

The Paternal Dilemma: Fathers, Sons and Inheritance in Shakespearean Drama

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The Paternal Dilemma

Fathers, Sons and Inheritance in Shakespearean Drama



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Foreword

Shakespeare is a sociologist and a dramatic architect. He constructs his plays in a way that both challenges and affirms social values, and decorates his characters with the richness of ambiguity. It is my task to explore Shakespeare's social analysis concerning the patriarchal structure of the family and the economic implications of this system. Four plays in particular, *King Lear*, *Henry IV*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest* resonate with these thematic elements. They are plays about fathers, sons, paternal power and its transmission. I begin with several questions: What is the proper role for a patriarch, be he literal father or king? What happens when traditional systems of inheritance fail? What is precisely the chief inheritance between father and son? And finally, Why is the institution of inheritance so important?

In his investigation of these themes, Shakespeare "shuffles the deck" of family arrangements. This technique gives the audience several different perspectives on the Elizabethan family and its generational transfers of power. The four plays I examine in this thesis rearrange the structure of the family; in *King Lear*, there is one father, and three daughters. In *Henry IV*, there is one son, and two father figures. *As You Like It* features no fathers and two pairs of brothers, while *The Tempest* presents a single father

with four child-figures. All four of these plays have a conspicuously absent mother to highlight the importance of the paternal-filial relationship. These plays also take us across genre; tragedy, history, comedy and what some refer to as “romance” offer different perspectives on the same theme; it is yet another lens on this sociological camera. Taking a cultural snapshot, Shakespeare winds up a certain dramatic scenario, letting it play out to its natural conclusion. He then complicates and develops these conclusions with ambiguity, irony and symbolic gestures. As a result, these plays teach something about the institution of patriarchy and primogeniture to the audience. With the protagonists, we undergo journeys, and emerge with a new understanding of the father role and its economic function.

Therefore, we can consider these four “paternal dramas” as “learning plays.” Shakespeare tangles and untangles the web of family economics, bringing us from Space A (a place of error, envy or injustice) to Space B (the place of education, reflection and gentility). With this geographical shift comes a philosophical shift as the characters shed their sin and begin to understand the best way to act in a system that is by no means perfect. As the protagonist returns to Space A, empowered and self-aware, the audience has hope for what before seemed like an uncertain future. The process of education makes this possible.

In my exploration of the Shakespearean father, I will navigate *King Lear*, *Henry IV*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*, paying close attention to the element of education and the artistic variations of the family structure. I place the plays in this non-chronological order to emphasize genre and to complicate the paternal-filial dynamic one step at a time. Of course, there is not one single angle, a “master shot,” that will reveal

the living, breathing organism of the Elizabethan family in all its complexity. Like the protagonists in these plays, we must enter the medium of drama with an open mind, prepared to reflect upon and question the family values that Shakespeare simultaneously reinforces and deconstructs.

Paternal Error and the Test of the Journey:

Primogeniture as Crisis in *King Lear*

In *King Lear*, we witness a landscape dominated by the family structure and the problems that occur during the transfer of power from one generation to the next. Shakespeare constructs parallel plots of two fathers struggling with these issues in order to explore conditions in which primogeniture doesn't run smoothly. Primogeniture was the dominant system of inheritance in England during Shakespeare's time, and works as a driving force in *King Lear*. According to this legal process, the firstborn son would unquestionably inherit the property of the family so as to avoid the splintering of estates among siblings (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 260). The practice is a function of patriarchal order and a means to sustain it.

Inheritance by primogeniture is the principal focus of *King Lear*, and Shakespeare creates two father figures who demonstrate the critical conflicts presented by this generational issue. Lear is an aging king who wishes to "shake all cares and business from our age" (I.i.37), setting up a will that he will oversee while he still lives. The Earl of Gloucester is tricked by his illegitimate younger son, who doesn't want to be left penniless. Together, these two family dramas operate as a dual case study in which primogeniture is shaken up and broken down only to be confirmed as the single viable

option for inheritance. *King Lear* also examines the relationships between parents and children, brother and brother, sister and sister, and master and servant. But the most important of these bonds for this argument is that of the father and child; the play scrutinizes the role of the father and how he interacts with his children on both economic and moral grounds. The two fathers in this play undergo journeys through both suffering and enlightenment that ultimately test them, guide them and teach them how to act as patriarchs according to laws and morals. Like other works by Shakespeare, it is a “learning play.”

Two important points set us on this particular thematic approach to the text, both involving the world in which *King Lear* takes place, a world far removed from Shakespeare’s England. An examination of *Lear*’s dramatic environment nonetheless sheds light on the historical context in which the text was written, and proves that this is certainly a play about inheritance issues – in fact, it is a play that ultimately defends the existing social order as a function of patriarchy, for good or for evil. Primogeniture greatly favors the firstborn; in the case of other sons, a father would give what he could, perhaps a good education if possible. But younger sons stood primarily as insurance for the eldest in case of a death (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 260).

For daughters, the issue of inheritance was typically replaced by marriages involving a dowry, material goods a father provides a husband-to-be. In this case, daughters themselves were a kind of inheritance between fathers and sons-in-law. Aristocratic marriages were usually arranged, and almost always to someone of equal social status. This is not to rule out the very rare cases of independent women who governed estates of their own because of the deaths of males, either fathers or husbands

(Briggs 52). Plays like *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice* explore this possibility. But in any case, the situations in Lear and Gloucester's families demand a consideration of these structures, and present extreme cases in which the system of primogeniture is stretched and tested for weaknesses.

King Lear takes place in an indeterminate pre-Christian Britain. We know this because of the many references to pagan deities and vague historical hints, like this one by the Fool: "This prophecy shall Merlin make, for I live before his time" (III.ii.95-96). The specific geographic setting is vague, and we don't get a clear sense of where Lear's court is. However, from geographical allusions in the text, primarily repeated references to Dover, we can infer that a large part of the action occurs in Kent, a county southeast of London. It is also likely that the name of Lear's courtier, Kent, is a pun on the geographical setting of the play. A reference to the county of Kent would have had certain connotations for the Elizabethan audience in regards to family economics.

In pre-conquest England, this region was famous for its peculiar system of inheritance known as "gavelkind," which promised equal portions of land to each son, rather than having all of the land go to the firstborn. This obscure practice, which directly contradicted primogeniture, was permitted by the Norman conquerors on account of the independent and steadfast spirit of the "Men of Kent" that Wordsworth praises in his 1603 sonnet (Cooley 328). This region's alternative to primogeniture stood as a "paradise for younger brothers" that were equal to their elders in the eyes of not just their fathers, but also the law (Cooley 329). This idealized society is nothing like Lear's Britain, however; Edmund is ignored by his father's will, and Cordelia, Lear's youngest, is disowned, despite her righteous spirit. The setting of the play calls to mind the practice of

gavelkind, and emphasizes it by its absence. While it may represent an alternative, more equal system of inheritance, as does Lear's division of the kingdom, it undermines the structure of primogeniture, and by extension, the system of patriarchy that gives Lear and Gloucester their power and influence.

The patriarchal environment of the play is also reinforced by the absence of mother figures, a common Shakespearean device. *King Lear*'s archetypal bonds between father and child would be skewed, distorted, even weakened, if Shakespeare had included a Queen Lear and Gloucester's wife as active characters. These maternal presences would provide a buffer between father and child, also acting as an intermediary or peacemaker with the ability to influence the father with her opinion. The absence of mothers is symbolically significant to an interpretation concerning inheritance, and suggests that the play may be more allegorical than realistic. Shakespeare's tragedies often do this, stretching structures and institutions to their breaking points for the purpose of examination (Greenblatt 6). With the wives and mothers out of the picture, it is the role of the "ungrateful" daughter and the illegitimate son to challenge the patriarchal authority, making it a generational, rather than a marriage issue. This puts a spotlight on the father. We watch him, and we judge him. We see what he has at the beginning, the choices and errors he makes, and what he has to lose. He is the sole decision maker when it comes to familial and legal choices. For rash Lear, the ultimate test is whether or not he can balance these roles, whether or not he can shuttle back and forth between the duties as both king, the father to his people, and the literal father within his family structure (McLuskie 147).

At the very start of the play, we come face-to-face with legal decisions: “But now in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most, for equalities are so weigh’d, that curiosity in neither can make choice of either’s moi’ty” (I.i.3-7), says Gloucester, referring to Lear’s plan to divide the kingdom and the unimportance of preference in such a decision. Cornwall and Albany are essentially equal, representing the mandatory social figure of husband, and neither has an advantage in terms of what land they will receive. The interesting point is the fact that neither Goneril nor Regan are mentioned, but rather their husbands are. This is the structure of patriarchy at work – upon marriage, a woman’s identity would become a part of the husband’s. Legally, she would be known as a “feme covert” in a practice known as coverture, taking on a kind of feudal relationship with her husband, exchanging material production and work for love and protection (Briggs 49). The discussion of Albany and Cornwall, though they are not true heirs of Lear, hints at a patriarchal bias in the partible inheritance plan that Lear effects in the court scene, even if the daughters are more important to the play.

It is in this scene, in Lear’s court, that the “dramatic problem” first begins. The King, approaching the end of his days, sees a need to organize and divide his land into three pieces, as Gloucester had said: “Now we will divest us both of rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state” (I.i.49-50). These elements of power are what the King represents in *Henry IV*, and what Prospero strays from in *The Tempest*. Lear’s choice is not actually necessary, but he attempts to deal with the problem of succession now, perhaps hoping to avoid the kingdom falling to pieces upon his death. This situation echoes what Shakespeare’s England felt during the reign of Elizabeth; the Queen was on

the throne, aging, childless, and no one knew who the next ruler would be – it was a national situation of psycho-social chaos (Briggs 48). This divestiture that Lear proposes is the generational transfer of power; this is the King's definition of inheritance, though he rejects primogeniture in favor of a tripartite division. But just as Lear plans to divide his kingdom in three, he divides his kingship itself into three parts through this announcement, namely “my power, / Pre-eminence, and all the large effects / That troop with majesty” (I.i.130-132). Division of any sort contradicts primogeniture and poses a threat to the dominant pattern of patriarchy, representing a potential chaos. At the same time, Lear insists that he “shall retain / The name, and all th'addition to a king” (I.i.135-136). In his old age, Lear hopes for something like a royal retirement – he wants to still be the king without the political responsibility (Kahn 6). The King has three daughters and no sons, an unusual case which creates problems already. Probably, giving the land to the eldest daughter Goneril and Albany would closest fit the pattern of primogeniture. As Goneril is now a social dependent of Albany, her husband could be treated as an heir (Sullivan 105). But Lear's decision to divide his land is unexpected, unorthodox, and, as the play will teach us, an unwise move for the patriarch of both the family and the state.

Why would Lear reject this closest alternative to primogeniture (by giving the whole kingdom to Goneril and Albany) and instead divide his territories into three parts? To hypothesize, several problems stemmed from the system of primogeniture, no matter how commonplace it was. Firstborn sons, though they would one day have full possession of the family estate, had no other option for their future, and simply ended up waiting until their father's death for their aristocratic life to truly begin (Cooley 334). The situation was much worse for younger siblings, who were often regarded, as historian

Lawrence Stone puts it, as “a kind of walking sperm bank,” that is, insurance in case the firstborn died. That way, the patriarchal system of primogeniture would be guaranteed. Career options were limited for these younger siblings in any case, and education was not always promised (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 260). The fact that Lear’s children are all female complicates the situation. Under primogeniture, females were worth least of all, and instead represented a financial burden for the father. Suitors accepted wives based on a dowry that the father could provide (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 261). Three dowries is quite a sum, even for a king. We can read Lear’s decision as self-indulgent. First of all, he divides the responsibility of his lands and politics among his daughters, keeping only the royal title for himself. This division of responsibility is dangerous, diluting power and causing incentive for civil conflict. Though Lear professes that his daughters benefit from his inheritance plan, in reality he sets himself up as the largest beneficiary.

Kingly Divisions and Paternal Love

Lear’s division of the kingdom, a move that violates general English norms of inheritance, as well as those of the play itself, is a deceptively simple solution to three major, interconnected problems. The audience faces the question of what Lear should actually do concerning this divestiture, but the unusual circumstances of Lear’s family obscure a clear answer. In any case, the chaos and suffering that result from the separation of the kingdom offer the proposition that the King should have given his land to just one daughter in order to prevent civil struggle (though no characters advocate this

option). The decision is now between the option according to primogeniture, Goneril, and the choice according to morals and merit, Cordelia. The confusion within these considerations make Lear's actual decision seem simple. It is a kind of compromise, a plan that undermines both the moral and the traditional option, and actually benefits the King himself. First, he is aging. Lear calmly alludes to his proximity to death, and his eldest daughter Goneril later on (and less mildly) mentions "the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them" (I.i.298-299). In short, the King, in his old age, could feel overwhelmed by the public and political pressures of his rule. Second, he needs to decide upon a legal plan for the kingdom: "Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent / To shake all cares and business from our age, / Conferring them on younger strengths" (I.i.37-40), all the while retaining "the name and all th'addition to a king" (I.i.36). Lear desires royal authority without responsibility. He wants respect, power, and the company of a hundred knights, but doesn't want to burden himself with political decisions. This bold move in hopes of a simpler, easier life again reflects his anxieties about his age; it is a kind of retirement plan. Finally, Lear must also deal with the marital situations of his three daughters: "We have this hour a constant will to publish / Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife / May be prevented now" (I.i.42-44). Lear uses the word "publish," a word with significant legal connotations that emphasize the transaction-like quality of marriage in this world.

Furthermore, these lines highlight the fact that the marriages of Goneril and Regan, the two eldest, have not yet been finalized with a dowry, and parcels of land will serve nicely as such (Sullivan 105). Cordelia's marriage to France is also a part of this third point, and Lear's decisions concerning this youngest daughter are a major factor in

his paternal error. Lear is eager to shed his political responsibility; he is selfish in a way by making things easier for himself while he complicates the state's politics. Coleridge saw the King's self-bias, and called it a "feeble selfishness, self-supportless and leaning for pleasure on another's breast; the selfish craving after a sympathy with a prodigal disinterest" (Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, 54).

All of these designs, which mesh together in the I.i court scene, are part of Lear's plan to simultaneously avoid trouble and to exhibit himself as a powerful and well-loved father. But in this hope, Lear confuses his duties as king and father, roles which are not so different in reference to the culture of patriarchy, but have diverging duties. Cordelia clarifies this dichotomy, calling attention to Lear's role confusion: "You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I / Return those duties back as are right fit" (I.i.96-97), she says, accentuating the familial tone of the scene that seems to outweigh the political tone. Lear doesn't see this point and refuses to accept Cordelia's "simple" daughterly love. Aside from the mixture of these paternal roles, Lear claims that there is some preventative power in the completion of these plans (at least in respect to the dowries), and this definitely seems true. Lear knows what problems he faces, and he has plans for each, plans that overlap. He is old. He needs to resolve the succession question. He needs to finalize his daughters' marriages. Here, in the king's court, all needs can be met. The King combines these issues into one solution, dealing with all three in what seems at first to be a pragmatic way of handling several demands. In spite of all this, Lear calls this plan "our darker purpose" (I.i.36), an ominous way to refer to a secret that he has probably kept to himself because of its controversial nature. But suddenly executed in the formality of the ceremony, Lear is able to realize his inheritance plans (Goldberg 18).

Image is especially important to Lear. He performs these three tasks in a ceremony of pomp that appears to conclude his royal career. He conflates his roles as king and father in a glorious demonstration of his dual paternal authority; as king, he divides his land, an act he argues is prudent given the fact that he has three daughters (McLuskie 145). As a father, he is loved by each of his children, and seeks to prove it. These intentions meet in the moment that has been called the “love trial”:

Tell me, my daughters...
Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge? Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first. (I.i.48-54)

The element of pomp is evident in his speech; Lear chooses the daughters in order of their birth, a ceremonial gesture that thematically reflects the concept of primogeniture, perhaps in an effort to legitimize the inheritance plan he is about to effect. Lear’s “love trial” attempts an air of order that the King ultimately undermines with his plans for the kingdom.

Though Lear divides his territories among his three daughters, he hopes to favor his preferred daughter Cordelia within the constructed order of the ceremony. Lear therefore doubly undermines the system of primogeniture, first with a partible inheritance plan, and second of all with a meritocratic clause. The love test is not real; Lear has already determined that Cordelia will get the best third of the kingdom. We can assume that the three parcels of land are equal in size, but not in opulence, that is, in their richness for natural resources (Sullivan 105). Lear awards Goneril and Albany the “shadowy forests” and “rich champagnes” (I.i.64) without yet hearing from Regan or Cordelia, proof that he has already made up his mind. Furthermore, he reveals that

Cordelia has an opportunity to “draw / A third more opulent than your sisters” (I.i.85-86).

The test is merely a public spectacle, and the division of land is not in fact equal (McDonald, *Shakespeare's King Lear with The Tempest*, 20). In a sense, Lear favors Cordelia as the heir he would want according to patriarchal love, even though this is impossible within the system of primogeniture. So in the absence of a family structure suited for primogeniture, that is, with a legally-privileged firstborn male heir, Lear makes his own rules – he creates a partible plan favoring one child over the others. He divides his kingdom according to legal sense, but portions the properties according to his children's shows of love for him (Kahn 6).

The last item on Lear's agenda concerns the marriages of his three daughters. Goneril and Regan's marriage arrangements lack only the dowries to make them official. The king's plans to “publish / Our daughters' several dowers” emphasizes the legal side of marriage as an institution. In fact, the legal sense of “publish” refers to the execution of a will before witnesses, and this is exactly what Lear is doing (“Publish, v.”). This consideration of marriage downplays the truth of any love between spouses, and the economics of such an arrangement would have made sense to Shakespeare's audiences in an age when financial matters often dictated marriages (Briggs 53). Lear approves of his daughters' husbands and blesses these two couples with the parcels of land which serve as the dowry. He concludes the business with his good wishes: “To thee and thine hereditary ever / Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom” (I.i.79-80). Lear reveals his aspiration for the longevity of the political order as it stands, hoping this action will prove justified in the future. Lear's unorthodox means therefore undermine primogeniture while he is trying to uphold the greater structure of patriarchy. This contradiction of

means and ends leads to the suffering experienced by the power-holding father characters later on in the play. Hand-in-hand with this contradiction is the confusion of Lear's legal and paternal roles. He overlaps motives, namely his need to "divest himself" of power as king and his need to provide a dowry for his daughters. Maybe Lear doesn't have to divest himself at all, but sees an opportunity to do so in his daughters' coinciding marriages (Kahn 5).

Things are complicated when Lear rejects his preferred daughter Cordelia. He does this because she refuses to play her prescribed role as most pious daughter in the love trial, professing a plain love that is appropriate for a father, but apparently not for a king-father (Kahn 15). "Here I disclaim all my paternal care / Propinquity and property of blood, / And as a stranger to my heart and me / Hold thee from this forever" (I.i.113-115), Lear says as he rejects her, all because she loves her father "according to my bond, no more nor less" (I.i.93). She speaks simply, using none of the flowery language Goneril and Regan fill their speeches with. And yet, the word "bond" suggests an interest in the legal process; the word makes sense given the fact that Cordelia deserves the kingdom more than either of her sisters according to merit alone. Allegorically, she represents filial duty (Goldberg 22). Lear's rejection is nonetheless a spectacular overreaction in the spirit of the ceremony. He acts not as a father, as Cordelia would like to see him, but rather as a king, even a tyrant, treating his youngest daughter as a subversive subject or a traitor, using all his paternal authority. Cordelia's choice to ignore the rules of the ceremony must certainly be a blow to Lear's patriarchal ego. She undermines the formality with the brutal reality we see again and again in the play. But given the context of the court, Lear must disown her, even though the move contradicts his moral sense (Goldberg 24).

What the King fails to see, however, is the misunderstanding that the love trial has created. “See better, Lear” (I.i.158), says the Earl of Kent, demonstrating his fealty as he does throughout the play, even when disguised as Caius. But Kent’s words are to no avail. Lear cannot publicly accept such a bare declaration of love, even from his favorite child – he is the king, and deserves a profession of love fit for one. But Cordelia sees Lear’s ceremonial atmosphere as superficial and seeks to subvert it, daring to see the King as her father to whom she owes her duty. Speaking as the voice of the play, Kent begs Lear to “Reserve thy state / And in thy best consideration check / This hideous rashness” (I.i.149-151), pleading for him to preserve the order of his rule, an object of patriarchy and primogeniture. Lear’s “hideous rashness” is his self-serving decision to quickly divide the kingdom and banish his favorite daughter. He is seduced by his own ceremony, by the gleam of his own crown; he falls for the profane love of his elder daughters and ignores the divine love of Cordelia, according to Marilyn Gaull’s duality in her essay “Love and Order in *King Lear*” (337). Lear is caught up in anxieties about the future of his kingdom, his age, and his ease. His decision to divide the kingdom reflects these anxieties, and it is a plan that benefits him, as selfish as it is. The structure of his family complicates this process; he is deceived by his own designs when he chooses Regan and Goneril, who represent “filial ingratitude” as Lear sees it. Merit and birth order are therefore inversely related in this particular case, which seems to undermine the social order of patriarchy and its primary means of sustainability, primogeniture (Cooley 337).

The parallel story of the Gloucester family adds emphasis to the economic struggles between fathers and their children, errors that violate systemic order, and the

chaos that ensues. In this case, however, the conflict rises from the bottom of the family structure, rather than being imposed from the top, as is the case with Lear. These two tragic instigators, Lear and Edmund, undermine the structure of primogeniture, attacking its roots until it comes crashing down. Lear blindly hacks at the foundations while Edmund, the younger and illegitimate son, strategically seeks out the weakest parts in order to overturn the order of filial preference in his family (Kahn 23). The focus of the play is on the main plot; after all, it is Lear who is the king, at the very top of the patriarchal structure that the play ultimately defends. But the Gloucester subplot features the only true legitimate male heir in the entire play. Edgar bears out his suffering and poverty, proving himself worthy of moral leadership to the audience. In the case of the Gloucester family, merit and birth order are inseparable, and Edgar is instrumental for the defense of primogeniture within the constructs of the play.

Edmund: A Case Against Primogeniture

The trouble in this subplot begins as Edmund opens Act One, Scene Two with his first soliloquy. This younger, illegitimate son is a radical character bent on undermining the normalized patriarchal system of primogeniture. He declares, “Thou, Nature, art my goddess, to thy law / My services are bound” (I.ii.1-2). Edmund professes his loyalty to Nature (which opposes Lear’s idea of Nature as divinely ordained natural law) and the free thinking and agency it confers on the individual, regardless of birth order or legitimacy. His use of the informal “thy” shows how close he positions himself to Nature (McDonald, *Shakespeare’s King Lear with The Tempest*, 40). With this rhetoric, Edmund

attempts to justify his attitude and plans to dispossess his brother Edgar. His philosophy opposes the “plague of custom” that decides which son should inherit the estate, favoring the merit and will of the individual instead. This is the very criterion at the heart of the love test in Scene One; Lear cannot see the merit of his youngest daughter, however. As for Edmund, we can already see his meritocratic thinking in the first scene: “Sir, I shall study deserving” (I.i.31), he says as he goes offstage. The “custom” of primogeniture that represents societal order to Kent and Gloucester is a sickness from Edmund’s point of view. The only medicine is the ambition and rebellion of the individual. He can’t have a title, so he wants land and power. Edmund hates his brother and father and wants revenge, simply stated. But we can extrapolate these feelings to a wider social context.

According to the rules of primogeniture, Edmund is twice Edgar’s inferior, first because of his age, second because of his “natural” birth outside the societal norms. Just as Edmund professes his obedience and duty to his idea of Nature, the higher power, he tries to shake up and reclaim the definition of the word “natural.” He believes the word to refer to a survival-of-the-fittest mindset, a natural selection rather than the divine natural order Lear expects in the form of obedient children. Edmund is “some twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother” (I.ii.5-6), and his casual tone and inaccuracy concerning the age difference makes it appear to be less important. However, it is important in reality, since it can determine who will legally benefit from the father’s will. The second problem Edmund faces is his birth outside wedlock. “Why bastard? Wherefore base? / When my dimensions are as well compact, / My mind as generous, and my shape as true / As honest madam’s issue?” (I.ii.6-9). His wordplay with “base” and “bastardy” mark these terms as social categories imposed unjustly, arbitrarily, upon people like him. To

Edmund, the words are empty; he cannot be “base” because of his capabilities. And indeed, the success of Edmund’s plan makes his argument convincing (Ellis 275).

Edmund directly questions the status quo with three solid points that would have effectively hit Shakespeare’s audiences, especially its younger brothers (Montrose 7).

Since his very conception, Edmund was at the bottom of the ladder in his family. Gloucester seems a little embarrassed about having an illegitimate son: “Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making” (I.i.21-23). Gloucester says this right in front of Edmund. This may seem insensitive, but he professes a love for each of his sons, taboo or not. He cannot ignore his illegitimate son, who serves as a memento of his previous sexual exploits. Edmund represents the shadow of incontinence in Gloucester’s past (just as Lear can represent impulsiveness), and while the issue is treated with humor on the surface, Gloucester’s lack of sexual restraint figures as something more sinister. Edmund is a knave by birth according to the play’s logic; he was born through sexual deviance, and commits sexual deviance during his life. On the reverse side, Edmund perceives his father as a credulous sexpot who wastes time in the study of astrology: “As admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star” (I.i.126-128). The words “whoremaster” and “goatish” mock Gloucester for his sexual incontinence, which ironically is responsible for Edmund’s birth, and a pattern of behavior we see in Edmund later on. This “ungratefulness” characterizes Edmund as a villainous character, as do his intentions, which violate Lear’s conception of Nature. This is proof that Edmund is in fact a base “knave.”

Though undoubtedly the villain of the play, Edmund loads his soliloquy with powerful, charismatic arguments in his favor. The fact that Edmund speaks in soliloquy situates him in a place of confidence from which he can manipulate the audience. His words extend outside the realm of the play and go out into the theatre's crowd. In this sense, Shakespeare can simultaneously uphold and undermine social norms. Edmund speaks out firmly, with conviction: "Now, gods, stand up for bastards!" (I.ii.22). This language, filled with phallic energy, echoes the sexual incontinence of his father, Edmund's pathway into the world (Gaul 338). There is a bond between the father's actions and the son's language. Edmund has received an inheritance of sexual deviance and interruption that will threaten the marriages recognized in the beginning of the play. But this is not a large enough share for Edmund.

Edmund calls out to the unfortunate younger brothers in the audience, the "walking sperm banks" of Shakespeare's London who have little or no chance of inheriting the father's estate, the true inheritance. Though Edmund's bold and independent spirit may seem virtuous by modern-day standards, his plan would have seemed subversive and rebellious, if intriguing and even thrilling, to Shakespeare's audiences. We can read Edmund as an archetypal model of the disenfranchised younger son, which can hold more significance than the network of motivations and actions we know as "character" (Goldberg 17). He presents a rallying cry, but Edmund's subversive language and actions against the dominant paternal authority mark him as a villain rather than a Machiavellian hero. *King Lear* is a play that stands up first for primogeniture and patriarchy, not bastards.

That said, Edmund's specific arguments definitely deserve attention. First, he recounts the fact that Gloucester does not favor one son over the other, figuring this fact as proof that he and Edgar are equal: "Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund / As to th' legitimate" (I.ii.17-18). These lines echo the dynamics of Lear's family; the King attempts to create the appearance of impartiality, which we know does not exist. Lear's preference is based on love, not law. Gloucester's relationship with his sons is the inverse. His words from this first scene of the play confirm the assertion of impartiality Edmund mentions. Edgar, though legitimate and older, is "yet no dearer in my account" (I.i.20-21), says Gloucester. This seeming equality doesn't seem very serious, however, especially given Gloucester's nonchalant attitude toward fatherhood. It exists solely within the family structure, and the "plague of custom" assures us that it is taken for granted that Edgar will inherit everything. For Gloucester, there is impartiality in affection, but not in terms of legal matters, namely inheritance. In the conflict between love and law, law wins out, simply because it guarantees order (Kahn 3).

Edmund continues his forceful argument with more reasons as to why he is equal to his brother Edgar. Despite his "low" birth that seems to embarrass Gloucester a bit in Act One, Edmund exclaims that there is no physical or mental difference between a legitimate son and a bastard. "Base" means nothing; it is merely a term of social distinction. Edmund's "dimension" and "shape" are "well-compact" and "true," meaning that he has no physical deformities and is even rather handsome. His only existing deformity is an arbitrary legal construction (he was born later, out of wedlock) and has nothing to do with practical matters. He and Edgar are brothers and they both have just as much of Gloucester's blood in them (however, it is Edmund who inherits the "blood" of

his father, meaning lust and sexual appetites) (Paster 66). Edmund and Edgar are also equal in physical and mental ability; at least, this is what Edmund proposes (the final physical challenge between the two sons is decided in primogeniture's favor, however). Edmund praises Nature rather than Culture: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess" (I.i.1), he says, allying himself against the male God of Law or Judgment, against the paternal order entirely. He instead chooses a meritocratic system, just as Lear appears to do in the love test scene.

Then Edmund raises his argument to another level, proclaiming that he is not equal to Edgar, but rather smarter and better, in part *because* he is illegitimate. Edmund uses the slippery word "noble" for his brother, but not as a compliment:

A brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy. (I.ii.179-182)

Nobility and legitimacy are a kind of credulity and obliviousness to evil. Edgar's kindheartedness is a benefit not to himself, but to Edmund, who takes advantage of him all the more easily in his quest to benefit from an inheritance he believes he deserves (Ellis 287). In addition, Edmund embraces his bastard status, concluding that it is better because of the personality traits it bestows. Bastards, born

...in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition, and fierce quality,
Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed
Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops. (I.ii.11-14)

Edmund values the blood he has received from his father, referring to libido instead of lineage (Paster 66). The passion and secrecy of Gloucester's affair, the "sport at his

[Edmund's] making" (I.i.23) have created a more lusty and ambitious, and therefore better, son than the boring firstborn conceived through the "custom" of tradition.

All seductive arguments. Edmund tops them off with an action, the letter he writes to betray his brother to prove he is smarter and better. The letter is meant to seem as if it was written by Edgar; the text reveals great dissatisfaction with the status quo's economic law, which "makes the world bitter to the best of our times" (I.ii.46). Though this could represent the vague trapped feeling associated with the firstborn's single-option future as caretaker of his father's estate, the deal proposed has more in common with Edmund's plans, as Russ McDonald says (260). Edgar does this with rhetorical points that threaten the social norms: "I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd" (I.ii.49-51). Edmund constructs Ancient Britain as a social producer of tyranny; he casts the father/patriarch as a heartless ruler. This overt rejection of primogeniture threatens Gloucester's position at the top of this structure.

However, a critique like this would make more sense coming from a twice-disenfranchised son, as would the financial arrangement at the end of the letter: "If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the belov'd of your brother" (I.ii.52-54). We know Edmund wants to overturn the standard of primogeniture, and the way he paints Edgar (as a coward who needs Edmund to help him carry out his plan) figures into Edmund's claim that he is smarter than his legitimate older brother. Edmund's letter is fairly well-crafted, a possible testament to the capability he claims to possess (Ellis 282). But it succeeds not because of its brilliance, but because of Gloucester's blindness as to which son represents true filial loyalty.

Edmund attacks primogeniture from an etymological standpoint as well, taking on the words “bastard” and “base,” deconstructing their meanings in relation to the word “legitimate.” “Why bastard? Wherefore base?” (I.ii.6), he questions, followed later by “Why brand they us / With base? With baseness? bastardy? base, base?” (I.ii.9-10). With each repetition, Edmund reduces the word to a sound, depriving it of its meaning as a way to avoid its claim upon him. The questions he makes are posed directly to the audience, and the use of “we” rather than “I” can refer to a collective consciousness, again characterizing Edmund as more important than just one bastard in a single aristocratic family. He transcends both his family and the constructs of the play by voicing these questions in such a fashion. By taking apart the words, Edmund also seeks to reveal a vertical orientation between the legitimate and the base, which he now proposes exists only to be inverted: “If this letter speed / And my intention thrive, Edmund the base / Shall [top] th’ legitimate. I grow, I prosper” (I.ii.19-21). Edmund, at the bottom of this family structure, twice denied his father’s inheritance, hopes to make the uphill climb against great odds. With this phallic language, Edmund appears as an ambitious Marlovian protagonist like Tamburlaine or Faustus. He is growing and rising against the existing order of primogeniture that had fixed him firmly to the bottom at his birth.

But despite his convincing arguments, clever schemes and wordplay, Edmund will never rise to his full height. His sexuality grows out of control, and it is too much for him to handle. Edmund finds himself at the center of the chaos that his revolutionary philosophy creates, and he ultimately fails when positioned in battle against Edgar, the play’s sole true heir. Edgar undergoes a kind of journey through poverty, and proves his

worthiness as heir through his patience and fealty to Lear and Gloucester while disguised as Poor Tom. Furthermore, his appearance as a victim causes the audience to pity him and desire his restoration (Ellis 285). Edmund, on the contrary, opposes patriarchy with his devotion to the Goddess of Nature; he revels in the illogical and the irrational, scorning the baseness cast on him because of his birth. He is the play's villain. Finally, he may make a defense for his status as a bastard, but he was born second, and nothing he does or says can change that. One could say that Edmund dies in Act Five, but really, the play kills him for his sexual deviance and his overt disruption of inheritance laws.

Madness and the Father's Journey

Gloucester has a flimsy hold on his family at the beginning of the play, a hold that weakens with each act. Though A.C. Bradley downplays his importance and considers him an indistinct and uninteresting character, I see him rather as a counterpoint to Lear, undergoing a similar journey in fatherhood. Gloucester makes a series of errors, the most important of which is mistaking Edmund for the loyal and righteous son. These errors undermine his paternal authority and upset the balance of his family. Gloucester may be blind, but feels the bonds breaking within the universe of the play: "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father" (I.ii.106-109). This "discord" stems from the mistakes of the fathers, which plunge the family into suffering. Gloucester is simply tricked by Edmund. He stands for impotent primogeniture, legally favoring his eldest son until he believes Edgar to be a traitor. In this case, he turns blindly to Edmund

in order to fill the gap, according to custom. Gloucester confesses that he has no preference of affection, and is concerned primarily with the correct bestowment of his legacy in order to sustain the social order. Primogeniture is a means to sustain this order, and if it fails, a younger son serves as a safety net. Gloucester therefore operates on merit in order to serve the needs of primogeniture, placing his legal preference on whom he perceives as the “righteous child.”

The plot devised by Edmund urges us all the more to consider Gloucester’s fit as a father figure. Though he states at the beginning of the play that he considers his sons as equals (unlike Lear, who has a clear favorite in Cordelia), this lack of preference could actually represent disinterest on the father’s part. In Act One, Scene One, Gloucester discusses with Kent the semi-humorous, semi-embarrassing fact of having an illegitimate son (Ellis 279). It is with a naïve sense of duty, rather than genuine love, that Gloucester reluctantly claims his bastard son: “The whoreson must be acknowledg’d” (I.i.24), he says in front of Edmund.

Gloucester’s weak relationship with his sons at the play’s beginning only deteriorates as the situation becomes more complicated. Gloucester’s lack of a preference between his sons is emphasized by how quickly he turns his trust to Edmund and denounces Edgar as a potential danger. Gloucester is surprised, even horrified by what he perceives as a chaotic shift in the natural order (according to Lear’s definition of Nature): “Abhorred villain! Unnatural, brutish villain!” (I.ii.76-77), he exclaims against Edgar, ironically since it is Edmund who is the “unnatural” son, referring to his illegitimate birth. As in the case of *As You Like It*, “villain” carries the connotation of one of low birth in this situation. The word “villein” appears in the Oxford English Dictionary referring

to a lack of moral qualities as well (Evans 404). Gloucester is blind to Edmund's plot, and does exactly what the bastard son expects him to do, given his conservative tendencies toward the legal patterns of the land, namely primogeniture. His declaration of Edgar as "unnatural" aligns the meaning of the word as "inappropriate" with "illegitimate," as for a child. Now, Edmund, the metaphorically "natural" child (meaning illegitimate) is also natural in the sense that he appears to be obedient and trustworthy. The roles seem to have been reversed, and Gloucester, the "credulous father," quickly goes along with it, believing he is doing the right thing, committing his major paternal error (McDonald, *Shakespeare's King Lear with The Tempest*, 48). Darwinian Nature is what Edmund stands up for and what he now seems to represent, posing these values against the constancy of the social order.

Gloucester's fatherly duties therefore seem to exist solely in a legal sense, according to the play. Because of the "plague of custom," Gloucester must hold Edgar higher than Edmund, though he has no preference for one or the other. He is a follower of the patriarchal system, and obeys these rules to uphold his power and his legacy. Edmund exploits his father's tendencies toward primogeniture by alluding to the possible treachery of son against father, a move that upsets the order promised by the social structure (Kahn 26). When he also antagonizes the rightful heir, Gloucester takes the next logical step, forming a confidential bond with Edmund against his firstborn, whom he perceives is no longer worthy of heir status: "Find out this villain, Edmund, it shall lose thee nothing, do it carefully" (I.ii.114-115). Again we see the doubly-ironic word "villain." Like Lear, Gloucester feels that he must divest himself. It is the hope of a new generation that causes both fathers to set up inheritance plans. They want the satisfaction

of seeing their legacy passed on. Just as Lear arranges for his daughters to inherit his land, Gloucester now turns to Edmund for the inheritance of his title and estate, placing his trust in him and presumably elevating him to heir status (Kahn 26).

This elevation continues as Edmund's suggestions continue: "As of my land, / Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means / To make thee capable" (II.i.83-85). These lines represent the new economic agreement. The father sees Edgar as a traitor and elevates the doubly "natural" Edmund as the new heir. Though once addressed as "sirrah," Edmund now receives a promise of land rights as well as the epithets "loyal and natural" referring to his obedience (with the ironic pun on "natural birth"). Gloucester acts in accordance with the legal prescriptions of primogeniture. But he has fallen for Edmund's trick. He follows the play's bias towards the social order in his mind, while in reality he is undermining them, denying his inheritance to the one true heir in the entire play. For his violation of primogeniture, he receives punishment, paying with the eyes that could not see which son was the righteous child. This case plays off the Lear situation, which is a reversal of this arrangement. For Lear, it is not the oldest, but the youngest who is most worthy to inherit, and so the play seems to simultaneously uphold and break down the standards of primogeniture (Greenblatt 6).

Lear struggles with his role as paternal authority like Gloucester, undertaking a journey through madness following his errors, a madness that represents a kind of clarity. He must first realize that giving up the kingdom is an unwise decision. "Only we shall retain / The name, and all th' addition to a king" (I.i.135-136), he says in Act One, demanding the title without responsibility (Kahn 16). This issue is another point of misunderstanding between Lear and his daughters, and comes to a head when the King

expects a strong filial bond to continue, even after the ceremony. Lear trusts that Goneril and Regan will care for him and house him, as well as a large number of knights, but this is not the case: “Epicurism and lust / Make it more like a brothel / Than a grac’d palace” (I.iv.244-246), says Goneril, referring to her castle, which is overrun by Lear’s men. Children caring for their aged parents was not uncommon during Shakespeare’s time, but Lear insisting on having his retinue with him complicates the simple fact of filial obedience (McLuskie 144). To Lear, the division of the kingdom does not sever the bonds between father and child, nor does it reduce him to a subject. “O, reason not the need!” he cries out, protesting that he is justified in bringing his retinue with him, as “our basest beggars / Are in the poorest things superfluous” (II.iv.264-265). Lear argues that everyone has a surplus on some level, even the poorest members of society. But Goneril and Regan misinterpret the ceremony in Act One as an official end to Lear’s reign, despite the fact that he is still living. Lear sees this behavior as filial ingratitude as well as treason. His crisis is simultaneously one of parenthood and one of kingship; he falls into a strange in-between state as the dispossessed living dead king on the heath (Kahn 6). It is on the heath, this place of learning, that he begins to consider his past actions and how they figure into his role as father and king.

The suffering and death that follow Lear’s actions make it clear that Lear could have made a better decision in terms of his inheritance plan. The audience ponders what this correct decision could be. As the play opens, Lear is the patriarch at the top of society. Just as the father is the head of the family, King Lear is the head of the state, and his divestiture represents a toppling of the order in the state that his authority sustains (Erickson x). Perhaps Lear should not have been thinking of his divestiture at all at the

beginning of the play. His choice to pass on his rule and land places him in a quandary between an immoral reification of the social order (giving all his land to Goneril and Albany in the tradition of primogeniture) and a moral rejection of the social order (choosing the virtuous, but youngest Cordelia as heir). Instead, Lear opts for the division of the kingdom, a political move that King James I denounced because of the threat of civil war: “Otherwayes by deviding your kingdom, yee shall leave the seed of division and discord among your posteritie” (Cooley 331). Each of these three choices have flaws, be they moral, social or political. It is perhaps not the choices that Lear makes that unleash chaos on the world of the play, but rather the fact that the father must give up his power.

It is therefore possible that the best action for Lear to take could have been inaction. Both Kent and the Fool seem to advocate this side, treating Lear as king throughout the play and surrounding him with service, advice and satire. Kent, the Fool, Edgar and Gloucester as well form a miniature court around Lear on the heath and in the hovel while the King undergoes the purgatory of his madness. The Fool’s song at I.iv.175 reveals his subscription to the divine order, Lear’s providential interpretation of Nature, which the King abandoned when he disowned Cordelia (Gaul 337). Kent is a loyal servant to the King from the first scene when he urges Lear to “see better.” Banished, he goes into disguise as Caius to pledge himself to Lear again, risking the punishment of the stocks: “Call not your stocks for me, I serve the king, / On whose employment I was sent to you” (II.ii.129-130). On the heath, Kent repeatedly pleads for Lear to enter the hovel for his own safety. Gloucester displays his fealty as well before the hovel: “Yet have I ventured to come seek you out, / And bring you where both fire and food is ready”

(III.iv.152-153). To these three, Lear is indeed “every inch a king” (IV.vi.107), and this period of male bonding is an effort to reaffirm the patriarchal structure even in the midst of Mother Nature’s tempest (Erickson 104).

It is during this tempest that Lear is transformed by his madness. It serves as a realization, a period of education for the disillusioned and dispossessed monarch. It is a purgatorial experience in which Lear ponders the actions he made in the past as well as the recent sins he has committed. Though we may pity him for his suffering, Lear is not “a man more sinn’d against than sinning,” and undergoes the madness as penance for his wrongs; he learns what it is to be a just father and monarch. Patriarchy is the rule, but only a moral patriarchy will prevail (Gaul 341). At first, Lear, driven out of his mind by the “evil” of Goneril and Regan’s ingratitude, cannot make sense out of his children’s behavior:

This tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there – filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to it? (III.iv.12-16)

This premature diagnosis of the problem is incomplete and naive. Lear sees his madness at first as a sickness that magnifies the pain he feels from his daughters’ disobedience. “Filial ingratitude” is the problem according to Lear, not the divestment of power or the division of the kingdom. He offers sustenance to his children, which he sees as vipers that bite the hand that feeds them (Erickson 107). As Lear descends into poverty, however, he changes. His madness transforms him, and he swims in it: “Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here” (III.iv.108-109), he cries as he tears off his clothes, surrendering himself to the storm and to his madness.

As Lear's madness destabilizes his mind and body, it introduces ideas into the play that destabilize the social order. Lear's madness, coupled with his dispossession, teach him something about poverty that he never realized before. In the hovel, he sees Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, and wonders how the "poor naked wretches" will "bide the pelting of this pitiless storm" (III.iv.28-29). Lear feels regret for the problem he never before had seen with his own eyes: "O, I have ta'en / Too little care of this!" (III.iv.32-33). The guilt that Lear feels encourages him to undertake a kind of penance in order to reverse the order of things and institute a kind of justice (Goldberg 117). He thrusts off his clothes in order to "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, / That thou mayst shake the superflux to them, / And show the heavens more just" (III.iv.34-36). In this penance, Lear takes on the garb and accommodations of a pauper, descending from the top of society to the bottom in order to experience true empathy with the least important members of his kingdom. Lear's desire to "shake the superflux" is evidence of a change within him; he now believes a ruler must be just and moral as well as politically gifted (Gaul 341).

The Confirmation of Primogeniture

In Gloucester's family, the holy bond between father and firstborn son, the bond anointed by primogeniture, is nearly the only thing that remains. New family lines have been drawn already, as Edmund joins Cornwall's ranks: "I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love" (III.v.24-25), Cornwall says to Edmund, who is now referred to as "Gloucester," stripping away the title from his father. This bond

with Cornwall, a surrogate, replacement father, establishes Edmund in a new family apart from Gloucester and Edgar. The father and rightful heir in disguise are now isolated together on the heath, the place of education, in preparation for the dramatic moment of familial redemption.

These two, father and son, dispossessed and alone in the wilderness with a veil of disguise and blindness between them, are guided by the play to restore and redeem the order of primogeniture in a key symbolic gesture that defines inheritance as the focus of the play. The idea of a “symbolic gesture” draws from G. Wilson Knight’s conception of the character as an allegorical figure, rather than a realistic or psychological independent. Knight discusses “direct poet symbolism” as a kind of gesture with transcendent meaning, according to Brechtian theory. “Shakespeare aims at the ‘burning core’ of life with his characters,” he writes (Goldberg 37). Edgar offers to be Gloucester’s guide, taking on a role of filial duty toward his aged and blind father. But he is crushed with despair: “And worse I may be yet: the worst is not / So long as we can say, ‘This is the worst’” (IV.i.28-29). And yet Edgar must take his father’s arm, though the damage has been done; he is without inheritance and his father is without sight. He must endure as Poor Tom; first, because he hopes to restore a sense of divine providence to his father’s life by remaining anonymous, appearing to be a helpful beggar. He wants it to appear to his father that this is all written, that the gods have ordained this suffering as a part of Gloucester’s life (Goldberg 84). And in a way, it is; the play makes Gloucester suffer in order to educate him, to teach him a lesson about fatherhood.

Second, Edgar remains in disguise for education’s sake. Edgar has taught Lear while playing the role of Poor Tom, instructing the King in empathy and giving him

lessons: “Obey thy parents, keep thy word’s justice, swear not, commit not with man’s sworn spouse, set not thy sweet heart on proud array” (III.iv.80-83). This moral advice leads Lear along the path to just leadership. But Edgar himself is tested by his poverty as well. The experience is a purgation; it chastens him and safeguards him from the lures of vice and greed that political power can bring. This insures him with a sense of divine love and order for the future reign of Britain. He is, after all, the sole rightful heir in the play (Gaul 342). Edgar and Gloucester have been severed from their legal identities, the most valuable part of the person (Kahn 111). Both father and rightful heir are penniless, but it is in this dispossessed state that we see the symbolic restoration of primogeniture in the most stripped-down and elemental way possible. There are no trappings of royal or legal authority; all that remain are the father and the son, together, impoverished in the wild.

This father-son bond transcends the motivations of these characters. Gloucester must feel it too, if not directly, then in some kind of abstract sense. The audience feels a kind of cathartic release in the dramatic irony as Gloucester takes Edgar as a guide. The father and son are reunited, though Gloucester doesn’t know and Edgar doesn’t tell. After his misguided decision to abandon his true heir in Act I, it is pleasing to see Gloucester accept Edgar again, even if he thinks he is providing charity for a pauper. Though it is heartbreaking that Gloucester doesn’t recognize his son, we know that Edmund is the villain, and we now see fatherly loyalty restored to the right son.

It is here that we witness the only act of true primogeniture in the play: Gloucester offers fine clothes to the disguised Edgar as recompense. “Bring some covering for this naked soul, / Which I’ll entreat to lead me” (IV.i.43-44), he says to the Old Man, who promises to bring “the best ‘parel that I have” (IV.i.49-50). This fine clothing will

visually conclude Edgar's roleplay as Poor Tom, and represents the aristocracy that neither character truly possesses anymore (Kahn 111). The gift is coupled by the money that Gloucester gives to Edgar as well, a financial offering which again is an instance of primogeniture: "Here, take this purse, thou whom the heav'ns plagues / Have humbled to all strokes" (IV.i.64-65). Gloucester is wrong again, thinking he is giving money and clothes to a beggar. But in this sense, he believes he is shaking the superfluous, as Lear would have wanted. This proves that Gloucester is ready to return from the heath of madness to the life of patriarchal law. Gloucester restores order to the social structure, repairing the system of inheritance in this scene. The tone the gesture creates for the audience in this moment is proof that primogeniture is the rightful system of order, just as Edgar is the rightful heir of the play.

The symbolic gestures and the educational journeys these fathers undergo make *King Lear* favor primogeniture as the only viable system of inheritance as a means to sustain a moral paternal order. Lear makes a selfish move in giving up the responsibility of the crown; his decision to divide the kingdom is preemptive and rash. Cursed with a family situation that undermines primogeniture from the start, he seeks the division as a compromise when inaction would be the best choice. Male-based primogeniture is, after all, only a means to sustain a patriarchal rule, and is not necessary, or even possible, in Lear's case. It is what Lear learns on the heath during his madness that changes him and shows him that the paternal authority needs to be moral and just.

Edgar's rise, with the help of his father's empowerment, sets him up to challenge Edmund (whom we view as a traitor) in a moment that tests primogeniture's worth. Edgar accuses his brother: "Thou art a traitor; / False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy

father” (V.iii.134-135). Edgar calls out his brother for these three violations of the paternal order before the physical confrontation. The duel between legitimate firstborn and younger bastard ends with Edgar’s victory, punishing the traitor and rewarding the righteous. Despite all Edmund’s arguments against the status quo, Edgar and the play prove that the cunning younger brother was in fact “base” and therefore unworthy to inherit Gloucester’s estate from the beginning, a bit like Caliban in *The Tempest* (Gaul 336). Of course, Shakespeare heightens the drama with the fact that Goneril, Lear’s oldest child, is also morally base in order to simultaneously undermine and reaffirm primogeniture as a means to sustain societal order. It is not the ideal system; it is merely the one that has the fewest problems.

Edmund goes on to inherit the entire kingdom by default, as he is the only eligible candidate to begin with: “Friends of my soul, you twain / Rule in this realm, and the gor’d state sustain” (V.iii.320-321), says Albany to Edgar and Kent. This succession plan is marred from the beginning, as it represents yet another division, the political act deemed a fatal error by James I (Cooley 331). But Kent resolves this division so that we have only one heir, saying he has a journey of his own to make and “must not say no,” possibly referring to suicide. This will leave the state in the hands of Edgar, who has the last line of the play. It may be too late for Lear; he pays for his rashness with the death of his favorite daughter and subsequently dies of grief, despite his educational journey and the testing he has undergone. Gloucester pays for his apathy and careless errors with both his eyes. But both realize their mistakes; both atone for their past ways with acts of charity, apparently “shaking the superflux” in order to become more socially conscious and moral paternal figures. And Gloucester simultaneously and unwittingly reaffirms

primogeniture as the most appropriate and least hazardous means of sustaining this system of moral patriarchy through his symbolic gesture. The “good state” will be re-established with one righteous, moral ruler who has proven himself in a final action that confirms male-preference primogeniture as the only option for inheritance. But Lear’s kingdom has collapsed. In the rare case of all female children, we must hold our breaths, just as Shakespeare’s London had to concerning Elizabeth’s successor. *King Lear* is a tragic dramatization of a very real social and political issue. In the next chapter, I turn to the genre of history to more closely examine the political implications of primogeniture and the bond between father and son.

Blood is Thicker than Wine:

Ethical Inheritance in *Henry IV*

As a history play, *Henry IV* works within the framework of known fact, yet Shakespeare emphasizes certain elements for thematic intrigue. Both parts of the play work together to reinforce assumptions about father-son relationships during the Elizabethan era. The play demonstrates the progression of two paternal bonds linked to the same son figure. Prince Hal's relationship with Falstaff (a surrogate father figure) and King Henry IV (both his actual father and "father of the people") as well as the choices he makes, ultimately confirm and solidify the triumph of political cunning over free play and human weakness (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 257). The political environment of Lancastrian usurpation established at the end of *Richard II* prevails, and Hal cannot resist the pull and subtlety of *realpolitik*. These ethics are an urge inside him, in his blood. Falsity is the legacy of the father, the ethical inheritance Hal receives according to heredity and tradition. This cold-blooded policy of Henry IV overcomes the carefree and lustful philosophy of Falstaff, making tarnished ethical inheritance and political deception the major link between father and son. Hal is an inheritor of usurped power, and ultimately plays his way into the role which has been

prepared for him by his father. He embodies his father's policy of political subversion, and even surpasses his father in its execution.

As the play begins, Hal is at the center of the spectrum between King Henry and Falstaff. The duality of these polar father figures is poetically interpreted by Falstaff in Part II. Falstaff sees himself as hot Spanish wine, and the King as cold, lifeless blood: "The second property of your excellent sherris is the warming of the blood which before (cold and settled) left the liver white and pale" (2.IV.iii.102-104). This schema, with the protagonist Hal tempted by the forces of wine and blood, echoes the duality of holiday and everyday that C. L. Barber discusses in his essay "Rule and Misrule in *Henry IV*" (216). Prince Hal is indeed the medium, the arena in which these two forces, really substances, mix and battle for influence. Hal already possesses the "cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father" (2.IV.iii.118), meaning the political cunning that led his father to the throne in *Richard II*. We can consider this blood to represent lineage as well as the ambition and corruption that Henry's reign is known for. Hal's apparent lack of sexual inclinations in *Henry IV* is further proof of his cold-blooded disposition, as opposed to a hot-blooded and lusty disposition.

However, because we see the Prince in the Boar's Head Tavern, we know the force of Falstaff's wine presents a challenge to the biological fact of Henry's cold blood. According to Falstaff, it is "with excellent endeavor of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris that he [Hal] is become very hot and valiant" (2.IV.iii.120-122). In Falstaff's opinion, this warm wine can balance out the cold natural disposition of the Prince, humanize him and make him more confident as well (Rackin 79). He claims that the wine affects the heart, and can pump Hal full of courage; without the wine that

Falstaff interprets as a remedy, the liver is left “white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and coward” (2.IV.iii.104-105). We can’t take what Falstaff says too seriously, however; we see him subvert honor on the battlefield, where he waves a butt of sack as a weapon and plays dead to avoid being killed. Wine is not “liquid courage” – it is freedom from responsibility, play, and in excess, oblivion. It is not an active danger, but rather a distraction that poses a certain kind of danger nonetheless. Hal recognizes this; he is in fact not threatened by the wine’s influence, despite his close association with Falstaff. In this sense, he merely ingests the wine as a show, a spectacle, while he anticipates the purge necessary in the future, when he will own his paternal bloodline.

Hal’s decision represents an understanding of the humors according to the Elizabethan conception of the body and its internal workings. He rejects the wine, which would provide a carefree, sanguine element to his composition. Rather, he slightly favors the choleric nature of his own blood, which fills him with ambition and the desire for political domination (Paster 80). This particular imbalance is necessary if Hal is to follow his deeper political motives. To be successful in this particular period in Shakespeare’s representation of English history, political craftiness must come before free play.

Hal and Falstaff: The Wine Flows

Hal’s associations with Falstaff, the first father-figure with whom he appears, create a public image of a more human, more fallible Hal, all according to the Prince’s plan. These episodes take place in the world of the tavern, a separate world from the court, apart from the King’s influence or knowledge. Hal uses this remote setting for his

benefit. He boasts of his drinking habits with confidence: “I am so good a proficient in one quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language” (1.II.iii.17-20). Here, he adapts his behavior to the environment of the Boar’s Head, or rather appears to before the patrons. This is a boast, after all, and we can’t accept it as fact. He also alters his speech, participating in insult matches with Falstaff, mocking his habits: “Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper” (1.I.ii.2-3). Here, Hal mocks Falstaff with his mastery of common speech and the fact that Falstaff is slipping into oblivion because of his indulgence on his sweet wine. Hal speaks crudely, like a commoner rather than a prince, as is perfectly appropriate for the setting. It is therefore not the tavern that brings out the ordinary in Hal; Hal’s appearance in the tavern and his ingestion of the wine are simply adaptations as he seeks to control this corner of England (Berry 208). This place is a training ground as he “starts small,” gathering political practice and skills. Hal also figures as an actor playing the role of the prodigal son, and when he calls Falstaff “that bolting-hutch of beastliness” (1.II.iv.450), he is reciting lines in a play, rehearsing the political manipulation that he will demonstrate later on (Greenblatt 7). Hal may sense that the saying “in vino, veritas” is true, and merely samples the wine, not giving it a chance to distract him from his exercises in falsity.

This interpretation confirms Stephen Greenblatt’s view of the tavern world as a place where Hal plays many parts in order to manipulate others, among them himself as prodigal son, himself as penitent son, his father, Hotspur, and a thief in buckram (Greenblatt 9). There are no consequences for the Prince; he merely feigns to partake in the environment, barely touching his glass while everyone, especially Falstaff, goes

through several refills. Falstaff may be the center of comic activity in the tavern, but Hal is the master of the domain. He is comfortable and even overconfident in this locale; his theatrics are actually control that he exerts over the tavern-goers. The Vintner, who runs the tavern, treats him with respect and acts as a gentle servant rather than the owner of the establishment: “My lord, old Sir John with half a dozen more are at the door, shall I let them in?” (1.II.iv.82-83). He defers to the prince, acting as a mere porter.

A special example of Hal’s theatrical manipulation of the tavern and his use of it as rehearsal space is the mock deposition scene. At first, Hal plays the role of himself, and Falstaff stands in for the King. Falstaff treats the first role play as a chance for Hal to practice what he will say to the King in his confrontation scenes later on: “If thou love me, practice an answer” (1.II.iv.374-375). Hal goes along with Sir John, even though he points out that Falstaff’s “state is taken for a join’d-stool, thy golden sceptre for a leaden dagger, and thy precious rich crown for a pitiful bald crown!” (1.II.iv.380-382). He plays the role assigned to him, but he is familiar with the true court environment which shames this cheap imitation. What at first appears to be Hal’s indulgence of Falstaff at the moment conceals the shadow of ambition, which is revealed after Falstaff (as the King) tells the Prince (as himself) that “there is virtue in that Falstaff; him keep with, the rest banish” (1.II.iv.430-431), a line that anticipates the final confrontation between Falstaff and Hal (Berry 204). Hal strikes back with “Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for me, and I’ll play my father” (1.II.iv.433-434). Hal acts according to the standard of free play, a characteristic of Falstaff’s wine. But this move dethrones Falstaff as the master of the tavern; Hal cannot hear any more of Sir John’s biased imitations of his

father, and seeks to defend the place of the king by becoming the king himself. It is an act of symbolic usurpation consistent with Henry's Lancastrian legacy.

Falstaff may be drunk, but he is very aware of Hal's importance. He is on the hunt for nepotism and hopes to secure a place for himself in Hal's future court. Consequently, he uses Hal's status as the butt of many jokes: "Hang thyself in thine own heir-apparent garters! ...And I have not ballads made on you all and sung to filthy tunes, let a cup of sack be my poison!" (1.II.ii.43-46). Falstaff speaks a mild threat here, waving Hal's tavern-going above his head as potential blackmail material. But he speaks ironically; a cup of sack can never truly be considered as poison, even for Falstaff. Rather, it is sweet and homeopathic; it warms the blood, as he says before, and balances out the humours. It is not a threat in itself, but presents an obstacle to Hal's ultimate goal. The Prince's way to the crown cannot be influenced by the mind-altering wine of Falstaff, which would make him stray from his path of ambition. As a history play, the events in *Henry IV* would already be known to the audience; Hal wavers, but finally takes up the crown to become the glorious Henry V. In this dramatization, therefore, Falstaff and his wine are obstacles to history itself, trying to derail Hal from his goal of political power (Rackin 235).

Hal knows the reality of this threat to his ambition, which could change him from the manipulative power-seeker he is into a wishy-washy heir drunkenly awaiting his time on the throne. In accordance with his master plan stated in his first soliloquy (1.I.ii.195-217), Hal moves further away from the bacchanal world of the tavern, especially in Part II (Empson 138). Falstaff takes over as lord of that domain, and becomes more of a caricature of his Part I self. His behavior is less humorous and more lecherous: "If the

cook help to make the gluttony,” he says to the prostitute Doll Tearsheet, “you help to make the diseases” (2.II.iv.43-44). Falstaff practically bathes in the wine of the tavern, spending a great deal of time in the company of Doll and the Hostess, as well as Ancient Pistol, a ruffian and “swagg’rer” whom he attempts to defend. His references to capital sins like gluttony and lust appeal to Shakespeare’s least common denominator theatergoers, but Falstaff has traveled so far down this path that he represents vice more than free play and human fallibility, as he did in Part I. Falstaff has succumbed to the influence of his wine and has degenerated into a walking tub of the seven deadly sins (Empson 147). The alcohol has unbalanced his humours and pulled him further into the tavern world of lust and debauchery. From Hal’s cool standpoint on the outside, we get a clear picture of Falstaff, who continues to digest the wine even though he’s had his fill. The Prince, focusing on his rise to power, is disgusted with even himself for desiring a taste of small beer, not as potent: “Doth it not show vildly in me to desire small beer?” (2.II.ii.5-6), he asks Poins, chiding himself for any hint of dependence on alcohol, which poses a threat to both Hal’s goal and English history.

As we progress through Part II, Hal’s interactions with Falstaff take the form of moral judgments rather than clever insults in the company of friends. We remember that although Falstaff and Hal drink together in Part I, Hal only ingests the wine, never committing any serious crimes. After the Gadshill robbery, which is more like a joke anyway, Hal makes sure no harm is done: “The money shall be paid back again with advantage” (1.II.iv.547-548). Again, Hal is consistent with his ultimate plan to choose the crown over the glass of wine or the thief’s buckram clothing. Hal is merely playing the part of the prodigal son in Part I, and continues this role play in Part II, where he acts the

part of a drawer, infiltrating the tavern scene that he once governed. Now positioned as an outsider, Hal does not take part (or rather, pretend to take part) in the mischief, but instead judges it with a moralistic attitude: “You knew I was at your back, and spoke it on purpose to try my patience” (2.II.iv.307-308), he says to Falstaff, who unwittingly just insulted him. No longer an actor on the stage of the tavern, nor its central character, Hal is instead the Greek chorus, offering judgment from a morally righteous position. This is not to say, as John Dover Wilson does in “Riot and the Prodigal Prince,” that *Henry IV* is a morality tale, and Hal is more or less a stock character who transforms from wild prodigal to glorious monarch (96). Rather, Hal rejects Falstaff because to the overweight knight, life is not real and has no consequences. He is free from everything and perceives life as a child, a philosophy of oblivion encouraged by his heavy drinking of sack. Hal strives for the politics and manipulation that are necessary to be a skilled governor, and the carefree spirit of Falstaff is a danger and a distraction to this end (Charlton 85). Hal simply reveals his true relationship to the tavern. The purge has begun.

Hal and Henry IV: It's in the Blood

The fact that Hal has pre-set motives and nearly limitless ambition make him out to be a rather flat character compared to the “roundness” of Falstaff. The Prince’s bond with the cold blood of his father does not change; in fact, his hopes and ambitions within the political sphere are only confirmed over the course of the two parts. We know from the beginning (and so would have Shakespeare’s audiences) that Henry IV’s politics won him the crown in *Richard II*, and he mentions the “Opinion that did help me to the

throne” (1.III.ii.42). This political know-how flows through Hal’s veins according to Falstaff’s metaphor, but it is not until blood is spilled on the battlefield, when Hal himself receives a wound, that the Prince is truly confirmed as a politically-minded heir-apparent of Henry’s tarnished crown. Before this revelation, Henry, who doesn’t hear his son’s first soliloquy, perceives Hal as unmotivated and without ambition. The King says to another of his sons, Clarence: “Chide him [Hal] for his faults, and do it reverently, / When you perceive his blood inclin’d to mirth” (2.IV.iv.37-38). He sees Hal from only one side of the play, the court, and is incapable (according to his own values) of following Hal into the tavern. His unfamiliarity with this environment forces him to see it only as a place where the sweetness of wine gives way to the hot blood of passion, which lies in direct opposition to the cold blood of the Lancaster line. In this particular passage, he reveals he wants Hal’s blood to remain cold and passionless; this means the young prince should check his sense of freedom and play. In short, he should avoid Falstaff and stay away from the wine. Hal knows this concern, of course; in the mock deposition scene, playing his father, he touches upon this anxiety: “Wherein is he [Falstaff] good, but to taste sack and drink it?” (1.II.iv.455-456). Hal realizes Henry’s anxiety about the hot Spanish wine which he fears will lead Hal into the heat of passions against the temperament of his blood. Hal obeys his father not apparently in deed, but more importantly in creed. He can interact with Falstaff without diluting his blood with wine or heating it with passion. His “play” in the tavern is not a loose, carefree play, but a scripted play, a part in which he casts himself in order to manipulate others. This actually reveals another advantage for Hal, for he knows another part of England that his father does not. We can argue about the value of the English commoners within the world of a

history play, but Hal's political values can explain his involvement in this seedy underworld.

Henry's ironic dissatisfaction with Hal is intensified by the presence of other characters as well, characters that appear as moral foils against the Prince. What matters to Henry is moral appearance rather than moral standing, and that goes for himself as well. In Part I, Hotspur represents the son that Hal could have been. Henry lauds him for his apparent virtue as "the theme of honor's tongue" (1.I.i.84-86), perhaps out of envy, since he never lets his unjustified usurpation leave his mind. At any rate, he imagines a possibility that maybe he has been raising the wrong child all along:

O that it could be prov'd
That some night-tripping fairy had exchang'd
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,
And call'd mine Percy, his Plantagenet! (1.I.i.86-89)

The apparent reality is brutal for Henry, who is ignorant of his son's political ambition, assuming that "Riot and dishonor stain the brow / Of my young Harry" (1.I.i.84-86). The King's gushing respect for Hotspur sets up a "son challenge" that propels Hal even further toward his political goal. While some critics see this move as a device for Henry to "win Hal back to him," I interpret it rather as an opportunity for Hal to seize, another step toward the crown (MacNamara 429). A duel with Hotspur has the potential to be extremely beneficial to Hal, who claims that "Percy is but my factor, good my lord, / To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf" (III.ii.147-148). Hal admits to Hotspur's countless virtues and honors, but reasons that defeating him will cast all these same virtues and honors onto himself. It is a manipulative strategy fit for a student of Machiavellian politics like Hal (Barber 222).

In Part II, Hal's brother John enters the play in a more emphasized role, acting with the same scheming political tactics on the battlefield that Henry IV exhibits in the battle at Shrewsbury in Part I. We recall that "the king hath many marching in his coats" (1.V.iii.25), a ploy to protect Henry from death in battle that proves to be successful (at the expense of Blunt, who plays the role of the King well, deceiving Douglas). In Part II, John takes part in this same kind of battlefield trickery. Pretending to offer peace, he turns on the rebels suddenly: "I do arrest thee, traitor of high treason, / And you, Lord Archbishop, and you, Lord Mowbray, / Of capital treason I attach you both" (2.IV.ii.107-109). John holds Henry's authority as unquestionable doctrine, even if his father possesses the crown unjustly. These military politics paint him as a younger version of the King himself, who reached the crown with the help of others and "through by-paths and indirect crook'd ways" (2.IV.v.184). Henry is pleased to hear of his son's victory and approves of John's fealty and his replication of this style of command. John will not inherit the crown, but behaves as a model younger brother because he imitates the father. The behavior exemplified by father and son on the battlefield confirms the philosophy that the moral life and the political life are mutually exclusive. The goal is to overcome the natural and moral man, and Henry and John act out this ideology in their military strategies (Charlton 86).

The direct obedience to Henry that John exhibits is an us-versus-them framework, a kind of nepotism favoring the Lancasters over England itself. Within this framework, Henry is the king, despite the way he got the crown. This is ironic when we see the Percys challenge Henry's rule. We see them as the villains in the play, while Hal (or Henry, in some readings) is cast as the protagonist. We side with the usurpers, who have

proven that Machiavelli's virtù wins out over the moralist's virtue (Charlton 90). Rackin offers an explanation of the success of Henry IV and Henry V as a cynical and jaded stage of individualistic ambition within the overall providential scheme of English history. At this same time, England saw the growth of Machiavellian strategy as a viable political and personal attitude, one that worked, in direct opposition to the divinely ordained schemas of a less secular England (Rackin 60). This structural view is helpful in relation to the play's context, but as a consequence it makes *Henry IV* seem like a morality play again – Hal's moral development fits onto this particular interpretation of English history. Better supported is the theory that the overarching providential framework of the history plays could allude to medieval nostalgia, rather than professing an unquestioning loyalty to Elizabeth I (though both of these factors would have increased the popularity of the plays). It is precisely the ambiguity between providential right and political might that is the drama in *Henry IV*.

Henry, Hal and John are all of the same blood, and they act according to Machiavellian values that stun the providential schemas of the status quo. Hal's political ambition is his own secret, his own soliloquy, and even his father misinterprets his motives in the tavern world. Hal is almost a generation deeper into the individualist values that his father and brother embody, as he confides only in the audience. Henry sees a need to make the reluctant Hal more like John through the "instruction scenes" that symmetrically appear in both parts of the play. It is for these moments that Hal "practices" with Falstaff in the tavern during the mock-deposition scene. These scenes are father-son lessons; Henry outlines the values he hopes to pass on to his son, believing such a gesture necessary. But it is in fact an unnecessary transfusion of the cold blood

that is already flowing through Hal's veins. Henry, not knowing this, explains how he "won" the crown: "And then I stole all courtesy from heaven, / And dress'd myself in such humility / That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts" (1.III.ii.50-52). With violent words like "stole" and "pluck," Henry characterizes himself as what he is, an aggressor and an unjust usurper. The blood may be bitter and cold, but this is his blood, and he must own it; these are his ethics, and he wishes to share them with Hal. Henry goes on to provide the negative example of leadership, Richard II, who lacked the political know-how befitting a king according to the "jaded stage" in the history plays, according to Rackin (60). It is true that Richard is the object of our sympathy in *Richard II*, but this is simply because he is the king and therefore the protagonist, according to McNamara's logic (425). Along these same lines, we side with Henry IV and his family. Henry believes that Hal's interactions with Falstaff and company are leading him down Richard II's path: "In that very line, Harry, standest thou, / For thou hast lost thy princely privileges / With vile participation" (1.III.ii.85-87). Again, we see Henry's misinterpretation of the situation, as he believes his son "participates" in the drunkenness of the tavern while he is merely feigning to sip the wine, or ingesting it only to purge. It is nearly insulting for Henry to make this comparison, but we cannot blame his ignorance. This declaration is just another "son challenge" for Hal; he has to reveal his reputation as a prince according to Henry's political advice, the reputation he has concealed so far.

The instruction scene in Part II builds upon this imperative, and is directed at a Hal who seems more mature and has proven himself to be more "himself" through military means. Hal's actions on the battlefield involve the crucial moment in which he,

wounded, saves his father from death at the hands of Douglas. When Hal steps in and defends his father, he is actually postponing his kingship – it would have been too easy for him to simply watch his father die and then claim the crown as his own. Henry himself is surprised by the move and offers his approval: “Thou hast redeem’d thy lost opinion, / And show’st some tender of my life” (1.V.iv.48-49). The choice that Hal makes here is in fact a necessary step on the way toward his goal. He avoids the allure of unchecked ambition, and finds an opportunity for self-mastery. By overcoming what Montrose calls the “patricidal impulse,” Hal reinforces himself as the apassionate individual who is conscious of the implications of his actions (Montrose 37). This builds upon the interpretation of Hal’s character regarding the humors. According to Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, the restraint and control of the passions, as well as the knowledge of their workings, make for the “ciuill Gentleman and prudent Politician” (Paster 189). It is exactly by this knowledge that Hal maintains both his composure and appearance. He wisely chooses a less direct path to the crown, just as his father did, mastering himself and again projecting a strong self-image.

These two instruction scenes prevent *Henry IV* from being a morality tale in which Hal overcomes the sin of his father’s usurpation and claims the throne in glory (Wilson 96). Rather, these scenes represent the bond between father and son, both experts in falsity. We know Hal is an actor, playing the role of the prodigal in the tavern. Henry’s deception occurs on the battlefield, with his decoys, as well as in his previous deposition of Richard and his betrayal of the Percys. In this case, Henry is leading Hal deeper into the ambition inherent in his blood. “Becoming oneself” is, as Greenblatt says, taking your place in a scheme of power, playing a role for advancement (9). In this reading, power

comes from the people and the candidate's skill to manipulate them through the creation of an image. Hal is not the prodigal prince turned virtuous king; he follows a deliberate (if sly and crooked) path to the crown.

The Inheritance of Ethics

Now that the distinction is drawn between wine, symbolizing freedom, play and human error, and blood, which symbolizes ambition and lineage, I turn my focus to the issue of ethical inheritance at the heart of the play. The world of *Henry IV* operates under the English standard law of primogeniture, so there is no doubt as to Hal's future; he has a legitimate claim to the kingship, and will inherit the crown unless the rebellion succeeds. He simply waits for his life to begin in earnest, a common occurrence for a firstborn son (McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 251). But this is not a long period of waiting; by the end of the play, Hal successfully creates the appearance of a transformation, and "becomes" Henry V, wearing the crown. However, it is the attitudes, policies and strategies Hal inherits with this crown which compose the more critical legacy.

Both father figures embody ethical systems that Hal faces. Ironically, neither ethics system seems particularly ethical; if the perfect moral position lies at the center, we find Falstaff and Henry on opposite sides of this spectrum. Falstaff's moral impurities consist of his surplus, his excessive dependence on food, drink, play and the satisfaction of desires without responsibility. Henry's moral problems concern an excess as well, an

excess of ambition and the manipulative means he uses to achieve what he wants. In this sense, both father figures offer a similar means to vastly different ends.

First, let's examine Falstaff's ethics, or lack thereof. "I prithee, sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art king?" (1.I.ii.58-62), he asks Hal, alluding to his dream of immunity when Hal rises to power. With the continued friendship with Hal, who could continue to sponsor his bacchanal explorations into oblivion, Falstaff reveals his ethical principles. Hal holds Falstaff in his company like a cup of wine, but never drinks in earnest. He rejects the philosophy of the "old man," but not from a moralistic standpoint. Hal is not the Christ figure of a morality play; rather, he is the reverse Christ, and in this instance turns Falstaff's wine to water. His rejection of Falstaff in the mock-deposition scene proves Hal has higher aspirations, aspirations he alludes to in his first soliloquy. And these quips and jokes only anticipate a final confrontation between Hal and Falstaff (Berry 204). Hal rises out of the tavern, playing into the role set for him by his blood and by history, the true playwrights. He loses patience on the battlefield with Falstaff, who brandishes a bottle of sack rather than a pistol: "What, is it a time to jest and dally now?" (1.V.iii.55) demands a frustrated Hal. The audience laughs at Falstaff, who seems to believe he is still in the tavern. But this is a battlefield, not the Boar's Head; the audience has to say, "No, it is not a time to jest." Falstaff cannot stop playing and doesn't take life seriously, perceiving it as a child does (Bradley 76). The Prince's choice to reject the hot wine of comedy, free play and oblivion is an undeniably adult move and a decision of ambition.

Hal decides to purge himself of Falstaff's wine in order to purify this ambition. Eventually he will toss the cup to the floor, emptying it of its contents and rejecting

Falstaff entirely. The first drops fall in Hal's first soliloquy, which shows us a level of political know-how to rival that of Henry. Despite the ambiguous behavior the Prince exhibits throughout the play, this soliloquy confides to the audience that Hal has a master plan that stretches beyond the appearance of his frivolity: "Yet herein will I imitate the sun, / Who doth permit the base contagious clouds / To smother up his beauty from the world" (1.I.ii.197-199), he says, explaining rationally that he is in control of both the tavern world and his life. With the word "base," the same word used by Edmund in his first soliloquy in *King Lear*, Hal marks himself as the social superior of Falstaff and company. And this is true of course, that no matter how much Hal associates with them, he is the Prince after all. Falstaff is not an agent of influence. He is merely a subordinate, and the "contagious clouds" of his alcohol will have no effect. This is not to deny the confession Hal makes, that he knows his habits cast a shadow on his reputation. But this obscuration is a benefit rather than a disadvantage, and makes Hal's motives less clear to England as a whole.

Hal continues his theatrics in "imitation," punning on the word "sun" to represent his place as his father's child and regal heir. This same pun appears in other Renaissance poetry, referring to Christ – but it is clear that Hal is not in fact the sun; his use of this figure of speech borders on blasphemy. He does not strive to be the sun in earnest, but only acts to imitate it for ambition's sake. He is, after all, merely "permitting" the clouds to cover him, biding his time before his glorious entrance when he will "[break] through the foul and ugly mists / Of vapor that did seem to strangle him" (1.I.ii.202-203). Like his father who "dressed myself in such humility" (1.III.ii.51), there is a distinction between appearance and reality, and Hal likewise means to use this disparity to his advantage.

Both father and son obscure their true image in the pursuit of power; Hal does this in his self-presentation as a stock character from a morality tale (Greenblatt 8). “By how much better than my word I am, / By so much shall I falsify men’s hopes” (1.I.i.210-211), he claims, knowing that his plan will stun the masses and fling them to his side. They cannot see the Machiavellian workings of his mind, only the miraculous tale of a prodigal prince turned glorious war hero. Hal takes up the legacy of his father, developing a new generation of Lancastrian policy built on the creation of an image.

The redemption of his father’s tarnished reputation is impossible; it is in fact this tarnished reputation that binds the father and the son together. As part of the new generation in the peak of this most cynical, Machiavellian period in English history, Hal strives to hold true to his father’s legacy, and even go beyond it (Rackin 60). In *Henry V*, he turns his father’s crusade dream into a reality with the grand-scale trial-by-conflict in France. Of course, civil war between the houses of Lancaster and York is inevitable, but Hal’s war is a successful fulfillment of his father’s advice to distract enemies with foreign wars. During these wars, Hal is just short of a tyrant; he asks his enemies to back down, claiming they are bringing rape and pillage on themselves, though he and the English army are the ones to carry out the blows. He disconnects himself from the damage he will inflict, yet another clever strategy in *realpolitik* and an indicator of Hal’s skill as ruler and leader (Greenblatt 11). The *Henry V* campaign seeks to redeem the Lancaster name on the surface through a show of investment in the providential schema of causation, but more important is the legacy underlying this move, the preservation of the Lancaster line through clever political schemes (Rackin 54).

Hal's political prowess in the context of this blood-bond with his father is exemplified by a particular interaction with the King that we can label the "symbolic gesture" of usurpation. The object of this scene, IV.v of Part II, is the physical crown itself which lies beside the sleeping Henry. The setting of this scene makes us recall Henry IV's deposition of the King in *Richard II* (IV.i), although now Henry IV occupies the seat of power and Hal is positioned as the usurper. This mix-up of roles is just what we saw in the tavern in II.iv of Part I; Hal's rehearsal with Falstaff has prepared him for this moment. "My due from thee is this imperial crown, / Which as immediate from thy place and blood, / Derives itself to me" (2.IV.v.41-43). Hal is no longer shifting back and forth between father figures; his eyes are set on the crown before him, and he speaks with a definite sense of entitlement despite the sin with which it was procured by his father. The crown may be tarnished with Henry's ethics and stained with blood, both from Henry's line and Richard's death. But Hal cites the blood as the primary reason for this inheritance, thereby accepting, rather than rejecting the means by which the crown was acquired.

This ideology is matched by Hal's decision to pick up the crown and place it on his head. The inheritance of the crown must also be a seizure because of the cynical politics of both father and son. The move is accompanied by the official words Hal utters:

Lo where it sits,
Which God shall guard; and put the whole world's strength
Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honor from me. (2.IV.v.43-46)

Hal practices these heavy, weighty lines of verse, rehearsing a ceremony that is both a coronation and a continuation of the usurpation in *Richard II*. Like his father, Hal's ambition oversteps the boundaries of royal decorum. By taking up the God-protected

crown, seizing both the physical object and the divine protection it carries with it, he simultaneously challenges the authority of the King of England (to satisfy his ambition) and follows his father's advice from the instruction scenes (as a Lancaster, as his father's son). The tarnished inheritance of Henry IV passes on to Hal, who must challenge his father in order to truly possess these ethics and the power they entail.

Redemption for Father and Son

Ethical inheritance in this play revolves around the word "redeem," a religious word that picks up political connotations. Henry uses the word only in reference to Hal's behavior, but he frequently alludes to a desire to restore respect for his house following his unjust acts. This motive has an implicit sense of redemption about it, despite his wily political ideology. In Part I, Hotspur accuses Henry of usurping the throne, mentioning "this seeming brow of justice" with which Henry won "the hearts of all that he did angle for" (1.IV.iii.83-84). Hotspur's unhesitant judgment of Henry depicts an ambitious, Machiavellian usurper who takes on false appearances in his desire for public opinion. Of course, Hotspur does not speak from an objective standpoint, but Henry's instruction scenes with Hal tend to confirm, rather than deny these accusations.

Despite Henry's investment and belief in underhanded means in obtaining political power (in as much as he passes them to Hal), when we first meet him in Part I, he seems to embody guilt. "So shaken as we are, so wan with care" (1.I.i.1), the King hopes to avoid civil conflict at all costs, and it is likely that the death of Richard is on his mind. "No more the thirsty entrance of this soil / Shall daub her lips with her own

children's blood" (1.I.i.5-6), he vows. But this promise represents a conflict between the innocent blood of the English people and the cold blood of policy that flows through Henry's veins. The king is faced with an ideological dilemma; he cannot simultaneously save the blood of his nation and embody the blood of his line. Henry may want to end the conflict; he may also want to be a legitimate ruler accepted by his people, and a part of him tries to see a hope for redemption in his son: "How I came by the crown, O God forgive, / And grant that it may with thee in true peace live!" (2.IV.v.218-219). He wants to brainwash all of England, praying that the people simply forget the fact of his usurpation and to believe in Hal as unquestioned, legitimate royalty. But in the political environment of *Henry IV*, the suppression of moral instinct is what characterizes the successful ruler. Admiration and ambition are mutually exclusive (Berry 210). Henry, like Hal, must choose lineage and policy over morals; guilt is an obstacle rather than a purifying force of conscience.

In spite of the jaded reality he has and must subscribe to, Henry has another guilt-inspired fantasy for the restoration of the family name. Henry often references a crusade as potential penance for his wrongs, a way to purify his bitter blood with a religious overtone: "Were these inward wars once out of hand, / We would, dear lords, unto the Holy Land" (2.III.ii.107-108). Again, we have an example of Rackin's "trial-by-conflict." It follows that if Henry is successful in his campaign "as far as to the sepulchre of Christ" (1.I.i.19), his rule would appear to be blessed by God, and therefore legitimate (Rackin 54). Henry's guilt suggests that he wants to redeem himself from his past actions.

However, the shadow of political strategy on Henry's crusade plan makes this impossible. The attempt to restore his name and legitimize his rule is actually a political

move in itself; Henry undermines his own attempt at redemption. He reveals this during the instruction scenes when he discusses the Percys and their army of rebels. Henry admits he has “a fear / To be again displac’d; which to avoid, / I cut them off, and had a purpose now / To lead out many to the Holy Land” (2.IV.v.207-210). Religion has a very small part, if any, in Henry’s crusade plan. Rather, it is prompted by the desire to avoid the threat of civil war. The political motive is clearer when Henry advises Hal to use warfare to distract and occupy his enemies so as to secure his place as king, a move of tyranny according to Plato. Henry’s plans are in vain, however, given the succession of events in English history that the King cannot escape, no matter how much he tries to twist the play from a history play to a tragedy. History is fact, and it damns Henry’s England to an inevitable civil war. The King’s trial-by-conflict in the Holy Land is impossible; the best he can do is to imagine the approval of his subjects, turning his death chamber into David’s City: “Bear me to that chamber, there I’ll lie / In that Jerusalem shall Harry die!” (2.IV.v.239-240).

Hal plays into the redemption scheme, but the word “redeem” has a more personal meaning for the young prince. We see Hal’s understanding of the word in his first soliloquy: “I’ll so offend, to make offense a skill, / Redeeming time when men least think I will” (1.I.ii.216-217). Hal is confident in his abilities. He juxtaposes the words “offense” and “redemption,” which normally have inverse connotations, and pledges to make something incredibly useful out of this offensive behavior, a trick that only the most ambitious Machiavels can perform. Hal also dictates the terms of this arrangement; it is he, not his father, who decides when he will choose to be “more himself.” When Hal refers to “redeeming time,” he touches on the immediate desire to right his wrongs, to

“make up for his misspent time” (Evans 893). This phrase would have connected to Shakespeare’s audience, which was probably familiar with William Whately’s sermon “The Redemption of Time” or the religious drama *Lusty Juventus* (Jorgenson 233).

But originally the line can be traced back to a verse from the Book of Ephesians, which exhorts the early Christians to “redeem the time for the days are evil.” The days in England may be evil indeed, as Rackin writes – an usurper sits on the throne in this cynical period – but Hal ironically seeks to defend this corrupted order of things; moreover, he seeks to add his own layer. The Prince inverts Biblical ethics to serve his own tarnished ethics in his quest for the crown. Like his father with the crusade plan, he is appropriating a religious idea for his political ends. Falstaff isn’t wrong at all when he says to Hal in the tavern, “O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint” (1.I.ii.90-91), alluding to Hal’s crafty manipulation of Bible verses. Falstaff goes on to insinuate that it is Hal that has corrupted him, not the other way around, and we can suppose that indeed, the blood of Henry and Hal is more poisonous than Falstaff’s wine.

So in *Henry IV*, the word “redeem” is tarnished by the cold-blooded political agendas of Henry and Hal. Henry wants to recover the good family name and legitimize his kingship, as his guilt suggests, but cannot do so without the cunning plan of a dual-motive crusade. Hal wants to “redeem himself” in the eyes of the people as a proper heir to the throne, but not before plunging into the depths of society in order to soar above when England least expects it. Of course, this path of ambition must be tempered by self-control, an aspect of policy that we see on the battlefield when Hal saves his father’s life (Montrose 37). Both characters have their vices, whether they are usurpation or low-life association; however, these vices are obscured by the redemption plans of both father and

son, which eliminate any negative repercussions. The word “redeem” is therefore a magical religious word that wipes away guilt. It polishes and purifies the names of Henry and Hal, at least in image. It is a political strategy under the guise of genuine atonement. According to this logic, one wrong is necessary to right another.

This is Henry IV’s value system, the politics and cold blood that were always flowing through Hal’s veins. Hal must choose his father’s legacy over Falstaff’s for the sake of politics, that is, in order to become the gifted leader of England, Henry V. This involves the sacrificial rejection of Falstaff, a final purgation of the wine that Hal merely sampled socially, for appearance’s sake, as he “made offense a skill” (Stewart 132). According to the critics Edward Berry refers to as the “Moralists,” Hal is justified in refusing the legacy Falstaff outlines in his soliloquy: “If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack” (2.IV.iii.122-125). He encourages the freedom, life-lust and oblivion that wine provides, directly in contrast to the sober government that Hal chooses instead. This proposition is excessive in the style of Falstaff, and Hal must reject it for its excess, its substance, and its “humane principle.” In fact, it is too humane, and runs the risk of warming Hal’s cold blood and inflaming the passions.

We always knew that Hal would choose the crown and reject Falstaff because of English history. In the final act of Part II, we have this long-awaited confrontation between son and surrogate father, a bond that was only a scheme on the Prince’s part. “I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers” (2.V.v.47), says Hal coldly, rejecting Falstaff not as a father, not as a friend, but merely as an aged good-for nothing who has deteriorated morally over the course of the play while Hal has made his upward climb to

the kingship. Berry writes that this crucial decision on Hal's part divides critics into two camps, the Sentimentalists, who see Falstaff as harmless and free, and the Moralists who judge him with Hal, who appears as a clerical figure in this "sermon" (Berry 201). I propose that the proper response of the audience is to side with King Henry V against Falstaff, though not for the reasons Berry lists. First of all, on a basic level, this action is a satisfying conclusion to the narrative (Bradley 60). But we should not figure Hal as a moral victor – Hal's manipulation and ambition, not his morality, have led him to power. And now he severs away the means by which he got there, just as Henry IV disconnected himself from the Percys who assisted in his climb to the throne.

Hal rejects Falstaff and his wine at once when he first enters as King in Westminster Palace following Henry's death:

The tide of blood in me
Hath proudly flow'd in vanity til now;
Now it doth turn and ebb back to the sea,
Where it shall mingle with the state of floods,
And flow henceforth in formal majesty. (2.V.iii.129-133)

Hal summarizes his political choice here with the recurring image of blood, this time a sea of blood, a much larger body to fit his increased power as king. The word "blood" has several meanings that Hal intends at once. On the surface, the word would have referred to the passions, anger and irrational impulses relating to the concept of the four bodily humors. We see similar uses of the word in *Othello*, when the Moor of Venice, lost in a fit of jealousy, cries out "O blood, blood, blood!" (III.iii.451) (Paster 66). If we take the word this way, Hal seems to be referencing a transformation along the lines of the morality play that J. Dover Wilson argues to exist. But in my interpretation there is no transformation; Hal speaks ironically as King, embodying the blood of his father and his

line, owning its manipulative political instincts. His eloquent language hides the strategic underpinnings of his rise to power, making his political moves even more impressive. Hal appears to be announcing his victory over the carefree “blood,” the indulgence of the tavern, which now “doth turn and ebb back to sea,” dissolving in the pure, royal sea of order. But the latter part of these lines suggest an acceptance of a legacy; Hal’s “tide” will “mingle with the state of floods,” joining a greater tradition – a tradition of political cunning. For Hal, the word “blood” will always hold the connotation of his policy and his line. The saying “blood is thicker than water” holds true for this play; at least, blood is thicker than wine. It holds the ethical tradition of the father within it, heavy matter that produces a cold, congealed substance. The wine of Falstaff, on the other hand, is in fact the “thin potation” that the overweight knight claims it is not. It acts as a distracter, an agent of play and oblivion, but ultimately fails to overtake the ambition of the blood. In this period of English history, providence doesn’t exist; there is only the agency of those who exercise policy. “So success of mischief shall be born, / And heir from heir shall hold his quarrel up” (2.IV.ii.47-49), says Hastings on the battlefield. *Henry IV* ratifies this observation; the only legacy that can prevail is the cold blood of policy. In the court, the cup of wine lies untouched.

A Marriage of Brothers: Fraternal Rivalry in *As You Like It*

I now turn from the sinister history of *Henry IV* in order to examine comedy's interpretation of this particular theme of family inheritance. *As You Like It* may seem simply like a comedy whose ultimate goal is the heterosexual marriage of a series of characters. And it is true that this is one of the planned outcomes of the play; marriage is a coming-together that features almost always in Elizabethan comedy (Williamson 23). However, I agree with Louis Montrose in his essay "The Place of a Brother" that the conflict and competition between brothers in relation to patriarchal inheritance and influence overshadows the "main" plot, which leads to the quadruple-marriage at the end of the drama. The women in the play, even the crafty Rosalind, figure as devices for the reconciliation of male characters (Montrose 2). The male-male bond is the law in *As You Like It*; it resolves economic and political tension between brothers, and provides a solution to succession issues. The system of patriarchy relies on the male-male bond for continuity, for posterity. Male-female marriages are simply a necessary evil, a means toward the reaffirmation of these bonds, which are tested, severed and renewed throughout the play as we move from court to forest, and back to court.

We experience this transition between courtly and pastoral life primarily through the eyes of Orlando, the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys and the protagonist of the play. Already, the surname “de Boys” prefigures the relationship between the two sons of this nobleman, Oliver and Orlando. Furthermore, the word “land” stands out in Sir Rowland’s name, showing us what is at stake. Here, in the de Boys household, within the realm of the court, economics takes precedence over family bonds. Possessions, opportunity, and at worst, fratricide, dominate the organic flow of kinship, memory and affection. We experience the corruption of these pure lines of power with Sir Rowland’s youngest son; we sympathize with him as he suffers the blows of Oliver’s tyranny. With him, we ask: What is a society’s duty to younger brothers under a system of primogeniture? What happens when the legal word of the father is posthumously violated? As we enter the forest, a state of nature with no father figures, Shakespeare explores these questions with a foray into the economic locks and limits on family relationships.

The Court: Envious Emulation

Orlando opens the play with a complaint about the inheritance situation in his family: “It was upon this fashion bequeath’d me by will but poor a thousand crowns, and, as thou say’st, charg’d my brother, on his blessing, to breed me well; and there begins my sadness” (I.i.1-5). Orlando occupies the bottom slot in his family’s inheritance scheme, and the “poor” amount of money is the meager inheritance promised by his father’s will. The word “poor” can also allude to his fear of poverty. On top of this, he worries about

any kind of dependence he may have on his brother Oliver, who is supposed to “breed [him] well” according to the “will” of the father. This “will” is both the hopes and desires of Sir Rowland, as well as the legal document specifying what he leaves to his youngest son. But Orlando senses a claustrophobic future with Oliver in which he will gain “nothing under him but growth” (I.i.14) and likens his life in Oliver’s care to that of animals and livestock. But even “his horses are bred better,” he sighs, plunging himself further down the list of priorities on the de Boys estate. With the word “breed,” Orlando ironically references the fact that his brother does not treat him as an aristocrat, nor as a human, but rather as a piece of Sir Rowland’s estate, not even equal to an animal.

So Sir Rowland’s death has thrown the de Boys family into upheaval, and Orlando’s “place” is essentially that of a nobody, thanks to his brother’s tyranny. He fears not only the loss of his inheritance, but the loss of his status as an aristocrat altogether. He identifies himself as a victim of the “fashion,” the “courtesy of nations” (I.i.46) that so closely resembles the “curiosity of nations” that Edmund struggles with in *King Lear* (I.ii.4) (Montrose 4). Oliver, as the eldest son, inherits the full estate as well as the paternal authority of the father. There is also a middle son who is mentioned briefly by Orlando; it is Jaques, who is furthering his education at a university. But Orlando, it seems, is left with nothing but a slim financial sum and an idle future. We can assume that Sir Rowland, the embodiment of primogeniture and the “will of the father,” would have had it otherwise. Though legal processes limit what he could bequeath to his youngest son, there is a bond between Orlando, the youngest of three children, and his father. The situation is a male rendition of Lear’s family. Orlando does not accuse his father of snubbing him, however; rather, he defends him (and primogeniture),

disconnecting Sir Rowland from the will he mentions in line 2. The force that is the cause of Orlando's sadness is this will, rather than Sir Rowland himself, who elected the way of primogeniture for his family according to custom. Unfortunately, will and wish are paradoxically opposed. Oliver's violation of the will makes matters even worse. Orlando wishes to reverse this turn of events; he wants to play the role of the blessed younger brother in the tradition of the Old Testament, defending his father instead of faulting him (Montrose 9). As a consequence, the blame must fall on Oliver instead.

So in spite of a system that is stacked against him, that threatens his noble status and his claim to an inheritance or education of any kind, Orlando still maintains a bond with the "spirit" of his father. The word "spirit" carries a wealth of connotations. Not only does it refer to the soul, but also it serves as a euphemism for semen, the first biological link between father and son. Orlando accepts, even proclaims his place as a younger brother when he defeats Charles the wrestler, declaring that he is "more proud to be Sir Rowland's son, / His youngest son, and would not change that calling / To be adopted heir to Frederick" (I.ii.232-234). Of course, this anticipates the change of fortune that this younger brother will experience at the play's end. Orlando feels the calling of his father, like Hamlet, and is inspired by this "spirit" which "begins to mutiny against this servitude" (I.i.22-24). Like the Danish prince, Orlando feels an imperative to act against a tyrannical figure that has violated the order his father put in place. Like Claudius, Oliver is a blocking agent; while not a usurper per se, he corrupts the small token of security, the education, that was to be passed down to Orlando (Montrose 9-10). "I will no longer endure it" (I.i.71), says Orlando boldly to his brother, feeling encouraged by the remembrance of his father. Orlando is, after all, the "memory / Of old Sir Rowland"

(II.iii.3-4), according to the steadfast servant Adam, who serves to ratify this spiritual and moral link. Orlando is the physical manifestation of the gentility of his father, and strives to live up to this standard in his actions as well as in his appearance. The bond between the father and the youngest son is clear; the name “Rowland” even echoes “Orlando” in a way (Montrose 9).

And yet, this schema is worth less than nothing to Oliver, who refuses to see Orlando as the “righteous younger son” figure from the Old Testament. Biblical language and imagery permeate the text of *As You Like It*. This recurring element stretches beyond the historical and social contexts of the play into a time before, a state of nature, and tells us that brothers will act against each other, will compete for resources, regardless of time or place. Though the Bible functions as a tragedy and we know the play will end as a comedy, there will always be brotherly conflict. Orlando and Oliver’s dispute reminds us of the story of Cain and Abel; violence is a very real factor in this power relationship, especially for the younger brother. They both wish to place a Biblical interpretation on their relationship, but cannot agree on a particular story. Oliver doesn’t see the chosen younger son Joseph or Jacob in his brother, but rather the New Testament’s prodigal son, who will take all his money at once, and “beg, when that is spent” (I.i.75). Oliver sees the younger brother’s role from the privileged position of older brother, and places himself ahead. Montrose, on the other hand, imposes the story of Cain and Abel onto the opening scenes of the play (Montrose 19-20). Orlando’s impatience and violence are threats to Oliver; like Jacob, he must undergo a wrestling match in order to prove his worth. Oliver tells Charles the wrestler, his stand-in, that his brother is the “stubbornest fellow of France, / Full of ambition, an envious emulator of every man’s good parts” (I.i.142-144).

Though Orlando has our sympathy, Oliver makes an astute observation. The world of the court is full of “envious emulation” – we see it in Orlando’s case, and simultaneously in Frederick’s usurpation of his elder brother. Oliver characterizes Orlando as a Machiavel like Edmund in *King Lear*, an ambitious individual who seeks to upend the status quo, challenging a privileged older brother, just like Frederick, although in the family, rather than at court. But Oliver himself is unjust, a tyrant, and the audience sees Oliver’s designs in this scene; he plots behind Orlando’s back, and so we sympathize with the younger brother, the hero of the play bolstered by both his heroic name (we recall the epic *Orlando Furioso*) and his heroic actions. Despite his strengths, he is still characterized as a victim; though he is perceived as a threat, it is actually Oliver who is the plot-driver (Waddington 156).

The Other Brothers: The Dukes and Usurpation

A contemporaneous conflict exists between the play’s second pair of brothers, the Duke Senior (nameless, perhaps, to emphasize his position as a paternal authoritarian) and his younger brother Frederick, who has usurped him (Barnaby 385). This matter creates another layer of brotherly conflict in the play. Just as *King Lear* focuses on two father stories, we have a thematically relevant background that interacts with the main Orlando-Oliver plot. In addition, Shakespeare departs from the source, Lodge’s *Rosalynde*, figuring the two dukes as brothers to emphasize inheritance and brotherly conflict as themes (Montrose 7). What complicates the matter is the fact that Frederick is the Duke Senior’s younger brother. Shakespeare inverts the power dynamic of the

Orlando-Oliver relationship, this time posing the younger brother as the usurper and oppressor. Both Frederick and Oliver act as tyrants toward their brothers. First of all, Orlando, leaving the wrestling scene, soliloquizes that he goes “from the smoke into the smother, / From tyrant Duke unto a tyrant brother” (I.ii.287-288). With these words, Orlando articulates that tyranny, the urge to impose one’s will, is the chief crime of the play. We know, however, that he sees his older brother as the greater threat. His financial future, well-being, and even social status depend on this particular bond. In these family relationships at court, it is economics that dictates behavior and attitude, and tyranny is the means by which this is done (Montrose 4).

Frederick’s usurpation of the Duke is the realization of every younger brother’s dark fantasy. As Orlando converts his frustration into violence on more than one occasion, so “the old Duke is banish’d by his younger brother the new Duke” (I.i.99-100), according to Charles. Like Orlando defeating Charles (and therefore Oliver) in the wrestling match, symbolizing his worth and power as a younger sibling, Frederick has overthrown the legitimate Duke Senior, his older brother. But this usurpation occurs in the political realm, augmenting its importance to the overall environment of the play, establishing a tone. It exerts influence over all the characters.

Duke Frederick is a tyrant according to the political discourses of both Plato’s *The Republic* and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Every political step he takes concerns the need to preserve his power, and he does this by simply banishing threatening figures from his kingdom, starting with his brother, the legitimate Duke. Orlando, the victor in the wrestling match, is two times an enemy of the court, despite the fact that he and Frederick are both younger brothers. The desire for power has usurped Frederick’s soul; Celia, his

daughter, says that her “father’s rough and envious disposition / Sticks me at heart” (I.ii.241-242). Envy and fear, values that permeate the court in *As You Like It*, require Frederick to oppose Orlando’s victory. Heredity is a very real threat to Frederick; everyone carries the image and spirit of their father, especially Orlando. “I wouldst thou hadst been son to some man else; / The world esteemed thy father honorable, / But I did find him still mine enemy” (I.ii.224-226). According to his tyrannical imperative, Frederick must be wary of and banish Orlando. It is a defensive act of political dispossession.

We see the two tyrants of the play interact with one another in Act III: “I never lov’d my brother in my life” (III.i.13), Oliver says to the new Duke, swearing allegiance and promising that a family connection will not skew his loyalty. Frederick responds with “More villain thou” (III.i.14), and immediately we have a comparison between these two brotherly conflicts. Both are tyrants, and both are villains, evil-doers according to the Orlando point of view that we take as an audience. Frederick’s assertion here is ironic, since Oliver calls Orlando a “villain,” a pun on “villein,” meaning a person of low birth, in the first scene (“Villain, n.”). Though this short scene draws these tyrants together, they do not bond. There is a power dynamic steeped in political influence and economics; the new Duke, who judges others not by who they are, but by who their father is, sends Oliver to seek his brother: “Bring him dead or living / Within this twelvemonth, or turn thou no more / To seek a living in our territory” (III.i.6-8). This ultimatum is presented with the threat of banishment and the seizure of “thy lands and all things that thou dost call thine” (III.i.9). As the eldest brother and the beneficiary of primogeniture, land property is Oliver’s chief source of wealth, even a part of his identity. Primogeniture is a

kind of seizure in its own way; by will, and against wish, Sir Rowland takes what could be Orlando's and gives it to Oliver. On the same token, Oliver seizes the inheritance afforded to his younger brother. Frederick acts out of retribution; he was once in the social role of younger brother, and now promises to inflict economic punishment onto Oliver accordingly.

What's At Stake: The Noble Identity

As we learn from the play's opening, Orlando is tormented by his elder brother's abuse. The unbalanced situation destabilizes not only his financial position, but his identity. He was raised according to the practices and customs of the aristocracy; his father, Sir Rowland, was not merely a titled nobleman, but also a friend of the Duke. Orlando is proud of his heritage, and emphasizes his place as the youngest son, even if it limits him socially. Of course, at the end of the play, Orlando does not have to choose between the spiritual bond with his father and a chance for a social-status upgrade. His marriage to the Duke's daughter Rosalind affords him this opportunity. Rosalind is an important character in the play, and is arguably the protagonist, according to some critics. But this particular interpretation focuses on her marital role as a function of patriarchy.

At the play's outset, Orlando is kept "rustically at home" (I.i.7) with the animals, instead of at a center of education. The Elizabethan social context reflects Orlando's anxiety; Shakespeare examines the tenuous nature of aristocratic status in *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* as well, both written during the "bottleneck years," in which court opportunities were limited, and nobles had to struggle to retain their rank (Williamson

14). Beyond Shakespeare's work is a host of poems, essays and instructional guides with "secrets" concerning aristocratic status, most notably Castiglione's *The Courtier*, with its insistence on *sprezzatura* (Barnaby 380).

Orlando does not need a nobility instruction-book, however; he already possesses the traits required of a noble. But he still fears he may lose this preferred social standing. The frustration with which Orlando appears in his rant to Adam in I.i. reveals the disparity he perceives between his social status as the son of an aristocrat and the opportunities provided by his brother. What makes an aristocrat? is the question the play seems to ask (Barnaby 380). As Orlando searches for an answer, he takes the side of his deceased father, which provides some consolation and rhetorical ammunition against his brother, who has undermined Sir Rowland's will: "The spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no longer endure it; therefore allow me such exercises as may become a gentleman" (I.i.70-72). The term "gentleman" is a bit hazy, since it can refer to either something you are or something you do. Orlando claims he owns both senses of the word. He confesses that he is technically inferior to his brother according to the custom of primogeniture, not arguing with the structure that Sir Rowland put into place (unlike Frederick). But he still demands the bare minimum that can be afforded to the youngest brother.

And yet, Orlando is disgusted with his seemingly dead-end future. There is only the idle life of an aristocrat's youngest child, "that differs not from the stalling of an ox" (I.i.10-11). He doesn't have the estate to attract a bride, either. On the other hand, he can turn to beggary or crime: "What, wouldst thou have me go and beg my food? / Or with a base and boist'rous sword enforce / A thievish living on the common road?" (II.iii.31-

33). This latter option manifests itself later on as Orlando's violent impulse, grown out of frustration, is released in the forest before the Duke (Montrose 6). None of these options involve the potential that Orlando knows he has inside of him, the "spirit of my father" that he feels within. He craves independence and personal agency, and is troubled by its elusive nature. In this sense, the play functions somewhat as a coming-of-age tale, as well as a rags-to-riches tale. Orlando must let the spirit of his father guide him through his adolescence, past the pitfalls of sin, into the riches of gentleness, brotherhood and economic stability. In the Forest of Arden, these latent values that separate men from beasts will emerge, and Orlando will reclaim his aristocratic heritage.

Early on in the play, Oliver claims that "I never lov'd my brother in my life" (III.i.13), denying the elemental bond between them. But in a soliloquy, he qualifies his hatred for his brother, revealing that he does not actually know why his "soul" despises him so much. He concedes that Orlando has some aristocratic potential behind the façade of violence: "Yet he's gentle, never school'd and yet learn'd, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly belov'd" (I.i.166-168). This admission of Oliver, the fact that he can acknowledge these traits, shows that there is hope for the reconciliation of these warring fraternal. Despite the tyranny and envy of the relationship, these words are seeds that will blossom into a peaceful resolution. Preparations are made on the other side of the equation as well; Orlando's interests are mostly intangible, organic, rather than concrete and materialistic. He mentions the "poor a thousand crowns" that Sir Rowland leaves him, but more important to him are good breeding and education, "such exercises as may become a gentleman" (I.i.72). On top of these priorities, Orlando aligns himself with his father's spirit rather than the estate, money, animals, or any other economic function of

an aristocratic life (Montrose 9). For Orlando, gentility lies in the family bond. It is the glue between family members; it ignores finances, or at least downplays them, and cannot be broken, even by death (as Orlando's bond with Sir Rowland proves). Such attitudes foreshadow the decision Orlando must make when his eldest brother is in mortal peril. His aristocratic spirit must overcome the economic trappings of his fraternal relationship with Oliver, and he must make the correct moral choice that leads to everlasting vows of fidelity between brothers.

The Physicality of Fraternity

The court is not merely a place of envious emulation, but also a place of physical violence, set in direct opposition to the "gentleness" which is one of the goals of the play. Orlando mocks his brother in Act I, claiming "I have as much of my father in me as you" (I.i.49-50), one of the same arguments Edmund makes in *King Lear*. He protests his animalistic upbringing and demands a cure for the idleness that is thinning "the gentle condition of blood" (I.i.44) within him. Oliver deals the first blow; the conflict changes from verbal to physical, and now Orlando's violence becomes a factor. "Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this" (I.i.53-54), he says boldly. Oliver has just stepped out of his arena and into his younger brother's; the choice to resort to physical blows inverts the power dynamic, and places Orlando at the top as he collars his brother. All Oliver can do is call his brother a "villain," while Orlando proclaims his heritage to his father, and then boldly says, "Wert thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat till this other had pull'd out thy tongue for saying so. Thou hast railed on

yourself" (I.i.59-62). Orlando alludes to the ultimate act of violence against Oliver, the forceful removal of his tongue, which is the only real weapon the elder brother possesses. In a struggle between males, this threat has a phallic tenor.

Orlando claims the conflict is Oliver's fault; his own tongue betrayed him, and his tyrannical approach to brotherhood set him up for this violent encounter. But Orlando qualifies this statement with the clause, "Wert thou not my brother." Unlike Frederick, he still respects the overall system beneath so many layers of insults and violence, even in spite of the coercion and idleness he has had to endure. Just as Oliver steps back from his tirade to grant Orlando a portion of gentleness, Orlando stays his own hand. The reality is immense, nevertheless: "You have train'd me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities" (I.i.68-70). This offense would seem unforgivable to Orlando, who is both offended and defensive. Violence is the only means by which this nearly portionless brother can deal with his anger, and he will not let go of Oliver "till I please" (I.i.66).

Orlando's wrestling match against Charles, the court wrestler, is a displacement of the physical conflict between the de Boys brothers. In this second round of the fraternal dispute, Oliver unleashes more of his power and influence as he arranges the seemingly unbalanced match-up between his brother (who will be disguised) and Charles, the Duke's wrestler. Oliver hopes for the worst: "I had as lief thou didst break his neck as his finger" (I.i.146-147), he says in confidence to Charles, citing Orlando's ambition as a justification for this harsh treatment, and possibly alluding to a kind of castration in another moment of phallic rivalry (Marshall 269). By formulating this device, Oliver becomes the Machiavel that he accuses his brother of being. He plots against his brother

in both economic and familial matters, “bar[ring Orlando] the place of a brother” (I.i.19-20). Though we do not know specifically what Orlando refers to here (perhaps the bare minimum duties to a younger brother under Sir Rowland’s primogeniture), it is clear that Oliver violates these terms. Now he seeks to crown his subjugation of his brother with an attempted fratricide.

In the first scene of the play, Orlando is a much more worthy opponent than his brother. He mocks Oliver for his inept fighting style, calling him “too young in this” (I.i.53-54). Charles, however, is the Duke’s court wrestler; he is a defending champion and a definite physical threat. We learn that facing a contender, Charles “broke three of his [the contender’s] ribs, that there is little hope of life in him” (I.ii.127-128). Charles admits Orlando is “young and tender” (I.i.129) and claims he “would be loath to foil him” (I.i.130), but Oliver, like Cain, says that he is not his brother’s keeper, despite the fact that his father’s will commands him to “breed [Orlando] well” (I.i.4). Thus, the challenge is set, and Charles becomes an extension of Oliver’s paternally-derived authority. “Come, where is this young gallant that is so desirous to lie with his mother earth?” (I.ii.200-201), Charles shouts in the arena, taunting Orlando with the phantom of incest. He is no longer worried about Orlando’s “tender” condition, and plays a spectacular role according to Oliver’s fratricidal plot (Marshall 270).

We sympathize with Orlando as the match begins. He bravely enters the ring “to try with him [Charles] the strength of my youth” (I.ii.171-172), seemingly with little concern for his safety (Montrose 11). He addresses Rosalind before the match with overdramatic words of despair. If he should die, he says, he owes “the world no injury, for in it I have nothing. Only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied

when I have made it empty” (I.ii.190-193). In this case, the “place of a brother” seems to be that of a non-person, a position of social death. Because of this, Orlando has nothing to lose by wrestling Charles – it seems like a suicidal tendency – but the better question asks what he has to gain. The physical struggle against Charles shows us a side of Orlando that is bold and daring, even to a hazardous degree, which all pays off in this Herculean effort (Waddington 156).

And Charles is an agent of Oliver, the elder brother; he is a proxy, a stand-in in what should be a second physical confrontation between the de Boys brothers, a rematch of what happens in I.i. In this context, however, like Hamlet, Oliver disguises a homicide attempt as sport or play (Marshall 269). Just as within the patriarchal structure of primogeniture, the cards are stacked against Orlando, which makes his victory all the more rewarding – and surprising – to the audience. By winning, Orlando reveals himself, and the character of the younger brother in general, as an actual social threat to the established order (here, Oliver’s dominion). We can connect this displaced victory over Charles to Frederick’s usurpation of his brother, the Duke Senior. Orlando makes known his desire to be somebody, to realize himself at the center of a rags-to-riches story. He announces himself proudly as “Orlando, my liege, the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys” (I.ii.222), shedding his disguise and asserting that “the place of a brother” is in fact worthy of honor and respect, within the limits of the patriarchal system (Montrose 10).

This symbolic victory makes conditions at court more dangerous for Orlando. He is a threat not only to Oliver, but to the Duke Frederick as well: “Bring him dead or living / Within this twelvemonth” (III.i.6-7), Frederick says to Orlando, eager to capture the virtuous fighter and younger brother. For Orlando, the grand victory gains him not social

acceptability, not honor and respect, but infamy: “Your virtues, gentle master, / Are sanctified and holy traitors to you” (II.iii.12-13), says Adam, Orlando’s loyal servant. Orlando may possess “gentle” qualities according to both Adam and, surprisingly, his brother, but his actions are interpreted as “envious emulation,” and the court is no longer a safe place. Besides, Oliver has another fratricide plot in the works, meaning “To burn the lodging where you use to lie, / And you within it. If he fail of that, / He will have other means to cut you off” (II.iii.22-25), as Adam says, bringing more theological language into the play. Oliver is unstoppable in his pursuit of fratricide, and so Orlando must flee to the Forest of Arden.

Into the Forest: Natural Usurpation

The Forest of Arden is not the idyllic pastoral environment that so many works of literature during Shakespeare’s time painted it to be. Corin, Silvanus and Phebe’s names recall the golden age of pastoral poetry, but these characters are in fact human beings with needs and wants, drives and desires. Corin, once a free shepherd, finds himself “shepherd to another man, / And do[es] not shear the fleece that [he] graze[s] (II.iv.78-79). The economics and morals of the court, which Corin mocks, have found their way to the forest before the play has even begun, leaving the ideal a mere memory in the mind of these agrarian characters. Arden is not actually a forest in this sense, but a court decorated with trees and wildlife. On a more sinister note, feudal enclosure is a dark cloud that blocks out the sun and the carefree spirit typically associated with pastoral literature.

This mixture of political and natural forms a medium in which the characters can scrutinize themselves and their relationships with others. They seek refuge following a rejection, usurpation or a threat. Orlando, at Adam's suggestion, leaves his brother's house to seek the security of the forest. The Duke Senior, banished from the court, brings his courtiers with him to Arden. Rosalind and Celia also flee the regime of Frederick. The conflicts in Act I set up a massive exodus from courtly setting to pastoral setting, and the characters learn, change and grow in this space.

We experience the interaction and confusion of courtly and pastoral most vividly through our main characters, primarily the Duke Senior. When the Duke arrives to the forest, he praises his surroundings regally, with a satisfied sense of ceremony: "Hath not old custom made this life more sweet / Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods / More free from peril than the envious court?" (II.i.2-4). In these lines, the Duke appeals to the pastoral myth, which infects the courtly aristocracy just as much as the courtly aristocracy infects the pastoral environment. He passes off the "painted pomp" of the court as bitter and hypocritical, contrasting it with the sweetness and security he sees in the forest. He maintains that he experiences an enormous change; free from the jaded politics of the court, such as what we see in *Henry IV*, the Duke claims he "Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (II.i.16-17). Coloring exile with a bright shade of optimism certainly has its benefits; he sees Arden as a new Eden.

However, there is a sense of irony in the way the Duke Senior "translate[s] the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (I.ii.18-19). The Duke is so many pages into his self-written pastoral romance that he does not notice how similar

things are to his previous life at court (Barnaby 377). The Duke does not actually “find books in running brooks”; he imposes them, forces them into the pastoral landscape. He introduces a polemic and a discourse where there had previously only been the twitter of birds and the rustle of leaves. Furthermore, a band of aristocrats attends the Duke; they all stand by the exiled ruler, awaiting his command just as they would in the Duke’s hall. These courtiers are Amiens and two or three other lords; they are dressed as foresters, in the garb of their new environment, but their function remains the same. The Duke may have been exiled; like Lear, he has been tossed out into the howling storm, the “churlish chiding of the winter’s wind” (II.i.7). But like the Ancient British king, the Duke Senior maintains a core of loyal men about him, all prepared to serve him (except Jaques, the complainer). He preserves these male-male bonds as a security measure during a period of desperation, despite the sunshine he proposes to cast on his fortune. As a result, the courtly life continues; the Duke cannot ever be entirely free from the “envious emulation” of the court.

The Duke actually usurps the environment for his social and political convenience. After praising the forest for its natural virtue, the Duke exclaims, “Come, shall we go and kill us venison?” (II.i.21), turning the instinctual need for food into the aristocratic activity of hunting. Now established in the depths of the forest, the Duke seeks custom to preserve a sense of both leadership and order. Hunting is a doubly aristocratic idea, combining an act of natural usurpation with a common pastime of the noble class. This suggestion is balanced by a hint of regret, however, concerning the former. The Duke expresses a token amount of pity for the “native burghers of this desert city” (II.i.23), the deer, which, since they must become a sacrifice, the sustenance for

their human superiors, cannot be taken too seriously. The Duke is used to the “venison” of the court, not the live deer of the forest, which he casts in turn as “burghers,” citizens in a city, rather than animals. The hunting of the deer brings up another question: whose are they? From Corin, we know the land within the Forest of Arden to have been enclosed by an absent aristocrat “of churlish disposition” (II.iv.80). It is therefore quite likely that the Duke Senior and his “many merry men with him” (II.i.115) may not be only usurping the natural habitat, but stealing property from another aristocratic figure. The Duke sees usurpation as rule, thievery as hunting, and culture as nature. These attitudes express a devotion to the established order of society, and we can extend this argument to include the practice of primogeniture.

The Duke Senior reconstructs the forest as a stand-in for the envious court he knows, not knowing that he does it, just as we often sustain our own cultures obliviously. In times before, Arden had its own kind of order and structure according to the Duke, though it was wild and boundless. It was a “city,” albeit a desert one, in which “burghers” enjoyed the benefits of their particular world. But the Duke’s coming has transformed the harmony of this state of nature into another Darwinian struggle for survival. His declaration of a desire to hunt undermines his pastoral praise of the forest, and casts him in the role of the usurper (like Frederick). This is all according to the logic of Jaques, one of the Duke’s courtiers who is a cynic, a loner, and the environmentalist of the play. A lord tells the Duke Senior that Jaques “swears you do more usurp / Than doth your brother that hath banish’d you” (II.i.27-28). Jaques makes this accusation justly, for the Duke does take the environment into his power, anthropomorphizing its inhabitants before turning them into victims of his new regime (Waddington 377). The Lord

describes to us a scene in which Jaques laments the death of a “poor sequest’red stag / That from the hunter’s aim had ta’en a hurt” (II.i.33-34). Jaques sympathizes not with the usurped Duke, who romanticizes his surroundings, but rather with the fallen stag, which is ignored by everyone, even the herd of other deer. Like Prospero in *The Tempest*, the Duke Senior is a usurped usurper; the pattern of power seizure in the play seems to justify the practice, even making it a standard. Jaques may complain, but the play ultimately stands behind the Duke.

The Reclamation of Gentility

The Forest of Arden may be a place of natural usurpation and environmental repression. Just as the Duke Senior hunts the deer for his venison, the aristocracy snatches up and encloses common pastures, leaving shepherds in poverty and hunger. However, the introduction of the aristocracy creates a new sphere within the forest, a medium in which gentility and nobility can assert themselves, possibly redeeming the aristocracy for its acts of usurpation. The state of nature, the rawness and rudeness of the “desert city” that existed before, gives way to a sense of honor, respect and even equality. Consequently, Arden is also a place of therapy and education; Orlando has several “sessions” with Ganymede (Rosalind in disguise) for these purposes. Humans act differently in the forest. They are not transformed entirely, but certain values that were always inherent manifest themselves in opportune moments. Attitudes change, relationships are inverted, and male-male bonds flourish.

The primary objective of Orlando's journey in the forest is the renunciation of his violent ways and the reclamation of a sense of gentility. He comes to the forest swelling with the pride of victory but fearing the retribution of both Frederick and Oliver. In this time of uncertainty, of transition, Adam is there for Orlando to guarantee his rights to inheritance. If Oliver, in his fratricidal fury, is the blocking agent, then Adam is the anti-blocking agent; he pledges his loyalty to Orlando, calling him "O my sweet master, O you memory / Of old Sir Rowland" (II.iii.3-4), again aligning this righteous youngest son with the just father, in physical aspect as well as in virtue. Adam is the model feudal servant, and Orlando sees him as a classical model from the Golden Age, in which servants worked out of the goodness of their hearts, rather than for the desire for advancement, economic or otherwise (Waddington 158). This supporting character takes up "the penalty of Adam" (II.i.5) in order to help Orlando prove his worth as both gentle and a gentleman.

But Adam's responsibility extends beyond this; he goes as far as to assume a fatherly role, that of a patron, offering Orlando his "five hundred crowns, / The thrifty hire I sav'd under your father, / Which I did store to be my foster-nurse" (II.iii.38-40). He restitutes Orlando with money that was originally Sir Rowland's; in a way, he resurrects the spirit of Sir Rowland within himself in order to play a paternal role, assisting Orlando in this time of need. This is his retirement savings, and all he has. Adam is essentially offering an inheritance to Orlando, and while it is only half of what Sir Rowland pledged to give his youngest son, it means just as much. Adam alerts Orlando to Oliver's plans to burn down the house; furthermore, he promises to accompany Orlando into the forest: "Let me go with you, / I'll do the service of a younger man / In all your business and

necessities” (II.iii.54-55). Adam’s aid to Orlando, in wisdom, in financial means, and in company and guidance makes him more than just a faithful servant. He is aware of the bond between Sir Rowland and Orlando, and works to preserve it, even though Sir Rowland is no longer alive.

Despite his eager attitude, Adam is in fact elderly, and becomes too weak to travel. “I will follow thee / To the last gasp” (II.iii.69-70), Adam pledges, and almost fulfills this promise, nearly fainting and requiring Orlando to care for him. Orlando seeks food to revive Adam, and stumbles onto the banished Duke’s party in one of the most crucial scenes of the play. It is a scene that tests Orlando’s gentility; like Ferdinand who must carry the logs for Prospero, Orlando’s interactions with the Duke have great implications for his reputation. Orlando is desperate at first: “Forbear, and eat no more” (II.vii.88), he pronounces confidently in the name of Adam, his sword drawn. The audience is faced with new questions: What change has the forest wrought on Orlando? Has he entirely lost his noble sense, as he feared he would at the play’s beginning? Has he become a mere thief, which he saw as one of two possibilities if he left the idleness of Oliver’s dominion? Or has his distress merely put him over the edge? The Duke calmly poses this last question: “Art thou thus bolden’d, man, by thy distress? / Or else a rude despiser of good manners, / That in civility thou seem’st so empty?” (II.vii.91-93). The words “manners” and “civility” ring out in these lines, decorating the hostile scene with a noble sense of tranquility. The Duke is able to reduce this state of Hobbesian nature to a civil realm governed by reason, manners, and above all things, “gentleness,” a word which surfaces again and again in this particular scene.

Orlando, face to face with the patient Duke, confesses that his current situation has deprived him of the decorum expected from an aristocrat. In the midst of such rude behavior as drawing a sword, a threatening, phallic gesture, Orlando says, “yet am I inland bred, / And know some nurture” (II.vii.96-97), claiming to possess the innate gentility that even his brother admits he has in I.i. Orlando and the Duke continue their conversation around the axis of the word “gentleness,” referring both to cordiality and goodwill, as well as the noble disposition that Orlando claims he still possesses, despite the outbreaks of violence we have witnessed. These aristocratic terms undergo a shift in meaning in the forest. They are stripped down to their roots, no longer burdened with the political and economic troubles of the court. What remains is the courtesy and kindness we see between these characters. The Duke Senior acts not only as a peacemaker and negotiator, but also as an instructor, offering a lesson in gentility: “Your gentleness shall force, / More than your force move us to gentleness” (II.vii.102-103).

To belong to this civil and aristocratic outpost in the midst of the forest, to be welcome in the Duke’s company, Orlando must suppress his violent instincts. He must sheathe his sword and renounce his aggression as a stipulation of nobility: “Let gentleness my strong enforcement be,” Orlando says, “In the which hope I blush, and hide my sword” (II.vii.117-118). The move is a bit embarrassing, but he must follow the rules of the Duke Senior’s forest-court, and let his gentle side take dominion over his whole person. He lowers his sword, a retraction of the phallic challenge and an expression of submission – being “gentle” may require Orlando to act with filial deference in order to reach a compromise, a bond between two males, which is the ultimate goal of the scene. This agreement between the Duke and Orlando represents a

pact that anticipates the father-son bond they will have as a result of marriage. It is an alternative to the trial-by-conflict which appears in so many of Shakespeare's history plays (Rackin 54). Orlando lowers his arms and speaks according to his aristocratic heritage; he is, after all, the son of Sir Rowland de Boys. The Duke, on the other hand, does not speak with condemnation, but rather, with welcome; the forest helps him climb down from his high seat of power to meet his subjects halfway.

Does, Fawns and the Brotherly Banquet

Orlando furthers this compromise by introducing Adam into the dialogue and reconciling his role-inversion with his newly manifested gentility. Adam acts the part of financier and wisdom-giver to Orlando: "This house is but a butchery; / Abhor it, fear it, do not enter it" (II.iii.27-28). These are strong words of advice from a servant, and we remember the financial gift he makes to Orlando before the forest journey begins. But the forest alters this relationship of youngest son and surrogate father. It is now Orlando who must look out for and make arrangements for Adam. Orlando clarifies this relationship with a relevant image: "like a doe, I go to find my fawn, / And give it food" (II.vii.128-129). Now it is Orlando who is the provider, and Adam, the fawn, is in need of help.

Orlando's use of the doe image characterizes him as more gentle, caring and providing, completely different from the wrestler or sword-brandishing ruffian he appears to be at the scene's opening. We can also pair the image of the doe with the "native burghers of this desert city," the Arden deer that the Duke Senior hunts down for venison. With this metaphor, Orlando casts himself in a role of weakness. His inheritance, mainly

his education, has been in a way usurped, swallowed up, by Oliver; now he dons the aspect of another usurped being, the deer. Such a move does not inspire pity, however, but awe. This “gentleness” seems to be Orlando’s underlying disposition, despite his violent tendencies. It is inherent, latent, beneath the façade of physical aggression. For as Oliver says in Act One, despite the huge grudge against his brother, “Yet he’s gentle, never school’d and yet learn’d, full of noble device” (I.i.166-167). Also significant to this deer image is the fact that Orlando has cast himself in a de-masculinized role, changing gender as a doe, the deer mother. In accordance with the “noble device” Oliver mentions, Orlando must surrender the sense of hostility that he possessed at the play’s outset, during the scenes with both Oliver and Charles. Now, he takes up the dual role as provider and feminine caretaker, the opposite of Oliver.

The Duke Senior, by extension, also takes on the role of the doe in this scene, inviting Adam to the table: “Welcome. Set down your venerable burthen, / And let him feed” (II.vii.167-168), he says, although to Orlando, the master, rather than to Adam himself. There is still arguably a sense of hierarchy about the scene; we remember that this is not the pure forest, but a mimicry of the court. The Duke governs the discourse with his gentle tongue. But regardless of social station, he permits Adam to sit down and eat with him. We have before us a tableau of political and social harmony, of brotherly love. The Duke’s ideology has not been completely inverted by a mystical force inherent in Arden; he still addresses Orlando primarily, respecting the general rules of hierarchy. But a sense of gentleness that is absent at the envious court, among Oliver and Frederick, the tyrannical brothers, penetrates the forest, and brings these three males, from three different social classes, together. The Duke Senior and Orlando are, in contrast, the gentle

brothers, and the banquet is an image of sacramental sharing between these men. “Good old man, / Thou art right welcome as thy [master] is” (II.vii.197-198), says the Duke in a flourish of his gentleness. Rather than tyrannically lording his authority over these subjects, he bends down to them in an act of hospitality.

Amiens’ song, positioned in the middle of this scene, after the Duke Senior invites Orlando and Adam to the table, has a dual role. First, there cannot be any dialogue while the Duke, Orlando and Adam are eating, but we can understand that there would probably be some small-talk between these characters during the meal. The song halts the action and slows down the scene to a crawl; we have an image, again a tableau, of these three figures from different social castes sharing a meal. The scene would probably be staged with the Duke leaning over, speaking in Orlando’s ear. The dialogue following the song would make sense with this staging, as the Duke later references a pre-existing bond between himself and Orlando.

Second, the song serves a thematic purpose. It is a song of social criticism, rebuking the selfish for not helping others in need: “Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind / As man’s ingratitude” (II.vii.174-176). Shakespeare wrote this play during a period of economic instability and famine; such a song reaches out with a purpose, offering a view from a social justice standpoint. The audience recalls within the fictive structure of the play that the common land has been enclosed for sheep-grazing. Corin’s fate is not so different from that of the peasants and agricultural workers of Shakespeare’s England. Always at court, the absent aristocrat does nothing to help the forest’s previous inhabitants. Corin explains to Rosalind and Celia: “By reason of his absence there is nothing / That you will feed on; but what is, come see, / And in my voice

most welcome shall you be” (II.iv.85-87). This “desert city” of Arden is empty not just of men, but of power, lacking its aristocratic overlords, and resources, as evidenced by the famine. But Corin, despite his poverty, despite his feudal master’s offstage exploitation of the land, has a sense of hospitality not unlike the Duke’s during this meal-sharing scene in the forest. Amiens’ song indirectly praises the Duke Senior for his gracious attitude and welcoming spirit; he “shakes the superflux,” as King Lear would have liked.

The scene ends with the Duke Senior’s verbal expression of recognition. We know already that the Duke Senior and Orlando’s father were friends: “My father lov’d Sir Rowland as his soul” (I.ii.235), says Rosalind. In addition to this, Adam calls Orlando “you memory / Of old Sir Rowland!” (II.iii.3-4). These two facts must come together while Amiens is singing, because when the song is over, the Duke announces the connection, the relationship that existed before they met: “I am the Duke / That lov’d your father” (II.vii.194-195), he says, calling attention to both his paternal and feudal role as a leader and Sir Rowland’s literal role as a father. The Duke is a gentle patriarch; he atones for his usurpation of the forest with his kind attitude and hospitality, and encourages Orlando as a feudal superior and mentor.

With this recognition, the Duke forges a filial bond with a promise. He brings Orlando into his care, priming him for the “coming-together” at the end of the play. “Give me your hand, / And let me all your fortunes understand” (II.vii.199-200), he says to the youngest son of Sir Rowland. In this gesture of clasped hands, the promise of a bond with feudal tones, the Duke Senior pledges himself as a surrogate parent to the fatherless and fortuneless Orlando. This is the goal of the scene: the consummation of a bond between males. There is the challenge of both sides, one in aggression, the other in

gentleness; the latter wins out in this “courtship” stage, and a meal of fellowship is shared; a song accompanies the scene; finally, there is the verbal profession of the Duke that solidifies and consummates the filial bond. The marriage of Rosalind and Orlando at the end of the play ratifies this filiation, which holds the greater significance. Not only does the Duke-Orlando alliance technically dictate the outcome of the Rosalind-Orlando relationship, almost to the point of making it seem as an arranged marriage; it also sets the stage for economic and political dealings of the future, solving issues of inheritance and succession simultaneously. Orlando becomes the economic beneficiary of the Duke Senior, as well as the heir-apparent of the dukedom.

Orlando becomes the Duke’s son-in-law even before the marriage happens; he earns his protection through gentleness, and is now a member of the Duke’s assembly and family. The “love” that existed between the Duke and Sir Rowland intensifies this bond, and places Orlando in the center of attention, with the Duke himself. In a single scene, this fatherless youngster merely seeking refuge has proven himself to be an aristocrat, noble, and gentle. He catapults himself from dagger-waving wrestler into the bosom of the exiled Duke, passing from Adam’s protection to the Duke Senior’s. In doing so, Orlando overcomes his impulse to violence in a moment that foreshadows the climactic scene of the play, in which he must reconcile with Oliver, his brother-rival and the violator of Sir Rowland’s will.

Brotherly Conversion

In addition to being a place of reflection and male-male bonds, the Forest of Arden is a place of conversion. Feuds based on economics and property dissolve and give way to holistic and elemental bonds between family members. The Oliver-Celia and Orlando-Rosalind marriages are not ends in themselves; rather, they are means by which the greater “marriage of brothers” can take place. These unions cross the lines of ducal power with the de Boys family, connecting these two pairs of brothers in a coherent, solidified unit. Also important within this four-male structure are the links between immediate brothers, which are restored during the last part of the comedy. Orlando and Oliver find reconciliation in the face of mortal danger, despite the allure of fratricide, and the usurper Frederick experiences an otherworldly religious experience that changes his heart, transcending the orders and regulations of primogeniture. In the end, the gentility of the forest wins out over the “envious emulation” of the court.

When Oliver appears in the forest the middle of Act IV and addresses Rosalind, we assume the worst, remembering his pledge to the Duke Frederick. Oliver has fallen into the background of the play, searching for his brother on Frederick’s orders. But now Oliver appears, not with the intention of confronting or threatening his brother, but rather as a messenger, bearing greetings: “Orlando doth commend him to you both, / And to that you he calls his Rosalind / He sends this bloody napkin” (IV.iii.91-93). This stunning announcement is the first evidence of a change in spirit, a conversion that the forest has brought out of this “tyrant brother”: “I do not shame / To tell you what I was, since my conversion / So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am” (IV.iii.135-137). Oliver uses the

power of narrative to describe this gesture, this instance of conversion. We do not witness it as an audience; instead of occurring as a scene within the play, it works as a kind of confession for the elder brother. He is reluctant, however, to name himself within the narrative. Orlando is the protagonist in this recollection, just as he is in the play, and Oliver conceals his own identity within the story, strangely referring to himself in the third person as “a wretched ragged man, o’ergrown with hair” (IV.iii.106).

Oliver also conceals his identity from Rosalind and Celia; here, in the woods, he is the outsider, and he knows it. Up until this point, Rosalind and Celia see him merely as a traveler, a messenger on Orlando’s behalf, not knowing he is in fact his brother. According to Orlando, they know Oliver to be “the most unnatural / That liv’d amongst men” (IV.iii.122-123). Oliver is unnatural for his violation of Sir Rowland’s primogeniture, the “culture-turned-nature” legal standard. But he is also unnatural because he falls short of the moral obligation to his brother. After all, he “did so oft contrive to kill him” (IV.iii.134). Oliver does not refute these accusations, but rather owns up to them and accepts them, albeit in the third person. The second revelation happens at the moment of rescue, in which Oliver is saved from the lioness, “who quickly fell before him, in which hurtling / From miserable slumber I awaked” (IV.iii.131-132). The “I” that slips into this last line signals Oliver’s confession and his spiritual peace with his brother. When this moment of brotherly reconciliation occurs, when “Tears our recountments had most kindly bath’d” (IV.iii.140), Oliver can accept his younger brother spiritually, not merely in the economic sense that caused the feud initially. As Cordelia says in *King Lear*, he loves his brother “according to my bond, no more nor less” (I.i.93).

The story of Oliver's rescue and conversion is powerful in part because of its symbolism. We find Oliver "Under an old oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age / And high top bald with dry antiquity" (IV.iii.104-105). This image of age and decay runs parallel to the "ragged" description of Oliver, who lies at the base of the tree. The tree is the place of the encounter, the setting of Oliver's and Orlando's reconciliation; it makes us think of the de Boys family tree. In fact, the surname "de Boys" weaves together the image of "boys" with the word "bois," French for woods (Montrose 16). Additionally, the tree takes on a Biblical meaning; "a green and gilded snake" wraps itself "about his [Oliver's] neck" (IV.iii.107-108). These combined elements form a representation of the Garden of Eden; again, the tree plays a central role, the axis of learning, of knowledge.

It is in this specific moment when Orlando must choose between good and evil. As Montrose says, it is a perfect opportunity for the younger brother to exact revenge. He is in the middle of the woods with no witnesses, and could easily commit the fratricide that seems justified according to retribution theory. After all, Oliver has plotted against Orlando's life, several times. The snake, curled around Oliver's neck, can represent the sin that the elder brother has accumulated during his suppression of Orlando through the violation of Sir Rowland's will and his attempts on Orlando's life. But it can also figure as the allure of sin to Orlando; as the serpent seduced Eve in the Book of Genesis, so it can attempt to coax the younger brother into committing fratricide. But, "Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself, / And with indented glides did slip away" (IV.iii.111). Orlando plays the role of the hero. He stares down the serpent, overcoming the attraction of envious emulation, and masters the "fratricidal impulse" which previously manifested itself in acts of physical intimidation and the wrestling match.

The snake's retreat leads us to the final element of the scene. "A lioness, with udders all drawn dry" (IV.iii.14), which fills the female void in an odd way in this play without mothers, approaches Oliver at the base of the tree. The lioness' presence as a female poses an additional threat to the restoration of the male bond between these two brothers. Fraternity is a branch of patriarchy, and the encounter is a trial-by-conflict. Though the lioness has the power to sever the bond between the brothers, she actually provides an opportunity for its reinforcement. Orlando's "kindness, nobler ever than revenge, / And nature, stronger than his just occasion, / Made him give battle to the lioness" (IV.iii.128-130). Orlando overcomes the fratricidal impulse by displacing his violence onto the lioness. By conquering this powerful female figure, he repairs his relationship with Oliver (Montrose 24). Orlando's rescue of his brother comes at a price, however. Oliver recounts being taken to the Duke Senior's cave, where he noticed "here upon his [Orlando's] arm / The lioness had torn some flesh away" (IV.iii.146-147). Just as Prince Hal suffers a wound in rescuing his father on the battlefield, Orlando sacrifices his blood in a symbolic gesture that affirms the spiritual bond between these estranged brothers. Oliver is not defeated by his younger brother; rather, he is redeemed, and we have the proof of Sir Rowland's blood as a token of sincerity. Orlando and Oliver are blood brothers and true brothers (Montrose 19-20).

It is Orlando who makes the choice to save his brother from the lioness, and therefore he deserves much of the credit for the reconciliation. He overcomes the animosity between himself and his brother, and channels his violence in a constructive way that builds, rather than breaks his fraternal bond. In short, he fulfills the ultimate "place of a brother," conserving this elemental union. Oliver, however, must

consequently come down from his pedestal of fatherly and brotherly domination in order to make peace with Orlando, who has saved his life. As a result, the elder brother is more humble: “Well I know he was unnatural” (IV.iii.124), he says to Celia, referring to himself in the third person in a confession of his lack of human empathy, as well as his failure to comply with the “natural” ordinations of primogeniture.

When he reveals himself to be the “wretched ragged man” in the story, he states unabashedly, “‘Twas I; but ‘tis not I” (IV.iii.135), splitting his character into the Oliver from Act One, who undermined Sir Rowland’s wishes for Orlando, and the new, converted Oliver that stands before us now. “I do not shame / To tell you what I was, since my conversion / So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am” (IV.iii.135-137), he proudly proclaims. As Orlando felt the spirit of his father within him during the first act, so now Oliver has welcomed the spirit of brotherhood into his breast. And he is glad to profess it; the word “conversion” has a religious connotation that makes this an announcement of a confirmation in the spirit, a marriage in brotherhood.

When Oliver and Orlando meet again, Oliver has shed any economic concerns, and only expresses an interest in a peaceful, married life with Aliena, who is actually Celia in disguise. “All the revenue that was old Sir Rowland’s I will estate upon you, and live here and die a shepherd” (V.ii.10-12), he says, atoning for his violation of the father’s will with a complete inversion of primogeniture. Oliver casts off the financial burdens of the typical Elizabethan marriage, and does not mind “the poverty of her [Aliena]” (V.ii.6). On top of this, he plans to regale Orlando, the youngest, with the estate of his father. The inversion continues when he asks Orlando’s permission to marry Aliena.

There is yet another fraternal bond that must be restored before the play ends, a variation of the symbolic gesture of reconciliation between Orlando and Oliver. As the multiple wedding is about to take place, there is an announcement of a second conversion. In the forest, Duke Frederick, in the hopes of finding his elder brother to “put him to the sword” (V.iv.158), meets an “old religious man” who convinces him otherwise:

After some question with him, [Frederick] was converted
Both from his enterprise and from the world,
His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother,
And all their lands restor'd to [them] again. (V.iv.161-164)

The same word, “conversion,” appears in this passage, linking this moment to Oliver’s similar change of heart. This conversion occurs in Arden as well, the place of introspection and learning. Just as Lear undergoes a kind of educational madness on the heath, Frederick succumbs to the power of the forest with the help of the religious man’s spiritual wisdom (Montrose 11). This figure, a kind of Buddha ex machina, leads Frederick “from the world,” away from materials, the court and its “envious emulation,” and into fraternal peace. The usurper gives back all he has taken to his disenfranchised and banished brother.

The story of Frederick’s spiritual rebirth is told to us by a messenger; we do not see it happen, just as with the de Boys’ reconciliation scene. The messenger in this case is the second-born de Boys brother, Jaques, mentioned briefly before. Shakespeare took the three-brother structure from his source, Lodge’s *Rosalynde*, although tales of “an old man and his three sons” (I.ii.18-19) are more than common. While Lodge’s three brothers stood for three different kinds of vices, Shakespeare does away with this morality-play structure in favor of a less didactic semblance (Wolk 102). While Jaques has been absent

during the play, and mentioned only a couple of times (such as in Orlando's opening monologue), it is his archetypal presence, his symbolic place as middle brother that is most important. Jaques, as the central axis of the de Boys family, acts as a mediator between the eldest and the youngest (Montrose 25). Orlando and Oliver must resolve their conflict one-on-one in the forest, both burdened by the threat of mortal peril. But Jaques de Boys' appearance at the end of the final act adds another layer of harmony to this newly-formed relationship, and that between Frederick and the Duke Senior.

Jaques interrupts the multiple-marriage ceremony to tell us of Frederick's conversion and the Duke's restoration to power. The rite of heterosexual marriage is overshadowed by the brotherly bond; if it serves a purpose, male-female marriage joins males together on another level. The Dukes and the de Boys brothers are united through the means of Orlando's and Oliver's marriages to Rosalind and Celia. They are in-laws technically, but these relationships possess elemental, organic and spiritual values, as well as predicting and overseeing economic, political and social values. Schleiner refers to this arrangement as the creation of "neo-feudal male-male bonds as a prop of aristocratic marriage" (309). But within the context of the play, male-male bonds are not merely a prop, but stage, set, costume and audience. The value of marriage is elevated to a social and political level.

Comedy is a kind of fantasy. Entering the theatre, we know that whatever problems are introduced in the first thirty lines will be ostensibly resolved within a few hours' time. In this fantasy, all things are possible. Oliver, the eldest brother, though the beneficiary of his father's will, hopes to realize his happiness in a life of pastoral poverty. Orlando, blessed by the "spirit of [his] father," appears as a kind of chosen youngest son,

becoming the heir-apparent to the Duke (through the justified means of marriage, of course) (Montrose 6). The journey through the woods has inverted and re-written relationships. Orlando has been catapulted from the bottom to the top; it is a rags-to-riches tale that appeals to our sense of fantasy. *As You Like It* is the name of the play, after all; it undermines the politics and economics of family life, emphasizing kinship, memory, and brotherly affection, all pleasing elements that unify and combine. In renouncing their tyranny and economic domination, Frederick and Oliver transcend the rules of primogeniture in order to atone for their fraternal sins. Through the medium of the forest, gentility guides and changes the hearts of these initially irreconcilable brothers, who all join together at the end of the play in a kind of marriage. This brotherly marriage sustains and upholds not only itself but society as a whole. And if “death do us part,” there will remain at court a structure, an order, a harmony; not the “envious emulation” of before, but an enlightened and spiritual leadership of gentle, brotherly love.

Prospero's Children:

Fatherhood as Authority in *The Tempest*

As one of Shakespeare's last plays, *The Tempest* will round out this exploration of inheritance and family bonds. In this fanciful tragicomedy, the mysterious island that Prospero transforms into his own, miniature autocratic state is a place of learning and discovery. The magical ex-Duke of Milan cultivates his sense of fatherhood, and by extension develops within himself a more capable political ruler. In order to become a magnanimous patriarch, he rehearses political relationships through filial relationships. The island is a stage upon which these things take place; Prospero, as master of his own will, is both protagonist and playwright, and manipulates the genre of the tale to suit his ends. He proves the island to be a kind of practice-ground for his return to Milan. Distinct from Italy, the island is a hyper-real place; its roots lie in fiction and fantasy, making the play appear as a kind of parable. This space hums with the same instructional value as the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, or the windswept heath in *King Lear* (Kott 257).

This environment works upon Prospero, the omnipotent ruler of the island and the play's unmistakable protagonist (Neilson 426). Prospero is more of a symbol than a human being; the island shapes him into an exaggerated father figure, giving him supreme patriarchal authority over all the beings and resources of the island. He is a

paternal autocrat, ruling over the island with his staff, a symbol of phallic power, power he shares with no one. Each of his relationships with the other characters on the island are vertical. They are filial or pseudo-filial bonds; Miranda, Ariel, Caliban and Ferdinand function as biological, servile, or social “children” (Knight 145). The paternal state of obedience was a common idea in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. James I once said that “I am the husband, and all the whole isle is my lawful wife; I am the head and it is my body” (Briggs 47). There is no wife figure in *The Tempest*, but it is with a similar policy that Prospero rules over his “children.” Through these intensified and unrestricted paternal relationships, he gains a better sense of his purpose as a father figure, both at home and at court (Hazlitt 67). This educational stage anticipates Prospero’s return to Milan, where he will hopefully rule both more wisely and more cynically as a magnanimous and more flexible patriarch until his line ends.

It is the play’s goal to turn this magician into a more authoritarian patriarch. Of course, there are certainly consequences in fatherhood, the certainty of divestiture and the “giving away” of property and children. While all the complexities of the Duke of Milan cannot be resolved, we still observe that this is a play about fatherhood and aging. Above all, however, it is a play about the problem of political power, its legacy, and the implications for children. A close examination of each of Prospero’s “children” will not set perfect conclusions magically before us, but will inform us as to the extent and strength of each of his paternal bonds, and their significance for his identity as both a father and the Duke of Milan.

Miranda: "This my rich gift"

In this play, children can serve as a kind of inheritance in and of themselves. Miranda is perhaps the greatest example of this fact; she receives the utmost protection from Prospero, who guards her as a prize or a family heirloom (Tillyard 129). And, in a way, she is a family heirloom, possessing the blood of her father, the royal blood of the rightful Duke of Milan. We have reason to believe that this is Prospero's only biological child, which intensifies his relationship with her and makes her everything to him; she is "a cherubin / ... that did preserve me" (I.ii.152-153) during the darkest times of Prospero's persecution. The magical paternal figure more precisely calls her "his only heir / And princess no worse issued" (I.ii.58-59), pinning her as the axis of inheritance (what this is, exactly, I will explore).

We can weigh Miranda against Claribel, the daughter of Alonso, the King of Naples. The Princess of Naples is a counterbalance to Miranda, and demonstrates that even victorious political enemies have something to lose, their daughters. Alonso, along with the other lords and shipmates, are returning from Africa when the tempest strikes their vessel. Following the wreck, Gonzalo mentions "the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis" (II.i.70-73), and speaks with a tone of optimism, amazed at the "freshness" of their garments despite the huge storm. Alonso, in contrast, speaks flatly of his sorrow, believing to have lost his son Ferdinand in the wreck, but also considering his daughter's marriage a kind of loss: "Would I had never / Married my daughter there! For coming thence, / My son is lost and (in my rate) she too" (II.i.108-110). The King of Naples is paralyzed with grief, regretting the marriage arrangement

and figuring he will never see Claribel again (Fuchs 59). As Prospero rejoiced in the presence of his daughter despite his banishment, Alonso cannot harness his misery and regret. His place is the political realm of Italy; on the island, he is out of his element and has been disinherited of his children. This is a part of Prospero's plan to create within him a sense of guilt.

Of course, the audience benefits from dramatic irony, knowing that Prospero "So safely ordered that there is no soul – / No, not so much perdition as an hair / Betid to any creature in the vessel" (I.ii.29-31). But Alonso is oblivious. As the possessive and protective father, he builds sorrow upon sorrow, claiming he has "lost" his daughter, although in fact he has fulfilled a very important parental obligation: he has given away his daughter fairly and appropriately to the duties and ceremonies of marriage. This arrangement also has geographical and political implications. The waters between Naples and Tunis represent the border between the Europe and the Ottoman Empire; such a marriage can therefore be seen as an act of globalization at best, and a cultural conflict at worst. Alonso is certainly bitter about the loss of his daughter, though it had to happen at some point. Prospero must anticipate this same urge, which comes with a smile and a tear.

Miranda is also a female, and the only one in the play. In her innocence and compassion, she functions as a kind of feminine deity on the island, yet one without power (Tillyard 128). She stands upon a pedestal, worshipped for her beauty and fertility, but is given no agency. "What, I say," exclaims Prospero, "My foot my tutor?" (I.ii.469-470). Like James I, Prospero is the head of this island, and Miranda is merely the foot; she has no power to make decisions (Coleridge, "An Analysis of Act I," 55). Her

character is rather flat; it is her gender and her sexuality that make her important. If there is to be any procreation, if there is to be any possibility for a new generation among these characters, she is the means. Consequently, *The Tempest* begins precisely at this moment in time, when Miranda's sexuality is blossoming, providing this chance for reproduction. We can contrast Miranda's youth and fertility to Prospero's old age; this juxtaposition urges the characters in the play toward Miranda's marriage. The hope for offspring abounds in this play, as it does in many comedies; the suitor Ferdinand has the desire for children on his mind, seeing the sexually mature Miranda as a means for this end, and expressing to Prospero a hope "For quiet days, fair issue, and long life" (IV.i.24), the second wish being the driving factor. But there are stipulations, of course; Miranda's chastity grants her the practical possibility of a royal marriage, for if she is a maid, there is no doubt concerning her parentage: "O, if a virgin, / And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you / The queen of Naples" (I.ii.448-450), says Ferdinand to Miranda, proposing a romantic usurpation of, or alliance with, Prospero's line. This consideration of virginity is of the utmost importance to Ferdinand, who has mistakenly assumed the crown of Naples, believing his father to be dead (Tillyard 128).

This physiological change in Miranda modifies the father-daughter relationship; Prospero must enforce his paternal hold on her to a greater degree, adding the role of the *Senex Iratus* to his theatrical repertoire. Miranda's sexual awakening necessitates a change; either Prospero must find a female companion, or Miranda must find a male companion, all in order to elude the shadow of incest on this sparsely-populated island. Prospero must be aware of this fact. But he does not allow his daughter much liberty, making a great effort to control, regulate and protect his daughter from her surroundings

and her impulses: “Hush! / Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he, / Having seen but him and Caliban” (I.ii.478-480), he hisses, chiding her for her naiveté (Wharton 45). Her innocence is as much of a curse as it is a blessing. It is not only for Miranda’s sake that he protects her, but also for the sake of his legacy. She is not only the precious daughter without compare, but “a third of mine own life, / Or that for which I live” (IV.i.3-4). What these “thirds” of Prospero’s life are is unclear. They could be Prospero’s political power, his magic and his daughter, all three of which he must give up at some point. They could also refer to Prospero’s “island children”: obviously Miranda, but also Ariel and Caliban. In any case, she is “that for which I live.” Miranda is Prospero’s paternal purpose; in the family, this old man’s destiny is the giving away of his daughter, just as Alonso gave away Claribel. Miranda plays a chief, if transparent role in *The Tempest* as an inheritance drama, and it is Prospero’s challenge first to realize and then to accept this fact.

Ariel: Indentured Servant

In addition to Prospero and Miranda, there are two characters on the island, both natives (as well as possible “thirds” of Prospero’s life). These characters exist as foils in power relationships, both complicating and enriching Prospero’s role as a father and autocrat. First there is Ariel, a neutral-gendered sprite (we’ll use the pronoun “he” for simplicity’s sake) who assists Prospero in his magic. Ariel adds a fanciful element to the island; he is often invisible, and contributes to the scene with music, singing and an element of play. The other characters feel the suggestion of his presence, but cannot see

Ariel: “Where should this music be? I’ th’ air, or th’ earth?” (I.ii.388), Ferdinand muses, stunned by the mystical character of the island. We know, however, that Ariel is “i’ th’ air” as both his name and his sprightly characteristics suggest. It is Prospero’s other servant figure, Caliban, who identifies with the earth (Coleridge, “An Analysis of Act I.” 57). But in any case, Ariel is a task-fulfiller, obedient and generally optimistic: “All hail, great master, grave sir, hail! I come / To answer thy best pleasure” (I.ii.189-190). This relationship, though again a vertical bond based on a specific power dynamic, is generally pleasant. It sometimes appears to be a reincarnation of the Puck-Oberon relationship in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but this play concerns more than shuffling pairs of lovers; the revenge tragedy elements of the play make Prospero’s bond with Ariel more complicated (Hazlitt 70). It is a master and indentured servant relationship based on duty and reciprocity.

In this second filial relationship, Prospero, the father and master, benefits from the service and obedience of the indentured servant Ariel. This relationship is intensified by the intimacy between the master and the servant. Ariel is invisible to everyone but Prospero, according to the master’s command to “be subject / To no sight but thine and mine, invisible / To every eyeball else” (I.ii.301-303). This dimension of secrecy adds to the mystique of Prospero’s “art.” In fact, the magical abilities and presence of Ariel make us wonder about the interaction between Prospero’s art and Ariel’s magic. Where can we draw the line? There is no definite answer, but it is clear that Prospero relies a great deal on the ingenuity of the sprite.

The background of this relationship surfaces in I.ii, when Prospero recounts how Sycorax, the witch that once ruled the island, confined Ariel “into a cloven pine, within

which rift / Imprison'd, thou didst painfully remain / A dozen years" (I.ii.277-279) until Prospero arrived on the scene and rescued the sprite. This action on Prospero's part characterizes the relationship between master and sprite as more reciprocal, rather than strictly power-driven (Fuchs 53). There is a general sense of friendliness between the two characters, but Prospero is the master, and therefore dictates the flow of the relationship. He will have none of the spirit's profuse apologies for this act of benevolence, asking only for a fixed period of servitude in return: "Do so," says Prospero, commanding the sprite, "and after two days / I will discharge thee" (I.ii.298-299). By putting a limitation on Ariel's servitude, he respects the sprite, though Ariel must listen to Prospero's every word during this period. The magical ruler of the island has no regard for Ariel's future, but merely uses him for his ends on the island now. It is a business-oriented relationship, conducted with a kind of reciprocity, but guided by Prospero's authority.

Ariel's magical tasks on the island range from comic hijinks to serious warnings of Prospero's power (therefore surpassing the range of Puck's actions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). As the playwright, Prospero controls the sprite as an actor in his drama, and can command Ariel to play comic or tragic roles according to his whims (Davidson 217). Ariel can therefore be a fanciful trickster in one moment, and a more sinister agent of revenge in another. In a comic scene, Ariel appears onstage, invisible to the clownish trio of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano. He inserts himself as a fourth player, reciting new lines of dialogue to interrupt the other characters. "Thou liest" (III.ii.45), he shouts into the comic conspiracy of this group's discourse. The result is the humorous confusion of the clowns, which pleases Prospero: "That was well done, my bird. / Thy shape invisible retain thou still. / The trumpery in my house, go bring it hither, / For stale to catch these

thieves” (IV.i.184-187). The master alludes to another performance here, asking Ariel to gather the decorated costumes from the “tiring house” of the island in order to trip up the clowns once and for all. With both dialogue and costume, Ariel serves as a multipurpose actor in the mini-plays that Prospero himself writes, all for his dramatic ends (Knight 138).

But Prospero commands the sprite in a more sinister role as well. Ariel appears before the usurpers, Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian, as a harpy, a mythical creature with the face of a woman and the wings and talons of a bird of prey (Evans 1677). In a menacing gesture, Ariel makes a magical banquet vanish from before the men, and speaks with a tone of condemnation, forcing them to recall “that you three / From Milan did supplant good Prospero, / Expos’d unto the sea (which hath requite it) / Him, and his innocent child” (III.iii.69-72). Ariel functions as a mouthpiece for Prospero, dealing out judgment according to the script that the magical playwright has devised. Still balanced on the line between comedy and tragedy, unsure as how far he will punish his brother Antonio and his conspirators, Prospero leaves room for atonement. “Nothing but heart’s sorrow / And a clear life ensuing” (III.iii.81-82) is the escape clause for these sinners; if they atone sincerely and pledge their good faith for the future, they are forgiven. Prospero can amaze these men momentarily with Ariel and his art, but it remains to be seen if this warning will leave a lasting effect on Alonso and company. Ariel can act as a Puck-like mischief-maker to the comic delight of the audience, but according with the darker side of Prospero, he can attire himself as and recite the lines of an agent of revenge. In this particular scene, Prospero acts like Hamlet, using Ariel to create a dramatic show which will “catch the conscience” of his enemies (Knight 148).

Ariel is completely in Prospero's control, and willfully; the ex-Duke's gesture of benevolence toward the sprite characterizes this relationship as a feudal arrangement, which, though a vertical power bond, would not have been uncommon in Shakespeare's time. Ariel does have some influence over Prospero, however; different from Puck, he demonstrates a measure of human empathy, showing Prospero a side of his enemies that he may not see. And empathy is a quality that Prospero requires if he is to be the "magnanimous patriarch" upon his return (Davidson 226). In addition, this gesture on the part of Ariel, who inhabits the skies with an omniscient view of the island, could play a role in Prospero's decision to seek comedy in place of revenge. Ariel's time of service must come to an end, however, and it seems to be one of the hardest things for Prospero to surrender. But he must do so, according to the play's central trope of renunciation. After breaking his staff and giving away Miranda to Ferdinand (symbolically, not according to marriage yet), he finally promises Ariel his freedom: "My Ariel, chick, / That is thy charge," he says, referring to the desire for calm seas for the return voyage. "Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well!" (V.i.317-319). Prospero finally relinquishes control of his indentured servant according to an agreement made long before. True to his word, he succeeds in giving away another part of himself, another of his child-figures, in preparation for his return to the reality of Milan.

Caliban: A Born Slave

Caliban, another of the original island-dwellers, represents yet another kind of filial connection, albeit a dark and brutish one. Caliban is a born slave, a base savage with

no hope for reform, despite Prospero's attempts. There are many who disagree with this assessment; recent post-colonial studies in literature position Caliban at the center of the play, urging that *he* is in fact the protagonist, and that Prospero is a colonial presence exerted upon him (Auden 96). Earlier critics see promise in Caliban's eagerness to please and an earthy, honest quality about him. Schlegel, for example, observes that this creature speaks entirely in iambic pentameter (Hazlitt 70). This is a convention of the play as a whole, however, and does not say anything about Caliban specifically. Although Caliban is praised as one of Shakespeare's more marvelous creations, these sympathetic interpretations do not pay enough attention to his disobedience, his unrestrained violence, or his resistance to education. If Prospero is the lord of the island, and Ariel is the indentured servant, Caliban is undoubtedly the slave-laborer according to his savagery. He is given this role because of his baseness, his disobedience, and his incontinence; even his name, an almost-anagram of "cannibal," suggests this interpretation of Caliban (Palmer 15).

The other characters in the play add to this perception of Caliban as irrevocably savage, frequently depicting him as a monster (Knight 138). Trinculo and Stephano stumble across him in a comic scene, and identify the native as "some monster of the isle with four legs" (II.i.65), making him out to be more of a beast than a person. Caliban appears earlier in the play, however, and we get a first impression of the important relationship he has with Prospero. "We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never / Yields us kind answer" (I.ii.308-309), says Prospero, characterizing the native islander as slavish and disobedient. Miranda tends to agree with her father on this point: "'Tis a villain, sir, / I do not love to look on" (I.ii.309-310). A "villain" is a term not just for a criminal, but

for one of low birth, and Prospero would have us think so with his continuous verbal assaults on Caliban's mother, "The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop" (I.ii.258-259) ("Villain, n."). Caliban confirms, rather than denying, that his mother was a witch, cursing Prospero and Miranda with "As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd / With raven's feather" (I.ii.321-322). There are also several reverences to Setebos, the pagan god that Sycorax worshipped, now a part of the folklore, legend and mystique that Caliban inherits from his mother. On top of this, we know from Miranda that Caliban is hideous, especially in comparison with the suitor Ferdinand.

Ugly as he may be, and with such detestable parentage as he may have, Caliban still poses a threat to Prospero. If it is Prospero's main task to protect his daughter in preparation for giving her away as his chief inheritance, Caliban represents a real danger, as he can sexually assault Miranda and rob her of her precious chastity with his "animal passion" (Coleridge, "An Analysis of Act I," 58). As he cultivates the island and inserts his culture and magical politics into it, Prospero tries to avoid this potential conflict by taking Caliban into his care. He plays the role of a father, adopting Caliban as a subject, until he realizes that he cannot tame the savagery out of the savage:

I have us'd thee
(Filth as thou art) with human care, and lodg'd thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honor of my child. (I.ii.345-348)

Prospero poses Caliban against humanity, calling him "filth" and treating him as an outsider within the entire passage, despite the fact that Caliban is a native to the island. Prospero takes possession of "my cell" and characterizes it as a warm hearth of human kindness that somehow cannot master the lustful and violent impulse of the native creature. And this frustrates Prospero (as well as Miranda); despite his magic, his

humanity and his hospitality, he cannot “convert” this being into a civilized, rational person, nor bestow upon him an inheritance of human kindness. His paternal authority and magnanimity cannot penetrate the thick shell of Caliban’s savageness. As such, Prospero must change his fatherly approach to this native being, becoming a slave-master instead of a surrogate father, therefore learning another kind of patriarchal relationship. He commands the base villain to do his work, which involves carrying logs, though he could probably do it himself with his magic. When he learns of Caliban’s conspiracy plot, he calls his servant “A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains, / Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost” (IV.i.188-190). Once again, Prospero reflects upon how this seemingly inhuman creature is incapable of learning domestic delicacy and chivalric virtue, things the ex-Duke values greatly. Contrary to a contemporary belief, a primitive origin does not ensure innocence and virtue (Kermode 176).

Miranda has a power relationship with Caliban as well; as her father makes an effort to civilize him with his hospitality and his paternal character, she encounters him with education and language, acting as his teacher. She succeeds in teaching English to Caliban, who rejects the language as bitter-tasting: “You taught me language, and my profit on ‘t / Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you / For learning me your language!” (I.ii.363-365). Caliban the savage is constantly ungrateful, even for receiving the faculty of communication. In this scene, Miranda manifests as an extension of her father, inserting the political into the educational (Fuchs 54). She succeeds in teaching Caliban, but fails to civilize him; language therefore takes on the characteristic of punishment. Prospero punishes Caliban as well according to his patriarchal duty. He

curses Caliban, and inflicts him with “cramps, / Side-stitches, that shall pent thy breath up” (I.ii.325-326). Caliban, unable to learn civility, is punished by labor, language, and physical torment.

Despite all Prospero’s attempts to reform him, or to exorcise the brutishness out of him, Caliban the savage remains Caliban the savage. He is not penitent about his desire to take sexual possession of Miranda; rather, he is proud of what he sees as a colonial effort of his own in response to Prospero’s authoritarian rule. For Caliban, the attempted rape of Miranda is a valiant effort to replicate his image across the island, supposedly to stage a large-scale insurrection. He laughs at this: “O ho, O ho, would’t had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (I.ii.348-350). Like Prospero and Ferdinand, Caliban understands the value in progeny, and Miranda is the only possibility for this hope in the entire context of the play. He manifests as a crude and violent suitor to Miranda, lacking the pedigree, continence, social graces and virtue that Ferdinand possesses and Prospero requires (Davidson 219). Caliban resorts to violence in his attempt to spawn a second generation in an animalistic and most inhumane fashion, and Prospero responds, simultaneously playing the role of the *Senex Iratus* and the slave master in order to protect his daughter and exercise political domination (Kermode 180). The time for reformation is over, and Prospero must rely on prevention and punishment as the primary means of Caliban-control. This native savage is the outlet for Prospero’s enforcer-impulse, another necessary component of political power.

The Savage's Conspiracy

Caliban's conflict with Prospero extends further than just Miranda; he has a small, yet potent matrilineal claim to the island that is just hostile enough to warrant the magician's attention. Caliban asserts that he is in fact the rightful owner of the island, not by might, but by right: "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (I.ii.331-332). Caliban directly accuses Prospero of usurpation, of which the magician himself is a victim. Like the Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, Prospero is a displaced and banished duke who forces his way into a new environment, ironically and somewhat obliviously playing the usurper (Knight 132). But there are not merely deer and wilderness animals here on the island, as there are in the Forest of Arden. Caliban says that at first "Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me / Water with berries in 't, and teach me how / To name the bigger light, and how the less" (I.ii.333-335), but this kind treatment and education soon gives way the punishment he mentions later, ending with Caliban being chained to a rock, all for good reason, according to Prospero.

Prospero perhaps puts too much stock in Caliban at first, as he is "all the subjects that you have" (I.ii.341). This is absolutely true; Miranda already fills the role of child, and Prospero needs a subject (of course, Ariel will factor in as another subject). He halts his failing education attempts, deciding instead on forced labor and punishment; Caliban is a slave, not a son. In the midst of all the physical labor, magical torment and psychological subjugation he endures, Caliban calls upon his maternal heritage as a claim to the island. As Sycorax once ruled over the island as a female witch, so now Caliban

seeks to rule in her stead according to his blood connection. Of course, this claim to power is a corruption of the traditional system of primogeniture; it is an alternative, matrilineal rather than patrilineal.

There is an odd symmetry between Sycorax as magical female ruler and Prospero as magical male ruler, however, and the paternal role that Prospero adopts concerning Caliban suggests the slightest hint of a connection between these two magical monarchs. We wonder if perhaps Prospero's father role is not merely symbolic, but also biological: "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (V.i.275-276), says Prospero mysteriously. It seems like a claim of paternity, but it is only a mere suggestion (Knight 139). All that we can glean from the Caliban-Sycorax relationship is that inheritance in this play is an act of self-continuation, an act of flesh and blood; Prospero shows us that it is also an act of self-purgation. The will of the father is not a document of distribution in *The Tempest*; rather, he must give up all he has eventually, resigning himself to the reality of old age, not merely closing his magical book, but "drowning it" (V.i.57).

In any sense, Prospero, in his dogmatic paternalism, cannot understand Caliban's claim to the island. Though he did not thrive in Italian politics, the ex-Duke of Milan brings to this naturalistic, organic island a religious subscription to patriarchy. After many years in this place, Sycorax's dark and mysterious feminine forces at work on the island, remnants of her "sorceries terrible / To enter human hearing" (I.ii.264-265), may still escape him (Brower 165). Miranda is the only actual female in the play, but this spirit of Sycorax hovers over Prospero's cell, and urges Caliban to take up what he rightly believes to be his. Shakespeare presents similar situations between the ghost of the King and Hamlet himself, and in *As You Like It* between Orlando and the spirit of Sir

Rowland de Boys, his father. And again we make a connection between Ferdinand and Caliban; both believe they have a claim to leadership (though Ferdinand is in fact wrong, since Alonso still lives). Caliban's claim unsettles Prospero, despite the native's slavish tendencies, especially when he teams up with Trinculo and Stephano, planting the seeds of usurpation in their minds:

Remember
First to possess his books; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am; nor hath not
One spirit to command: they all do hate him
As rootedly as I. (III.ii.91-95)

It is unclear whether Caliban is lying about the overwhelming importance of Prospero's books, or about the spirits' sentiments toward him. But one thing is certain; Caliban is providing information to Trinculo and Stephano for a kind of forceful takeover of the old magician. Caliban also levels the hierarchy of the island, calling the bookless Prospero "but a sot, as I am," acknowledging his own baseness, but extending it to others as well. We are all living beings on this island, he seems to say, reinforcing the notion of this place as a state of nature. Of course, this Caliban-centric logic is inherently flawed; the slavish islander and his clown friends can only stage a farce of a usurpation attempt.

Naturally, the conspiracy does not go unnoticed. In one of the most puzzling scenes of the entire play, Prospero explodes into a fury, interrupting the pre-marital masque of the spirits when he remembers (in an aside) that Caliban is plotting against him: "I had forgot that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life" (IV.i.139-141). Prospero is quite angry, and orders the spirits away; the festivities are over. In regards to the main plot, the political dealings of the play, he still teeters between comic playwright and revenge hero. Prospero interrupts the charms of the

masque, which may be a kind of spell cast over the lovers to ensure chastity, in order to preserve his own life (Knight 135). Such an odd, egotistical action is hard to explain. Perhaps Shakespeare conceives of the revenge hero as an egoist, as opposed to the more altruistic comic playwright who works for others' ends. Maybe Prospero is simply upset that his own comic conspiracy plot could be derailed by the conspiracy plot of usurpation which draws near. The success of Caliban and the two clowns would dispossess and disinherit the former Duke, robbing him of his purpose. This concern is present in the fact that Prospero sees Caliban at the helm of this rebellion, and Trinculo and Stephano are "his confederates," helpers or mercenaries rather than actual plotters. It is likely, however, that Prospero's frustration comes from his inability to reform Caliban. Despite all the pains he took to civilize him according to the patriarch's duty, he failed, and on top of this, Caliban is trying to overthrow him (Middleton 121). In the grand scheme, such a mutiny would strip Prospero of his paternal identity as both literal father and as Duke. His action to stop Caliban is a hard-nosed defense and proclamation of his patriarchal authority.

Though Caliban claims he should rule the island, he is actually uneducated, without political savvy, and therefore, as Prospero says, unfit to rule the island. He submits himself to the magical powers, punishment and slavery of Prospero, the ultimate father figure who is almost god-like, according to patriarchal folklore. Caliban even admits his own spiritual beliefs as inferior: "I must obey. His art is of such pow'r, / It would control my dam's god, Setebos / And make a vassal of him" (I.ii.372-374). In this aside, Caliban cowers before his master. If his pagan god stands no chance to Prospero's art, then there is not even a spark of hope that Caliban can withstand the magician's

influence. There is really no choice but to obey; as a born villain, Caliban is cut out only for servitude under the patriarchal, Italian sphere of influence that Prospero has created on the island. Caliban can make claims to power, but relies on the clowns Trinculo and Stephano to merely begin the plans for a usurpation attempt, let alone to carry them out. And the result is an unsuccessful, farcical attempt at that. The native senses a hierarchy between the Italians and himself, and places himself at the bottom of this hierarchy out of a sense of custom and social inferiority.

When Trinculo and Stephano stumble over him, Caliban is overcome by their wine, which, rather than emboldening him according to Falstaff's logic, only strengthens his sense of servitude: "These be fine things, and if they be not sprites. / That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor. / I will kneel to him" (II.ii.116-118). Caliban's drunkenness intensifies his inherent need to submit, to please his superiors, and he promises Trinculo and Stephano a guided tour of the island and all its secrets: "I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island; / And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee be my god" (II.ii.148-149). In this promise, Caliban rejects his mother's god Setebos, as well as the more symbolically godlike Prospero, in favor of these two clowns. He has been infected by the patriarchal airs that Prospero has brought to the island, and pledges fealty (according to the standard of feudalism) to these two new paternal master figures. We wonder if a similar scene occurred when Prospero first landed on the island; perhaps the ex-Duke was greeted with the same obsequiousness we see in Caliban now. Perhaps history is repeating itself as Caliban pledges fealty to Stephano and Trinculo. The native seeks to cast off his master, but in doing so, he must acquire a new master (Dowden 75).

It follows that Caliban is incapable of establishing a dominion of his own. He admits to his failings at the end of the play. As Alonso realizes his own guilt, Caliban realizes his own foolishness:

I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this fool! (V.i.295-298)

Despite this effort at atonement, Caliban will always be a follower, not a leader; a son, not a father. If he were to live on the island alone, with no Prospero and no Italians, Caliban would not rule as a monarch; rather, he would probably exist in a free state of nature, an organic, liberated life without political ties or conflicts (Wharton 43). In the context of the play, Caliban is not so much a surrogate son or heir figure, but rather a rude native who is both punished by and thrives in an autocratic society. Simply stated, he is not fit to rule as a leader, not fit to inherit as a son, and not skilled enough to pilot a conspiracy against the all-seeing Prospero.

Ferdinand: Son-In-Law

The Tempest throws Ferdinand into Prospero's magic circle, and as a result, relationships and foils develop around him. To Miranda, he represents the model suitor and the promise of a royal life beyond the island. To Prospero, the theatrical architect, he is the greatest wish for his daughter, a husband. But until he proves himself to be worthy, virtuous and continent, Ferdinand represents a threat to the Senex Iratus side of Prospero. The Prince of Naples, in this role as a suitor to Miranda, therefore positions himself as a foil to the vulgar and violent Caliban, an "unsuccessful suitor." With Prospero's

permission, Ferdinand wins the hand of Miranda with gentleness (a key vocabulary word in *As You Like It*) rather than violence; with submission rather than disobedience, with respect for patriarchal order (Palmer 16). Ferdinand builds himself into this close network of characters, “auditioning” for the role of Prospero’s son-in-law. As Prospero journeys from Senex and revenge hero to comic playwright, he takes the Prince down a path of tests, challenges and stipulations before he can arrive at the ultimate prize, the only daughter and essential inheritance, Miranda.

When we first meet Ferdinand, he is “Sitting on a bank, / Weeping again the King my father’s wrack” (I.ii.390-391). Like father, like son, we might think; both share the melancholy urge to mourn the other’s loss. Prospero is instrumental to the design of this symmetric father-son mourning, working as a playwright at the beginning of the story. As a dramatist, he forges tragedy between these two characters; he separates father and son, distorting and obscuring the possibility of traditional primogeniture between Alonso and Ferdinand, at least from the King’s perspective. Like the magician that he is, he makes primogeniture disappear with his art.

But the Prince, believing his father to be dead, assumes the crown in a symbolically complex speech: “Myself am Naples, / Who with mine eyes (never since at ebb) beheld / The King my father wrack’d” (I.ii.435-437). Perhaps, thanks to his youthful ambition, Ferdinand grants himself the kingly title, following the prescriptions of succession. After all, Alonso calls his son “O thou mine heir / Of Naples and of Milan” (II.i.112-113). But we know for a fact that Alonso is alive and unharmed (except for the loss of his son, the greatest possible affliction within the drama). With this fact, we can interpret Ferdinand’s self-declaration as King as an oblivious usurpation. He

simultaneously follows and violates royal proceedings, a bit like Hal in *Henry IV*, but his honest sorrow for his father's death and his respect for the process of primogeniture ultimately render him an ally of the patriarchal Kingdom of Naples.

However, Prospero poses the word "usurpation" into the dialogue: "Thou dost here usurp / The name thou ow'st, and hast put thyself / Upon this island as a spy, to win it / From me, the lord on't" (I.ii.454-457). The magician, all-seeing and all-knowing thanks to his books, his art, and Ariel's aid, has irony and the structure of the play on his side. He taunts Ferdinand with facts that do not make sense to him, calling him "impostor" (I.ii.478), while Ferdinand believes he is merely following convention, proceeding accordingly from the place of an heir. He accuses the Prince of taking his father's name and challenging him (Prospero) for control of the island. We can laugh at the irony of this scene; Prospero's conspiratorial bond with the audience makes this possible (Breight 10). With these words, the old magician positions himself between genres. He can choose to follow his impulse as the *Senex Iratus*, the paternal blocking agent of a comedy (such as Aegeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Brabantio in *The Merchant of Venice*), and separate his precious daughter from Ferdinand. Or, he can work toward a marriage between the two, signifying a merger between the two political entities and reconciling the grudge he (seemingly, he alone) has with Naples. More immediately, he fosters the love at first sight which he observes: "At the first sight / They have chang'd eyes" (I.i.441-442), he says. The attraction between the two is obvious, but as the father, Prospero has to be skeptical. He is dealing with Miranda, his precious daughter, his "cherubin." It is his imperative to give her away freely on his own, according to his rules, to a virtuous and righteous suitor; this is the ultimate act of the

paternal figure. And Prospero must wrestle with genres just as these two impulses wrestle within him.

The Conspiracy of Marriage

Prospero plays the role of the Senex in order to test Ferdinand, to protect Miranda, and to ensure a chaste and worthy relationship between the two. Through this complex arrangement, the paternal magician is working a conspiracy of his own: “They are both in either’s powers,” he says in an aside, “but this swift business / I must uneasy make, less too light winning / Make the prize light” (I.ii.451-453). He fills Miranda and Ferdinand’s love tale with plot devices, twists and complications, creating a play-within-a-play. The end is to ensure the promise of an actual, soulful connection between the lovers, and not just lust. As a father, Prospero is skeptical, and rebukes Miranda for her “love at first sight”: “Hush! / Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he, / Having seen but him and Caliban” (I.ii.478-480), he says, calling her “Foolish wench” (I.ii.480) in front of the young suitor. But there are grounds for his doubts. Miranda has spent her whole life on the island, in isolation, and Prospero has been her only sense of knowledge and experience. The presence of reality, politics and the beyond is both an opportunity and a curse (Tillyard 128).

Ferdinand represents this uncertainty to Miranda; it is the “brave new world” she references in Act V (V.1.183). While she is excited about the new possibilities it offers, Prospero sees this external world with a foreknowledge of the shrewd and often dishonest politics that take place there. As he conducts this mini-comedy within the larger structure

of *The Tempest*, Prospero builds an odd sort of relationship with his son-in-law to be, this outsider from the “brave new world.” He interrupts Miranda’s defense of the Prince: “Speak not you for him; he’s a traitor. – Come, / I’ll manacle thy neck and feet together” (I.ii.461-462). Prospero takes Ferdinand into his power, preparing the young man for the tests of virtue he must endure to prove his worth, tests that Caliban failed. Prospero (as revenge hero) must factor in Ferdinand’s heredity, aware of the bond of conspiracy between his father Alonso and the treacherous usurper-brother Antonio.

As such, Prospero directly challenges the Prince of Naples: “Come, from thy ward, / For here I can disarm thee with this stick, / And make thy weapon drop” (I.ii.472-474). He encourages the Prince to leave his position of defense, urging him forward. It is a phallic confrontation; raising his own staff, the source of his powers and paternal dominion on the island, Prospero can weaken and disable Ferdinand’s defenses. He throws Ferdinand’s sword to the ground, symbolically emasculating the suitor. Through this phallic challenge, we also get a sense of the duality between Italy and the island. Prospero’s staff commands the ethereal forces of the island; he governs it with magic, the “art” he mentions so many times. We know Prospero began his studies of magic in Italy, a place governed by the sword, not the staff, a different form of power. And Prospero, in “neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated / To closeness and the bettering of my mind” (I.ii.89-90), lost his dukedom to the metaphorical, subtle sword of Antonio, his brother. In this particular scene, Prospero may be exacting some revenge, playing to his strengths in an environment in which magic flourishes as a kind of politics, and does not distract or weaken (Brower 162). Prospero’s test of this young man involves physically binding him with his art, imprisonment and forced labor. He treats Ferdinand as a slave, saying to

Miranda “Foolish wench, / To th’ most of men this is a Caliban, / And they to him are angels” (I.ii.480-482), verbally stripping the Prince of not only his royal pedigree, but also his attractive physical appearance.

The comparison between Ferdinand and Caliban continues as Prospero digs his way deeper into the Senex role. He places the Prince in the same conditions as Caliban, who we know failed as a suitor on account of his violence, disobedience and incontinence. Prospero treats Ferdinand with the same formula of tests, perhaps a kind of magical prescription or trick for suitors, tormenting him with his magical powers and forcing him to do manual labor. In fact, we see Ferdinand doing Caliban’s same job, carrying firewood. But unlike the native islander, who groans under such duress, mumbling that “There’s wood enough within” (I.ii.314), and refusing to cast off the dirt and homeliness of savagery, Ferdinand takes up the logs with a sense of virtue, duty and promise: “My heart fl[ies] to your [Miranda’s] service, there resides, / To make me slave to it, and for your sake / Am I this patient log-man” (III.i.66-67). Ferdinand poses himself against Caliban, redefining himself as a slave for virtuous purposes, rather than attempting to deny a brutish disposition that has been developed by myth and history. Moreover, Miranda offers her help to this “patient log-man” (the word “patient” originating from “passio,” suffering) (“Patient, adj. and n.”), investing a sense of mutual interest in the relationship. Ferdinand and Miranda respond to these tests according to Prospero’s paternal desires (Wharton 45).

So although he acts the part of the revenge hero and Senex Iratus, Prospero seems to succumb to his comic inclinations. He spies on the lovers, sees Miranda help Ferdinand with his labor, and decides he is in favor of the arrangement. Hidden from

their sight, he confides to the audience: “Fair encounter / Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace / On that which breeds between ‘em!” (III.ii.74-76). It appears that this magical lord of the island is now merely an observer, a member of the audience rather than the conductor of the plot. In this aside, he is pleased by what he sees. Prospero comes off as a bi-polar father figure indeed, shuttling back and forth between blind fury and a ripe sense of easy pleasure. In any case, he decides to endorse the love match, blessing not only the “fair encounter” of the two, but also, more importantly, the next generation that shall flow from their union.

Predictably, however, Prospero struggles again with the “letting go” of his daughter. He must reinforce the arrangement with sexual limitations, enforced at all costs. Before the spectacle of spirits, intended as a celebration of the engagement of the lovers, Prospero utters a solemn warning to Ferdinand:

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be minister’d,
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
Sour ey’d disdain, and discord shall bestrew
The union of your bed... (IV.i.15-21)

Once again, Prospero agrees to the marriage as a possibility, but continues to introduce stipulations and warnings to keep the arrangement chaste, virtuous and worthy. Like a good playwright, he knows that obstacles and conflicts make for a more compelling story. Miranda is all he has; through his seemingly unfair treatment of and limitations on Ferdinand, Prospero can both protect his daughter from harm and exact a token amount of revenge for his usurpation (Middleton 118). His purpose has catharsis, and vice-versa. Prospero seems to have a fixation with Ferdinand’s sexual continence, warning the suitor

not to “break her virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies” occur. As in other Shakespearean plays, sexual continence is an indicator of moral virtue and worthiness in a match, and is indispensable in a royal engagement so as to eliminate doubts of paternity. This concern brings us right back to primogeniture; for purposes of inheritance, it is absolutely necessary to know who the father of the child is (Kermode 188).

Prospero sees the world, both Italy and the island, as a web of power structures between fathers and sons. After all, the universe of this play is concerned with the pattern of patriarchy and its continuation. As a warning, Prospero threatens Ferdinand with the worst curse imaginable: “No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall / To make this contract grow” (IV.i.18-19). The greatest nightmare for the males in this play is a barren future without offspring, and Prospero’s magic reinforces the horror of this threat, posing it as a real possibility. Giving away children is an overwhelming task, as we see in both Prospero’s and Alonso’s cases; but being without a chance *to* give away your children is a malediction beyond comprehension for these characters. And Ferdinand responds virtuously, expressing his desire for “fair issue” (IV.i.24), and promising that “The white cold virgin snow upon my heart / Abates the ardor of my liver ” (IV.i.55-56), pledging he will act according to Prospero’s suggestions.

Prospero will have to decide on a final genre for the play when the romantic and political plots meet, when father Alonso and son Ferdinand are reunited. He can choose the coming-together of comedy or the revenge and imposed suffering of tragedy. But Prospero begins with the marriage preparations between the lovers, tending toward comedy, it seems. Through the children of the play, Prospero acts out his will in a mini-drama isolated from the political plot of the play, using conspiracy as a device that brings

together, rather than pulls apart. “It works” (I.ii.495), he says in an aside (Breight 1). We see a softer Prospero who favors the gentler path, anticipating his last act, the giving-away of his prized possession, his daughter.

The Father's Last Act

The romantic plot of *The Tempest* is a success; as Miranda and Ferdinand are drawn together, Prospero struggles with himself, but reconciles their relationship with the rest of the play out of practicality and theatrical sense. Of course, the “main plot” of *The Tempest* concerns Prospero’s usurpation, banishment and return to power (Wharton 47). As a father and political patriarch, his duties shift, merge and cross, the island being the transformative medium in which Prospero finally comes to understand these roles. He uses the mysterious island as a rehearsal space for his return to the Milanese Dukedom as a magnanimous ruler; his intensified relationships with Miranda, Ariel, Caliban and Ferdinand represent a kind of distilled dukedom, one he can rule with his magic (Davidson 226). Magic and political power are not polar opposites; they are interchangeable forms of patriarchal control. Magic is Prospero’s learning tool on the island, an incarnation of political power. It serves as training wheels as he learns to ride the two-wheeler of patriarchal politics, and gives him home-field advantage in his filial relationships. The magician’s staff and the duke’s rapier may not be so different, then.

At the beginning of the play, Shakespeare introduces Prospero as a magician. “Lend thy hand, / And pluck my magic garment from me” (I.ii.23-24), he says to Miranda, as he begins the story of how they came to be on the island. Though he takes off

his robe, Prospero still has a magical aura around him. He truly is a magician, and reveals that he was a magician even during his time as Duke, at the expense of his political responsibility. Prospero was

...for the liberal arts
Without a parallel; those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies. (I.ii.73-77)

Prospero appears to desire the best of both worlds, and this desire ultimately undermines his authority. As Duke, he keeps away from the public domain, following the political advice of Henry IV. Ironically, this makes him a worse ruler. While he claims the title of “prime duke” for himself, he is absorbed not in the political affairs of Milan, but rather in the intrigue of the mystical world. And he admits this, saying that “to my state” he grew “stranger,” spending his time not in the throne room, but in his closet with his books (Middleton 110). Like King Lear, Prospero wants authority and title without political responsibility. This conflict of interests transforms Prospero’s relationship with Antonio, his brother. Before, Prospero defines this relationship as a kind of father-child relationship according to the patriarchal nature of the Dukedom: “My trust, / Like a good parent, did beget of him / A falsehood in its controversy” (I.ii.93-95). The banished duke refers to a proverb that figures good parents usually breed disobedient children, and thus he pins the bulk of the blame on Antonio, belittling him even to the “place of a brother” that we remember from *As You Like It* (Knight 132). But given his earlier admission of what seems to be a transfer of power or duty, Prospero is unjustified in calling Antonio “thy false uncle” (I.ii.77). It appears that it was actually Prospero who entrusted Antonio with the practical responsibilities of the dukedom in the first place, estranging himself

from the politics of his position. Perhaps this usurpation seems like an abdication, then; Prospero actually helps his brother to usurp him, “thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated / To closeness and the bettering of my mind” (I.ii.89-90). He leaves these “worldly ends” to Antonio, considering himself cut out for higher things: intellectualism, studies, and eventually “his art” (Davidson 215).

The most detestable part of the usurpation, according to Prospero, is the submission of Milan to the Kingdom of Naples. He feels doubly betrayed, according to both familial and political principles. Prospero is an independent figure who desires isolation and contemplation rather than the gregarious society of the court. In Milan, he is rational, a thinker, and a meditator, rather than a doer or an agent (Davidson 216). This tendency still remains on the island, where Gonzalo helps Prospero to recreate “mine own library with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom” (I.ii.167-168). But the island is helpful to Prospero because of its magical properties; it is a middle-space where he can practice absolute authority and magnanimity while still enjoying the pursuit of his art. Prospero will always see value in self-sufficiency, however, which is destroyed when Antonio submits to Alonso, the Duke of Naples. For Alonso agreed

To give him annual tribute, do him homage,
Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend
The dukedom yet unbow'd (alas, poor Milan!)
To most ignoble stooping. (I.ii.113-116)

Prospero's disgust with his brother's diplomatic actions is evidence of political ineptitude. From the clandestine perspective of his studies, Prospero probably did not understand (or even care to understand) the wider political implications of Antonio's actions, wishing for everything to remain the same. An inflexible and independent man, he may not be conscious of the need for political alliances and negotiations; furthermore,

this unreliable perspective does not provide reasons for such a pact, treating it instead as a blunder (Davidson 216).

The disagreement between Prospero and Antonio therefore has fewer tangible roots than Prospero claims. The magician's secret studies play a role in the rupture between the two brothers; we can trace these studies, which distract Prospero the Duke from his political responsibilities, to the "art" he uses to control the island. In a way, Prospero the Duke of Milan undergoes a kind of training, studying and learning skills for his magical reign as the Duke of the Island. Art is an intensification of political power; on the island, Prospero rehearses the ducal role as a one-man autocracy. He is, as he claims, Milan himself. But with this autocracy comes the necessary renunciation of possessions, magic and children. Prospero and Antonio are past hope for the reconciliation of their bonds, perhaps; it is only through their children and the marriage between them that the sharp edge of animosity can round out into friendship. Therefore, Prospero uses the comic subplot of *The Tempest* to resolve the political main plot.

When Prospero comes face to face with Alonso and Antonio, he remains an ambiguous protagonist, toeing the line between judgment and forgiveness: "At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies" (IV.i.265-266). The harpy's message (III.iii.53-82) places the decision partly into the hands of Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio, the "usurpers." Ariel the harpy expresses Prospero's discontent, and deals out judgment as a proxy (Knight 148). With the same technique Prospero uses on Ferdinand, dropping the men's swords to the ground as an act of symbolic emasculation, Ariel delivers Prospero's accusation:

You three
From Milan did supplant good Prospero,

Expos'd unto the sea (which hath requit it)
Him, and his innocent child. (III.iii.69-72)

Ariel emphasizes the goodness of Prospero and the innocence of Miranda; he includes the sea, and later on, the creatures and shores of the island, as agents of revenge under Prospero's command. The accusation uses Prospero's same logic from I.i, however; it is one-sided and ignores the subtle presence of secret studies, a possible abdication and the necessity of a pact with Naples. Though we may have to swallow Prospero's grudge with a dose of skepticism, the accusation is not so strict as to condemn all. Ariel reiterates the fact that Ferdinand is gone, and promises that a "lingering perdition"

...shall step by step attend
You and your ways, whose wraths to guard you from –
Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls
Upon your heads – is nothing but heart's sorrow,
And a clear life ensuing. (III.iii.78-82).

Again, Prospero includes a clause to his accusation, giving his enemies a chance to redeem themselves through "heart's sorrow." All he demands is a truthful acknowledgement of regret and the extension of an apology; apparently these simple things are enough to clear the usurpers and conspirators of their guilt. The harpy scene shocks the usurpers, but we are left with the question as to whether or not it will make a lasting impression. As Prospero nears the end of this final dramatic act of his life on the island, he gives up not only his daughter and his magic, but his rights to a revenge-tragedy conclusion to this story. Perhaps he realizes that his grudge was founded on faulty logic, but more important is the surrender involved in this old man's choice. He abandons the pursuit of revenge, striking it from the play as a potential plotline by extending a clause of peace to his enemies, hoping it leads to penitence, but not convinced entirely that it will.

And all of this leads up to the conclusion of the play, when Prospero comes face to face with Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian. Prospero meets them with welcome, rather than reproach, and creates another spectacle, both magical and theatrical, that will ensure the harmony of all characters at the end of the play. He acts according to the dramatic text that he has prepared, consoling Alonso as he plays the role of the childless father:

As great to me as late, and supportable
To make the dear loss, have I means much weaker
Than you may call to comfort you; for I
Have lost my daughter. (V.i.145-148)

Prospero's irony makes the audience smile. We remember Alonso at the beginning of the play, mourning not only the loss of Ferdinand, whom he perceived to be dead, but also Claribel, whom he gave in marriage to Tunis. The omniscient Prospero makes himself a foil to Alonso in this respect, again emphasizing the child as the greatest legacy of the parent (Middleton 109). But Alonso is only filled with more grief, imagining the taste of a harmonious future: "A daughter? / O heavens, that they were living both in Naples, / The King and Queen there!" (V.i.148-150). The heir is the possibility of a fulfilled legacy to Alonso, and a marriage is the guarantee. This thought torments Alonso, and he wishes with all his might that it could be him in the "oozy bed" at the bottom of the sea instead of his son. To him, the marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda represents what could have been a fanciful conclusion to a comedy. But to Prospero and the audience, it stands as what *is*: "I will requite you with as good a thing, / At least bring forth a wonder, to content ye / As much as me my dukedom" (V.i.169-170). In a final act of "magic," Prospero restitutes Alonso with his son, the ultimate gift. It is a resurrection, the renewal of a hope for a legacy and the continued patrilineal rule of Naples. "A most high miracle!" (V.i.177), says Sebastian; even this plotter and conspirator cannot hide his

admiration and pleasure in seeing such a trick performed. This is a scene of compromise, of familial combination and unity: “I have / Receiv’d a second life; and second father / This lady makes him to me” (V.i.194-196), says Ferdinand, remarking on the multiple ties that have been forged. Ariel’s earlier confrontation with these men purges Prospero of the need to rebuke Antonio and Alonso for their deeds. What remains is the revelation of a lost heir and reconciliation by means of a well-matched marriage.

Prospero learns how to be the lord of the island. He is also the lord of the drama; he is the playwright, creating plot devices and stipulations, and orchestrating confrontations and meetings between characters, encouraging them at times, and checking them at others (Middleton 110). His authoritarian and patriarchal control is made possible by his magic, his learning tool. But at the end of the play, he must surrender this absolute authority, gather the knowledge he has learned, and return to power as the Duke of Milan. With a flourish, Prospero appears no longer as the magus, but as the Duke himself: “Not one of them / That yet looks on me, or would know me! Ariel, / Fetch me the hat and rapier in my cell” (V.i.82-84). He exchanges his magic robes for the Ducal robes of Milan, giving up magic’s absolute power for the less potent but practical political authority. It is a matter of recognition, but it is also a matter of identity; Prospero refers to himself in the third person as “The wronged Duke of Milan” (V.i.107), again bringing up his betrayal. Prospero insists on the restitution of his worldly and political power, having renounced his magical power; it is the complex of the patriarch to cling to power, despite the necessity to bequeath and bestow it for the sake of future generations. And the transfer of power back to Prospero happens several times, strangely: “Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat / Thou pardon me my wrongs”

(V.i.118-119), says a penitent Alonso. But in lines 132-134, Prospero states that he “require[s] / My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know / Thou must restore.” Despite Prospero’s age, despite the fact that he cannot live forever, he desires the restitution of his Dukedom, and this is justified according to his banishment and his magical political education on the island.

Of course, *The Tempest* leaves us with many questions concerning paternity and inheritance. Ferdinand pledges himself to Prospero, calling him a “second father” (V.i.195) and claiming that he had heard of his good reputation before. This appears to be a solidification of the father and son-in-law relationship, a conclusion to all the tests and conditions Prospero initially forced upon Ferdinand (Brower 173). However, despite the “success” of the marriage, despite the restitution of Prospero’s dukedom, uncertainty hangs in the air (Davidson 227). We do not know if magical lessons seem as valuable in Italy as they do on the island; they may be ephemeral, fleeting, like the wonder produced at a theatrical performance. The ghost of political dishonesty therefore lingers: “Sweet lord, you play me false” (V.i.172), says Miranda as she and Ferdinand are revealed, playing chess. Though Ferdinand protests that he is playing by the rules, Miranda says that “for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play” (V.i.174-175), seemingly justifying any kind of political deception, even the kind that Antonio and Alonso undertook long ago. And the combat-like nature of chess also could suggest a level of mild tension still existing between Milan and Naples, despite the happiness of Miranda and Ferdinand. While Prospero lives and reigns as the Duke of Milan, perhaps there will still be some tension. Maybe only the passing of a generation, the closing of inheritance procedures, can end this brotherly feud and this political

friction. But perhaps not; if the island has done its work correctly, if Prospero has learned from his intense relationships with his child and subject-figures, if he has truly broken his staff and drowned his books, if he is a magnanimous and capable patriarch, then maybe there can be a harmonious conclusion to this tragicomedy, this “romance,” as some critics call it. Maybe Prospero has reconciled his roles as father and Duke, and can combine them in the political and familial role he now faces once he returns to Italy.

Once again, Shakespeare certainly doesn’t resolve all the questions he introduces in *The Tempest*. But, as one of his final plays, possibly an adieu to the world of the theatre, it represents the attitude of the father in decline, the problems he faces, and the hopes he has for the next generation (Palmer 21). There becomes a point in the father’s life when inheritance is more important than power; the cycle of politics, of family economics, turns again, and again, and again.

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