriage, is for man, if an offence, none the less a mild and pardonable one, but for a woman a matter of the utmost gravity."[61] The reason 'unchastity' was a "matter of the utmost gravity" only for women was that since the 'seed' is put into the woman only the woman can be 'polluted' and thus pollute all issue she may bear: "...new feminist analyses prove that (the male-female) division is gender-specific, i.e.;...public life is the property of men and women are relegated to the invisible private sphere."[62] The idea that "the private sphere is rightfully inhabited by women is a social reality that exists as a corollary of the chastity issue."[63] It became common knowledge that an unchaste, unmarried woman has already been violated by someone else and is therefore unclean, polluted, and not fit for marriage. Only virginity is clean.

In 17th Century England, therefore, marriage for women

was paramount. A woman must be married off as soon as possible, given as a possession by one man to another in order to reproduce. In fact, procreations were considered by some in the Renaissance to be "acts of policy not pleasure, since the female children were used to obtain politically profitable marriage alliances with neighbouring princes."[64] This policy developed out of the need to protect Britain during times of peace. Henry I's "natural daughters were wed to princes all along the Anglo-Norman periphery" and "William of Malmesbury insists that he begat his twenty or more natural offspring for reasons of policy rather than pleasure."[65] Thus, women's primary avocation as a childbearer disqualified her for other forms of work outside the home. This explains the tradition of dowries, a tradition in which the father provides a dowry of money and gifts to the husband in order that his daughter be provided for. In this process, which existed in 17th Century England, but dates to Athens, women "lost their economic and legal powers and became objects of exchange."[66] Because the household was considered a refuge from the public sphere, women were considered to be apolitical. Women's work, that is, work done in the home, was considered to be necessary labour that men needed to be liberated from in order that they attend to political concerns. Therefore, for at least 2500 years, women have traditionally resided over the private domain while men have held the role of provider. This has led to the perception that women are financial burdens

dependent on men, regardless of their share of work in the home. Ironically, women are required by the culture both to continue to adhere to the limited and stifling role of marriage in order to sustain the family, and to complete abstinence from politics. Therefore, women face a dilemma: They can stay within the boundaries of their socially acceptable roles, as Imogen and Rosalind ultimately do, thereby retaining life at the cost of freedom; or, they can risk the greater chances that Juliet and Cordelia take and attain a brief glimpse of freedom at the cost of life.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

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Chapter II: Imogen and Rosalind: Life at the Cost of Freedom

Imogen's story is partly based on the anonymous The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune, performed in 1582, published in 1589. The story features the faithful princess Fidelia, who symbolises the limited choices women have in life. Imogen's choice to leave the traditionally female realm, home and hearth, and venture out into the traditionally male public arena, underlines her vulnerability. The fact that she dresses in boy's clothing shows ingenuity, and it also illustrates her knowledge and fear of the dangers of the public world. While it is true that Imogen is an independent, strong woman, she cannot control the actions and beliefs of her father and husband. She never manages to rise to a more active role in life; she succeeds only in repairing what has been undone by others. Imogen must repair the unfounded perception of her husband that her chastity is no longer intact. Without chastity, Imogen will cease to exist as an acceptable wife, daughter and woman in the society of her day. Her goal, therefore, is to preserve her role, and she does this successfully. Ultimately, she succeeds only in re-affirming the existing social order and the societal boundaries that control her life. She does not escape to a new world or a new way of existence. Imogen does, however, show a brave spirit, when she spontaneously decides to don a man's clothing and make her cathartic journey through the woods. While

not emancipated from the old way of life, she proves herself capable of playing the system to her best advantage; she avoids a bloody death and wins her husband back. She opts for life at the cost of freedom.

Shakespeare's story underlines the theme that not only are women vulnerable in the world, but they may also be vulnerable to the very people who profess to protect them, their fathers and husbands. As long as a woman is faithful to one man, she is assured of her own safety. Unfaithfulness, however, equals a betrayal of both husband and father, a betrayal of society, and, ultimately, a betrayal of the patriarchal system. Husband and father can then become her most dangerous foe. Imogen's first conversation with Cymbeline is indicative of the treatment of a wayward daughter, who has dangerously strayed from the social course defined by man. Her crime is having chosen a mate not in concordance with her father's choice. For this her father bitterly berates her. The patriarch bursts into an explosive rage, while the accused daughter resorts to begging her father to calm himself:

> Cymbeline: O disloyal thing
> That shouldst repair my youth, thou heap'st
> A year's age on me.
> Imogen: I beseech you, sir,
> Harm not yourself with your vexation. (I. i. 131-134)

Not only does Cymbeline expect his daughter to take

responsibility for "repairing" his youth, he now blames her unacceptable marriage choice for adding a year to his advancing age. Diane Elizabeth Dreher refers to the close connection between the father-daughter relationship, the declining fortunes of the patriarch and eventual death.[1] She points to the fact that twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays deal with father-daughter relationships. Dreher suggests that Shakespeare must have been intrigued with such relationships, having had two daughters himself. She further suggests that a father such as King Lear, or Cymbeline, feels the mantle of old age coming on, and, sensing his own mortality, wants to mold his daughter, the first woman he has ever been able to dominate in his life. Signe Hammer supports Dreher's view:

> ...at the heart of the father-daughter relationship lies the mystique of perfect love. For her, it is the great love of her independent life. For him, a daughter is, at last, a controllable female, one he can mold to his image of the ideal woman.[2]

Like Cymbeline, Capulet and Lear, Dreher continues, "the majority of Shakespeare's fathers face midlife with imperious assertions of their patriarchal prerogatives."[3] When they are consequently "threatened by their daughters' growing independence and their own waning powers, they become domineering tyrants like Cymbeline or busybodies like Polonius."[4] The sight of the younger, stronger offspring intimidates the older, weaker fathers who are closer to death. The awareness of their own mortality causes Shakespeare's

insecure fathers to impose drastic measures in order to reassure themselves of their own power.

In addition to this, financial considerations for Imogen's future mask Cymbeline's true aim, which is to control his daughter in order to ensure the continuity of his genealogy and inheritance:

> Cymbeline: Thou took'st a beggar, wouldst have made my throne
> A seat for baseness. (I. i, 141-142)

To make his patriarchal display of power complete, Cymbeline implies Imogen's subordination by accusing her of being "mad" (I. i, 147) and of being "a foolish thing" (I. i, 150). He then explicitly details his master-slave relationship with his daughter, giving the order: "Away with her and pen her up" (I. i. 152). With Cymbeline, Shakespeare outlines the phenomenon of ownership and control of women by men.

As wife, too, Imogen is regarded as property. Posthumus says "I praised her as I rated her. So do I my stone" (I. iv. 81). In boasting of his wife to his friends, he equates her with his ring. Later, he attempts to have Imogen killed because of her supposed infidelity. Ironically, he is responsible for his wife's contact with Iachimo. Fully aware of Iachimo's intentions through the wager they have made, Posthumus is the dishonest half of this married pair. He dupes the unsuspecting Imogen with his introductory letter, which Imogen reads aloud within hearing of Iachimo:

> He is one of the noblest note, to whose

> kindnesses I am most infinitely tied. Reflect upon him accordingly, as you value your trust---Leonatus. (I. vi. 22-25)

It is not surprising that Imogen places her trust in Iachimo when she is so directed by her husband. Neither is it surprising that Posthumus reacts violently towards Imogen when Iachimo informs him of her infidelity. His violent reaction is not surprising because Posthumus is a man who, without even questioning his wife on the matter, accepts Iachimo's word as truth. Paramount to the issue, then, is the question: How can Posthumus blame Imogen for a perceived infidelity when he himself was the messenger of her downfall? He is partly to blame for duping her, and yet deigns to punish her by death when she is so duped.

Unlike Posthumus, Imogen does not have the freedom to move abroad, to have a vocation. Only under duress does she leave her home. The character of the homebound Imogen is in stark contrast to that of her worldly husband. In Act I, scene iv, Posthumus is portrayed as a man abroad on business, surrounded by fellows with whom he shares a healthy camaraderie. Imogen, on the other hand, is presented from the outset as a solitary figure, first arguing with a tyrannical father, then conversing with Iachimo, a man who will cause her temporary fall from the patriarchal circle. Even as Imogen reads her husband's note informing her of Iachimo's integrity, her abuser is scheming against

her:

> Iachimo: (Aside) All of her that is out of door most rich!
> If she be furnished with a mind so rare,
> She is alone th' Arabian bird, and I
> Have lost the wager. Boldness be my friend!
> Arm me, audacity, from head to foot,
> Or like the Parthian I shall flying fight---
> Rather, directly fly. (I. vi. 15-21)

Iachimo is correct in his ambiguous assertion that Imogen is alone. Indeed, she is singularly alone, even in her own home. No one else in the play seems to have the aura of isolation that seems to doom her. First she is pitted against her father and step-mother who both languish in the comfort of the kingdom. Then Cymbeline greets his stepson with more equanimity than he does his own daughter:

> Cymbeline: A worthy fellow,
> Albeit he comes on angry purpose now.
> But that's no fault of his. (II. iii. 57-59).

The credulous Imogen is freed to deliberate with the unworthy Cloten early in the play. Cloten represents the same patriarchal attitude that Cymbeline and the Queen adopt: "You sin against Obedience, which you owe our father" (II. iii. 114). Thus Cloten and the patriarchy he represents counsel obedience, regardless of the exigency of Imogen's situation. Imogen remains alone and friendless until Act III scene iv when Pisanio takes pity on her. When he suggests that Imogen disappear into the woods, she

quickly sums up her desperate fate:

> Imogen: Why, good fellow,
> What shall I do the while? Where bide? How live? Dead to my husband.
> Pisanio: If you'll back to the court---
> Imogen: No court, no father, nor no more ado
> With that harsh, noble, simple nothing,
> That Cloten, whose love suit hath been to me
> As fearful as a siege. (III. iv. 129-136)

Fearing for her as a woman alone in the woods, Pisanio suggests a disguise, in which Imogen must "forget to be a woman" (III. vi. 156). She must forget all the social and domestic customs of being a princess:

> Pisanio: ...Change command into obedience, fear and niceness---
> The handmaids of all women, or more truly
> Woman it pretty self---into a waggish courage;
> Ready in gibes, quick-answered, saucy, and
> As quarrelous as the weasel. (III. iv. 156-161)

Once again, obedience is counselled as a sure option for Imogen. Imogen loses what little power she has, that of being a chaste princess in her father's patriarchal realm, when she leaves the oppressive safety of her home. The alternative is shame and possible death; a harsh and certain fate should she return to her father's kingdom as an adulterous woman.

The woods represent both the dangers and the freedom of the world outside the palace. The polished language of the court is now replaced with the raw and natural tone of the forest. It is

here, in the woods, that the desires of individuals are expressed. Cloten, now free of the constraints of Cymbeline and his court, exposes his true feelings toward his step-sister and Posthumus:

> Cloten: Posthumus, thy head, which now is growing upon thy shoulders, shall within this hour be off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to pieces before her face; and all this done, spurn her home to her father, who may haply be a little angry for my so rough usage; but my mother having power of his testiness, shall turn all into my commendations. (IV. i. 16-22)

Thus Cymbeline's incongruously generous treatment of Cloten and equally incongruous treatment of Imogen in the early scenes of the play serves as a clear foreshadowing of the mishap between Cloten and Imogen which follows.

For all characters involved the forest is also a great equaliser of power. When the doomed Cloten demands respect for his station, Guiderius responds in an ironic tone:

> Cloten: Thou villain base,
> Know'st me not by my clothes?
> Guiderius: No, nor thy tailor, rascal,
> Who is thy grandfather. He made those clothes which, as it seems, make thee. (IV. ii. 80-83)

Ultimately, clothes do not make the man, as Guiderius aptly points out, and Imogen must be saved by her brothers, in spite of her disguise.

Once out of the woods, the ordered language and behaviour of the court resumes. Rogues, outcasts and runaways and the brutal customs of wild animals do not exist at court. The woods were simply a fantasy, a window in the world of the patriarchy. They represent a possibility of what the world would be if the rules of brute strength prevailed; Cymbeline's court represents the rigidly ordered world that man has built, in which men rule and women serve. It is fitting that Imogen's final words echo this reality: "My good master, I will yet do you service" (V. v. 403).

Rosalind does not escape the enforced social reality of marriage at the end of her journey; yet she does actively direct the main action of As You Like It. However, she must assume a male identity in order to control the events of the play. This is because a woman, especially a talented woman, cannot be trusted. "Those (women) that (Fortune) makes fair, she scarce makes honest; and those that she makes honest, she makes very ill-favouredly" (I. i. 37-38). Rosalind's disguise seems to reflect the fact that women's talents are actually a liability *because* they are women. Otherwise, why can she not accomplish her goals dressed as herself? The inference is that a woman does not possess any power as a motivator of events. Moreover, Rosalind and Imogen both change their mode of dress not only because of their lack of credibility as females and their fear of danger in the public arena, but because

both are ostracised; Imogen is outcast because of a perceived infidelity and Rosalind because she is the daughter of the rightful Duke. And so politics, power struggles and family relationships form a central theme of As You Like It.

The theme of the untrustworthy woman can be found in much of 17th century literature. The notion of woman as the "weaker vessel" was blamed on Eve's "audacious behaviour in the Garden of Eden."[5] Such theorists "accepted the notion of woman's moral inferiority (and) simply concentrated on the eternal vigilance necessary to keep the devil from tempting the woman and causing her to fall---yet again."[6] It was not difficult for "certain propagandists (who were moved) towards the notion of woman as inherently evil"[7] to conclude that any woman perceived to be "fallen" had resorted to witchcraft. While Rosalind may not be accused of witchcraft, the trick of the disguise is a device that Shakespeare could not do without in order to achieve a degree of credibility. Good girls cannot be taken seriously as leaders, and talented or ambitious girls are evil, so the only recourse was to choose disguise in the form of one who could be taken seriously as a trusted leader: Man.

True to patriarchal structure, As You Like It begins not with the story of Rosalind but with the story of a man, Orlando. Orlando lacks power because of primogeniture; he is for that reason a marginalised character, not unlike Rosalind. Orlando's first

words speak of his disdain towards his brother Oliver: "He lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education" (I. i. 18-20). Rosalind, a woman, naturally subordinates herself, focussing not on her own crisis, but on her father's. In her first exchange with Celia, she says: "Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure" (I. ii. 3-5). Thus women are taught that to centre on their own problems is selfish; to concern oneself with the problems of others is an act of selflessness and therefore appropriate social behaviour for a woman. That she vicariously deals with her problems by concerning herself with her father should satisfy any emotional needs she may have.

The negation of female identity and female power is important to the entrenchment of male power. This negation is achieved in a myriad of ways. For example, a large portion of female power lies in woman's ability to give birth. What better way to eradicate the power of the female than to deny the importance of childbearing by equating it with death, to be feared. This equation is made when Charles says of Orlando: "Come, where is this young gallant that is so desirous to lie with his mother earth?" (I. ii. 190). Equating the female with birth and death transforms birth, which is natural and beautiful, into something evil, to be feared and certainly not to be trusted.

Another way of entrenching power in favour of one group is to preach fanatical loyalty to that group at the exclusion of all other loyalties. Loyalty to one's own beliefs must be sacrificed. Constant allusions to bonding together and loyalties to one's family rather than to the significance of the individual recur in Act I. The absence of any thoughts pertaining to individual identity points to the rule that participation in such talk is shameful and disloyal to one's family.

> Celia: Is it possible on such a sudden you should fall into so strong a liking with old Sir Rowland's youngest son?
> Rosalind: The Duke my father loved his father dearly.
> Celia: Doth it therefore ensue that you should love his son dearly? By this kind of chase, I should hate him, for my father hated his father dearly; yet I hate not Orlando. (I. iii. 26-33)

Celia expresses the importance of individual choice, while Rosalind expresses the socially acceptable wish to join a family on the basis of loyalty to her father, even if she must negate her own identity. Similar talk of bonding and loyalties is employed by Duke Frederick to inform Rosalind she is no longer welcome in her own home:

> Rosalind: ...your mistrust cannot make me a traitor. Tell me whereon the likelihoods depends.
> Duke: Thou art thy father's daughter, there's enough.
> Rosalind: So was I when your Highness took his dukedom; So was I when your Highness banished him. (I. iii. 53-58)

Rosalind spells out the unfairness of Duke Frederick's selective ostracism based on his political affiliations:

> Rosalind: Treason is not inherited, my lord...
> mistake me not so much
> To think my poverty is treacherous. (I. iii. 59, 62-63)

Thus Rosalind questions why she should be outcast because of her relationship with her father; that is, why she should be persecuted because of her misfortune of being her father's daughter. Since Duke Frederick views Rosalind as an adjunct of her father and not an individual, she is considered a traitor based on her father's behaviour. Any good qualities of character she may possess are disregarded.

The forest plot in AYLI provides an escape from Duke Frederick's threat of execution. The social conditions of Rosalind's life take on a sense of adventure during her tenure in the woods; alas, her freedom to aggressively pursue romance and direct the social circumstances of others is as short lived as her stay in the Forest of Arden. Once her adventures in the public domain come to an end, Rosalind assumes the traditional role of wife and resumes her role as dutiful daughter. Shakespeare's use of the forest as play within a play allows Rosalind to enjoy some temporary freedom, yet her traditional role is secure because her stint in the forest is framed within a fantasy realm.

Rosalind is not literally alone as is Imogen. But even

with the presence of Celia in AYLI, there is a sense, especially after they enter the forest, that these are two young women alone in the world. They are alone ideologically, because in leaving together they are shunning Duke Frederick's patriarchal domain and therefore the protection it affords women. Rosalind and Celia are also physically alone, without the protection of men. Yet Celia convinces Rosalind they should remain together: "Shall we be sund'red, shall we part, sweet girl? No, let my father seek another heir" (I. iii. 96-97). Celia's willingness to forfeit her inheritance indicates her loyalty to Rosalind, thus Rosalind can be assured she will not be alone.

In spite of Celia's camaraderie, Rosalind is apprehensive about the dangers of entering the forest: "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (I. iii. 108). For this reason and because she is "more than common tall" (I. iii. 113) Rosalind decides to dress as a man. She believes her internal fear will be hidden as well as her external body: "...In my heart lie there what hidden woman's fear there will, we'll have a swashing and a maritial outside..." (I. iii. 116-118).

Once in the forest, Rosalind's first words concern the fact that clothes make the man: "I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman..." (II. iv. 3-4). Rosalind seems to be ironically commenting on the idea that women are naturally not as courageous as men; more likely,

however, Shakespeare's character is simply reflecting the contemporary attitude towards women.

Rosalind, of course, remains powerful and independent only while she is in the forest. Once she is out of the forest, her words take on a self-deprecating tone: "I will weary you then no longer with idle talking" (V. ii. 51-52). The fiery Ganymede of the woods who would not give a second thought to speaking her mind is gone; Rosalind, without a male identity to validate her possession of an opinion, does not want to bore her audience with her idle feminine chatter. It seems that, with the marriages at the end of As You Like It, Rosalind's episodic cross-dressing comes to an end, as does her independence and therefore any power, or perhaps energy, to do anything other than what would seem to be within the realm of normalcy. Once the marriages occur, Rosalind says to the Duke "I'll have no father, if you be not he" (To Orlando) "I'll have no husband, if you be not he" (V. iv. 122-123). With these statements, Rosalind reclaims her position as woman within the patriarchal context.

If the forest is a metaphor for the escape to a new world, then the forest is also a metaphor for the dangers the world holds for women as they try to improve their circumstance. Rosalind's comforting words to Celia at their entrance into the Forest of Arden indicate that she has some reason to fear for the future: "Courage, good Aliena" (II. iv. 7-8). In spite of their courage the sojourn

through the forest does not permanently change their circumstances. In fact, with the emergence from the woods at the end of As You Like It, Rosalind's world is not transformed; instead her circumstances revert to those that existed before her father's ostracism by Duke Frederick.

Shakespeare's aim seems to be something other than the discovery of better circumstances for women. Wittingly or not, the sum of such plays as Cymbeline and As You Like It is the reinforcement of a patriarchal system that has provided a successful venue for this playwright. At first glance, the use of the forest simply appears to be a device Shakespeare employs to make the plot more interesting to the audience. In the end, however, the forest in As You Like It provides only a temporary reprieve from the patriarchal world.

The endings of both As You Like It and Cymbeline signify many endings: The end of feminine venturings and the end of temporary feminine "independence." It is ironic because the two heroines do not experience any truly lasting achievement or independence from the patriarchal system which imprisons them. They only succeed in reinforcing that system by partaking of the role that "good" girls traditionally participate in, namely the marriage role. Economically and socially they have no other choice. There is a sense too that once the romantic goals are reached, there is no further goal necessary for Imogen or Rosalind

to achieve. Their marriage goals are their only life goals. Thus these characters are anything but feminists; indeed they ultimately reinforce a system that will protect them only if they are "good" girls. Women only venture into the woods in the realm of fantasy; their opinions can be respected and their lead followed only when there is a male mask to their identity.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1 Diane Elizabeth Dreher, Domination and Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare, (Lexington: Kentucky UP, 1986), 1.

2 Signe Hammer, Passionate Attachments, (New York: Rawson, 1982), 9.

3 Dreher, 6.

4 Dreher, 6.

5 Antonia Fraser, The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in 17th Century England, (London: Weidenfeld, 1984), 1.

6 Fraser, 2.

7 Fraser, 2.

Chapter III: Juliet and Cordelia: Freedom at the Cost of Life

Individuality is the enemy of any routine system such as the one instated by patriarchal rule. Whether male or female, all have a preconceived part to play, according to the strict rules laid down by societal norms. The stifling of individuality also stifles any possibilities outside of marriage that a character like Juliet may aspire to. Juliet's need for independence, however, is so great that she risks losing a reliable husband and a solid financial and social future. In fact, she sacrifices her life in order to assert her independence. The romantic notion that Juliet risks all simply because she favours one lover over another is an underestimation of her sense of self. Her need to assert her own choice in the face of her family's and society's denial becomes more important than life itself. Thus the woman's role is always that of seeking validation within the male structured society. Men are automatically validated by virtue of their gender; they can move beyond the role of searching for validation to achieving glory and power. But with the power comes the responsibility of providing for the family. Juliet's father is bound by the traditions of his culture to provide for his possession, his daughter Juliet. In his mind he may be providing a good match for Juliet, but he is also stifling any individuality of choice his daughter may wish to assert. Thus the

two are forever at odds. The repression of Juliet's individual free will, of course, results in tragedy.

While women must prove themselves worthy by being submissive, men have been taught to be aggressive in the name of the community. Their roles as all powerful warriors and protectors has somehow become intertwined, so that power and sexuality are confused. Coppelia Kahn points out that the men in Romeo and Juliet are required to defend their families' honour by fighting others over the slightest provocation.[1] Furthermore, the feud also "provides a psycho-sexual moratorium for the sons."[2] Instead of courtship leading to marriage and separation from the paternal house, the men "must prove themselves men by phallic violence on behalf of their fathers"[3] Thus sex is linked with sexual aggression rather than with pleasure and love.[4] Shakespeare establishes the sex-as-power issue and the concept of male camaraderie in the first scene of Romeo and Juliet as demonstrated by the crude banter of Gregory and Sampson:

> Sampson: A dog of that house shall move me to stand.
>
> I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.
>
> Gregory: That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest goes to the wall.
>
> Sampson: 'Tis true; and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall. Therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall (I. i. 12-20).

The unholy union of sex and power is only one force used to eradicate individuality in favour of the perceived greater good of the social culture. Unfortunately, this community is supported by rules based in sexism and violence; this in turn preserves a tradition which is ultimately self-destructive, responsible for the deaths of the offspring that would perpetuate it.

The institution of marriage has traditionally forced women to conform to a narrowly defined role model. Although acquiescing to marriage brings about resolution and happiness at the end of comedies, it spells disaster for those who strive for free choice, as does Juliet. Juliet enters into her tragic conflict innocent of the consequences. However, she quickly senses the serious import of her situation upon learning Romeo's identity:

> Juliet: My only love, sprung from my only hate!
> Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
> Prodigious birth of love it is to me
> That I must love a loathed enemy. (I. v. 140-143)

Juliet appropriately realises that, though Romeo may be a "loathed enemy," it is too late to simply avoid him altogether. Their meeting has already taken place and their passion has a firm hold on them.

Once Juliet marries Romeo, she finds herself in the dilemma of being married to her father's enemy and being betrothed to another man; it is this dilemma that leads her to her fatal plan. Juliet's dilemma is a result of her role as an item of possession; as

Capulet's daughter she must be married off. Ultimately, her dilemma results from a combination of her own impulsiveness in marrying Romeo and of having an unwanted marriage foisted upon her by parents who selfishly think only of the continuance of the family line and financial considerations.

> Capulet: Doth she not give us thanks? Is she not
> proud? Doth she not count her blest,
> Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
> So worthy a gentleman to be her
> bride? (III. v. 143-146)

The patriarchy protects only those who adhere to its rules; Juliet's death is proof of this. Indeed, the threat of ostracism is no idle threat by Capulet but a dictate of the cultural norms he subscribes to. Juliet is excluded from making decisions concerning her own life. The reasons for this are out of Juliet's control but are justifiable from the societal point of view. Even though Juliet lacks power and credibility within the male-defined culture she is forced to live in, she nonetheless empowers herself by her own nature. By locating or asserting the personal power that is available to her but repressed by the culture, she attempts to overcome her powerlessness as an individual within the society. Capulet crows loudly about his expectation that Juliet will be ruled by him, and him alone: "I think she will be ruled in all respects by me; nay more, I doubt it not" (III. iv. 13-14). When Juliet surprises him with an opposing point of view, he accuses her of resorting to

"chopped logic" (III. v. 149) and threatens her with ostracism: "...hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, for, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee, nor what is mine shall never do thee good" (III. v. 194-196). Juliet will not adhere to the rules of the patriarchy; Capulet will not acknowledge Juliet's independence.

The father continues to rail at Juliet when he realises she is not acquiescing to his need for a suitable heir; but he softens when she later seems to submit: "This is as't should be...My heart is wondrous light, since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed" (IV. ii. 29, 46-47). Capulet's words seem to indicate that he is joyful at his daughter's maturity in deciding to marry the right man, a man who will guarantee her a secure financial and social future. There is, however, no respect in Capulet's words for any decision Juliet may have made regarding her marriage; there is only his relief that the best possible match has been made. Only through assuming an appropriate heir can Capulet's genealogy be assured.

Traditionally, one way of silencing women has been to criticise them: "Unworthy, disobedient, whining" (III. v. 144, 160, 184) are just some of the abusive words that are applied to Juliet. It is a choice of vocabulary that clearly reveals Capulet's strategy. His sense of power is threatened by Juliet's opposition; consequently, he tries to intimidate her with a string of insults:

> Capulet: Out, you greensickness carrion! Out, you baggage! You tallow-face!
> Juliet: Good father, I beseech you on my knees, hear me with patience but to speak a word. (III. v. 156, 158-59)

Words such as carrion and baggage indicate the father's attitude toward his daughter. She is a burden whose only hope is to be married. Capulet demands Juliet's acquiescence; Juliet begs for her father's permission to speak. While the male-defined cultural norms allow for Capulet's open show of power, Juliet must cloak her assertiveness behind a mask of submission. She cannot openly display the decision she has already made to marry Romeo; asserting the power of choice over her own life is not acceptable because of her age and gender.

Seeing that no compromise with her father is possible, Juliet has no choice but to collude with the friar and elope with Romeo. She readily enters into a complex plan with the friar:

> Friar: If, rather than to marry County Paris,
> Thou hast the strength of will to slay thyself
> ...I'll give thee remedy. (IV. i. 71-72, 76)

Juliet's decision to enlist the friar's help is not necessarily borne of spite toward her parents. The larger issue is her determination to be with Romeo at any cost. At her tender age, love appears to be the only thing worth fighting for. Juliet's fight for Romeo is an

extension of her will to assert power over her own life; yet having power over her life does not necessarily entail hostility toward her parents. Indeed, ingenuousness rather than hostility marks Juliet when she clamours to die rather than marry Paris:

> Juliet: O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
> From off the battlements of any tower...
> Or bid me go into a new-made grave
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud---
> Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble---
> And I will do it without fear or doubt,
> To live an unstained wife to my sweet love.
> (IV. i. 71-78, 84-88)

The economic and social role of women in the patriarchy dictates that Juliet has no power to choose her own future simply because she is female. Had she been respected to the extent that she could at least discuss choices with her parents, Juliet would not have felt so desperate as to stage such an elaborate and fatal plan. Instead she is treated only as chattel by her father.

Juliet's assertion of her own identity threatens her father's position and causes him to retaliate. Elizabeth Dreher sees Shakespeare's pairings of fathers and daughters as representing the daughters' need to grow to maturity and the fathers' need to impede this process in order to retain their potency.[5] Juliet's need to assert her independence is obviously at odds with her father's need to retain power and youth.

"Shakespeare's fathers are shocked and hurt by what they experience as personal rejection."[6] Thus the oppression of women by men is represented by the conflict between Juliet and her father.

Shakespeare begins King Lear with a display of Cordelia's individuality: "I love your Majesty according to my bond, no more nor less" (I, i. 94-95). The tragedies of both father and daughter are foreshadowed when Lear responds not with empathy, but with a show of power on his own behalf. Lear first tries to cajole Cordelia with a threat: "Mend your speech a little, lest you may mar your fortunes" (I, i, 96-97). Lear cannot or will not acknowledge Cordelia's independence. When she will not acquiesce, he uses the power of his position to destroy her future: "...Thy truth then be thy dower!...Here I disclaim all my paternal care" (I, i, 110, 115). Lear attempts to entrench his own royal tradition by threatening to destroy Cordelia's individual rights.

The King, noting the decline of his own fortunes, wants to assure himself of a worthy heir. Cordelia's failure to assure Lear of her loyalty is her downfall. Her choice of honesty over flattery is misconstrued by Lear as a show of disrespect. The daughter, in following her own instincts does not follow traditions held sacrosanct by her father and his male-defined culture. Lear's sudden response suggests disgust with her attitude: By attacking Cordelia's beliefs and reneging his responsibility as an understanding father, he sets in motion a series of destructive

events.

King Lear limits Cordelia's role in the world. First, he denies her right to individual thought. His denial irrevocably erodes Cordelia's credibility in the public arena of court life. Lear's disapproval results in Cordelia's social disgrace within her culture, Lear has had and still has power in the world; now, however, he is selfishly trying to keep Cordelia from developing her own sense of power. Cordelia's individuality shows in her language, actions and ideas:

> Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
> they love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
> that lord whose hand must take my plight
> shall carry half my love with him,
> half my care and duty.
> Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
> to love my father all. (I. i. 98-102)

She expresses herself as an individual; this differentiates her from her sisters, who try to operate within the patrilinear system. Lear's acknowledgement of Cordelia would have allowed her to own her individuality with pride; instead his fear of death causes him to hold on to any semblance of power possible and in the process he denies Cordelia her maturity and independence.

Linda Bamber suggests that "in the tragedies we respond to the women characters very largely on the basis of our interest in the hero; our vision of the feminine is mediated by our desires on behalf of the men."[7] Bamber notes, as an example, that we feel

strongest about Cordelia when "we see her feelings for Lear."[8] Instead of her behaviour being important because of how it affects her own fortunes, it is important only as it affects Lear's. Why is the importance of Cordelia's tragedy thus diminished by this attitude in King Lear? Because the maturity and independence of a woman is secondary to Lear's tragedy of mortality, Cordelia's character is subordinated to Lear's.

From the outset, Lear establishes himself as the master, and Cordelia does not openly criticise Lear's harshness towards her. Lear does not see Cordelia as deferring; rather, he sees her as making a fool of him. He threatens her to 'mend her speech'. Eschewing argument and showing fierce loyalty, Cordelia responds not with a threat but with deference:

> Good my lord, You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I return those duties back as are right fit, Obey you, love you, and most honour you. (I,i, 98-102)

In spite of her attempt to be deferential, the King insists on patrilinear adherence or nothing.

Cordelia has a good command of the language and presents a reasonable argument. And yet, Lear's response to her eloquent speech leaves her powerless; in his rage, confusion and ignorance, he chooses to misconstrue her words:

> Lear: So young, and so untender?
> Cordelia: So young, my lord, and true (I, i, 108, 109).

Cordelia's assessment of the situation must surely be that she is

being completely honest with her father, and therefore fair. Lear's assessment, from his patriarchal perspective, is necessarily quite different. He perceives her as his female offspring who is using his own language to make a fool of him. To Lear, Cordelia further diminishes the royal power by her disrespectful attitude.

Teresa de Lauretis' sums up the "woman problem" by suggesting that women, no matter how articulate, must forever defer to men. To illustrate this phenomenon, she alludes to the story of Humpty Dumpty's meeting with Alice in Through the Looking- Glass:

> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean---neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master---that's all."[9]

de Lauretis points out that like all masters, "Humpty Dumpty is arrogant and very rude to Alice...yet she feels obliged to be polite."[10]

Cordelia and Juliet both attempt to reason with their fathers; both fail. The relationships of Juliet and Cordelia with their fathers exemplify the power men hold over women. Ultimately, no woman can win an argument with the patriarchy using the language developed by a culture that excludes women in important areas such as politics and language:

> (Alice) tries to make conversation with no idea that her simple questions are taken by him as riddles: riddles, however, to which he has all the answers, for precisely conversation, speech and language, is the terrain in which his mastery is exercised.[11]

Thus, a verbal gap exists between men and women, just as a gap of communication exists between King Lear and Cordelia, or Capulet and Juliet. This gap of communication prevents change and preserves patriarchal rule.

Even though she is initially ostracised by her father, Cordelia later shows compassion in Lear's hour of need. Is she still deferring to him? In Cordelia's first interchange with Lear, he selfishly chooses to defend his royal and paternal image, while Cordelia is opinionated, defiant. In their final interchange, when Cordelia could have continued to show an independent attitude, she chooses empathy instead: "...Wast thou fain, poor father, To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn, in short and musty straw?" (IV. vii. 38-40). As is the norm in Shakespeare, Cordelia's acting out of the traditional role takes precedence over her own needs and beliefs. Her magnanimous attitude toward a father who has been antagonistic toward her independence all along shows that since Lear cannot change, she must, in order to make peace: patriarchal rule and feminism cannot be reconciled.

Cordelia's compassion for her father is an acknowledgment of personal failure. Her empathy shows the audience that a woman cannot be independent without being perceived as heartless. More important, Shakespeare's story shows a woman making a choice is a direct threat to the patriarchy. Cordelia, in the end, reunites with her father, who now is more powerless than she ever was. Her choice to be caring toward the dying Lear rather than vindictive is not a tribute to Shakespeare the feminist; it is a tribute to Shakespeare the humanist and his belief in human kindness over ambition. That one person can do another wrong and yet receive a favour in return is the true spirit of Shakespeare's message. Tellingly, it seems as though Shakespeare thought his audience could more easily accept empathy from a woman than a man, as it is Cordelia who must change her ideals in order for a reconciliation to take place. This may be the perspective Shakespeare draws from the culture he helped to shape. Nevertheless, the limits of Shakespeare's intent can be stretched in order to support the idea that men and women can learn from the story of the dying patriarch and his lion-hearted daughter.

Cordelia is explicitly referred to as an item of possession when France says she is "herself a dowry" (I, i, 243). But she contravenes the dictum that she not offend her father; she also breaks the rule of women adhering to the private sphere.

Cordelia does emancipate herself from the traditional roles of womanhood, at least partially, by becoming a soldier in France. The reconciliation with her father and her subsequent death dilute her strength as an individual and reinstate her in her 'proper' position within the family. Death hardly seems a fitting end for one so daring and courageous. Yet once having broken the unspoken rule that women remain at home, there seems to be no other position left for Cordelia to 'return' to.

In Cordelia two unmistakable traits co-exist: independence of will and loyalty. Shakespeare's use of language reflects both her loyalty and her independence of will. She reconciles the early alienation of her father through her later loyalty to him, at a time when, as Lear himself points out, she has reason not to be loyal. Cordelia's simple, calm answer: "No cause, no cause" (IV, vii, 75) provides a powerful moment in the play because her statement tells the audience that she has finally found reconciliation with the old king. Her early repudiation of her father's will showed her independence, her later reconciliation with Lear shows her loyalty to him.

The foreshadowing of her return to Lear's inner sanctum is told in Act IV, scene vii, when Cordelia enquires about the state of her father's health (12, 44). Lear, for his part, expresses his regret at losing Cordelia and his hostility against her killers: "A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all! I might have saved her;

now she's gone for ever" (V, iii, 172, 173).

From beginning to end, Cordelia opposes her father's traditions, starting with her refusal to follow her sisters' lead. Her death is her punishment for making her own marriage and career choices. Indeed, the actions of Juliet and Cordelia are very unusual in a culture that expects women, especially young daughters to be controlled by the patriarchy. Some critics feel Shakespeare is espousing feminism by presenting these two strong young women. Instead, I believe that Shakespeare reinforces the social reality of the patriarchal culture by illustrating the fatal dilemmas Juliet and Cordelia face when they try to apply their own answers to their problems. In letting their fathers make their decisions for them, women sacrifice their own integrity for a niche that is constructed for them from the time they are born.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1 Lenz, Greene and Neely, 173.

2 Lenz, Greene and Neely, 173.

3 Lenz, Greene and Neely, 173.

4 Lenz, Greene and Neely, 173.

5 Dreher, 5.

6 Dreher, 5.

7 Bamber, 109.

8 Bamber, 109.

9 Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), 1.

10 de Lauretis, 1.

11 de Lauretis, 1.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

What is it that father figures in tragedy seem to fear so much? They fear that which is at the core of every tragedy: The inevitable decline and destruction of every one of us. No matter what pinnacle of power someone may achieve, we all share the universal knowledge that we are all equal because we have an ultimate fate in common. And yet, despite this cruel insight, tragedy is, in the end, comforting. It allows us to watch the destruction of another, safe in the knowledge that our own time is not yet at hand; it confirms our own sense of power over another, no matter how fleeting, because *we* are alive and *they* are dead. Life is the confirmation of power; death is the confirmation of loss.

Tragedy shows the loss and failure of humankind; comedy shows us the chance of hope. Perhaps what it is that the fathers fear in the tragedies is this perceived loss and failure, a fear not necessarily caused by any tangible *failure* per se, but by the loss associated with mortality. Keeping subordinates dependent correlates with the hold on power, with longevity, even immortality. Elizabeth Dreher states:

> Shakespeare's fathers and daughters are caught in a generational struggle between two conflicting paradigms: the fathers uphold traditional hierarchical order and

> patriarchal authority, while their daughters affirm the new progressive bonds of individual trust and cooperation.[1]

Power is insurance against mortality because the patriarchal system deems it so. The declining fathers rail against their daughters, because the exposure of the daughter's lack of credibility results in their own perceived supremacy. "Misogyny... (is) born of failure and self-doubt" states Linda Bamber.[2] The fathers doubt their own power; to them, eliminating or preventing someone else from having power is an exercise in self preservation. The father plans to control Juliet's fortunes this way, but his plan backfires. Instead of adhering to her father's wishes, Juliet marries Romeo anyway and dies in her quest for empowerment. Unfortunately for Capulet and his grandiose design, a dead child is equal in magnitude to a wayward child, because in both cases the child is now in a realm that the father does not control. Once every attempt has been made to control others around him, the final blow to Capulet is the knowledge that death is penultimate, regardless of one's status.

Furthermore, Bamber suggests Lear's outburst against women is one of the clearest examples of the connection between misogyny and the declining fortunes of men:

> In Shakespeare's tragedy there is a firm connection between self-hatred, reversal of fortune, and misogyny. The hero's view of women reaches bottom at the moment when he is out of control of himself and his world.[3]

Lear reflects all of his regret and misery onto the image of the woman: "Down from the waist they are Centaurs...Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness" (IV, vi, 123) and "there is the sulphurous pit--burning, scalding, stench, consumption...it smells of mortality" (IV, vi. 127-128, 132). Both of these statements show that what Lear fears is death, an intangible entity that can only be put into words through allegory, in the body of woman.

What happens to women who dare to display their independence, who disregard or try to change the boundaries of their roles? Death is the result for Cordelia. Cordelia, Juliet, Imogen, and Rosalind are examples of young women who leave the restrictive patriarchal environment for an allegorical one in which they must show their self-sufficiency and strength. Yet because the two environments cannot be reconciled, they also share a symbolic or physical return to the patriarchal hierarchy. Cordelia and Juliet experience not only a physical return but also a symbolic return, a return of finality in the form of their deaths.

Dusinberre's claim that "Shakespeare saw men and women as equal in a world which declared them unequal"[4] cannot be substantiated. At best it is an example of what Carol Thomas Neely refers to as wishful thinking.[5] Mortality, patriarchal order, and a need to achieve some semblance of immortality through one's offspring are issues central to Shakespeare's vision; it is a vision, I think, far removed from feminist thought. Because of very specific

and rigid societal attitudes concerning the role of women in Renaissance England, Juliet's political reality in the patriarchal order is the major issue that keeps Romeo from being a good marriage choice for her. The Capulets have a family name to protect and perpetuate. Romeo is an enemy and therefore an impossible choice. Without Capulet's support, however, there can be no inheritance for Juliet. Like King Lear, Capulet fears insignificance and mortality: Juliet, his only heir, must provide a male heir to continue the line. Juliet's marriage to Paris is preferable because the continuance of the Capulet line builds on the financial strength of both families.

Shakespeare's aim is not the equality of women, as Dusinberre suggests, but the validation of the patrilinear hierarchy. If their daughters are adequately provided for, old men die fulfilled; if not, they die in disgrace, their bid at immortality tainted. The mortality issue, which occurs so frequently in Shakespeare, represents the hierarchical demand for provision by the elders for the children: Cymbeline, Duke Senior, Duke Frederick, Lear, Capulet; all head families, all must suffer inevitable loss, sorrow and ultimate death. Keeping someone dependent upon them, as expected by the rules of the patrilinear society, postpones their own inevitable decline. And if they succeed in providing for their offspring in a permanent way, they are somehow guaranteed a vicarious immortality.

Imogen and Rosalind may be malleable enough, marrying suitors that satisfy their fathers' need to provide, but Cordelia and Juliet pose a real obstacle for their power prone fathers. The stories of the two tragic heroines, partly by virtue of their untimely deaths, provide a more complex exploration of the father-daughter relationship. Do their deaths teach us that the patriarchal rules are destructive? Or do they act as a lesson to future offspring not to question political reality, a reality designed to preserve the power of patriarchal authority and which depends on the systemic devaluation of women for its survival? Should the latter be true, does it follow that the ability to access one's own power is available to each individual, but that the interests of the culture eclipse the rights of the individual? If Shakespeare has written plays which reinforce the rules of his culture, he also provides a forum in which these and other issues have been and will continue to be challenged. Ultimately, I do not believe Shakespeare was attuned to feminist concerns as Dusinberre implies. The patrilinear culture that embraces Shakespeare is the wellspring from which his plays originate.

NOTES

CONCLUSION

1 Dreher, 5.

2 Bamber, 15.

3 Bamber, 15.

4 Dusinberre, 308.

5 Neely, 14.

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