

**THE CONSCIENCE OF THE QUEEN:
LADY MACBETH, QUEEN ELIZABETH AND THE TRANSPARENT FEMALE
BODY IN JACOBAN ENGLAND**

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INTRODUCTION

Susan Bordo and Reva Siegal have written extensively about configurations of the female body in American law. Susan Bordo has shown that, despite the value our law and culture claim to place on physical self-determination and bodily integrity, in practice, male subjects have been accorded the protections such notions afford, whereas women, in cases involving reproductive rights, are treated like purely mechanistic bodies stripped of subjectivity.²

In support of her argument, Bordo notes that judges consistently refuse to force individuals to undergo unwanted medical treatment even when the life of another is at stake, citing *Union Pacific Railway v. Botsford* for the principle that “[n]o right is held more sacred, or is more carefully guarded by the common law, than the right of every individual to the possession and control of his own person, free from all restraint or interference of others unless by a clear and unquestionable authority of law.”³ Bordo

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² SUSAN BORDO, UNBEARABLE WEIGHT: FEMINISM, WESTERN CULTURE AND THE BODY 73 (1993). *Id.*, citing *Union Pacific Railway v. Botsford*, 141 U.S. 250, 251 (1891).

contrasts this tradition with the law's willingness to interfere with the bodily integrity of women with respect to their reproductive lives.⁴ In the case of court ordered obstetrical intervention, she observes, "the statistics make clear that in this culture the pregnant, poor woman . . . comes as close as a human being can get to being regarded, medically and legally, as a 'mere body,' her wishes, desires, dreams, religious scruples are of little consequence and easily ignored in the interests of fetal well-being."⁵

To understand this discrepancy, Bordo turns to gender ideology, in which women's bodies and wombs are seen as incubators or prisons, and, correspondingly, fathers are seen as embodying all the subjective aspects of childbearing, being in fact the child's true parent and claiming all the subjective experience of pregnancy, while woman are mere "carriers."⁶ Bordo lays the blame for these notions at the door of "Cartesian dualism," the philosophy of a mind body split which has driven Western thought for centuries.⁷

Siegal traces present day assumptions about women to the nineteenth century American campaign against abortion, that, she shows, used "facts about women's bodies . . . to justify regulation enforcing judgments about women's roles."⁸ This, in turn,

³ See *id.* at 75. Bordo also discusses ways in that these principles of bodily integrity have been discarded with respect to the reproductive freedom of other groups such as the mentally ill and racial minorities. *Id.* at 75-76/

⁴ *Id.* at 76.

⁵ *Id.* at 76.

⁶ *Id.* at 80-93. Interestingly for my purposes, Bordo begins this section with a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost* asking why God didn't find a way for men alone to "generate mankind." *Id.* at 88.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ See Reva Siegal, *Reasoning from the Body: A Historical Perspective on Abortion Regulation and Questions of Equal Protection*, 44 STAN. L. REV. 261 (1992).

underlies the reasoning in *Roe v. Wade* that based limits on the exercise of state power on medical, rather than social criteria, thus authorizing “state action against the pregnant woman on the basis of physiological criteria, requiring no inquiry into the state’s reasons for acting against the pregnant woman or the impact of its actions on her.”⁹ Indeed, Siegal points out, the *Roe* court reasons as if “the state’s interest in protecting potential life scarcely pertained to the pregnant woman herself.”¹⁰ Siegal uncovers the roots of this belief in nineteenth century writings that depict the fetus as an independent male being with “scant relation to the woman bearing it,” and “woman’s role in reproduction [as] a kind of reflexive physiological function.”¹¹ In sum, “women were merely the passive instruments of nature’s purposes.”¹²

As Bordo observes, the notions both she and Siegal discuss have “deep roots in Western culture.”¹³ Neither Bordo’s Cartesian dualism nor Siegal’s nineteenth century medical history reaches the real roots of the phenomenon, however. This article unearths these roots, and identifies the specific symbolic systems that helped to put them in place. Specifically, this article will argue that the formulations Bordo and Siegal describe, whose potential was long present, in a broad sense, in the Western tradition, took a

⁹ Siegal, *supra* note 8 at 277.

¹⁰ Siegal, *supra* note 8 at 277.

¹¹ Siegal, *supra* note 8 at 291.

¹² Siegal, *supra* note 8 at 291. Interestingly, Siegal connects the nineteenth century’s anti-abortion campaign with the efforts of medical doctors to consolidate power over women and to exclude non-professional female practitioners from a role in childbirth. *Id.* at 283-84. This same dynamic was at work in the early sixteen hundreds in England, when the nature of female possession was at issue. *See* text accompanying note 181 *infra*.

¹³ BORDO, *supra* note 2 at 89.

decisive turn in the early modern period amid the disintegrating symbols of Elizabethan power.

To show that this is the case, this article places Lady Macbeth's transformation from demon-invoking virago to guilt-ridden suicide in its historical and cultural context. Specifically, I show that the shortly post-Elizabethan Lady Macbeth's fate rewrites Queen Elizabeth's construction of her conscience and the political legitimacy this construction gave her. In revising Elizabeth's self-construction, the play depicts the female body as emptied of its capacity for political power. This reconfiguration of the female body, moreover, was also enacted in the surrounding culture. It appears in King James's attempts to debunk young girls' claims of demonic possession, and in emergent medical ideas about the nature of hysteria. Thus, this article shows that the treatment of the female body in law that Bordo and Siegal discuss originated, at least in part, in the death of a Queen 400 years ago.

Elizabeth refined the idea of the royal conscience to suit her own ends. Elaborating on the theory of the king's two bodies and the doctrine of the *arcana imperii*, or "secrets of rule," Elizabeth presented the conscience of her corporate body as hidden, inaccessible and even dangerous to the view of ordinary mortals.¹⁴ The revision of this construction, embodied in Lady Macbeth, depicts the conscience of the female ruler as open to view, readable by all, and her body as the page on that it is written. Whereas Elizabeth's construction of her royal conscience enabled her to avoid blame and

¹⁴ For a discussion of the medieval political philosophy of the king's two bodies, *see generally* ERNST KANTOROWICZ, *THE KING'S TWO BODIES: A STUDY IN MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THEORY* (1957).; for a discussion of the *arcana imperii* doctrine, *see* JONATHAN GOLDBERG, *JAMES I AND THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, DONNE AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES* 55-112 (1983).

accountability by shrouding its inner workings behind the doctrine of “state secrets,” Lady Macbeth’s conscience takes over her entire being, incapacitating and finally destroying her. No longer hidden inside an invisible royal body, the female conscience is now literally and visibly embodied in a mortal, female body. In Lady Macbeth, then, the female body is no longer imaginable as a locus for secrets of state; it is now transparent, accessible to the moral judgments of all, and deprived of the opacity necessary for the exercise of political power. This rewriting was achieved through the reworking of Queen Elizabeth’s iconography: in *Macbeth* the symbols that helped legitimize a female sovereign rule were given new meanings, meanings that undermined the idea of female rule.

The emptying of the female body that we see in the figure of Lady Macbeth finds an analogy in King James’s response to cases of the alleged demonic possession of young girls. A sceptic, King James debunked these claims by symbolically revealing that the female body contained no secrets, a move that is a direct revision of Elizabeth’s *arcana imperii* doctrine. All these cultural forms worked together to disable the female body as a locus of political power and, conversely, to remove the feminine from the political realm.

Methodology

Representations of women’s relationships to power emerge not just from cultural myths, but from “the intersection of these myths with political situations.”¹⁵ In other words, social beliefs interact with political realities to determine the nature and extent of

¹⁵ NINA S. LEVINE, *WOMEN’S MATTERS: POLITICS, GENDER AND NATION IN SHAKESPEARE’S EARLY HISTORY PLAYS* 14 (1998).

women's access to power. In Jacobean England, the cultural myths of the female body were changing for a variety of reasons, scientific, political, and economic, as has been amply documented.¹⁶ These changes, however, must be seen as they intersected with a particular political reality: the death of a female sovereign who had reigned for over forty years, never married, developed a complex iconography to undergird her power, and wielded that power unhesitatingly over her male subjects and court. The anxiety this bred has also been amply demonstrated as well;¹⁷ its aftermath, not previously investigated, is the focus of this article. Elizabethan imagery offered a ready-made set of symbols to serve as the focus of recuperation from this anxiety; emergent notions of femininity in turn provided ways to rework these symbols in the interests of that recuperation. In this process, the many forms of theater in this culture negotiated, mystified, demystified, and together reworked images of women and power so that the coexistence of the female body and political power became unimaginable.

This project differs from other work that has examined the question of interiority in the early modern period because it focuses on the gendering of interiority. Michael Schoenfeldt, for example, argues convincingly that interiority in this period developed through the subject's regulation of the body's consumption and excretion and through control of its appetites, but he does not consider the role that the subject's gender might

¹⁶ See, e.g., MEGAN MATCHINSKE, *WRITING GENDER AND STATE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND* (1998); ANTHONY FLETCHER, *GENDER, SEX AND SUBORDINATION IN ENGLAND 1500-1800* xvi (1995); LENA COWEN ORLIN, *PRIVATE MATTERS AND PUBLIC CULTURE IN POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND* 90 (1994).

¹⁷ See, e.g., SUSAN FRYE, *ELIZABETH I: THE STRUGGLE FOR REPRESENTATION* (1993); Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text*, in *LITERARY THEORY/RENAISSANCE TEXTS* 303 (Patricia Parker et al eds., 1986); 'A *Midsummer Night's Dream*' and the *Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form*, in *REWRITING THE RENAISSANCE: THE DISCOURSES OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE* 65 (Margaret Ferguson et al. eds., 1986); 'Eliza, *Queen of Shepherdes*' and the *Pastoral of Power*, *10 ENGLISH LITERARY RENAISSANCE* 153 (1980).

have played in this process, nor whether this process differed for men and women.¹⁸ Elizabeth Hanson argues that the subject was both empowered and threatened in this period by an increasing fascination with discovering people's inner thoughts and secrets - again, without discussing ways in that this process was shaped, or was shaped by, gender.¹⁹ Schoenfeldt declines to attend to gender because "women writers of this period turn more frequently to religious discourse than to physiological self-regulation to articulate their inwardness" and because his focus, "physiological and psychological inwardness . . . is less frequently gendered."²⁰ This ungendered quality of interiority was beginning to change, however: by the end of the seventeenth century essentialist notions about gender had laid claim to even the heretofore "sexually undifferentiated body-interior."²¹ This change, in turn, had important implications for developing ideas of the female body's capacity for subjectivity and its relationship to political power.

Elizabethan iconography set the terms for and enabled that process. The cultural symbols that surround people in society tend to determine the boundaries of what is imaginable and what is off limits to the imagination.²² The symbolism of Elizabeth's rule made a female ruler imaginable, if uneasily so: it depicted her mortal body as coterminous with an immortal, corporate, royal body - a body that, unlike her mortal one,

¹⁸ See generally MICHAEL C. SCHOENFELDT, *BODIES AND SELVES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: PHYSIOLOGY AND INWARDNESS IN SPENSER, SHAKESPEARE, HERBERT AND MILTON* 1-39 (1999).

¹⁹ ELIZABETH HANSON, *DISCOVERING THE SUBJECT IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND* 1-23 (1998).

²⁰ SCHOENFELDT, *supra* note 1 at 37.

²¹ *Id.*; ANTHONY FLETCHER, *GENDER, SEX AND SUBORDINATION IN ENGLAND 1500-1800* (1995).

²² PHYLLIS MACK, *VISIONARY WOMEN* (1992).

could contain the “secrets of state,” the mysteries of rule that were forbidden to mortal sight but that enabled royal power. As the symbols of female rule were disassembled and reconfigured after Elizabeth’s death, the female body was depicted as transparent, devoid of the hidden inner spaces where political power resided. As mentioned, this process is apparent not only in *Macbeth*. It also takes place in the imagery that accrued to Queen Elizabeth’s death, King James’ debunking of young girls’ claims of demonic possession, and in emergent medical and legal notions of hysteria.

Substance

These changes in how the female body was conceived spurred the relegation of women and the feminine to the nascent “private sphere,” and accelerated the emergent construction of the female body not only as unfit for political power, but as lacking in a subjectivity comparable to men’s.²³ These developments, were, of course, overdetermined: they emerged because of a convergence of many forces, social, political, economic, and religious. The symbolic scaffolding that Elizabeth had built up around her rule was not solely responsible for them. Rather, it provided the symbolic language that represented these changes, and, as a language, influenced their content.

²³ For detailed discussions of the changes in views and status of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *see generally* SARA MENDELSON & PATRICIA CRAWFORD, *WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND 1550-1720* 435 (1998) (noting a widening “cultural gap between the two sexes” and that the growing construction of women as “ignorant, pious and irrational fed into the notion of ‘complementary spheres that so dominated eighteenth century ideas about gender difference’”); ANTHONY FLETCHER, *GENDER, SEX AND SUBORDINATION IN ENGLAND 1500-1800* xv (1995) (arguing that this period saw a “crisis in men’s control over women” and analyzing how patriarchal control “adapted and survived”); LENA COWEN ORLIN, *PRIVATE MATTERS AND PUBLIC CULTURE IN POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND* 89 (1994) (describing the period’s “progressive hierarchization of public and private” with women associated with the private); Renate Bridenthal, *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* in *BECOMING VISIBLE: WOMEN IN EUROPEAN HISTORY 175, 176* (2d ed., Renate Bridenthal et al., eds 1987) (arguing that “women as a group . . . experienced a contraction of social and personal options” during the Renaissance).

Finally, as Bordo and Siegal have observed, these notions of female subjectivity and the female body are with us today. This is true in many respects, but this article focuses on their hegemony in the legal discourse concerning women's reproductive rights. It may seem overreaching - if not foolhardy - to connect a seventeenth century English play to a 21st century American legal debate, but it is, in fact, not only justified, but necessary. Understanding the historical origins of a discourse about concepts that seem "natural," and that undergird legal regimes, clarifies the terms of the debate and compensates for historical biases.²⁴ Like many other aspects of culture that solidified in early modern England, ideas about women influence our thinking today in ways that are not always obvious. This article embodies a quest for some of the roots of that thinking, and the symbolic regime that brought it into being.

This article consists of two parts. Part One analyzes Lady Macbeth's transformation in light of Queen Elizabeth's presentation of her relationship to the royal conscience, showing how Lady Macbeth's suicide rewrites this relationship. Part Two turns to demonic possession. It discusses the highly contested case of Mary Glover, the first instance in that evidence of what we would call psychosomatic illness was admitted into a court of law in an attempt to disprove alleged possession. It then interprets James's motives and methods in disproving these claims as an attack on the idea that the female body could serve as a locus for the *arcana imperii*. Together, these changes in cultural configurations deprive the female body of its ability to serve as a locus for the "mysteries

²⁴ My model is Reva Siegal's historical research showing how nineteenth century views about women's "proper roles" as mothers subliminally inform the terms of the reproductive rights debate today. See Reva Siegal, *Reasoning from the Body: A Historical Perspective on Abortion Regulation and Questions of Equal Protection*, 44 STAN. L. REV. 261 (1992).

of rule,” and hence for political power. Throughout, we see how the iconography that Elizabeth had carefully constructed to symbolically validate her rule as a woman provided the symbolic system whose undoing made female rule unimaginable.

In this culture theater was an integral and pervasive cultural form. All kinds of social practice in this period took the form of theater: executions, bear-baiting, royal progresses, plays, exorcisms, fairs.²⁵ These forms all worked together, permeating, informing, mystifying and demystifying one another.²⁶ The scenes of possession described here, and the culturally constructed scene of Elizabeth’s death, were as much theater as a performance of *Macbeth*: all are what Stephen Greenblatt calls “simultaneous and permeable social languages and practices.”²⁷ That is, all of them engaged in a reciprocal cultural conversation about what was imaginable in the culture and what was not. Louis Montrose observes that plays of this time are best understood not as products of a “hypostatic” culture, but rather productions of a “dynamic and unstable” culture.²⁸ He suggests that the cultural fantasies of gender and sexuality “by that [plays have] been shaped are also those to that [they] give shape,” in a dialectic that deploys these discourses to “articulate relationships of power.”²⁹ Thus, Lady Macbeth’s metamorphosis and scenes of possession work together to re-negotiate the relationship of gender to political power.

²⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Exorcism into Art*, 12 Representations 15 (1985).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.* at 23.

²⁸ LOUIS ADRIAN MONTROSE, THE PURPOSE OF PLAYING: SHAKESPEARE AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE 109 (1996).

²⁹ *Id.*

Finally, one of the theater's purposes is to "visualize unexplainable phenomena for purposes of protecting the collectivity and reaffirming its cohesiveness in the face of the unknown."³⁰ All the forms of theater already mentioned - plays, the death of a monarch, demonic possession - staged images of female political power to remove it from the realm of the possible and hence to affirm an ascendant form of patriarchal society.

THE PLAY

Many critics have situated *Macbeth* in its historical context.³¹ Others, most notably Janet Adelman, have explored the play's rejection of femininity in a psychoanalytic framework.³² Callaghan integrates both the historical and psychoanalytic approaches, locating in Lady Macduff a new "modern" figure of domestic femininity.³³

³⁰ Brigitte Cazelles, *Bodies on Stage and the Production of Meaning*, 86 YALE FRENCH STUDIES 56, 57 (1994).

³¹ Arthur Clark's *Murder Under Trust* examines the play in light of the Gowrie plot against King James, as does Henry Paul in *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, an exhaustive look at all potential historical aspects of the play. See ARTHUR CLARK, *MURDER UNDER TRUST* (1981); HENRY PAUL, *THE ROYAL PLAY OF MACBETH* (1950). Steven Mullaney, in "Lying Like Truth," links what he calls the "amphibolic" language in the play to a broader political discourse of treason. Stephen Mullaney, *Lying Like Truth*, in STEPHEN MULLANEY, *THE PLACE OF THE STAGE: LICENSE, PLAY AND POWER IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND* (1988). Other readings of the play have focused on its ideological mission of solidifying Stuart monarchical power: for example, Alan Sinfield, in *Macbeth, History and Intellectuals*, shows ways the play expresses anxiety about differentiating between legitimate rulers and tyrants. Alan Sinfield, *Macbeth, History and Intellectuals*, in . Feminist readings also abound; some, like Dympna Callaghan's "Wicked Women in Macbeth," uncovers in it an historical moment in the construction of modern femininity. Dympna Callaghan, *Wicked Women in Macbeth*, in . Greenblatt historicizes the witches by showing that they share with theater the quality of being staged on the line between fantasy and reality. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare Bewitched*, in NEW CASEBOOKS: SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES 109, 124 (Susan Zimmerman, ed., 1998).

³² She argues that the play expresses the desire to escape what she calls the "matrix" of maternity and female power. In fact, she asserts, the play "becomes a representation of primitive fears about male identity and autonomy itself, about those looming female presences who threaten to control ones' actions and one's mind, to constitute one's very self, even at a distance." In response to these fears, she continues, the play offers a fantasy of a "purely male realm . . . founded on the excision of maternal origins." JANET ADELMAN, *SUFFOCATING MOTHERS: FANTASIES OF MATERNAL ORIGIN IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS – HAMLET TO THE TEMPEST* (1992).

None of these readings sees in Lady Macbeth a modern figure of “domestic femininity.” In fact, however, she is exactly that: the figure of Lady Macbeth rewrites the iconography that legitimated Elizabeth’s rule not only to foreground the anxiety awakened by female rule, but to address that anxiety by depriving the female body of the potential for political power. To show this process in the play, I discuss, in order of appearance, its symbols of gender-related anxiety: the witches, Duncan’s body, the witches’ sieve, and the Queen’s conscience.

The Witches

As critics have hailed *Macbeth* as the only Shakespeare play to open with an all-female scene,³⁴ it seems fitting to begin with the three sisters, even if their gender is technically in doubt. Any attempt to classify the “weird sisters” as witches or as women, however, soon founders. By 1603, the evidence indicates that James had eschewed his former belief in witchcraft: these figures’ presence in the play, then, is not a simple gesture of flattery toward the king’s world view.³⁵ And, as we learn from Banquo, their gender is not clear: they appear to be women, but their beards “forbid” such an interpretation.

First, what are they? The three sisters were never called witches in the original stage directions.³⁶ Certainly, they have a more prestigious ancestry than the homely

³³ Callaghan, *supra* note 18 at 181.

³⁴ CAROLINE BICKS, MIDWIVING SUBJECTS IN SHAKESPEARE’S ENGLAND 146 (2003).

³⁵ See Peter Stallybrass, *Macbeth and Witchcraft*, in FOCUS ON MACBETH 189, 193 (1982).

³⁶ See Peter Stallybrass, *Macbeth and Witchcraft*, in FOCUS ON MACBETH 189, 193 (1982).

“cunning woman” of village folklore.³⁷ They hearken back to the Norns, the three sisters of fate in Norse mythology, who controlled and created the future.³⁸ The Norns were said to sit around the base of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, spinning the thread that represented every mortal’s life span. One wound it onto the wheel, one spun it, and one cut it.³⁹ The witches thus seem connected, in a degenerate way, to birth, life, death and fate: the word “weird,” with that the sisters describe themselves, derives from the Old English *wyrd*, meaning, in the singular, fate, or enchantment, and in the plural, the three Fates.⁴⁰ The sisters also call to mind the three Fates of Greek mythology.

It is also worth remembering that there were three Gorgons, one of whom, Medusa - whose name means “Queen” - had a visage that turned men to stone.⁴¹ Specifically, Medusa was said to have snakes for hair, and to petrify any man who gazed at her directly, making his hair stand on end, in the process, with the horror of her visage.⁴² Freud interpreted this myth as expressing male fear of castration.⁴³ Thus, at the outset, the play presents us with figures of indeterminate gender that connect power over fate with the power to emasculate.

³⁷ See, e.g., George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* 137 (Beatrice White ed., 1931) (1593) (discussing a village “cunning woman,” who knows spells to make butter churn and drive away the devil).

³⁸ KATHERINE BRIGGS, *PALE HECATE’S TEAM* 77, 78 (1962).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d. 1991).

⁴¹ For a discussion of the Medusa’s symbolism, see MARJORIE GARBER, *SHAKESPEARE’S GHOSTWRITERS: LITERATURE AS UNCANNY CAUSALITY* 110 (1987); Neil Hertz, *Male Hysteria under Political Pressure*, 4 *REPRESENTATIONS* 27 (1983).

⁴² GARBER, *supra*.

For the most part, as many critics have observed, the sisters seem to represent no one thing in particular, but rather indeterminacy itself.⁴⁴ They speak in “amphibolic” - i.e., ambiguous - language:⁴⁵ the battle will be “lost and won;” “fair is foul and foul is fair.” Their gender is unclear: as Banquo says “You should be women/ and yet your beards forbid me to interpret/That you are so.” Jonathan Goldberg has shown that the play begins to undermine the stability of representation in the use of its sources: he notes, for example, that Shakespeare gives Duncan lines that, in Shakespeare’s source, Holinshed’s *Chronicles*,⁴⁶ are spoken by one of the witches, and that Shakespeare redistributes to various characters throughout the play lines that Holinshed assigns to the witches.⁴⁷ Goldberg reads this redistribution to demonstrate the absence of sources, even authors, outside of representation.⁴⁸ He locates “the menacing heterogeneity of uncontrolled duplication that threatens the autonomy of power” in the witches, he ascribes this to a

⁴³ SIGMUND FREUD, *The Head of Medusa*, in THE COMPLETE PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKS OF SIGMUND FREUD 4:233 (.James Strachey, trans. 1900).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., GARBER, *supra* note 28; JONATHAN GOLDBERG, SHAKESPEARE’S HAND 160 (2003); Karin S. Coddon, “Unreal Mockery: “Unreason and the Problem of Spectacle in *Macbeth*, 56:3 ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY 485, 491 (1989).

⁴⁵ Although Mullaney uses this term to describe the witches’ speech, it actually appears in Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. STEVEN MULLANEY, THE PLACE OF THE STAGE: LICENSE, PLAY AND POWER IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND (1988). Scott tells the story of “an excellent philosopher” who was tricked by a woman’s “amphibologicall speech.” *Discoverie of Witchcraft* 176 (John Rodker, ed. 1972) (1584). *Amphibole* is an ancient Greek word meaning “double-pointed” or “ambiguous.” LIDDELL AND SCOT’S GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON (7th ed. 1975). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an “amphibole” is a casting net that can be held on both sides. OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (2d ed. 1991). Garry Wills discusses the play’s amphibolic language in the context of Jesuits and the Gunpowder Plot, noting that ambiguous speech was associated with Jesuits and treason. GARRY WILLS, WITCHES AND JESUITS: SHAKESPEARE’S MACBETH (1995). I agree that anxiety about the Gunpowder Plot and Jesuits, though not my focus, is an important part of the play’s provenance.

⁴⁶ RAPHAEL HOLINSHED, CHRONICLES OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND (2d ed. 1587) are considered the main source for the play’s plot. See THE RIVERSIDE SHAKESPEARE 55 (G. Blakemore Evans ed., 1974).

⁴⁷ GOLDBERG, *supra* note 31 at 160.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 171.

generalized ahistorical “anxiety about women.”⁴⁹ Rather, the anxiety in the play is anxiety about gender indeterminacy at this particular historical moment, and that the witches’ words on Duncan’s lips indicate the radical instability of all categories that gender indeterminacy can unleash.

There were reasons that gender categories appeared so unstable in this period. The prevailing model of biological gender at this time was one of homology, not absolute difference.⁵⁰ Contemporary anatomy books depicted women as inverted versions of men, male genitals compacted inside their bodies, unable to extrude due to their colder humoral makeup.⁵¹ Anthony Fletcher’s *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, traces an evolution in that gender, at the beginning of the period not seen as “rooted in the body,” was understood toward the end of the period as biologically based.⁵² As long as the homological model ruled, however, the dangerous possibility of slippage from one sex to another always existed.⁵³ Effeminate behavior could turn men into women; aggressive, “masculine” actions could turn women into men.⁵⁴ By masturbation, a woman could “so enlarge her clitoris that she became a person truly of a

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 173.

⁵⁰ See generally THOMAS LAQUEUR, *MAKING SEX: BODY AND GENDER FROM THE GREEKS TO FREUD* (1990).

⁵¹ *Id.* at 25-26.

⁵² ANTHONY FLETCHER, *GENDER, SEX AND SUBORDINATION IN ENGLAND 1500-1800* xvi (1995).

⁵³ See *id.* at 87-88; LAQUEUR, *supra* note 37 at 122-134 (relating the French story of a peasant girl who ran so energetically after her sheep one day that she generated enough heat to extrude her male genitals and thus turned into a man).

⁵⁴ See FLETCHER, *supra* note 39 at xv-xvi.

double gender.”⁵⁵ Hermaphrodites were seen as being of intermediate sex; those born with ambiguous sexual characteristics could choose a social and legal gender.⁵⁶

Another aspect of gender indeterminacy in this period was the belief that acting a part in performance had the potential to change the nature of the performer into that of the performed.⁵⁷ This danger extended to, and indeed found its most anxiety-ridden expression in, gender identity.⁵⁸ As Laura Levine has pointed out, the controversy about acting and the stage in early modern England came to focus on the fear that “theatre could structurally transform men into women,” a fear “expressed in virtually biological terms.”⁵⁹ Levine notes that attacks on the theater deploy the anxiety that “the sign can alter the essence, that wearing the other sex’s clothing can literally adulterate gender.”⁶⁰ As Phillip Stubbes, a prominent anti-theater polemicist, says:

What man so ever weareth womans apparel is accursed, and
what woman weareth mans apparel is accursed also. . . .
Our Apparell was given to us as a signe distinctive to
discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore one to wear the
Apparell of another sex is, is to participate with the same,
and to adulterate the veritie of his own kinde.⁶¹

⁵⁵ SARA MENDELSON & PATRICIA CRAWFORD, *WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND 1550-1720* 19 (1998).

⁵⁶ Miri Rubin, *The Body, Whole and Vulnerable, in Fifteenth Century England*, in *BODIES AND DISCIPLINES: INTERSECTIONS OF LITERATURE AND HISTORY IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND* 19, 21 (1996).

⁵⁷ See LEVINE, *supra* note 2 at 10-25.

⁵⁸ *See id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 10.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 22.

⁶¹ Quoted in *id.* at 22.

The prominence of this anxiety suggests that Elizabeth's performance of a male role - that of a king - would have threatened the dissolution of her gender. In this light, it is important to note that biological transformation is exactly what Lady Macbeth demands from the spirits: she calls for them to "unsex" her, to stop her biological processes, to literally make her male. Lady Macbeth's invocation, in light of contemporary fears about the power of dressing and acting, is the logical extension of Elizabeth's performance of male rule. Elizabeth's dressing in kingly attire, ornamenting herself with symbols of her father's rule and describing her female body as co-existing with a male, immortal, kingly body, implicate, in contemporary terms, her very gender.⁶² Lady Macbeth embodies this implication and its consequences.

Other critics have of course noted that gender indeterminacy, a theme ushered in by the witches, is central to the play's concerns. Marjorie Garber, for example, finds key - to both *Macbeth* and Macbeth, as she says - the figure of Medusa, that she locates in the play as a recurring image of "undecidability as such."⁶³ She historicizes this insight, connecting the theme to the sexual ambiguity of both Elizabeth and James: "England had recently been ruled by a Queen who called herself a Prince" and James "was known to have not only a wife but also male favorites. . . . Elizabeth and James . . . encoded boundary transgression at precisely the point of maximum personal and political power."⁶⁴ Unlike many feminist critics, Garber declines to find undecidability resolved

⁶² *See id.*

⁶³ MARJORIE GARBER, *SHAKESPEARE'S GHOSTWRITERS: LITERATURE AS UNCANNY CAUSALITY* 110 (1987). Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin suggest that the popularity of *Henry V* in 1599 may have been partly thanks to "audience members weary of the rule of a woman." JEAN HOWARD & PHYLLIS RACKIN, *ENGENDERING A NATION: A FEMINIST ACCOUNT OF SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES* 4 (1997).

at the end of the play; in fact, she argues that this lack of resolution is the point of the play - i.e., “the undecidability that may lie just beneath the surface of power - and perhaps of sexuality itself.”⁶⁵ Susan Zimmerman, in a similar vein, argues that Duncan’s corpse, by remaining off stage and therefore unseen throughout, functions as an emblem of the semantic and gender indeterminacy of the play.⁶⁶

These analyses of indeterminacy and its historical basis are helpful as far as they go, but they fail in two respects. First, they do not account for the opposing impulse in the play toward gender and semantic stability. It matters that the characters have differing responses to the gender undecidability that the play presents. It matters that Banquo, James ancestor, resists gender ambiguity, offers a way out of it, and fathers a line of kings that will outlive Macbeth. It also matters that Lady Macbeth, at first immune to the paralyzing fear that the Medusa - here in the form of Banquo’s ghost - inspires in Macbeth (as Garber herself points out, Macbeth expresses shock that his wife “can behold such sights/And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks/When mine is blanched with fear”⁶⁷) becomes a body – indeed, the only surface in the play - on whom at last the truth can be read. Second, these readings fail to recognize that the play emphasizes a particular aspect of gender indeterminacy, an aspect peculiar to the Jacobean court. To identify this, I turn to the witches’ beards.

⁶⁴ GARBER, *supra* at 118.

⁶⁵ GARBER, *supra* at 119.

⁶⁶ See Susan Zimmerman, *Duncan’s Corpse*, in *A FEMINIST COMPANION TO SHAKESPEARE* 320 (Dympna Callaghan, ed. 2000).

⁶⁷ GARBER, *supra* note 50 at 109.

Bearded women certainly appeared in witch folklore.⁶⁸ But in that case, why does Banquo fail to recognize such an obvious cultural signifier, instead finding, to the contrary, that it cuts off interpretation? It is not enough to answer that “[t]heir beards and fingers on their lips forbid interpretation and point beyond an order of words and utterance to an excess at the source.”⁶⁹ In fact, beards had a particular significance in the Jacobean court.

Having a beard signified a different kind of masculinity at the Jacobean court from being “smooth-faced.”⁷⁰ Contemporary lore had it that beardless men were especially appealing to those with homosexual inclinations; James was said to have discarded one male favorite because he grew a beard.⁷¹ After James’s death, his son Charles had performed at court a masque that presented in allegorical form his efforts to bring about the court’s moral regeneration.⁷² A character recited a list of reforms, including the decree that “Ganymede is forbidden the bedchamber, and must only minister in public. The gods must keep no pages nor grooms of their chamber under the age of twenty-five, and those provided of a competent stock of beard.”⁷³ Beards were signifiers in a system in that men could be gendered in different ways: those without beards risked becoming effeminized objects of the king’s amorous gaze; a bearded face

⁶⁸ KEITH THOMAS, *RELIGION AND THE DECLINE OF MAGIC* (1971).

⁶⁹ JONATHAN GOLDBERG, *SHAKESPEARE’S HAND* 175 (2003).

⁷⁰ See COMTE LEVENEUR DE TELLIERES, *MEMOIRES* 2 (M.C. Hippeau, ed., 1863).

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² Quoted in JAMES SASLOW, *GANYMEDE IN THE RENAISSANCE: HOMOSEXUALITY IN ART AND SOCIETY* 194 (1986).

⁷³ Quoted in JAMES SASLOW, *GANYMEDE IN THE RENAISSANCE: HOMOSEXUALITY IN ART AND SOCIETY* 194

signaled a more masculine position. Beards were thus a sign of a masculinity not susceptible to diminution; they precluded the androgynous appearance that James was said to favor. A beard was a sign that stopped the slippage between genders. The anxiety about indeterminacy focused in one direction: on the possibility, substantiated by contemporary medical thought, that men could slide a few rungs down the ontological ladder into femininity.

On the faces of the witches, then, beards represent not just gender indeterminacy, but also the desire for its opposite, stability in signifiers of gender - specifically, masculine gender. Banquo voices this desire when he seeks to determine the witches' gender, and reads the beards as they were read at the Jacobean court: as signs that prevent female gendering - that "forbid" a feminine reading. Thus, at the outset of the play, we see not anxiety about generalized indeterminacy, but anxiety about the slide down the gender hierarchy from masculine to feminine - and Banquo's use of semiotic tools against it.

Similarly, Banquo's approach to the weird sisters, unlike Macbeth's, is not interactive: he starts out speaking about them in the third person, treating them as objects of speculation and observation, and addresses them directly only to establish their status as objects of (kingly) male inquiry ("are you aught/That man may question?"). Macbeth immediately enters into a relationship with them of mutual subjectivity: he demands that the sisters interact with him by speaking. In a way, then, Banquo also seeks to pin down gender by establishing that the sisters are objects of his gaze, not beings with independent

(1986).

subjectivity. Macbeth's approach, on the other hand, grants them subjective status, and thus begins the cycle of ambiguity and violence.⁷⁴

Banquo's inquiry also redirects the dilemma of the sisters from the supernatural to gender.⁷⁵ He first observes that the sisters "look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth," but a few lines later revises the question to ask whether they are male or female ("You should be women . . ."). This, from Banquo, the figure who represents the hope for stability, is an important move. It suggests that the chaos the sisters represent - semantic, political, civil - can be avoided if their gender is determined. It is generally accepted that the overwhelming majority of the accused witches at this time were women:⁷⁶ as Lerner puts it, "If you are looking for a witch, you are looking for a woman."⁷⁷ Here, however, Banquo - and, by implication, King James - revises this dictum, saying in effect, If you think you are looking at a witch you should be looking for a woman instead. The issue is no longer that a witch is female; it is that if you can determine her gender, you can rid yourself of her threat. This is new: that the threat is inversely related to gender determinacy. For the first time, this "fact" is offered as a way to decrease a witch's power rather than as aggrandizing or confirming it.

⁷⁴ Critics also note, of course, that Macbeth's first words, echoing the witches' "foul and fair," indicate a shared subjectivity. See, e.g., Robin Grove, *'Multiplying Villainies of Nature, in FOCUS ON MACBETH* 113, 119 (John Russell Brown ed., 1982).

⁷⁵ Greenblatt interprets Banquo's lines here as expressing the dilemma staged by the play as a whole: how is it possible to differentiate between phenomena that exist outside the mind and those that exist only within it. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare Bewitched, in NEW HISTORICAL LITERARY STUDY: ESSAYS ON REPRODUCING TEXTS, REPRESENTING HISTORY* 108, 123 (1993).

⁷⁶ CHRISTINA LARNER, *ENEMIES OF GOD: THE WITCH HUNT IN SCOTLAND* 35 (1981). See also JOYCE GIBSON, *HANGED FOR A WITCH: ELISABETH LOWYS AND HER SUCCESSORS* 11 (1988) (noting that 93 percent of those indicted for witchcraft between 1563 and 1736 were women, and that, when a man was charged, it was usually with a woman, who was seen as the principal offender).

The opening appearance of the weird sisters, then, presents both the threat of instability and the hope of escape. Halting the slide into the feminine offers salvation from regicide and civil chaos.

The Bleeding Body

Duncan's murdered body offers an opportunity, similar to the one presented by the sisters, to separate political power from the feminine. Rushing from the chamber where the murdered king lies, Macduff exclaims "O horror, horror, horror . . . Approach the chamber and destroy your sight/With a new Gorgon." Dead, and thus rendered powerless, Duncan's body is revealed as feminine, as both the Medusa effect and the dead king's wounds indicate.⁷⁸ First, as discussed, the Gorgon image is a one of female power.⁷⁹ Rather, a close look at the Medusa myth shows it to be about the fear of castration - i.e., not gender indeterminacy in general, as Garber claims ⁸⁰, but the fear that men can be turned into women.⁸¹ As discussed, such a fear resonated for the Jacobean court for a number of reasons. As Garber notes, Elizabeth was a Queen who called herself a Prince, and James was a pacifist who doted on androgynous young men.⁸²

Duncan's body is gendered feminine by his copious bleeding as well.⁸³ In a system of belief that labeled loss of control of physical boundaries as the dangerous

⁷⁷ LARNER, *supra*.

⁷⁸ Adelman reads these lines as suggesting that "Duncan's bloodied body, with its multiple wounds, has been revealed as female and hence blinding to his sons." ADELMAN, *supra* note 19 at 133.

⁷⁹ See text *supra* at 9.

⁸⁰ GARBER, *supra* note 50.

⁸¹ FREUD, *supra* note 30.

⁸² See text accompanying note 53 *supra*.

quality of the female body, “the bleeding body signifies as a shameful token of uncontrol, as a failure of physical self mastery, particularly associated with woman.”⁸⁴ Women’s menstruation - unlike the medical procedure of bleeding that men might choose to undergo, was not voluntary or subject to the will - served as proof.⁸⁵ Women’s bodies were subject to involuntary, and by extension, punitive, bleeding; loss of blood was coded as loss of bodily control, that, in turn, was coded feminine.⁸⁶

Duncan’s feminine gendering, however, is also foreshadowed in the historical record. Holinshed, Shakespeare’s source, blames Scotland’s political instability on “feminine” elements in Duncan’s character: he was “too soft and gentle of nature . . . had too much of clemencie,” failed to punish misdeeds, so that “manie misruled persons tooke occasion thereof to trouble the peace and quiet state of the commonwealth, by seditious commotions that first had their beginning in this wise.”⁸⁷

A comparison with James is instructive. In terms of gender stability, James may have seemed, at first at least, a reprieve from Elizabethan.⁸⁸ He was a married male with two sons and a daughter, guaranteeing a secure succession, and his pacific tendencies may well have come as a relief to a citizenry heavily taxed to pay for Elizabeth’s wars.⁸⁹ On the other hand, as the following passage makes clear, the public uneasily discerned some

⁸³ Gail Kern Paster, “*In the Spirit of Men There is No Blood:*” *Blood as Trope of Gender in Julius Caesar*, SHAKESPEARE QUARTERLY 284.

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ *See id.* at 287.

⁸⁶ *See id.*

⁸⁷ HOLINSHED, *supra* note 33 at 3:54.

⁸⁸ *See* DEREK HIRST, *AUTHORITY AND CONFLICT: ENGLAND 1603-1658* 96 (1986).

“feminine” elements in James’ nature as well, elements that were associated with civil disorder and unrest:

He is by nature placid, averse from cruelty and a lover of justice. . . . He loves quiet and repose, and hath no inclination to war, whereat his subjects are little pleased, and less that he leaveth all government to the Council while he followeth nothing but the chase.⁹⁰

Duncan’s murdered body offers at least one solution to the problem of the ambiguously gendered ruler: he is revealed to be feminine and powerless in the same instant.⁹¹ The sexually ambiguous ruler is destroyed in a way that separates his/her feminine aspects from his/her power. Femininity is located where power is not - here, in the dead body.

The Sieve

Scene Three introduces a symbol that had played a important role in Elizabeth’s iconography. The first sister relates her plan to avenge herself on an uncharitable sailor’s wife by sailing after her husband’s ship and causing it to be “tempest tossed” and blown away from land “sev’nights nine times nine.” The vessel that will carry her on this mission is a sieve. The sieve was a symbol of Elizabeth’s rule in several intersecting ways.⁹² It appeared in her portraits as an emblem of her virginity and her related ability

⁸⁹ *See id.*

⁹⁰ G. B. HARRISON, *A SECOND JACOBAN JOURNAL, BEING A RECORD OF THOSE THINGS MOST TALKED OF 1607 TO 1610* 1 (1958).

⁹¹ *See* text accompanying note 66 *supra*.

⁹² For discussions of the sieve as Elizabethan symbol, *see* ROY STRONG, *GLORIANA: PORTRAITS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH* 50 (1987). Roy Strong interprets the series of Sieve Portraits as an iconographic campaign against Elizabeth’s putative marriage with the Duke of Anjou. *See* ROY C. STRONG, *GLORIANA: THE PORTRAITS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH* 97-99 (1987). In this scheme, the sieve symbolizes the virginal

to rule.⁹³ The relationship between these ideas derives from the myth of the Roman virgin Tuccia, who was said to have proved her chastity by carrying water from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta in a sieve.⁹⁴ The logic was that if the porous sieve could, *mirabile dictu*, hold water, then the porous female body could be believably inviolate.⁹⁵ The corporeal boundaries symbolized by the sieve were important because the ruler's body was seen as coterminous with the physical boundaries of the realm. Thus, the Queen's virginal body, represented by the sieve, symbolically affirmed the security of the kingdom.⁹⁶

The sieve also served as an emblem of Elizabeth's ability to distinguish good from evil, both in the world and within herself.⁹⁷ Imprisoned in the Tower during her sister's reign, a contemporary account reports, the Princess Elizabeth "wrote in the windows of her lodging in the Tower yet to be seen, and in other places, with a diamond: many things have been objected against me, but nothing proved can be. So she gave for her Device a Sieve, for she had been sifted and fanned with all curious devices, but no chaff found."⁹⁸ The Sieve Portrait (c. 1580) depicts Elizabeth holding a sieve in the

impermeability of Elizabeth's royal body, based as it is on the legend of the Roman virgin Tuccia who carried a sieve full of water from the Tiber to the Temple of Vesta as proof of her virginity. See *id.*

⁹³ STRONG, *supra*.

⁹⁴ LOWELL GALLAGHER, *MEDUSA'S GAZE: CASUISTRY AND CONSCIENCE IN THE RENAISSANCE* 129 (1991).

⁹⁵ Andrew Belsey & Catherine Belsey, *Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I*, in *RENAISSANCE BODIES: THE HUMAN FIGURE IN ENGLISH CULTURE C. 1540-1660* 15 (Lucy Ghent et al eds., 1990).

⁹⁶ Both the Christian and the classical worlds regarded the virginal female body as endowed with supernatural strength and ritual purity. See MARINA WARNER, *ALONE OF ALL HER SEX: THE MYTH AND CULT OF THE VIRGIN MARY* 48 (1976).

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ .British Lib. MS Addl. 116000, f.48, quoted in LESLIE HOTSON, *SHAKESPEARE BY HILLIARD* 31 (1977).

very front of the portrait, its rim engraved with the saying, “*a terra il ben mal dimorra insella* (the good falls to the ground, the bad remains in the saddle).⁹⁹ In everyday speech, the image of the sieve carried the same connotations: at his trial for murder in 1613, the Earl of Somerset objected that a petition he had written to the king should be used against him, insisting that “when I wrote it, I did not think thus to be sifted.”¹⁰⁰

The sieve, however, was a volatile symbol: it could also represent the female body as the “leaky vessel” that early modern medical texts, iconography and oral culture deemed it to be.¹⁰¹ As Gail Kern Paster has shown, this convention derived from labeling one aspect of the female body’s expressiveness, its production of fluids (blood, breast milk) as excessive and disturbing.¹⁰² This cultural convention made bodily self-control, or the maintenance of bodily boundaries, a gendered issue: women were seen as much more susceptible to loss of control and of physical integrity.¹⁰³ In a cosmic order in that the ruler’s body was symbolically conterminous with the boundaries of the realm, a ruler with the “body of a woman” was an unstable symbolic guarantor of the country’s security. Elizabeth had harnessed the iconographic energy of the sieve to her purposes, using it as a sign of her virginity and hence of her body’s ability - unique among her sex - to assure her country’s integrity.¹⁰⁴ Emerging scientific thought about essential

⁹⁹ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 82 at 128.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in ANNE SOMERSET, *UNNATURAL MURDER: POISON AT THE COURT OF JAMES I* 345 (1997).

¹⁰¹ GAIL KERN PASTER, *THE BODY EMBARRASSED: DRAMA AND THE DISCIPLINES OF SHAME IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND* 23-63, 25 (1993).

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ *Id.*

¹⁰⁴ *See* SUSANNE SCHOLZ, *BODY NARRATIVES: WRITING THE NATION AND FASHIONING THE SUBJECT IN*

biological differences between the sexes, however, that deemed all female bodies the same, undermined the idea of a unique female body and exacerbated anxiety already present in the culture.¹⁰⁵ It is not surprising, then, that in the years after Elizabeth's death the anxiety about the female body this symbol evoked resurfaced in the context of civil and monarchical chaos.

The sieve, moreover, had represented dangerous female power in James' world view before his ascension to the English throne: the witch setting out to sea in her sieve to harm men does not appear for the first time in *Macbeth*. The witches' mischief in *Macbeth*, Caroline Bicks has pointed out, resembles the actions of the accused witches in the Berwick case, when James, still king of Scotland only, had accused a coven of causing storms that had prevented the ship carrying his Danish bride from reaching him.¹⁰⁶ The pilot's thumb, flaunted as a trophy by the first sister, calls to mind the Berwick witches' confession that they had caused the storms by tying to a cat "the cheefest parts of a dead man, and several joynts of his bodie" and casting it into the sea.¹⁰⁷ Bicks interprets these similarities as images of threatened dismemberment of the royal body.¹⁰⁸ Whereas this reading is plausible, this imagery is still connected to

EARLY MODERN ENGLAND 67 (2000).

¹⁰⁵ *See id.*

¹⁰⁶ CAROLINE BICKS, MIDWIVING SUBJECTS IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND 144 (2003). For James' account of the interrogation and trial of the Berwick witches, *see* JAMES STUART, NEWES FROM SCOTLAND, DECLARING THE DAMNABLE LIFE AND DEATH OF DOCTOR FIAN, A NOTABLE SORCERER WHO WAS BUIRNED AT EDENBROUGH IN JANUARY LAST 16-17 (G. B. Harrison ed., 2002) (1591).

¹⁰⁷ STUART, *supra* note 93.

¹⁰⁸ Bicks notes that the witches "christen" Macbeth by calling him by his titles - the one he has and the ones he is about to be awarded - and analogizes this role to that of midwives christening newborns. BICKS, *supra* note 94.

Elizabeth's use of the sieve, and foregrounds the instability of a leaky female body as a locus of power.

The sieve in the play undoes the sieve in the hand of Elizabeth: what she had used to present the integrity of her female body, and hence of the realm, now foregrounds anxiety about destructive female power, power that is figured as the power to erase distinctions (between good and evil, fair and foul, rightful king and usurper, loyal vassal and regicide, self and other, etc.) and to turn the relationship between sign and thing into chaos. The sieve, meant to retain the good and let the bad fall away, instead safely carries evildoers on their missions of destruction. Obviously, something has gone wrong.

As the instrument of the witches' mischief, the sieve suggests that if the power to distinguish between good and evil is entrusted to the hands of a woman, the permeability of her body will not only destabilize that distinction, it will also undermine all other distinctions. The body must be reliable as the primal locus of distinction between self and what lies outside the self for it to be the basis for making further distinctions in the world. This epistemological crisis, as well as anxiety about the female body's permeability, necessitates the banishment of the female body from the body politic.

The Transformation of Lady Macbeth

At the beginning of the play, Lady Macbeth plays the role of instigator, taunting Macbeth to murder. Suppressing any qualities in herself that might deter her from the deed, she calls on spirits to "unsex her"

And fill me, from crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse;
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between

Th'effect and it!

I.v.43-49.

In this passage, Lady Macbeth calls upon the spirits to perform a specific, biological act of “unsex[ing]:” she asks them to stop her menstrual cycle.¹⁰⁹ Specifically, she wishes that her genital tract should be blocked by “thickened” blood.¹¹⁰ Because the womb was thought to be connected to the heart, this blockage will also impede the flow of remorse from her heart.¹¹¹

Lady Macbeth’s speech must be read in light of Queen Elizabeth’s speech to the troops at Tilbury in 1588.¹¹² In that speech, that historians now agree probably took place, Elizabeth, dressed “as armed Pallas,” exhorted her underfed and unpaid army to resist the Spanish invaders by invoking the martial valor of a king:

¹⁰⁹ Jenijoy La Belle, *A Strange Infirmary: Lady Macbeth’s Amenorrhea*, 31 no. 3 SHAKESPEARE QUARTERLY 381, (1980). La Belle shows that Lady Macbeth’s reference to the “passage to remorse” must be read in light of the use of the word “passage” in obstetrics manuals to describe the tract through that menstrual blood is discharged.

¹¹⁰ *Id.* at 382.

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² For notes on the text and historical accuracy of this speech, see ELIZABETH I: COLLECTED WORKS 325-26 (Leah Marcus et al. eds., 2000). Marcus has associated Elizabeth’s “crossdressing” at Tilbury with Joan of Arc’s outfit of men’s armor in 1 Henry VI. See LEAH MARCUS, PUZZLING SHAKESPEARE: LOCAL READING AND ITS DISCONTENTS 66 (1988). Marcus seems poised to make the connection between Lady Macbeth and Elizabeth: she suggests that the play “celebrate[s] the Jacobean succession and blacken[s] the barren female authority associated with the previous monarch,” but then lets the matter drop, leaving “the task to those who have already begun it.” *Id.* at 105. She cites in this respect Jonathan Goldberg, *Speculations: Macbeth and Source*, in SHAKESPEARE REPRODUCED: THE TEXT IN HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY ? (Jean Howard et al eds., 1987), MALCOLM EVANS, SIGNIFYING NOTHING: TRUTH’S TRUE CONTENTS IN SHAKESPEARE’S TEXT (1987), Steven Mullaney, *Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England*, 47 ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY 32 (1980), Michael Hawkins, *History, Politics and Macbeth*, in FOCUS ON MACBETH 155 (John Russell Brown, ed., 1982), and ARTHUR F. KINNEY, LIES LIKE TRUTH: SHAKESPEARE, MACBETH AND THE CULTURAL MOMENT (2001). None of these readings, however, connects the figure of Lady Macbeth with Elizabeth. For a discussion of the fear - and danger - perhaps associated with portraying a powerful, demonic female figure on the Elizabethan stage, see DIANE PURKISS, THE WITCH IN HISTORY: EARLY MODERN AND TWENTIETH CENTURY REPRESENTATIONS 186 (1996). Such cultural repression, of course, would help explain the resonance of the shortly post-Elizabethan figure of Lady Macbeth.

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman,
but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of
England too - and take foul scorn that Parma or any prince
of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.
To the that rather than that any dishonor should grow by
me, I myself will venter my royal blood; I myself will be
your general, judge and rewarder of your virtue in the
field.¹¹³

This speech makes use of the political fiction of the King's Two Bodies.¹¹⁴ The idea that the ruler has a mortal and an immortal body goes back to the Middle Ages.¹¹⁵ According to this belief, the king's mortal, perishable body was supplemented by the immortal royal body upon his ascension, and thus the continuity of kingship was assured.¹¹⁶ Elizabeth's twist on this notion, of course, involved gender. She presented her mortal female body as coterminous with a royal, male body - referred to in her portraiture through symbols of her father, Henry VIII.¹¹⁷ Her speech at Tilbury, an exhortation to bravery and martial action in a masculine arena (troops in the field) is legitimated by the presence of her second, masculine body. From the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth had

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ See generally ERNST KANTOROWICZ, *THE KING'S TWO BODIES: A STUDY IN MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THEORY* (1957).

¹¹⁵ See *id.* at 13.

¹¹⁶ *Id.* "The king has two Capacities, for he has two Bodies, the one whereof is a Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and death as other Men are; the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects, and he and his Subjects together compose the Corporation . . . and this Body is not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the King never dies, and his natural death is not called in our Law . . . the Death of the King, but the Demise of the King, not signifying by the word (*Demise*) that the Body Politic of the King is dead, but that there is a Separation of the two Bodies, and the body politic is transferred and conveyed over from the Body natural now dead, or now removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural. So that it signifies a Removal of the Body politic of the King of this Realm from one Body natural to another." *William v. Berkley*, Plowden, *Reports* 177a .

¹¹⁷ See Belsey, *supra* note 82 at 13; Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text*, in *LITERARY THEORY/RENAISSANCE TEXTS* 303, 312-315 (Patricia Parker et al. eds., 1986).

claimed to have the qualities required to rule - qualities her culture coded as male: she referred to herself as “prince;” she had portraits painted, as mentioned, with symbolic references to Henry VIII in her garb and her surroundings.¹¹⁸ The Tilbury speech, however, marked the first time Elizabeth “unambiguously claimed possession of the [male] virtue of courage,” rather than merely a courage comparable to her father’s.¹¹⁹ The heart was the location of courage and of her royal identity; the stomach was the organ associated with violent, martial deeds.¹²⁰ Here, spurred on both by the Spanish threat and the necessity of taking Mary’s life the year before, Elizabeth laid claim to a coterminous kingly body - seated in the figurative internal spaces of her heart and stomach.¹²¹

Lady Macbeth’s unsexing speech reworks Elizabeth’s self-presentation at Tilbury, turning it into the grotesque. While Lady Macbeth, wife to a king regnant, is not literally analogous to Elizabeth, who wielded sovereign power herself, she nonetheless serves as a figure with that to rework the Elizabethan image: at the beginning of the play, she controls her husband and drives him to commit the murders. Her spurring on of Macbeth to seize the throne is in some ways more sinister than Elizabeth’s overt exercise of power.

¹¹⁸ For discussions of Elizabeth’s use of the myth of the King’s Two Bodies, *see generally* CAROLE LEVIN, *THE HEART AND STOMACH OF A KING: ELIZABETH I AND THE POLITICS OF SEX AND POWER* 121-148 (1994); SUSAN FRYE, *ELIZABETH I: THE STRUGGLE FOR REPRESENTATION* 12-21 (1993); PHILLIPA BERRY, *OF CHASTITY AND POWER* 61-92 (1989). The word *prince* is derived from the Latin *princeps*, that is neuter. Janel Mueller, *Virtue and Virtuality: Gender in the Self-Representation of Queen Elizabeth I*, in *VIRTUAL GENDER: FANTASIES OF SUBJECTIVITY AND EMBODIMENT* 37, 51 (Mary Ann O’Farrell et al eds., 1999); CASSELL’S LATIN DICTIONARY (1968).

¹¹⁹ Janel Mueller, *Virtue and Virtuality: Gender in the Self-Representation of Queen Elizabeth I*, in *VIRTUAL GENDER: FANTASIES OF SUBJECTIVITY AND EMBODIMENT* 37, 51 (Mary Ann O’Farrell et al eds., 1999).

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 52.

It hints that even when a male king appears to rule, his animating spirit is a female. Moreover, it is not that Shakespeare set out to rewrite Elizabeth's Tilbury speech in Lady Macbeth's mouth. Rather, Lady Macbeth's speech reflects what the Tilbury image - that of a female ruler who claimed legitimacy and power partly through the confluence of the "weak and feeble body of woman" and the "heart and stomach of king" - had, by 1604, become.

The undermining of this image had begun before Elizabeth's death, however. In 1593, Parliamentarian Peter Wentworth, expressing a general concern of the public as a whole,¹²² drafted a speech blaming the Queen for failing to name a successor:

O England England how great ar thy sines towardes thy
mercifull god, that he hath so alienated the harte of her that
he hath sett over thee to be thy nource, that she should
withold nourishing milk from thee, and force thee to drinke
thyne one distruction . . . Thes ungodly and unnaturall
evills they cannot thinke or judg to be in your majestie as of
your self and of your owne nature, but that your majestie is
drawen unto it by some wicked charming spiritt of
traiterous persuasion, of thay our majestie is overcome by
some feminine conceipt.¹²³

The speech was deemed seditious, and was never given; its author spent time in the Tower revising his views.¹²⁴ But it shows the volatility in Elizabeth's version of the Two Bodies. The potential expressed by Lady Macbeth is already here: the female ruler is easily demonized into the "unnatural" female - a wet nurse who withholds life-giving

¹²¹ *Id.* at 56.

¹²² See J.E. NEALE, *ELIZABETH I AND HER PARLIAMENTS* 1:210-221 (1966).

¹²³ Quoted in LEVINE, *supra* note 5 at 116.

¹²⁴ *Id.*

milk from the infant in her care - and who perhaps also had “pluck[ed] her] nipple from his boneless gums/and dashed the brains out.”

Significantly, Wentworth wrote this speech to oppose Elizabeth’s possible marriage to the Duke of Anjou, her French suitor.¹²⁵ The contemplated marriage inspired huge opposition in Parliament and among the people.¹²⁶ France was a traditional enemy, and Catholic: the marriage negotiations aroused fears of foreign invasion and the imposition of an alien religion.¹²⁷ It is hardly surprising that these fears expressed themselves in images of the malevolent female body, that, instead of providing nourishment, threatens “England” with “distruction.” Elizabeth’s body, and thus the realm, were suddenly seen as a site of possible foreign sexual invasion.¹²⁸

In sum, then, Lady Macbeth’s “unsexing” speech expresses a cultural construction of what the body of the female ruler had become by the time of the Jacobean succession.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ For a discussion of popular opposition to the Anjou marriage, see WALLACE MACCAFFREY, *QUEEN ELIZABETH AND THE MAKING OF POLICY 1572-1588* 255-56 (1981); J. E. NEALE, *QUEEN ELIZABETH* 239-40 (1934).

¹²⁷ See MACCAFFREY, NEALE, *supra*.

¹²⁸ Phillip Stubbes, who wrote a tract against the marriage called *The Gaping Gulf*, lost his right hand as punishment for meddling in state affairs. Phillip Stubbes, *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf whereinto England is like to be swallowed by another French mariage* (1579). Immediately after the amputation, as he stood with blood pouring from his arm, he called out “God save the Queen.” Rather than responding in chorus, as was the custom, the watching crowd stood silent, apparently honoring Stubbes’ benediction as a prayer to keep the Queen safe from the match and the foreign threat it entailed. See also Louis Adrian Montrose, *Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary*, 69:4 *ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY* 907 (2002) (noting that the marriage was seen as a “threat to the Commonwealth” and that Elizabeth’s “inviolable sexuality was [seen as] a mystical source of the nation’s welfare”). The notion of the king’s two bodies was in crisis for other reasons at this time. In the 1590’s, as Elizabeth aged well past childbearing years and gave no sign of naming a successor, the idea of the two bodies changed to reflect the anticipation, rather than the actual experience, of the monarch’s death. A doctrine that was normally activated at the death of the king to ensure the continuity of succession was now activated while the ruler lived, raising questions about the succession. In this context, the theory gave rise to a conflict between loyalties to present and future, to the body natural and the body politic. If discussion of the succession and speculation about the Queen’s end were treason, loyalty to and concern for the survival of the monarchy was antithetical to loyalty

The stresses of the later years of Elizabeth's reign, and the volatility of gender identity in the period, combined to make female rule monstrous.

The Conscience of the Queen

Lady Macbeth's transformation from monster to penitent is brought about by the activation of what we would call her conscience. Apparently tormented by guilt over the murder, she sleepwalks nightly, seeing through her sightless eyes a murky hell, smelling blood and compulsively washing her hands. Critics have failed to consider the role that ideas about conscience and gender play in her fall.¹²⁹ This section shows that the play's representation of Lady Macbeth's conscience rewrites Queen Elizabeth's presentation of the nature of her conscience, and, finally, in doing so, represents an historically specific moment in the separation of women and political power.

To understand how Elizabeth constructed her conscience and her relationship to it, I turn to the event in Elizabeth's reign in that the royal conscience was most at issue - the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.¹³⁰ The trial and execution of Mary, Elizabeth's cousin and Catholic rival, represented the period when the nature of the monarch's

the present monarch. *Id.*

¹²⁹ Robin Grove claims Lady Macbeth is "haunted by what she has murdered in herself." Grove, *supra* note 63 at 135; Peter Stallybrass sees her as undone by the reassertion of a natural remorse, and in the end transformed back into the virtuous wife in a way that "operates as a specific closure of discourse within the binary opposition of virago (witch)/wife." Peter Stallybrass, *Macbeth and Witchcraft*, in *FOCUS ON MACBETH* 189, 199 (John Russell Brown ed., 1982); Davis suggests that Lady Macbeth's childhood was marred by "serious disturbances in her relationships," and that her "depression" is caused by lack of her husband's support, Derek Russell Davis, *Hurt Minds*, in *FOCUS ON MACBETH* 210, 213, *supra*. Grove and Davis, of course, make the mistake of treating the character of Lady Macbeth as a "real" person rather than part of a text..

¹³⁰ For a discussion of the role of conscience in Elizabeth's decision to execute Mary to that I am indebted for this section, see LOWELL GALLAGHER, *MEDUSA'S GAZE: CASUISTRY AND CONSCIENCE IN THE RENAISSANCE* 21-72 (1991).

conscience was most contested and, hence, most developed.¹³¹ Both sides in the debate over the execution - Parliament and Mary herself - tried to lay claim to the nature of the royal conscience and to exploit it to achieve their goals.

Mary was tried on October 1586 and executed in February 1587, eliminating a threat that had been festering in England for fifteen years, ever since she had taken refuge there after being chased out of Scotland in 1572.¹³² Shedding royal blood, however, posed a serious moral problem for Elizabeth and for those around her.¹³³ The months between the trial and the execution saw a struggle over who owned the royal conscience.¹³⁴

In signing Mary's order of execution, Elizabeth, in effect, condoned regicide, that Mary did not hesitate to mention.¹³⁵ The gravity of the matter, and its potential to irredeemably blot Elizabeth's reign, was recorded by contemporary chroniclers. Sir Robert Naunton, James I's secretary of state, described the execution as the "one staine or taint" that marred Elizabeth's reign in the winter of 1586-87.¹³⁶ The word "stain," of course, carried the religious connotations of a sin that stained the soul.¹³⁷ This, of

¹³¹ *See id.*

¹³² ALISON WEIR, *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* 368-378 (1998); GALLAGHER, *supra* note 122 at 21-35; ANNE SOMERSET, *ELIZABETH I* 385-442 (1991); JASPER RIDLEY, *ELIZABETH I* 253-266 (1988).

¹³³ ALISON WEIR, *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN* 368-378 (1998); GALLAGHER, *supra* note 122 at 21-35; ANNE SOMERSET, *ELIZABETH I* 385-442 (1991); JASPER RIDLEY, *ELIZABETH I* 253-266 (1988).

¹³⁴ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 21-35.

¹³⁵ GALLAGHER, *supra* nte 130 .

¹³⁶ Quoted in GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 23.

¹³⁷ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130.

course, is exactly the implication that Elizabeth wished to banish from interpretations of her role in the trial and execution.¹³⁸

Elizabeth and her supporters resisted this notion of a moral stain and the monarch's guilt with a twist on the *arcana imperii* theme. Anyone who dared look too closely, or inappropriately, at the Queen could be blinded and paralyzed by the dazzling mystery of the royal presence. William Parry, a Catholic and would-be assassin reportedly having an opportunity to stab the Queen with a dagger, instead became "wonderfully appalled and perplexed," suddenly seeing in her "the very likeness and image of King Henry the Seventh" and burst into tears.¹³⁹ R.C., a supporter of Elizabeth and author of the pamphlet, *A Declaration of the ends of traytors* (1587), attributed to her majesty a Medusa-like countenance that would leave all traitors "so dismayed upon the sight of your princely person, and in beholding your most gracious countenance" that they would suddenly find themselves powerless "to performe the thing, that they hadde before determined upon."¹⁴⁰ Bacon referred to the "deep and unscrutable center of the court, that is her Majesty's mind."¹⁴¹

By the same token, just as the sight of Elizabeth's countenance paralyzed traitors, it also blinded eyes that sought to scrutinize and judge her. The events surrounding Mary's death and Elizabeth's role in them were not subject to observation. No discernible act of Elizabeth's precipitated it; no particular moment in time sealed Mary's

¹³⁸ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130.

¹³⁹ John Stow, *A True and Plaine Declaration of the Horrible Treason Practised by William Parrie*, quoted in Holinshed's *CHRONICLES*, *supra* note 33 at 4:561-87.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 24.

¹⁴¹ FRANCIS BACON, *Letters*, in *WORKS* 6:256 (James Spedding ed., 1890).

fate. As Gallagher phrases it, one could feel the effects of queenly power but not “discern the means by that she exercised it.”¹⁴² Her goal was unaccountability.

Mary’s goal, of course, was the opposite: to hold Elizabeth accountable, and to call her cousin’s conscience to account.¹⁴³ Despite Elizabeth’s conspicuous absence at her trial - the Presence Chamber at Fotheringay Castle where the trial took place contained an empty chair “for the Queen of England, under a cloth of estate” - Mary repeatedly appealed to Elizabeth’s conscience by calling on those of Elizabeth’s commissioners who were trying her.¹⁴⁴ She asserted that Elizabeth would be tried in a court in that God alone would judge her: the court of conscience.¹⁴⁵ This claim, made to the empty chair, served to challenge Elizabeth’s moral immunity.

In resisting both sets of voices, Elizabeth used the idea of the *arcana imperii*, the secrets of state that no ordinary mortal was fit to know, to describe her conscience as hidden and inaccessible, something her subjects would not, and should not, ever try to interpret or understand.¹⁴⁶ As George Sandys explained, the fable of Actaeon - the mortal who saw the goddess Diana bathing and was hunted down and killed by his own hounds in punishment - “was invented to shew us how dangerous a curiosity it is to search into the secrets of Princes, if by chance to discover their nakedness.”¹⁴⁷ As

¹⁴² *Id.* at 25.

¹⁴³ See GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130.

¹⁴⁴ Cobbett’s COMPLETE COLLECTION OF STATE TRIALS 1: 1172 (1809).

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion of the doctrine of *arcana imperii*, see *id.* at 25, 38; Montrose, *supra* note 13; JONATHAN GOLDBERG, JAMES I AND THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, DONNE AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES 55-112 (1983).

Montrose puts it, “to ‘discover’ the nakedness of the prince is both to locate and to reveal the *arcana imperii* - to expose to scrutiny, and perhaps to ridicule, and thus to demystify, the secrets of state, whether these be the politic strategies that legitimate royal power, the spectacular performances that sustain it, or the intelligence upon that it fashions policy.”¹⁴⁸

Once the trial was over and the sentence had been passed, the issue of Elizabeth’s culpability in her cousin’s death became more difficult to avoid, and a struggle ensued between the Queen and Parliament over her unwillingness to act.¹⁴⁹ Parliament now required a single deed on Elizabeth’s part: the signing of Mary’s death warrant.¹⁵⁰ In response to Parliament’s petitions demanding her acquiescence to the judgment, Elizabeth obfuscated. She gave two speeches that gave and then retracted her assent, in a pattern of revelation and correction that Gallagher interprets as a lesson to her subjects that they could not, in fact, understand her meaning, or read her conscience, and therefore could not judge her.¹⁵¹

In both speeches, Elizabeth hinted that the circumstances of the case were so complicated, and accurate perception of them so difficult, that her actions in response to

¹⁴⁷ GEORGE SANDYS, *OVID’S METAMORPHOSIS ENGLISHED, MYTHOLOGIZ’D AND REPRESENTED IN FIGURES* 151 (Karl K. Hulley at al. eds 1970) (1632).

¹⁴⁸ Louis Montrose, *Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary*, 69:4 *ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY* 907 (2002).

¹⁴⁹ See GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 30.

¹⁵⁰ See GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 39.

¹⁵¹ See GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 39. Elizabeth’s obfuscation at this juncture has traditionally been read as dithering and indecisiveness, implicitly connected with her gender: Alison Weir characterizes Elizabeth’s November 24 speech to Parliament as “distracted and undecided,” WEIR, *supra* note 128 at 373; John Lingard, the nineteenth century Catholic historian, called Elizabeth’s elusive language a sign of a defect in “the constitution of her mind,” quoted in GALLAGHER at 29.

them could not be judged.¹⁵² Even further, she implied, the attempt to discern the conscience of the queen was a self-incriminating act: those who thought they knew how to interpret her hesitation to act as a pretense of clemency were not only wrong but were themselves subject to the judgment of “the maker of all thoughts.”¹⁵³ Ultimately, she called upon her subjects to be content with “an answer without an answer.”¹⁵⁴ Gallagher describes the Queen’s “answer answerlesse” as “a further meditation on the hazardous enterprise of expressing, and judging, the ‘intents’ within her conscience.”¹⁵⁵ Indeed, it presented “a pattern of unaccountability in language.”¹⁵⁶

Some interpreted Elizabeth’s “answer answerlesse” correctly: William Warner, author of *Albions England*, (1612), deemed the Queen’s answerless answer an appropriate expression of royal power - that is, the power to manipulate enigmas to serve royal ends.¹⁵⁷ “With her oracle the bod them do, and doe it not,” he wrote, “played they as Alexander did with King Gordian’s Knot” - i.e., her ministers cut through the ambiguity of Elizabeth’s words and acted, in a way that left them accountable and the Queen untainted.¹⁵⁸

Elizabeth’s manipulation of the idea of conscience was connected to the idea of the king’s two bodies. The ruler’s body natural was connected to a mortal conscience,

¹⁵² GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 35-57.

¹⁵³ ELIZABETH I: COLLECTED WORKS, *supra* note 100 at 201.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at 204.

¹⁵⁵ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 55.

¹⁵⁶ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 56.

¹⁵⁷ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 56.

susceptible to the judgment of God and other mortals, but the conscience of the body politic was, according to Blackstone, incapable not only of doing wrong but even of thinking anything wrong: “[the ruler] can never mean to do an improper thing; in him is no folly or weakness.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, Parliament had addressed the conscience of Elizabeth’s body natural, theoretically vulnerable to the argument that failing to execute Mary would have left a threat to the realm and so a burden on Elizabeth’s conscience.¹⁶⁰

In response, Elizabeth conflated two contemporary meanings of the word “conscience” to preserve the obscurity and inviolability of her own.¹⁶¹ “Conscience” at this time meant both to be aware of one’s own acts and thoughts and also to be aware of events in the world around one.¹⁶² Elizabeth made use of this double meaning to define her conscience as the awareness of the acts, secrets and thoughts of those around her. In so doing, she made herself immune to both Mary’s and Parliament’s threats against her “conscience,” because those threats were based on the idea of the conscience as awareness of one’s own actions, and sensitivity to God’s censure for them. By deploying the other meaning of the word, Elizabeth implied that she could suffer for the acts of her subjects, to that her conscience, as she defined it, was attuned, but not for her own. The “conscience” of her body politic, on the other hand, was impossible to read - indeed, dangerous to view - because of the blinding and paralyzing nature of her power. The

¹⁵⁸ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 56.

¹⁵⁹ SIR WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND I:237ff (1807).

¹⁶⁰ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 60.

¹⁶¹ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 60.

¹⁶² GALLAGHER, *supra* note 130 at 60.

royal conscience was unseeable and unknowable, and this unknowable conscience was a facet of the ruler's two bodies.

To return to Lady Macbeth: as opposed to the way Elizabeth depicted her conscience as hidden and unknowable, Lady Macbeth's is completely accessible. In fact, by the end of the play, she is nothing more than its embodiment, enacting its workings in her compulsive writing, reading, and hand washing, and verbalizing its reproaches as the doctor and the waiting woman observe her. She has become the embodiment of a tormented, mortal and inescapable conscience. As the doctor says, "[her] heart is sorely charged." The point is clear: Lady Macbeth's very physicality has been taken over by the awareness of her crimes; far from being "unsexed" in order to do violence, she is completely incapacitated. Her rumored suicide in V.v is the logical end of this process.

Karin Coddon interprets Lady Macbeth's madness as one of the many efforts in Act Five to contain the forces of representational and civil chaos that the play has unleashed (that is, the crisis in naming and gendering correctly, the crisis in political legitimacy).¹⁶³ She points out that, as is rare in the play, "everything [Lady Macbeth] says has a concrete referent to a prior event," and notes that the sleepwalking scene is replete with strategies of containment: the privacy in that it takes place, the doctor's observation, his transcription of her words, the doctor's "orthodox, even banal" observation at the end of the scene that "unnatural deeds/Do breed unnatural troubles" - all, Coddon suggests, strategies to "check . . . the anarchic play of unreason and its

¹⁶³ Karin Coddon, *supra* note 31 at 498.

relentless deconstruction of boundaries.”¹⁶⁴ Lady Macbeth’s madness and suicide do offer the hope of containment of the chaos that the play has unleashed, but this hope stems from the elimination of the female ruler’s opacity, an elimination that Lady Macbeth’s “transparent” conscience presents.

What brings about this transformation? Lady Macbeth’s role at the beginning of the play is that of pitiless inciter to murder, fearful only that her husband’s nature is “too full of the milk of human kindness/To catch the nearest way” to the “golden round.” Having invoked the spirits to “unsex” her, she urges Macbeth not to contemplate the deed or hesitate, “Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would’/Like the poor cat i’th ’adage.” After Macbeth commits the murder and expresses horror at what he has done, she chides him for thinking “so brainsickly of things,” and assures him “A little water clears us of this deed.”

The first sign of Lady Macbeth’s transformation occurs in II.iii, when, at the discovery of Duncan’s body, she suddenly collapses and is carried out. This is a shocking collapse into passivity for the character as she has so far been portrayed, and it is worth looking at what precedes it. In the immediately preceding lines, Macbeth has just confessed to killing Duncan’s guards, pretending to have been overcome with rage at their alleged participation in the murder:

Who can be wise, amazed, temp’rate and
furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.
The expedition of my violent love
Outran the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
For ruin’s wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

Steeped in the colors of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breeched with gore. Who could
Refrain,
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
Courage to make's love known?

II.ii.109-119.

These lines hark back to Lady Macbeth's taunt, when, in I.vii, Macbeth told her that they would "proceed no further in this business [the murder]." She responds by mocking Macbeth's inability to translate his desires into action, and adds that she will consider his love for her the same way - i.e., that he may feel it or profess it but is unwilling or unable to act on it. Her mockery provokes an angry retort: Macbeth tells her, "I dare do all that may become a man." Now, having committed the murder she egged him on to do, Macbeth expresses his transformation into one who cannot refrain from acting in the heat of passion, without taking time to contemplate the wisdom of his deeds. Of course, his explanation is disingenuous: the audience knows that he killed the grooms so they would not be able to protest their innocence and implicate him - but playing the part, as we have seen, allows him to become it. Having acted, in killing Duncan, as one who acts without hesitation, and now speaking the part, Macbeth becomes it. And, as he speaks/becomes it, Lady Macbeth figuratively ceases to function; as Macbeth's conscience disappears behind his actions, she leaves the world of action to become the embodiment of conscience.

Lady Macbeth also indicates, in fainting, her own removal from the world of action and of the play - that is, the action of royal succession and the transmission of power. Of course, her transformation is not yet complete: she returns, in the banquet scene, to ridicule her husband's terror at the appearance of Banquo's ghost, that she

herself can't see. But even as Macbeth plots Banquo's murder, it is clear that their relationship has changed: when Lady Macbeth asks, "What's to be done?" Macbeth answers, "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck/till thou applaud the deed." Again, she is excluded from the world of action - specifically, political action involving royal succession (for example, cutting off Banquo's line). Macbeth's words here are reminiscent of Elizabeth's equivocation concerning Mary's execution: as Gallagher puts it, "[w]hile it was possible, then, to enjoy or to suffer, the effects of Elizabeth's power, it was not possible to discern the means by that she exerted it. One might rejoice, or privately lament, that Mary was suddenly absent from the theater of the world; but one could not pinpoint the moment at that Elizabeth assured her going."¹⁶⁵ Thus, Lady Macbeth is removed by her husband's obfuscation from the subject position of royal power - having access to its internal machinations and to the royal conscience - to that of subject, excluded from the ruler's thoughts, and left, like Elizabeth's subjects after Mary's execution, only to "applaud the deed."

Macbeth's remonstrations with the doctor in Five, three, further illustrate the inescapability of Lady Macbeth's conscience.. Told that his wife is "troubled with thick-coming fancies/That keep her from her rest," Macbeth demands that the doctor "[p]luck from the memory a rooted sorrow/Raze out the written troubles of the brain/And with some sweet oblivious antidote/Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff/That weighs upon the heart." The doctor, however, disclaims the power to do so, insisting that "the patient /Must minister to himself." The doctor's answer states the inseparability of the guilty conscience from the body - in this case, the female body, and presents the only

¹⁶⁵ GALLAGHER, *supra* note 117 at 25.

treatment as the patients self ministrations, i.e., an examination of the conscience. This, of course, is exactly what both Mary and Parliament - with different goals, of course - had asked Elizabeth to do in 1587, and what she refused to do on the basis of the inscrutability of the royal conscience. Here, to the contrary, the conscience of the female ruler has become all too “scrutable.” Unlike Elizabeth, Lady Macbeth cannot hide from her conscience, or define it as residing outside herself. When the Doctor reports to Macbeth that “more needs she the divine than the physician,” he is affirming the inseparability of her conscience from her body. Medical - i.e., physical - treatment will not alleviate her physical symptoms; only spiritual remedies will work.

This evolution of the relationship of conscience and gender took place in a cultural and historical context. First, a glance at Shakespeare’s source makes clear that assigning conscience to the female in the story was Shakespeare’s innovation: in Holinshed, the “prick of conscience” belonged exclusively to the male regicides, even though wives, as in the play, incite their husbands to the their crimes.¹⁶⁶ Holinshed records two murders, first, Donwald kills King Duffe, and then Macbeth murders Duncan.¹⁶⁷ Donwald, we learn, “though he abhorred the act greatly in his heart, yet through instigation of his wife” was driven to it.¹⁶⁸ Once on the throne, however, despite seeming “happy to all men . . . to himself he seemed most unhappy . . . for . . . such as are pricked in conscience for any secret offense committed, have ever an unquiet

¹⁶⁶ RAPHAEL HOLINSHED, CHRONICLES OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND, in William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 140, 145 (Sylvan Barnett, ed. Signet Classics, 1963).

¹⁶⁷ HOLINSHED, *supra* note 153 at 3:138, 144.

¹⁶⁸ *Id.* at 138.

mind.”¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Macbeth’s wife “lay sore upon him to attempt the [king’s murder], as she that was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a queen.”¹⁷⁰ Later, however, Holinshed tells us, “the prick of conscience . . . caused [Macbeth] ever to fear, lest he should be served of the same cup, as he had ministered to his predecessor.”¹⁷¹ In short, then, Shakespeare redistributes this “prick of conscience” from the husband to the wife, from male to female, and leaves other markers of their relative culpability intact. This move reflects the demands of this particular historical moment.

Megan Matchinske has shown “a cultural rewriting of conscience” in the early years of the seventeenth century as “chaste, feminized and dowried.”¹⁷² Between about 1600 and 1620, Matchinske argues, conscience becomes a gendered domain, with woman standing “guard over men’s minds” and marriage as “the domestic site of social control.”¹⁷³ She sees Esther Sovernam’s pamphlet in defense of women, *Ester hath hang’d Haman* (1617) as an early expression of this change as a way of stabilizing the notion of the marriage contract by giving women a commodity they can offer on the marriage market - namely, moral regulation.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *Id.* at 140.

¹⁷⁰ *Id.* at 144.

¹⁷¹ *Id.* at 145.

¹⁷² MEGAN MATCHINSKE, *WRITING GENDER AND STATE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND* 87, generally 86-126 (1998).

¹⁷³ *Id.*

¹⁷⁴ *Id.* at 88.

Matchinske shows that many texts in this period, wrestling with how to reconcile discrepancies between thought and action, appoint women, by nature supposedly averse to sin, as a kind of “domestic confessors . . . keepers of [their husbands’] conscience.”¹⁷⁵ In Reformation England, as Matchinske points out, where the Church had been stripped of its role as confessor and absolver of sin, assigning this role to women was a powerful move.¹⁷⁶ More broadly, as the state became increasingly unable to control its subjects, the possibility of domestic agents who monitored and controlled the hidden realm of inner thoughts was an attractive one.¹⁷⁷ Of course, such a system is unstable: concern lingers that women will fail to maintain the chastity and rectitude that make them suitable guardians of conscience, and this doubt finds voice in other anti-feminist tracts.¹⁷⁸ The point, however, is that this suitability of women for their ordained role is now the central ground for disputation.¹⁷⁹ Lady Macbeth’s suicide is a logical extension of this role and of the self awareness - or, more accurately, the inability to escape from the self - that comes with it.

Two chronologically earlier vignettes involving transgressive females - one a literary character, the other “real” - shed light, by contrast, on what is new about Lady Macbeth’s transformation: the punishment of Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester in 2 Henry

¹⁷⁵ *Id.* Of course, this creates a dialectical relationship: women, on the one hand, embody conscience as divorced from action, but on the other hand, they police their husband’s actions, and so engage the world of action. I thank Yair Sagy for pointing this out to me.

¹⁷⁶ *Id.* at 111.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

¹⁷⁸ *Id.*

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*

VI, and descriptions of the dying Queen Elizabeth. First, Eleanor, in the play, inspired by a dream that she will become Queen, enlists the aid of a witch and two errant priests to conjure spirits who prophesy the king's violent death.¹⁸⁰ Caught in the act, she is sentenced to walk barefoot through "the flinty streets," wrapped in a white sheet, carrying a taper, her crimes written on a piece of paper pinned to her back so the common people may mock her.¹⁸¹

Walking through the streets in a white sheet carrying a taper was a common punishment for women who sinned; both Eleanor and Lady Macbeth wear this garb of penance.¹⁸² There is a crucial difference, however: Lady Macbeth has internalized her guilt, while Eleanor's distress stems exclusively from her "open shame:"

Methinks I should not thus be led along,
Mail'd up in shame, with papers on my back,
And follow'd with a rabble that rejoice
To see my tears and hear my deep-fet groans.

II.iv.30-33.

All the external signs of her crime that Eleanor bears in the 1590-91 play - sheet, taper, written placard - have been transformed in Lady Macbeth's 1606 appearance to internalized markers of guilt. Lady Macbeth dresses *herself* in penitential garb - the nightgown, that resembles a winding sheet - picks up the taper that she has "by her continually," writes secretly on a piece of paper that she reads and then locks up in her "closet" before returning to bed. Her performance is nocturnal, secret - spied upon by

¹⁸⁰ William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part Two*, in THE RIVERSIDE SHAKESPEARE 637 (G. Blakemore Evans, ed., 1974).

¹⁸¹ *Id.* at 643.

her waiting woman and the doctor, but otherwise private - not the public parade of shame Eleanor performs. .Lady Macbeth, unlike Eleanor, performs the roles of both magistrate and rabble and enacts her own ritual expressions of internal torment.

This evolution, then, from the shamed, unrepentant Eleanor of Gloucester to the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth expresses an evolution in the roles of women, whereby they became embodiments of conscience and sites of moral regulation. Lady Macbeth's transformation in the play reveals the central role Queen Elizabeth, both as ruler and as iconographic system, played in this development.

Second, depictions of Elizabeth's death indicate the same development. Here, for example, is one written shortly after she died:

As was well known, Queen Elizabeth in her last month of life ordered removed from her finger the ring originally given to her by the city of London to marry her symbolically to the kingdom. Contemporaries took the action to be a portent, and indeed soon afterward, the queen fell into a deep and ultimately fatal melancholy, attributed by Essex' remaining partisans to her remorse at his execution. . . . Although it was not generally known, when Elizabeth rid herself of the city of London's ring, she did not remove a second ring, presented to her by Essex, but retained it to her dying day.¹⁸³

This is a description of Queen Elizabeth's transformation from ruler to mortal woman. In the removal of the ring of state from her finger - seen as a "portent" - and in her fatal remorse we see the female ruler with the inscrutable conscience turn into the mortal female, melancholy with love and guilt. Here is another, contemporary account:

¹⁸² FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 269.

¹⁸³ Verna Ann Foster & Stephen Foster, *Structure and History in "The Broken Heart:" Sparta, England and the "Truth,"* 18 ENGLISH LITERARY RENAISSANCE 318 (1988).

In the beginning of her sicknesse her gums swelled,
and quickly abated again; then her appetite by little and
little fayled her, and withal shee gave her selfe over wholly
to melancholy, and seemed to bee perplexed with some
speciall feeling of sorrow; either through the force of her
disease or for the misse of Essex.¹⁸⁴

And a similar reference to Elizabeth's death in John Webster's *The Devil's Law Case*
(1619):

Let me die
In the distraction of that worthy princess,
Who loathed food, and sleep, and ceremony,
For thought of losing that brave gentleman,
She would fain have sav'd.

III.iii.275-80.

This transformation, I suggest, begins a process that culminated in the invention of nerve theory, or sensational psychology, in the late seventeenth century. Thomas Laqueur and Anthony Fletcher have identified this development as enabling the “transformation of gender from a theory of hierarchy to one of opposition.”¹⁸⁵ Nerve theory made this possible by positing “sensibility” - sensitivity to external impressions, and highly developed moral and spiritual consciousness - as a mostly innate trait in women.¹⁸⁶ In the late 1600's, female subordination to men was “naturalised on the basis of their finer sensibility.”¹⁸⁷ To complete the circle, by the late eighteenth century, doctors described hysteria as originating solely in the brain, and afflicting women who

¹⁸⁴ WILLIAM CAMDEN, *ANNALES: THE HISTORIE OF ELIZABETH* 4:584 (R. Norton trans., 3d ed. 1635).

¹⁸⁵ FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 291-92; LAQUEUR, *supra* note 37 at 149-154.

¹⁸⁶ FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 291-92.

were “delicate and endowed with great sensibility.”¹⁸⁸ This change can already be seen in the figure of Lady Macbeth, and it was enabled, at this point before nerve theory, by the revision of the iconography of the Queen’s conscience.

“Not of Woman Born”

Macduff presents the ultimate expression of the fantasy that men can appropriate political power from women, even the power literally to produce kings by giving birth. Although Macbeth’s reliance on the premise that no one could be “not born of woman” turns out to be fatally misplaced, the audience is presented in Macduff with a figure who, in a sense, does fit this description.

This becomes clear if we examine the discursive web of that the man “not of woman born” is a part. Popular lore about childbirth at the time generally agreed that even normal labor was brought on by the efforts - kicking - and conscious will of the fetus.¹⁸⁹ The uterine muscles were not described as playing a role, nor was the mother consciously thought able to bring on labor.¹⁹⁰ As one manual puts it, “the true pains of a woman in travail . . . are nothing else but the force of the infant now perfect.”¹⁹¹ Since pictures of fetuses in wombs as depicted in midwife manuals are all male, childbirth was already figured as male-initiated, a striving of the boy-child against the passive enclosure

¹⁸⁷ FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 293.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 390; according to Elaine Showalter, by the end of the nineteenth century, “hysterical had become almost interchangeable with ‘feminine’ in literature, where it stood for all extremes of emotionality.” ELAINE SHOWALTER, *THE FEMALE MALADY: WOMEN, MADNESS, AND ENGLISH CULTURE 1830-1980* 84 (1985).

¹⁸⁹ AUDREY ECCLES, *OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY IN TUDOR AND STUART ENGLAND* 55 (1982).

¹⁹⁰ *Id.*

¹⁹¹ J. Wolveridge, *Speculum matricis* 10 (1671).

of the mother's womb.¹⁹² Hence the child that the witches show Macbeth is bloody from his struggle to escape imprisonment in the mother's body, fulfilling the fantasy that men are solely responsible for their own birth.

On a more literal level, however, Cesarean birth provided the means for male surgeons to displace female midwives in the childbirth process - and, literally, in the childbirth room.¹⁹³ In fact, "since Cesarean birth was one of the first obstetrical procedures that was lost to female practitioners, the circumstances of this operation can be used as a point of departure for a study of developments in the history of women and medicine."¹⁹⁴ Women, not licensed to perform surgery, were not allowed to perform Cesareans and were required to call in male surgeons in cases where they were necessary.¹⁹⁵ A fifteenth-century print of a Cesarean birth revealingly shows a ghostly maternal body, stomach cut open, prostrate on an operating table, while the surgeon holds up a surgical knife while gesturing with his other hand in front of a seated woman who holds the baby on her lap.¹⁹⁶ Thus, being "not of woman born" in Macduff's case represents a moment when males were inserting themselves into the private female realm of childbirth, and, through surgical technique, were themselves taking over the very process of giving birth. Of course, it is also significant that a Cesarean birth at this time

¹⁹² ECCLES, *supra* note 175 at 55-56.

¹⁹³ See generally RENATE BLUMENFELD-KOSINSKI, NOT OF WOMAN BORN: REPRESENTATIONS OF CESAREAN BIRTH IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE CULTURE 91-119 (1990).

¹⁹⁴ *Id.* at 91.

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* at 93.

¹⁹⁶ Reproduced *id.* at 89.

meant the death of the mother.¹⁹⁷ At the very least, the play uses the image of Macduff's birth to expunge a female role in royal succession and the transmission of power: it is the hero who is born through male skill, not female biology, who can kill the usurper and restore order.

It is important to note that this vision of male generation represents a radical break with earlier imagery of male nurturance. Whereas medieval Christianity offered images of male nurturing in the figures of both Adam and Christ, these images depicted the male figures providing nurture by acquiring female characteristics such as the ability to nurse, not by eradicating feminine aspects of nurturing.¹⁹⁸ Medieval religious imagery depicted Adam and Christ giving birth, through Cesarean section, to Eve and the Church, for example, but they also presented Christ as offering mankind the nourishment of the blood flowing from his side as a version of breast milk.¹⁹⁹ As Carolyn Walker Bynum puts it, “[I]n the blinding light of the ultimate dichotomy between God and humanity, all other dichotomies faded. Men and women might agree that female flesh was more fleshly than male flesh, but such agreement led both sexes to see themselves as in some sense female-human.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ See generally *id* 180-185; ANGUS MCLAREN, *REPRODUCTIVE RITUALS: THE PERCEPTION OF FERTILITY IN ENGLAND FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY* 124-27 (1984).

¹⁹⁸ Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg*, 39:3 *RENAISSANCE QUARTERLY* 399 (1986).

¹⁹⁹ See prints reproduced in MONICA BRZEZHINSKI POTKAY & REGULA MEYER EVITT, *MINDING THE BODY: WOMEN AND LITERATURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 800-1500* 63 (1997).

²⁰⁰ CAROLYN WALKER BYNUM, *HOLY FEAST AND HOLY FAST: THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF FOOD TO MEDIEVAL WOMEN* 296 (1987); *The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages*, *supra* note 186 at 399.

The vision of male generation in *Macbeth*, on the other hand, presents the female body as grotesque and unnecessary - even harmful to male power. Macduff's "untimely ripping," and the corresponding death of his mother from whose womb he emerged, presents a vision of generation wherein the absence of the female, and the elimination of the nurturing features of the female body, is the key to male power and bodily integrity. It is a vision in that women's role in procreation is that of an incubator whose function is devoid of a subjective or nurturing relationship with the (presumed male) child.

To summarize up to this point: the unraveling of Queen's Elizabeth's iconography in *Macbeth* produces a conception of women that excludes them from political power. The play achieves this result in two stages. First, it shows us the threatening instability of female rule in the images of the witches and the "unsex'd" Lady Macbeth. Then, in a recuperative move, the play offers a benign vision of woman: Lady Macbeth disabled by remorse and paralyzed by her conscience, a Lady Macbeth who will never again intervene in affairs of state. This banishment from political power extends to the bearing of children: to the extent that giving birth constitutes an intervention in politics - i.e., as when the child is destined to succeed to a throne - the role of this "new woman" will be limited to a purely physical, mechanistic one. I now wish to bridge the gap to the present by showing how these notions of women's lack of capacity for subjectivity animate legal discourse today.

This change can also be seen in the new irrelevance of female sexual pleasure.²⁰¹ Emergent medical debate centered around whether the fetus was pre-formed in the sperm

²⁰¹ MENDELSON AND CRAWFORD, *supra* note 79 at 27.

of the ovum; everyone agreed that women did not “spend seed” during copulation.²⁰² Contemporary writers worried about the consequences of this new understanding for women’s attitude toward pregnancy: “some . . . would persuade women that Mothers afford very little to the generation of the child, but only are at the trouble to carry it . . . as if the womb were hired by Men . . . women grow luke-warm, and lose all humane affection towards their children.”²⁰³ This description, as we can see, eerily foreshadows the underlying assumptions that Bordo and Siegel describe in today’s legal decisions.

Macbeth thus reveals a significant cultural shift connected to the Jacobean succession. Both the play and the succession serve as textual space to redraw the lines between femininity and power, marking femininity as the absence of power and, in the case of the murdered Duncan, absence of power as feminine. This move is part of the dissolution of Elizabethan iconography, the image of the female ruler with the "heart and stomach of a king" in the "body of a weak and feeble woman."

WITCHCRAFT AND THE CULTURAL MILIEU

The themes revealed in *Macbeth* - that is, the emergent depiction of the female body as transparent, incapable of harboring the secrets related to political power - were replicated in James’ treatment of young girls who claimed to be possessed. Jacobean responses to these cases reveal novel features that, like the depiction of Lady Macbeth, rewrote Elizabeth’s self presentation as the locus of occulted secrets of state power. James’ debunking of the claims of possessed girls resembles Banquo’s attempt to

²⁰² *Id.*; see also Thomas Laqueur, *Orgasm, Generation and the Politics of Reproductive Biology*, in **Check**

ascertain the weird sisters' gender: both James and Banquo try to use gender determination as a way of separating the female body from power - in the case of the sisters, power over life, death and royal succession, in James' case, invisible demonic power that distorted bodies, made them unnaturally heavy and strong, impervious to pain, and endowed them with deep, masculine voices.²⁰⁴

The unifying idea of the play and the possession cases was the transparency of the female body. Just as Lady Macbeth's fate dispelled the idea that the body of a female ruler could keep her conscience hidden and inaccessible, King James' debunking of possession claims dispelled the idea that the bodies of young girls could contain invisible, demonic powers - powers that, like Elizabeth's, could be discerned only in their effects. Thus I hope to demonstrate that the new understanding of the female body I have shown in the play represented more than one playwright's quirky attitude: rather, it was part of a culture-wide revision of how the female body was seen. This revision is apparent in places besides the stage, namely, James' skepticism about claims of possession and his methods for disproving them, and the emergent medical theory that hysteria, not demonic influence, caused the girls' symptoms.

²⁰³ Lemnius, L., *The Secret Miracles of Nature in Four Books* 9-10 (1658).

²⁰⁴ For descriptions of these features of demonic possession, see Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, *supra* note 32 at 72 (describing the how voice of Satan "rored and cried mightilie" from the lips of the possessed Mildred of Norrington); *The Disclosing of a late counterfeyted Possession by the Devyl in two Maydens within the Citie of London* (1574), reprinted in PHILIP C. ALMOND, *DEMONIC POSSESSION AND EXORCISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: CONTEMPORARY TEXTS AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXTS* 62, 68, 69 (2004) (describing how the possessed Agnes Briggs "would swell and heave with her body marvellously" and "disfigured herself with divers strange countenances, feigning divers strange voices and noises, in monstrous manner", and how the possessed Rachel Pinder "feigned dives strange and hollow speeches within her throat"); Edward Nyndge, *A true and fearful vexation of one Alexander Nyndge: being most horribly tormented by the Devil from the twentieth day of January to the twenty-third of July* (1615), reprinted in ALMOND, *supra*, at 46, 50 (reporting of a possessed boy that he "was of such strength the sometimes four or five men, though they had much advantage over him by binding him to a chair, yet could they not rule him").

There is a tendency to view moments such as this one, that seems to stage empiricism's triumph over belief in the supernatural as forward moments in the history of epistemology, science and rationality.²⁰⁵ As Diane Purkiss points out, however, such optimistic readings are misplaced. She argues that the empiricist observer of a female patient/ hysteric has much more power than the passive spectator of a female enacting demonic possession.²⁰⁶ Such a figuration allows the male observer much more power over the disorderly female body; it does not constitute a move toward essential truth or toward neutral, scientific observation.²⁰⁷ Rather, it represents a move toward consolidating power in one gender position. This theory allowed the uterus to dominate all aspects of a woman's physiology and behavior: the womb was well on its way to becoming, as it would be considered by the nineteenth century, "the controlling organ in the female body," origin and cause of all disorders, mental as well as physical.²⁰⁸ As Fletcher puts it, the Glover case hinted at the possibility of establishing "a new kind of patriarchy that would be founded on sexual difference rather than homology."²⁰⁹ Purkiss rightly sees in the newly minted hysteric the precursors of Charcot's female patients with their "rambling speech" and their "disorderly or carnivalesque" bodies.²¹⁰ Disorder

²⁰⁵ Diane Purkiss, *Macbeth and the All-Singing, All-Dancing Plays of the Jacobean Witch-vogue*, in *SHAKESPEARE, FEMINISM AND GENDER* 216, 219 (Kate Chedgzoy, ed. 2001).

²⁰⁶ See *id.*

²⁰⁷ *Id.*

²⁰⁸ BARBARA EHRENREICH AND DIERDRE ENGLISH, *COMPLAINTS AND DISORDERS: THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF SICKNESS* 29 (1973).

²⁰⁹ FLETCHER, *supra* note 3 at 67.

²¹⁰ See *id.*

expressed by women in the public sphere is translated into, and contained as, a purely physiological condition inherent in female biology.²¹¹

This argument is, of course, indebted to Michel Foucault's discovery of what he called the "hysterization of the female body."²¹² Foucault identifies this process as one of the ways that medical and psychiatric power was consolidated in the nineteenth century: describing the female body as "thoroughly saturated with sexuality [and] subject to a pathology intrinsic to it," the emerging professions could integrate it into their system of control and analysis.²¹³ The cultural events discussed here foreshadow this later development, but more is at stake here than showing that the hysterization process began at this period. Foucault focused on the ways power is exercised, the channels through that it flows.²¹⁴ Whereas power was exercised through the theatrical spectacle of the debunking of possession, what was at stake was the imaginability of the female body as a site for political power. I should also clarify at the outset that this general trend was obviously related to factors other than the death of Elizabeth; I do not argue, even in the English context, that changes in the understanding of hysteria were caused by her death; I claim, rather, that her death and the disassembly of her iconography provided a convenient forum to renegotiate cultural myths of female power.

Glover's Possession

²¹¹ See Moira Gatens, *Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic*, in *WRITING ON THE BODY: FEMALE EMBODIMENT AND FEMINIST THEORY* 80, 84 (Katie Conboy et al eds. 1997).

²¹² MICHEL FOUCAULT, *THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY* 104 (Robert Hurley trans., 1980).

²¹³ *Id.*

²¹⁴ I am indebted to David Garland for this formulation, articulated in his Foucault Seminar at NYU fall

In late 1602, a fourteen-year-old girl named Mary Glover, the daughter of a prominent Puritan merchant, claimed she was bewitched and began having fits.²¹⁵ Her body contorted and her throat swelled so severely that she could not swallow.²¹⁶ The trial of the old woman accused of bewitching her, and the ancillary investigation of Glover's alleged possession, was the first time in English legal history that medical science was introduced as evidence in a court of law, specifically to try to show that behavior attributed to a supernatural cause – demonic possession – in fact stemmed from a physiological one – hysteria, or the “suffocation of the mother.”²¹⁷ Medical science, in other words, strove to show that symptoms that seemed to flow from a hidden source of invisible power stemmed, in fact, from a tangible part of the female body - indeed, from the female body's tangibility itself.

Glover, the bewitched girl, accused a neighbor, the Widow Jackson, of bewitching her.²¹⁸ Glover's fits provided free theater to her neighbors, who showed up in throngs to

2004.

²¹⁵ For an account of the Glover case, transcripts and pamphlets, see MICHAEL MACDONALD, *WITCHCRAFT AND HYSTERIA IN ELIZABETHAN LONDON* (1991).

²¹⁶ *Id.*.

²¹⁷ DAVID F. HOENIGER, *MEDICINE AND SHAKESPEARE IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE* 202 (1992).

²¹⁸ As Stephen Greenblatt points out, possession and witchcraft were two distinct phenomena. See Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare and the Exorcists* in *SHAKESPEARE AND THE QUESTION OF THEORY* 163, 168 (Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartmann eds., 1985). See also Brian P. Levack, *Possession, Witchcraft and the Law in Jacobean England*, 52 *WASH. AND LEE L. REV.* 1613 (1995). Levack explains that witchcraft involved practicing black magic, while possession meant the invasion of a human body by demonic spirits that gave it superhuman strength, threw it into convulsions, and made it perform other unnatural acts. See *Id.* As a practical matter, however, witchcraft and possession were two sides of the same case: the allegedly possessed victim would accuse someone of causing it through witchcraft. See, e.g., the account of the Devonshire witches in GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE, *WITCHCRAFT IN OLD AND NEW ENGLAND* 6-22 (1956). For general histories of witchcraft in England this period, see DEBORAH WILLIS, *MALEVOLENT NURTURE: WITCH-HUNTING AND MATERNAL POWER IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND* (1995); PETER HAINING, ED., *THE WITCHCRAFT PAPERS: CONTEMPORARY RECORDS OF THE WITCHCRAFT HYSTERIA IN ESSEX 1560-1700* (1974); KEITH THOMAS, *RELIGION AND THE DECLINE OF MAGIC* (1971); ALAN MACFARLANE, *WITCHCRAFT*

watch her writhe. The girl and her neighbors called for prosecution of the widow, but a physician insisted to the Chief Justice, John Andersen, that “the maid did counterfeit.”²¹⁹ Anderson in turn ordered Glover to the chambers of John Croke, the Recorder of London, to undergo tests.²²⁰ The tests convinced Croke that there was no fraud: he confined the widow Jackson to Newgate, and ordered a group of ministers to try to cure Glover by fasting and prayer, measures that ultimately succeeded.²²¹ This episode provided the first forum in English legal history for the argument that possession was a psychosomatic phenomenon, attributable neither to witchcraft nor to pretense, but to a disease of the brain.²²² Glover’s case became an early legal testing ground for theories of female hysteria.²²³

Though the judge at the trial, Sir John Anderson, was a known witch-hunter, he started out by no means convinced that this case involved the supernatural. And the widow had many powerful and influential people on her side: most members of the College of Physicians believed that the cause was something other than witchcraft. One

IN TUDOR AND STUART ENGLAND: A REGIONAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY ((1970); RONALD SETH, CHILDREN AGAINST WITCHES (1969); WALLACE NOTTESTEIN, A HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT IN ENGLAND 1558-1718 (1968); K. M. BRIGGS, PALE HECCATE’S TEAM” AN EXAMINATION OF THE BELIEFS ON WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC AMONG SHAKESPEARE’S CONTEMPORARIES AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS (1962); KITTREDGE, *supra* note 216. In this paper, I will be concerned primarily with possession.

²¹⁹ MACDONALD, *supra* note 213 at ??

²²⁰ MACDONALD, *supra* note 213 at ??

²²¹ MACDONALD, *supra* note 213 at ??

²²² HOENIGER, *supra* note 208.

²²³ The legal system was a significant intellectual milieu in this period. See CHRISTOPHER W. BROOKS, LAWYERS, LITIGATION AND ENGLISH SOCIETY SINCE 1450 201 (1998). For general legal history of the period, see JOHN H. BAKER, AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH LEGAL HISTORY ----- (4th ed. ---).

in particular, Doctor Edward Jorden, made a new and innovative argument.²²⁴ He believed that the cause of the Glover's fits was not sorcery but an affliction known then to medical science as "the Mother," or *hysterica passio*.²²⁵ But *hysterica passio* was traditionally ascribed to mature women experiencing sexual deprivation or disruption of their menstrual cycles.²²⁶ Mary Glover, it was agreed, was too young to have either of these problems (in fact it was determined at the time that her menstruation began after she started having fits):²²⁷ what made Jorden's argument revolutionary and prescient of modern psychology was that he added a third possibility, that the brain, affected by disturbances in the womb, could also cause the disease.

In the end, Jorden's argument did not prevail. In fact, the judge ridiculed him for being unable to state clearly what he meant; we can see Jorden trapped in a still-forming and fragmentary concept that was still missing crucial elements:

Lord Anderson: Do you think she counterfeiteth?

Dr. Jorden: No, in my conscience, I think she doth not counterfeit.

Lord Anderson: Then in my conscience, it is not natural. For if you tell me neither a natural cause of it, nor a natural remedy, I will tell you that it is not natural . . . give me a natural reason or a natural remedy, or a rash for your physic.²²⁸

²²⁴ As Mark Micale notes, the seventeenth century saw significant innovation in the study of hysteria in Europe as well as in England: French doctor Charles Lepois argued that hysteria was to be found not in the womb or the soul but in the head. MARK. S. MICALÉ, *APPROACHING HYSTERIA: DISEASE AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS* 21 (1995).

²²⁵ HOENIGER, *supra* note 204.

²²⁶ HOENIGER, *supra* note 204.

²²⁷ Stephen Bradwell, *Mary Glover's Late Woefull Case and her joyfull Deliverance* (1602), quoted in MACDONALD, *supra* note 212 3-140.

Either, the judge argued, the symptoms were supernatural or the girl was counterfeiting. Jorden, struggling for a third alternative, and insisting the girl was neither possessed nor faking her symptoms, was at a loss. One of the opposing ministers, Bradwell, sneered:

These physicians sought earnestly, to make the case a mere natural disease . . . Dr Jorden earnestly contended with reasons, that when they delivered, argued not so much a natural disease, as some mind (rather) of dissimulation and counterfeiting. 229

The jury found Elizabeth Jackson guilty of witchcraft, for that she was sentenced to a year's confinement and several sessions in the stocks. She served neither, however, having acquired powerful supporters during the trial - supporters with a political stake in disproving the existence of demonic possession and the efficacy of exorcism.²³⁰ As for Glover, she was ultimately cured by day-long prayer vigil at a friend's house.²³¹

Mary Glover's daily fits, while they continued, and the trial, became a form of theater for the London populace, attracting spectators of high and low rank. Indeed, the audience took on the characteristics of a theatrical one, complete with pickpockets: the diarist John Manningham records the following anecdote:

A gentle woman who had been with a child that was said to be possessed with the divell [i.e., Glover] and how she lost her purse while they were at prayer. Oh said a gentleman not unlikely, for you forgot halfe your lesson. Christ bad you watch and pray, and you prayed only: had

²²⁸ MACDONALD *supra* note 213.

²²⁹ MACDONALD *supra* note 213 at xv.

²³⁰ *Id.*

²³¹ John Swan, *A true and briefe report, of the grievous vexation by Satan, of Mary Glover of Thames Street in London: and of her deliverance from the same, by the power of Lord Jesus, blessing his own ordinance of prayer and fasting* (1603), reproduced in PHILIP C. ALMOND, *DEMONIC POSSESSION AND EXORCISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: CONTEMPORARY TEXTS AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXTS* 296 (2004).

you watched as you prayed you might have kept your purse
still.²³²

Watching entertainment and being pickpocketed is reminiscent of attending the public theater, a milieu commonly associated with petty crime.²³³ The public trial was, of course, also a theatrical spectacle. Together, these forms of theater served as public performances that re-investigated the female body's powers and secrets. In Jorden's new theory, this investigation determined that there were, in fact, no such powers and secrets: gender, that could be read in the physical body, explained everything.

James' Dis-Coveries

James' responses to claims of possession also played a role in the process of making the female body transparent. In disproving claims of possession with the methods he used, James, like Jorden, showed that the female body had no secrets. Although at first glance the author of *The Demonologie*, a tract about witchcraft, would seem to believe in witchcraft, the evidence suggests that even before leaving Scotland, James was beginning to discard his credulity about it.²³⁴ For example, in 1597, he revoked authority for the commissions of justiciary that were being held to investigate witchcraft throughout Scotland, a stroke of the pen that immediately decreased the number of executions.²³⁵

²³² THE DIARY OF JOHN MANNINGHAM OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE 1602-1603 58 (Robert Parker Sorlien ed., 1976).

²³³ See generally Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583).

²³⁴ CHRISTINA LARNER, JAMES THE VI AND I AND WITCHCRAFT 75 (1973).

²³⁵ KITTREDGE, *supra* note 216 at 279.

By the time James became King of England, the evidence indicates that he had become skeptical about many claims of those supposedly possessed. Kittredge was one of the first to suggest that James had lost his belief in witchcraft by the time of *Macbeth*.²³⁶ Christina Lerner proposes three phases for the king's witch beliefs: his minority in Scotland, where he took little or no interest in the issue, second, the last thirteen years of his residence as king there, when persecutions were intensified and *The Demonologie* was published, and, finally, his reign in England, where both his own natural intellectual growth and the more sophisticated skepticism he encountered across the border made him leave behind and downplay his former zeal.²³⁷ Even his concern over the plots of witches against him and his bride, Anne of Denmark, focused more on his anxiety over the implied threat to his "divine body" than actual concern over the machinations of demonic power in the land.²³⁸

By the time James reached England, the number of witchcraft cases was declining there: the Witchcraft Act of 1604 was harsher than the Elizabethan Act only in its provision for death as punishment for first offenses - a clause that was never enforced under James.²³⁹ Kittredge also argues that the 1604 Act was more a result of popular pressure in England on legislators rather than an expression of James's world view.²⁴⁰ As King of England, he protected those who had been wrongfully accused and pardoned

²³⁶ See KITTREDGE, *supra* note 216 at 276-328.

²³⁷ LARNER, *supra* note 230.

²³⁸ LARNER, *supra* note 230 at 13.

²³⁹ LARNER, *supra* note 230 at 88.

²⁴⁰ KITTREDGE, *supra* note 216 at 297.

many of those convicted (perhaps Elizabeth Jackson included).²⁴¹ One of his courtiers firmly stated that James "grew first dissident of, and then flatly to deny, the workings of witches and devils as but falsehoods and delusion."²⁴²

It is important not to align belief in and skepticism about witchcraft with differing attitudes toward women. James's change in views toward the phenomenon of possession did not reveal a nascent pro-feminism; on the contrary, it was an expression of his continuing anti-feminism. Witchcraft skeptics at this time, like Reginald Scot and George Gifford, in mocking the idea that old women could perform the feats that superstition ascribed to them, were constructing a view of power that excluded women.²⁴³ James' "discoveries" participated in solidifying this view. As Diane Purkiss observes, "misogyny can exist perfectly well alongside skepticism, and can even subtend it."²⁴⁴

More important, however, than James' skepticism are the methods that he used to disprove claims of possession. He tricked the alleged victims - young girls all - into giving up their pretense by making symbolic reference to their gender. In other words, James did to these young girls what Banquo tried to do to the witches in *Macbeth*: he dispelled the idea that they could harbor demonic powers by symbolically establishing their female gender. Here is an example of this technique:

²⁴¹ MACDONALD, *supra* note 213 at

²⁴² *Id.* at

²⁴³ DIANE PURKISS, *THE WITCH IN HISTORY: EARLY MODERN AND TWENTIETH CENTURY REPRESENTATIONS* 65 (1996).

²⁴⁴ *Id.*

In the reign of King James I, one Mrs. Katherine Waldron (a gentlewoman of good family) waited in Sir Francis Seymour's lady of Marlborough. She pretended to be bewitched by a certain woman . . .and pretended strange things etc. . . She had acquired such a strange habit, that she would endure exquisite torments, as to have pins thrust into her flesh, nay, under her nails. These tricks of hers were about the time when King James the first wrote his Demonologie. His majesty being in these parts, went to see her in one of her fits; she lay on a bed, and the king saw her endure the torments aforesaid. The room, as it is easily to be believed, was full of company. His majesty gave a sudden pluck to her coats, and tossed them over her head, that surprise (it seems she had some innate modesty in her) not imagining of such a thing, made her immediately start, and detected the cheat.²⁴⁵

This example shows that King James's "uncovering" of phony witches was a literal uncovering of the female body, one that revealed the "truth" about the sham witch at the same time that it revealed the "truth" about her gender. Indeed, these two truths turned out to be one and the same. By revealing the hidden location of gender - the location of the genitals - the king put an end to the symptoms of demonic possession; he reveals that what seemed unnatural - a woman possessed by hidden devils - was in fact "natural" - a gendered female. In "tossing her coats over her head," James shifted attention from the woman's mind to her sexuality, symbolically re-locating the site of truth from her intellect to her gender. James's uncovering assured that, once female gender was established, all signs of supernatural powers would turn out to have been a sham. The "body of a weak and feeble woman" could no longer be the site for "the heart and stomach of a man," or power of a register associated with masculinity.

²⁴⁵ HENRY PAUL, THE ROYAL PLAY OF MACBETH; WHEN, WHY AND HOW IT WAS WRITTEN BY SHAKESPEARE 81 (1950).

Elizabeth's visual imagery of the *arcana imperii* makes clear why James' skirt-flipping were significant. As discussed, Elizabeth used the doctrine of the *arcana imperii* to create a sense of her conscience that made it off limits, and indeed, not susceptible, to public understanding. The royal conscience was thus among the secrets of state connected to political power.²⁴⁶ Louis Adrian Montrose, moreover, has shown a symbolic visual locus of Elizabeth's *arcana imperii* on the royal body.²⁴⁷ The Queen's "virgin knot," that appeared in her portraits where her father Henry had won his codpiece, offered "what might be called a natural symbol of her *arcana imperii*, the incarnation of her state secrets."²⁴⁸ In lifting women's skirts, James revealed the truth about the Queen's jewels: that there was really nothing there. The political content of this statement is revealed by Elizabeth's presentation of her "secrets of power:" James showed that the female body was no longer a locus for the mysteries of state, or for that matter, any mysteries at all. It was transparent, and transparency is incompatible with Tudor and Stuart notions of political rule.

In light of this refiguring of the female body as incompatible with political power, it is not surprising that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a trend toward increasing disqualification of women for public office based on their gender alone.²⁴⁹ As Mendelson and Crawford show with respect to women holding public office, "[d]uring the [sixteenth century] a patchwork of arrangements based on custom or local

²⁴⁶ See GOLDBERG, *supra* note 119 and accompanying text.

²⁴⁷ MONTROSE, *supra* note 13.

²⁴⁸ MONTROSE, *supra* note 13.

²⁴⁹ SARA MENDELSON & PATRICIA CRAWFORD, *WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND 1550-1720* 57-58

contingencies appears to have predominated. . . . some localities showed more concern for inheritance rights than for the sex of the officer.”²⁵⁰ By the late seventeenth century, however, “a consensus had emerged that declared women unfit for civic office” because of their sex.²⁵¹ This belief rested on the idea that women were unsuited for duty in the public realm: in 1788, a court deemed the office of church sexton acceptable for a woman because it “was only a private office of trust,” but declared that of overseer of the poor unacceptable because it was considered a public office.²⁵² Of course, this trend reflected a broad range of social, economic and political changes; it was not solely caused by the backlash against Elizabeth’s rule. The symbolic systems, however, that enabled this trend, and that determined what was imaginable for women, constituted a reconfiguration of Elizabeth’s iconography.²⁵³

This “regendering” was part of the logic of exorcism in general. Lyndal Roper has suggested that disruptions in acceptable feminine speech and excessive bodily movements usually associated with males indicated to observers the presence of demons or the devil, and that successful exorcism succeeded in restoring proper, gender-based

(1998).

²⁵⁰ *Id.* at 58.

²⁵¹ *Id.*

²⁵² *Stubbes Case* (1788), *English Reports*, cxiii. 216.

²⁵³ In this context, it must be understood that this location was the eroticized part of a woman’s body in this period. Breasts, though considered adornments, were not the focus of sexualized attention as they are today. Women at court often wore them uncovered; they were regarded as feminine allurements, like the face or hair. The genitals, on the other hand, were the locus of attention when the issue was one of literal sexual attention and sexual violence. See G. R. QUAIFFE, *WANTON WENCHES AND WAYWARD WIVES* 165-185 (1979). Thus, the exposure of this part of the female body directed attention at its most highly sexualized and gendered part.

decorum to the victim's behavior and appropriate boundaries to her body.²⁵⁴ Roper writes about possession and exorcism in its European context; though the English campaign against exorcism relied on the same underlying logic, the specifics of James's debunking "discoveries" were aimed at the iconography of Elizabethan power, specifically, the *arcana imperii*. The exorcisms that Roper describes succeeded by the conventional means of prayer: flipping up skirts and entrapment through attractive young men is notably absent. These were Jacobean innovations. A hundred and fifty years later, this gendering had become the logic of hysteria: Victorian psychiatrist John Conolly advised asylum superintendents to supply female hysteria patients with attractive caps for Sunday wear, because "[d]ress is women's weakness, and in the treatment of lunacy it should be an instrument of control, and therefore of recovery."²⁵⁵

Another congruence between the logic of exorcism and that of hysteria was the assumption that the possessed/hysterical girl was lying, deceiving those around her in a quest for attention, and that her "cure" consisted of revealing this deceit for what it was.²⁵⁶ This approach was new: before, possession had been taken at face value, and cure was seen as liberating the victim from the demons who inhabited her body or from the spells of the person who had bewitched her. Pins in the arms, burns, were used to determine whether the possession was genuine; there was a possibility that the victim was faking, but there was also a real possibility that the fits were real. This new approach,

²⁵⁴ LYNDAL ROPER, *OEDIPUS AND THE DEVIL: WITCHCRAFT, SEXUALITY AND RELIGION IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE 190-191* (1994).

²⁵⁵ SHOWALTER, *supra* note 176 at 84.

²⁵⁶ Elaine Showalter, *Feminism, Hysteria and Gender*, in *HYSTERIA BEYOND FREUD* 301 (Sander Gilman, Helen King, et al. eds, 1993).

that dominated the treatment of hysteria through the nineteenth century, assumed that the symptoms were the product of deception, and described the doctor's role as one of tricking, or forcing, the patient to give them up.²⁵⁷ The theme that connects James to the nineteenth century psychiatrist was the idea that curing the female body consisted of compelling it to give up its pretense of having secrets, to reveal its transparency.

To return to the Jacobean: women's sexuality was also used to show up fake demons in a figurative sense in the case of Anne Gunter, the 18 year old daughter of Brian Gunter.²⁵⁸ In the late summer of 1604, she began exhibiting typical symptoms of possession: temporary deafness and blindness, insensitivity to pain, vomiting pins, violent fits and attacks on those around her, etc. She accused three neighboring women of bewitching her. The women were tried and found not guilty, but this did not put an end to Gunter's fits. They continued through the summer of 1605, and finally, at the end of August, attracted the attention of the King, who was visiting Oxford. James interviewed Gunter four times between August and October, and referred her case to Richard Bancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bancroft, in turn, put her into the custody of his chaplain and assistant, Samuel Harsnett, who was finally able to uncover her deception:

Whils't the King was staying at Oxford a young girl about eighteen years of age excited the wonder of the people of Britain on account of her strange cleverness in deception, that imposed upon the astonished multitude. . . . she was at once brought to the king. To the great wonder of the bystanders she lacked all sense of pain when she was stuck with pins. . . Not only was this wonderful in the eyes

²⁵⁷ *Id.* at 300-301.

²⁵⁸ For an account of the Gunter case as it transpired in the Star Chamber, *see generally* JAMES SHARPE, *THE BEWITCHING OF ANNE GUNTER* (2000). The transcript of her testimony to the Star Chamber consists of thirty pages of handwritten foolscap in the British library. *See id.* at 6.

of those who were present, but she also cast out of her mouth and throat needles and pins in an extraordinary fashion. The King wondering whence she vomited forth so many pins so suddenly, plied her with repeated questions but she remained firm; asserting that this happened to her by a miracle and that the sense of feeling taken away from her for the time being would return to her by divine Providence. The king . . . committed the young girl and the investigation of the matter to the Archbishop of Canterbury . . . the Archbishop called in the services of Samuel Harsnett . . . Led by a hint from the Archbishop, he induced a very proper youth in the retinue of the archbishop to entice the girl into love; who . . . easily procured her favor. Thereafter he gradually neglected her on the pretext of her magical vanities . . . But she (as is characteristic of womankind) inclined to lust, revealed all her tricks, committing fame and safety to the mastery of the youth. Thus was fraud laid bare and detected by lack of self control in a woman. In the end the glory of detecting the fraud was awarded to the king, and ridicule for their vanity was awarded to the actors.²⁵⁹

This account records a remarkable moment of "regendering," and, furthermore, one depicted as a play acted out on a stage. Putting the girl to the test as human, that is, made of flesh, was not effective: pins in her body, burns, did not cause pain. Only when a test was made of her nature, constructed as specifically feminine, as opposed to simply "human," was her "counterfeit" uncovered. In this case, that part of femininity that was called upon is psychological - woman's "inclination to lust" - whereas in the former case it was the literal locus of her gender. In either case, the minute the inquisitor proved the victim to be gendered female, the ruse ends. Again, the language - "laid bare" - evokes

²⁵⁹ ROBERT JOHNSTON, *HISTORIA RERUM BRITANNICARUM* 401 (1655), quoted in JAMES SHARPE, *THE BEWTICHING OF ANNE GUNTER* 182 (2000). Johnston, a Scot, was in James' retinue at Oxford when the events he describes took place. *Id.* at 181. To seal the regendering deal, James is said to have given the contrite girl a marriage portion to marry the youth. See Thomas Guidot, *Preface* to EDWARD JORDEN, *DISCOURSE OF NATURAL BATHS* (1669) (unpaginated).

stripping: the "proper youth" did figuratively what James did literally in the previous instance, revealing demonic visitation to be inconsistent with the female body.

By way of contrast, before James came on the scene, cases in which girls' claims of possession were revealed as fraudulent fail to display this regendering. For example, when Mildred Norrington of Westwell, the seventeen-year-old illegitimate daughter of Alice Norrington, started having fits in 1574, the unmasking of her deceit took a different form.²⁶⁰ Mildred threw herself around with great violence, and a male-sounding voice issued from her mouth accusing "Old Alice of Westwell," (her own mother ²⁶¹) of bewitching her. The story spread far and wide, and finally she was summoned to appear before a Mr. Thomas Wotton of Boston Malherb, who, aided by George Darrel, a lawyer and justice of the peace, found out that Mildred was in fact a talented ventriloquist, and had been using her gifts to simulate a male voice that claimed to be that of the devil.²⁶² Interestingly, is that the debunking and subsequent confession here were achieved without any of the gender-based trickery James would later use. In fact, Reginald Scott comments:

[n]either was her confession won, according to the form of the Spanish Inquisition; to wit, through extremity of tortures, nor yet by guile, or flatterie, not by presumptions; but through wise and perfect triall of everie circumstance, the illusion was manifestlie disclosed."²⁶³

²⁶⁰ See Scott, *supra* note 32 at 72.

²⁶¹ See Scott, *supra* note 32 at 74.

²⁶² See Scott, *supra* note 32 at 73.

²⁶³ Scott, *supra* note 32 at 74; boys who claimed to be possessed were treated without gender-based trickery: Thomas Darling, of Burton, started having fits in 1596 after getting lost in the woods. He eventually accused an old village woman of bewitching him. Samuel Harsnett came to examine the boy, and finally, in response to threats, Darling admitted that he had tried to imitate the antics of some other

Henry, James's son, followed in his father's footsteps. In a letter, James commended his son's efforts at rooting out sham victims of demonic possession, complimenting him on "the discovery of your little counterfeit wench," adding "I praye God ye maye be my aire in such discoveries."²⁶⁴ A counterfeit wench was a witch; once she was shown not to be a counterfeit wench, then she could be shown to be a counterfeit witch. These cases give voice to the notion that the potential demonic power of women could be contained if gender could be reinstated as ultimately decidable and the female body could be shown to be transparent. Elizabeth's iconography of power, by situating her *arcana imperii* at the locus of her gender, had put these matters into question. In this context, it is interesting to note that James's praise of his son for unmasking the "counterfeit Wenche" immediately brought to the king's mind the male lineage between them, inspiring his hope that Henry will be his "aire in such discoveries." The rhetorical progress in this letter, from Henry's "dis-coveries" to the male lineage he shared with

allegedly possessed girls he had heard about, and that the whole thing had been a sham. PHILIP C. ALMOND, *DEMONIC POSSESSION AND EXORCISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: CONTEMPORARY TEXTS AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXTS* 154 (2004). Again, in 1598, in Nottingham, William Somers was induced to confess that his alleged possession was fraudulent through sheer threat of force: threatened with beating and with "a pair of pinchers to pinch him by the toes," he confessed to having counterfeited. See *The Several Answers . . . on Certain Questions . . . for the Discovery of the Practices with W. Somers to cause the said W. Somers to affirm his dissembling of possession*, reproduced in ALMOND, *supra* 282-83. Finally, the twelve year old William Perry, in 1620, began feigning fits after claiming to have had an encounter with an old woman from the area, and proceeded to exhibit various signs of the supernatural, among that was the production of black urine. At first the local Bishop tried to beat the truth out of him, and when this failed he sent a servant to spy on the boy through a hole in the wall. Left alone, Perry was. "espied mixing ink with his urine and nimbly conveying the ink-horn into a private place." *William Baddeley, The Boy of Bilson* (1622), reproduced in ALMOND, *supra* 334, 347 (2004) These examples show that the "re-gendering" method of uncovering fakery was used in cases involving women under James, and that in other cases, more conventional methods were used.

²⁶⁴ NICHOLS, *PROGRESSES OF JAMES I* v. I 304

James, replicates the dramatic progress in *Macbeth* from Banquo's attempts to "gender" the sisters to the triumph of the "untimely ripp'd" Macduff.

James' repositioning of the locus of the female body - sometimes literal, as when skirts were flipped; sometimes metaphorical, as when young men were called in to flirt - mirrored the repositioning of the female body in two other important arenas that set the stage for modernity: the dissection amphitheater and the insane asylum. With respect to the anatomy amphitheater, the famous frontispiece to Vesalius's *Fabric of the Human Body* (1543) makes this point.²⁶⁵ It shows the audience crowding around the dissection table, on that lies a dead female body, and beside that stands the anatomist, displaying, at the central point of the painting, the body's opened womb. The only female figure in the scene is the dissected body.²⁶⁶ The scene's similarity to one on a theatrical stage is suggested by the possibility that the architecture of the amphitheater imitated woodcuts of theaters found in printed editions of Terence (1497) and Plautus (1511); in England, the stage designer and architect Inigo Jones was commissioned to design the new anatomy theater in 1636 for the Barber-Surgeons at Monkwell Street in London.²⁶⁷

Jonathan Sawday interprets this picture as implicitly challenging the new Copernican vision of the universe through its visual assertion that the womb, not the sun, lies at the center of the universe, and of human life.²⁶⁸ While this reading is compelling

²⁶⁵ Reproduced in JONATHAN SAWDAY, *THE BODY EMBLAZONED: DISSECTION AND THE HUMAN BODY IN RENAISSANCE CULTURE* Fig. 2 (1995).

²⁶⁶ Sawday suggests, however, that one of the figures in the shadows behind the arcade is that of a woman. *Id.* at 68.

²⁶⁷ *Id.* at 69, 76.

²⁶⁸ *Id.* at 71.

as far as it goes, Sawday fails to take into account the lines of gender and power that the painting displays. As Brigitte Cazelles has noted - in an essay that also emphasizes the theatrical nature of this scene - the painting presents a “victimizing understanding of order.”²⁶⁹ The flesh is turned into truth on the surface of the female body, through the violation, or uncovering, of its secrets. This revelation of truth through the exposure of the womb is not limited to the anatomy theater: illustrations from Berengarius’ *Isagoge Brevis* (1522) show female figures throwing back their coverings to reveal the truth about their bodies - in the form of the exposed womb.²⁷⁰ This gesture is analogous to James’ flipping up of skirts. Both gestures assert that the identity of the female body is determined solely by the uterus, and that, once this is made the powerless object of the male gaze, it can serve, as the foundation for male power, both scientific, in Vesalius’ case, and, in the case of James, political.

In a famous nineteenth-century photograph of a lecture by Charcot at the Salpetriere, the audience of male doctors in training gazes attentively as the psychiatrist who holds up the swooning figure of an hysterical female patient.²⁷¹ Her head and upper body fall backwards, her blouse is slips off one shoulder, and her pelvis juts forward, making it the focal point of her body. All of these repositionings had as their goal the location of “truth:” “[t]he anatomist . . . assum[es] the existence of a separation between false forms and true contents: by cutting away illusory forms . . . he will penetrate to the

²⁶⁹ Cazelles, *supra* note at 70.

²⁷⁰ Reproduced in SAWDAY, *supra* note 260 at 69-70.

²⁷¹ Reproduced in SHOWALTER, *supra* note 176 at 149.

real truth.”²⁷² In the nineteenth-century treatment of hysterics, Elaine Showalter observes, “[t]he goal was to isolate the patient . . . unmask her deceitful stratagems, coerce her into surrendering her symptoms, and finally overcome her self-centeredness.”²⁷³ Psychological and anatomical truth have coincided.

The gestures of both the anatomists and of James reverse Queen Elizabeth’s own self-anatomy. In an episode made famous by Louis Montrose, Elizabeth once greeted the French ambassador wearing “a petticoat of white damask, girdled and open in front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress, and one could see all her belly, and even to her navel . . . she has a trick of putting both hands on her gown and opening it insomuch that all her belly can be seen.”²⁷⁴ As Sawday notes, the Queen “teasingly . . . blazoned her own body, revealing to her courtiers what was at the same time denied to them.”²⁷⁵ James’s skirt flipping, and the anatomists tables, repossessed this locus of desire and queenly power, claiming it as the object of their gaze and their knowledge.

In this light, Jorden's determination to prove that Mary Glover's symptoms were caused by hysteria takes on new meaning. Up till this point, symptoms such as Glover’s were ascribed to the rising of the Mother (the womb), that could be brought on by sexual

²⁷² DEVON L. HODGES, *RENAISSANCE FICTIONS OF ANATOMY* 15 (1985).

²⁷³ SHOWALTER, *supra* note 176 at 137.

²⁷⁴ The account of the French ambassador is reproduced in Montrose, *Shaping Fantasies*, *supra* note 4 at 198.

²⁷⁵ SAWDAY, *supra* note 264 at 198.

deprivation or simply menstruation.²⁷⁶ But because Mary Glover was too young at the time for these explanations, Jorden, to make his argument for hysteria, had to argue that the brain by itself could produce the symptoms.²⁷⁷ In so doing, he took a gender-based illness and made it more (or less) than physiological - he made it psychological. This significant move, played out as the Queen lay dying and her successor James was losing his belief in witchcraft, shows a shift in the construction of female power, as the power of the queen first became the potentially demonic power of all women, and then was contained as a mental illness called the "Mother." Jorden's rhetorical maneuver shifted the seat of gender from a physical site - the womb - to a metaphysical site - the mind. In doing so he literally eliminated any space for the "naturally unnatural" in the female body. Femininity now occupied the mind as well as the womb.

CONCLUSION

The modern depiction of the female body whose beginnings this article describes did not emerge solely because Elizabeth was Queen and created an iconography that had to be dismembered after her death. Such an argument would have to be based on some notion of an alternative history, that would be impossible to construct. Changes in women's roles and in views of female nature were shaped by a wide variety of social, economic, political and demographic developments associated with modernity that interacted in complex ways. Women's relegation to the "private sphere," and claims about their "sensitive natures" were, clearly, influenced by the demands of these changing

²⁷⁶ MACDONALD, *supra* note 212 at

²⁷⁷ MACDONALD, *supra* note 212 at

circumstances in ways that are beyond this work's purview. Two points, however, are clear: one, Elizabeth's iconography provided the symbolic system that, reworked, came to express these new attitudes, and, two, that this iconography, to an extent, determined their content. For example, we cannot know whether, without Elizabeth's presentation of her body's relation to the *arcana imerii*, the backlash would have given us a female body incapable of opacity, devoid of any secrets that could not be revealed as biological. All we know is that, with the backlash, it did give us such a body, and that that body is still with us, and with the law.