

The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare

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## The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare

THE ARISTOCRATIC family of Shakespeare's England was, according to social historian Lawrence Stone, "patrilinear, primogenitural, and patriarchal." Parent-child relations were in general remote and formal, singularly lacking in affective bonds and governed solely by a paternal authoritarianism through which the "husband and father lorded it over his wife and children with the quasi-authority of a despot" (*Crisis* 271). Stone characterizes the society of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as one in which "a majority of individuals . . . found it very difficult to establish close emotional ties to any other person" (*Family* 99)<sup>1</sup> and views the nuclear family as a burdensome social unit, valued only for its ability to provide the means of patrilineal descent. Second and third sons counted for little and daughters for even less. A younger son could, it is true, be kept around as a "walking sperm bank in case the elder son died childless," but daughters "were often unwanted and might be regarded as no more than a tiresome drain on the economic resources of the family" (Stone, *Family* 88, 112).<sup>2</sup>

Various Elizabethan documents, official and unofficial, that comment on family relations support Stone's hypothesis of the absence of affect.<sup>3</sup> Yet were we to turn from Stone's conclusions to those we might draw from Shakespeare's plays, the disparity of implication—especially if we assume that the plays to some extent mirror the life around them—must strike us as significant. Shakespeare's dramas consistently explore affective family dynamics with an intensity that justifies the growing inference among Shakespearean scholars that the plays may be primarily "about" family relations and only secondarily about the macrocosm of the body politic.<sup>4</sup> Not the absence of affect but the possessive overabundance of it is the force that both defines and threatens the family in Shakespeare. When we measure Stone's assertions against the Shakespeare canon, the plays must seem startlingly ahistorical

in focusing on what would seem to have been the least valued relationship of all: that between father and daughter.

While father and son appear slightly more often in the canon, figuring in twenty-three plays, father and daughter appear in twenty-one dramas and in one narrative poem. As different as these father-daughter plays are, they have one thing in common: almost without exception the relationships they depict depend on significant underlying substructures of ritual. Shakespeare apparently created his dramatic mirrors not solely from the economic and social realities that historians infer as having dictated family behavior but from archetypal models, psychological in import and ritual in expression. And the particular ritual model on which Shakespeare most frequently drew for the father-daughter relationship was the marriage ceremony.<sup>5</sup>

In an influential study of the sequential order or "relative positions within ceremonial wholes," Arnold van Gennep isolated three phases in ritual enactment that always recur in the same underlying arrangement and that form, in concert, "the pattern of the rites of passage": separation, transition, and reincorporation.<sup>6</sup> The church marriage service—as familiar to a modern audience as it was to Shakespeare's—contains all three phases. When considered by itself, it is basically a separation rite preceding the transitional phase of consummation and culminating in the incorporation of a new family unit. In Hegelian terms, the ceremonial activities associated with marriage move from thesis through antithesis to synthesis; the anarchic release of fertility is positioned between two phases of relative stasis. The ritual enables society to allow for a limited transgression of its otherwise universal taboo against human eroticism. Its middle movement is the dangerous phase of transition and transgression; its conclusion, the controlled reincorporation into the stability of family. But before the licensed transgression can take place—

the transgression that generates the stability and continuity of society itself—the ritual must separate the sanctified celebrants from the sterile forces of social interdiction. The marriage ritual is thus a pattern of and for the community that surrounds it, as well as a rite of passage of and for the individuals who enact it. It serves as an especially effective substructure for the father-daughter relation because within its pattern lies the paradigm of all the conflicts that define this bond at its liminal moment of severance. The ceremony ritualizes two particularly significant events: a daughter and a son are being incorporated into a new family unit, an act that explicitly breaks down the boundaries of two previously existing families; yet, at the same time, the bonds being dissolved, particularly those between father and daughter, are being memorialized and thus, paradoxically, reasserted. In early comedies like *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare followed the Roman design of using the father of the young male lover as the *senex iratus*, a blocking figure to be circumvented. The mature comedies, tragedies, and romances reconstruct the problems of family bonds, filial obedience, and paternal possessiveness around the father and daughter, the relation put into focus by the marriage ceremony. When marriage activities are viewed from the perspective of their ritual implications, the bride and groom are not joined until the transitional phase of the wedding-night consummation; before that, a marriage may be annulled. What the church service is actually all about is the separation of the daughter from the interdicting father.

The wedding ceremony of Western tradition has always recognized the preeminence of the father-daughter bond. Until the thirteenth century, when the church at last managed to gain control of marriage law, marriage was considered primarily a private contract between two families concerning property exchange. The validity and legality of matrimony rested on the *consensus nuptialis* and the property contract, a situation that set up a potential for conflict by posing the mutual consent of the two children, who owed absolute obedience to their parents, against the desires of their families, who must agree beforehand to the contract governing property exchange. However true it was that the

couple's willing consent was necessary for valid matrimony and however vociferously the official conduct books urged parents to consider the compatibility of the match, fathers like Cymbeline, Egeus, and Baptista feel perfectly free to disregard these requirements. Although lack of parental consent did not affect the validity of a marriage and, after 1604, affected the legality only when a minor was involved,<sup>7</sup> the family control over the dowry was a powerful psychological as well as economic weapon. Fathers like Capulet, Lear, and Brabantio depend on threats of disinheritance to coerce their children. When their daughters nonetheless wed without the paternal blessing, the marriages are adversely affected not because any legal statutes have been breached but because the ritual base of marriage has been circumvented and the psychological separation of daughter from father thus rendered incomplete. For in Shakespeare's time—as in our own—the ceremony acknowledged the special bond between father and daughter and the need for the power of ritual to release the daughter from its hold.

As specified in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, the marriage ritual enjoins that the father (or, in his absence, the legal guardian)<sup>8</sup> deliver his daughter to the altar, stand by her in mute testimony that there are no impediments to her marriage, and then witness her pledge henceforth to forsake all others and “obey and serve, love honor and keep” the man who stands at her other side. To the priest's question, “Who giveth this woman to be married unto this man?”—a question that dates in English tradition back to the York manual (*Book of Common Prayer* 290–99; 408, n.)—the father must silently respond by physically relinquishing his daughter, only to watch the priest place her right hand into the possession of another man. Following this expressly physical symbolic transfer, the father's role in his daughter's life is ended; custom dictates that he now leave the stage, resign his active part in the rite, and become a mere observer. After he has withdrawn, the couple plight their troths, and the groom receives the ring, again from the priest. Taking the bride's hand into his, the groom places the ring on her finger with the words, “With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with

all my worldly goods I thee endow," thus solemnizing the transfer in its legal, physical, and material aspects.<sup>9</sup>

Before us we have a tableau paradigmatic of the problematic father-daughter relation: decked in the symbols of virginity, the bride stands at the altar between her father and husband, pulled as it were between the two important male figures in her life. To resolve the implied dilemma, the force of the priest and the community presides over and compels the transfer of an untouched daughter into the physical possession of a male whom the ceremony authorizes both as the invested successor to the father's authority and as the sanctified transgressor of prohibitions that the father has been compelled to observe.<sup>10</sup> By making the father transfer his intact daughter to the priest in testimony that he knows of no impediments to her lawful union, the service not only reaffirms the taboo against incest but implicitly levels the full weight of that taboo on the relationship between father and daughter. The groom's family does not enter into the archetypal dynamics going on at this altar except through the priest's reference to marriage as the cause why a man "shall leave father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife." The mother of the bride is a wholly excluded figure—as indeed she is throughout almost the entire Shakespeare canon. Only the father must act out, must dramatize his loss before the audience of the community. Within the ritual circumscription, the father is compelled to give his daughter to a rival male; and as Georges Bataille comments:

The gift itself is a renunciation. . . . Marriage is a matter less for the partners than for the man who gives the woman away, the man whether father or brother who might have freely enjoyed the woman, daughter or sister, yet who bestows her on someone else. This gift is perhaps a substitute for the sexual act; for the exuberance of giving has a significance akin to that of the act itself; it is also a spending of resources.<sup>11</sup>

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By playing out his role in the wedding ceremony, the father implicitly gives the blessing that licenses the daughter's deliverance from family bonds that might otherwise become a kind of bondage. Hence in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play centered on marriage, the

intransigent father Egeus, supported by the king-father figure Theseus, poses a threat that must be converted to a blessing to ensure the comic solution. In *Love's Labor's Lost*, the sudden death of the Princess' father, who is likewise the king-father figure for all the French ladies, prevents the necessary blessing, thus cutting sharply across the movement toward comic resolution and postponing the happy ending. In plots constructed around a daughter without a father, the absent father frequently assumes special dramatic prominence. This absence felt almost as a presence may well contribute to the general unease and unresolved tensions emanating from the three "problem plays," for Helena, Isabella, and Cressida are all daughters severed from their fathers.

Within the father-daughter plays, the daughter's association of father with husband is so strong that even when a woman as independent as Rosalind or Viola first thinks about the man she will eventually marry, her thoughts immediately call to mind her father. Her movement toward conjugal love unconsciously resuscitates a mental movement back to the father to whom she will remain emotionally as well as legally bound until the ritual of marriage transfers her loyalties from one domain to the other. The lack of narrative logic in the association emphasizes its subconscious quality. When Viola first hears the governor of Illyria named, she responds: "Orsino! I have heard my father name him. / He was a bachelor then" (*TN* 1.2.28–29). When Rosalind meets Orlando she instantly tells Celia, "The Duke my father lov'd his father dearly," making a connection that Celia pointedly questions in her response, "Doth it therefore ensue that you should love his son dearly?" (*AYL* 1.3.29–32). Once inside Arden Forest—ostensibly on a journey to find her father—Rosalind pays scant attention to her purpose, instead asking Celia, "But what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?" (3.4.38–39). But at the conclusion of the play, when Rosalind prepares to become Orlando's wife, she seeks out her father as the necessary figure who must ritually enable her to do so. Whereas she can freely don male clothing and shift her identity back and forth between Rosalind and Ganymede without the assistance of ritual, marriage is not

merely the transposition of assumed roles but the actual transition from daughter to wife. And the movement must be ceremonialized through its distinct, sequential phases. Having spent the play testing various roles and disguises, Rosalind at the end chooses a fixed identity as wife; but that identity depends on her first having re-entered the role of daughter. To be incorporated into a new stasis, she must have one from which to be separated; she must be reunited as child to her father before she can be joined to her "child's father" (1.3.11). Thus in ritual language she repeats the vow of incorporation first to her father and then to Orlando: "To you I give myself, for I am yours" (5.4.116, 117). The play itself becomes paradigmatic of the ritual movement that concludes it: Rosalind's search to be reunited with her father metamorphoses into a journey to be united with the husband who replaces and supersedes him. And instantly on completion of the ceremony, having first been rejoined with his daughter and having then fully performed the father's formulaic role, Duke Senior is miraculously reinstated in his dukedom, regaining the paternal authority over his domain that he had lost at the same time as he had lost that over his daughter. In *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare uses the same pattern, making the King's ability to govern his state depend on his ability to enact his ritual role as father. In *Lear*, however, the dual restitution of paternal roles that concludes the two comedies is reversed into an opening scene staging the dual divestiture of daughter and kingdom.

In tragedies like *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, the father's failure to act out his required role has a special significance, one that we can best apprehend by looking not at the logic of causal narrative progression but at the threat implied by the violation of ritual. Even when marriage is sanctified by the presence of a priest, as it is in *Romeo and Juliet*, the absence of the father becomes crucial. In *Romeo*, the significance is dramatically projected through ritual structures in which Capulet repeatedly "gives away" his daughter without her consent and Juliet is repeatedly "married" without the blessing of her father, a father who ironically has been "a careful father" in choosing a harmonious match compatible with the best interests of the daughter he obviously cherishes.

At the same moment as Romeo and Juliet consummate their wedding upstairs, downstairs the father figuratively gives his daughter's hand to the County Paris. Although Capulet earlier tells Paris, "My will to her consent is but a part" (1.2.17), he now presumes his paternal authority: "I think she will be rul'd / In all respects by me; nay more, I doubt it not" (3.4.13–14). Here, at the structural center of the play, where Romeo and Juliet are momentarily joined only to be separated until death reunites them, Shakespeare has drawn on inverted marriage ritual as the vehicle for the tragic peripeteia. Scenes 4 and 5 of act 3 dramatize two phases of the matrimonial rite, featuring two bridegrooms: the one downstairs to whom the father gives his consent and the one upstairs with whom the daughter consummates hers. While the separation ritual of scene 4 is legitimizing Paris as bridegroom, the incorporation rite of scene 5 is legitimizing Romeo; both young "grooms" consequently come to the Capulet monument to lie with Juliet, both convinced of their right to claim her. In these two scenes, disjunct phases of the rite of passage are enacted in isolation. But although each scene includes a groom, each is missing a crucial figure—either the father or the bride—and a crucial sequence, the daughter's transition from one male domain to the other. The juxtaposition obviously increases the tension of the narrative by making us aware, as Romeo and Juliet celebrate their union, of the unexpected threat that will irrevocably separate them, a threat emphasized by the lovers' intuition of a growing darkness that invades the ecstasy of their morning aubade (3.5). The threat that they metaphorically imagine as darkness is to us, however, a great deal more specific. Specifically, it is Juliet's father, who comes, as we know he will, to invade his daughter's bridal chamber, assert his paternal prerogative to invalidate her right to choose a future, and conclude that, since she is his property, he has the ineluctable right to dispose of her as he will: "And you be mine, I'll give you to my friend; / and you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets" (3.5.191–92). The central conflict in the play, projected in microcosm through these two scenes, mirrors the archetypal conflict in the daughter's life. The altar ritual likewise mirrors it, for the threat to

the marriage and the daughter's future is always embodied in the person of the father, the character propelled into the role of tragic nemesis in *Romeo and Juliet* by the substructuring logic of marriage ritual.

After the crucial scenes in act 3, the remainder of *Romeo* progresses as a series of inverted and disordered epithalamia.<sup>12</sup> When the priest, the groom, and the musicians organized by old Capulet enter Juliet's chamber to take the bride to church, Capulet finds that she has already been wedded and the festival has gone on without him. He can thus only lament that "Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir, / My daughter he hath wedded" (4.5.38–39) and that "All things that we ordained festival / turn from their office to black funeral" (4.5.84–85). In a parody of the father's due expectations on entering the bridal chamber the morning after a wedding, Capulet exclaims when he discovers Juliet's bleeding body lying with her husband:

. . . O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!  
This dagger hath mista'en, for lo his house  
Is empty on the back of Montague,  
And it mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom!  
(5.3.202–05)

The play ends in a final reversal, concluding with the scene that should traditionally have preceded the wedding: the two fathers bargaining over the bridal portion, Capulet initially asking for Montague's "hand" as all he feels able to demand as a widowhood entitlement for his "daughter's jointure" (5.3.297); Montague insisting that "I can give thee more / for I will raise her statue in pure gold" (298–99); and Capulet countering with his matching offer of as rich a statue for Romeo.<sup>13</sup> Appropriately, this play, so controlled by the problems of time and timing, ends with the ritual elements scattered out of sequence and the fathers participating in a futile attempt to validate the spousals retroactively, finally playing out their correct but now untimely paternal roles as reciprocal gift gives vying to give counter-gifts that surpass each other in sumptuousness (see Lévi-Strauss).<sup>14</sup> The barrenness implicit in their action is projected on stage through the subtext of parodic ritual.

The famous "nunnery scene" in *Hamlet* is another such inverted marriage ceremony, furnished as it is with the couple themselves and

with the bride's father and the figure of state authority secreted where they can overhear the vows. Ophelia, who even holds the prayer book that the bride traditionally carries, is dramatically positioned between her concealed father on the one side and Hamlet on the other. But instead of the groom's awaiting the entrance of the bride and her father, the hidden father and the nervous Ophelia await Hamlet; instead of having the groom give the bride a ring, this scene inverts the model by having Ophelia return Hamlet's gifts, which she says she has "longed long to redeliver" (3.1.93). The awkward phrase is an appropriate one. For the scene presents, not a deliverance of a daughter to a new family, but a redeliverance to her father. When Hamlet suddenly demands of Ophelia "Where's your father?" (129), he is essentially asking her to choose, to declare just where her obedience and service, her love and honor, are bound. In her response, "At home, my lord" (130), not only does she lie but, more importantly, she chooses: through the very words she desperately seizes on, she indicates her own inability to break away from the weighty bonds of home and father. In making such a choice Ophelia violates the ritual. And Hamlet responds in savage parody by giving her the dowry she has indeed received from Polonius: to be as chaste as ice and as pure as snow and yet not escape calumny. He then shatters the mock ceremony with his injunction that there shall be no more marriages. When Ophelia later sings her bawdy songs and distributes her symbolic flowers with an insight born of derangement, thoughts of her father and Hamlet entangle in her mind like the fantastic garlands she wears. To both the unfaithful Gertrude and herself she gives rue. She also gives Gertrude a daisy, symbolic of dissembling; but, as she says, she has no violets to give away, for these flowers of faithfulness "wither'd all when my father died" (4.5.184). The fidelity that should have been given to Hamlet is inextricably entwined with thoughts of her father, the male from whom she has never ritually transferred her obedience or her loyalty.

Through the use of ceremonial substructures, Shakespeare invokes a sacramentality, a context of sacredness, for a certain moment and space within the play. Such structures temporally and spatially set the ritualized moments away from

the undifferentiated profane events of the drama. But once a ritual has been invoked, has in effect drawn a circle of archetypal reference around the moment and space, any events from the non-sacramental surrounding world that interrupt or counter its prescribed direction take on special, portentous significance.<sup>15</sup> By interrupting or converting the invoked ritual to parody, such profane invasions rupture its sacramental context. Ritual structure is explicitly invoked, for example, in *Othello* 2.2, a twelve-line scene staged only to allow a “Herald” to proclaim that “every man put himself into triumph” for “the celebration of [Othello’s] nuptial.” When next Iago—earlier identified by Brabantio as a “profane wretch” (1.1.114) and by Desdemona as “a most profane and liberal counsellor” of “lame and impotent conclusion” (2.1.163, 161)—then converts the epithalamion outside Othello’s chamber into a drunken, violent rout that interrupts the bridal pair within, our intuition of an ominous significance attached to the action derives from a half-conscious awareness of ritual violation. The matter is not one of direct causality. No one is reductively to infer, for example, that Othello murders his wife because the revelers got drunk or that Romeo and Juliet come to a bad end just because her father did not participate in the wedding. Shakespeare’s inverted rituals are a matter, rather, of violated sacramentality, the transgression of a sacred enclosure, the disruption of a hallowed sequence by incongruous actions penetrating from the profane world.

When Shakespeare wants to create a heightened aura of harmony, he will periodically blend ritual references, incorporating our associations with the “rite of May” and “Saint Valentine” into the festival already evoked by the title of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Conversely, to intensify a tragic moment, he will—rather than blend ceremonial structures—bring two incompatible rituals into collision, most frequently those of wedding and funeral.<sup>16</sup> When the technique works, the consequent explosion infuses the scene with the energy released by the violation of two sacred spheres, each shattered by its convergence not with something of a lesser energy but with something of equal sacred intensity. In *Romeo* we often encounter dual ritual references, as in Lady Capulet’s line “I would the

fool were married to her grave” (3.5.140). Such merely verbal references only allude to ritual structures without actually invoking them; Lady Capulet’s juxtaposition of incompatible ceremonies serves as a tragic foreshadow. In scenes from other plays, however, the collision of modes incipient in the words is converted to a presentational dramatization. One of the finest examples of this collision of rituals is Ophelia’s funeral.

*Hamlet* 5.1 begins as a scene of profaned ceremony: an inverted funeral of maimed and truncated rites presided over by a “churlish priest” who refuses the brother’s plea for traditional ceremonies, instead asserting that “Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her,” for “We should profane the service of the dead / To sing a requiem” (230–31, 236–37). Through Gertrude’s action of strewing flowers, returning them as it were to Ophelia, the ritual moment is suddenly expanded to present us with an image associated not only with funerals, but with weddings:

I hop’d thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife.  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck’d, sweet maid,  
And not have strew’d thy grave. (5.1.243–45)

The double context harkens back to one of the major disturbances of the play. It echoes the paradigm of colliding sacred rituals already alluded to in Hamlet’s bitter description of the conjunction of his mother’s marriage and his father’s funeral feasts, where “the funeral bak’d-meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables” (1.2.180–81). The coincidence of the two ceremonies desecrates the ritual sacramentality of each. This collision of significations is enjoined when Laertes, playing out his role as his sister’s natural guardian, leaps into her grave to assert the seemingly unchallengeable primacy of his bond (5.1). But his claim of authority is challenged and the sullied funeral recast into the bizarre image of a superimposed parodic wedding when Hamlet, fulfilling the role earlier defined by his mother, steps forward to this mock altar to assert his own claim to Ophelia’s body. Again the tableau at the altar is invoked as the two claimants struggle over possession of the mock bride, Laertes refusing to relinquish the “fair and unpolluted flesh” of his sister (239) and Hamlet asserting that “Forty thousand

brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum" (269–71). The stage image of the two men competing for possession of Ophelia's shrouded body is the more suggestively dual in ceremonial reference when we recall the wedding custom—alluded to in Robert Herrick's "Nuptial Song on Sir Clipsby Crew and His Lady"—of sewing the bride up in a white sheet before laying her on the flower-strewn bed to await the groom's entrance.<sup>17</sup> The violent rivalry of the two competing claimants pulling the sanctified body back and forth between them reflects the structural principle underlying the scene: the violent collision of two mutually exclusive rituals, funeral and wedding, each struggling to claim the sacramentality it unwittingly pollutes by its own parodic enactment, the two competing claims forced by simultaneity into the fusion of energies that releases the scene's dramatic explosion.

In *Othello*, the father-daughter rupture is dramatized as a structural parody of the church service. As in most of the father-daughter plays, the father here is apparently a widower with only one child, a daughter whom he loves possessively and has denied to several suitors. When he is awakened in the first scene by Iago's vividly pornographic pictures of "your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse," "your daughter and the Moor . . . making the beast with two backs," "your daughter . . . in the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (111–12, 115–17, 122, 126), Brabantio's odd response, "This accident is not unlike my dream, / Belief of it oppresses me already" (142–43), suggests the repressed voyeurism of the father's incestuous projection seeping into the unconscious world of his dreams. In his brief moment alone on stage, the father speaks of the isolated sense of loss that his subsequent rage and denial attempt to supplant: ". . . gone she is; And what's to come of my despised time / Is nought but bitterness" (160–62). Although Brabantio voices a bitterness that has been purged from Prospero's response in a later play, both men express an unassuageable emptiness. Like that other Venetian father Shylock (who also tries to lock his daughter inside his house), Brabantio sets off through the city streets determined to reclaim his stolen treasure before it has been "possessed" by the claimant he has never authorized. Instead of using either

the ritual archetype of the father's bringing the bride to the altar or the folktale pattern of the groom's kidnapping her from her father's fortress, Shakespeare here stages an inverted model, with the father storming the groom's quarters and attempting to recapture the bride.

Brabantio's action dramatizes the emotional and psychological problem that the marriage ritual seems implicitly designed to control and prevent. For consciously or unconsciously, overtly or implicitly, the father of the bride in most of Shakespeare basically wants, like Brabantio, to retain, withhold, lock up, and possess his daughter. Prevented by law, custom, and ritual injunction from taking any of these actions, the only satisfaction available to him is to arrogate to himself the choice of her husband, most often insisting on someone she does not want, lest a desired husband usurp the father's primary position in the daughter's life. But in spite of the paternal preference for Cloten over Posthumus Leonatus, Burgundy over France, Demetrius over Lysander, Paris over Romeo, or Saturninus over Bassianus, Shakespeare always stages the defeat of the father's choice, in both comedy and tragedy.

Brabantio's defeat in the Duke's chamber is played out against the set sequential movement of the church ceremony. Hoping to persuade the Duke that there are impediments to the marriage, Brabantio alleges that "Sans witchcraft" Desdemona could not "fall in love with what she fear'd to look on" (1.3.64, 98). He is here alluding to a specific impediment recognized by canon law as an *impedimentum dirimens*, one that, if proved, would indeed prevent a marriage or could nullify it retroactively. Specifically, Brabantio is claiming the impediment of *vis et metus*, or a condition of fear, duress, and constraint overruling the will—a general category that included the more specific accusation of witchcraft.<sup>18</sup> The Duke's rejoinder to Brabantio, "To vouch this is no proof" (106), reflects the appropriate procedure for such a charge, for an alleged impediment would prevent a marriage only when accompanied by substantive proof (Wheatly 491, *Rathen* 34–35).

When Othello then refutes the charge of coercion by denying that he seduced Desdemona by any "indirect and forced courses" (111), the Duke accepts the validity of Othello's story and

gently advises Brabantio to “Take up this mangled matter at the best” (173). But the sadly stubborn father orders Desdemona to tell the congregation “Where most you owe obedience” (180). Desdemona answers with what is essentially the recitation of her wedding vow to obey and serve Othello, forsaking all others, including her father:

I do perceive here a divided duty:  
 To you I am bound for life and education;  
 My life and education both do learn me  
 How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;  
 I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband;  
 And so much duty as my mother show'd  
 To you, preferring you before her father,  
 So much I challenge that I may profess  
 Due to the Moor, my lord. (1.3.181–89)

The nine-line passage is rhetorically arranged to reflect the “divided duty” of the bride poised at the altar. Its structure is a balance of two separate sentences, each one made up of four and one-half lines, the structural “volta,” or difficult turn, from father to husband occurring at the midpoint of the fifth and longest line, the full stop in midline reflecting the attempt to terminate one status and begin a new one. The important fifth line is given added weight through alliteration, which emphasizes the turn to “husband.” Following this transition, the terms “lord” and “duty” are transferred from the first to the second rhetorical domain of the passage. In the final line, which conveys Desdemona’s determination through its brevity and its emphatically monosyllabic construction, the “duty” in question metamorphoses to “due,” the proscriptive stasis of “duty” in the first line converting to the vitality of “due” in Desdemona’s concluding speech-act pledge. Desdemona’s response accords with the ritual; Brabantio’s parodies it. Instead of presenting his daughter as a consecrated gift, the possessive and now dispossessed father hurls her across the stage at Othello with the words

I here do give thee that with all my heart  
 Which but thou hast already, with all my heart  
 I would keep from thee. (1.3.193–95)

The Desdemona-Brabantio scene and the Lear-Cordelia confrontation, two versions of the same ritual model, have obvious similarities.<sup>19</sup> The opening scene of *King Lear*, however, is

infused with the additional tension of colliding, incompatible ritual structures: the attempt of the man who is both king and father to substitute the illegitimate transfer of his kingdom for the legitimate one of his daughter.

In *King Lear*, the father’s grudging recognition of the need to confer his *daughter* on younger strengths while he unburdened crawls toward death should be understood as the basal structure underlying his divestiture of his kingdom. Lear has called his court together in the opening scene because he must at last face the postponed reckoning with Cordelia’s two princely suitors, who “Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn, / And here are to be answer’d” (1.1.47–48). But instead of justly relinquishing his daughter, Lear tries to effect a substitution of paternal divestitures: he portions out his kingdom as his “daughters’ several dowers,” attaching to Cordelia’s share a stipulation designed to thwart her separation. In substituting his public paternity for his private one, the inherently indivisible entity for the one that biologically must divide and recombine, Lear violates both his kingly role in the hierarchical universe and his domestic one in the family. Nor is it accident—as it was in *Hamlet* 5.1—that brings these two incompatible rituals into collision in *Lear* 1.1. It is the willful action of the king and father, the lawgiver and protector of both domain and family, that is fully responsible for this explosion of chaos.

Yet of course Lear’s bequest of his realm is in no way an unconditional transfer of the kingdom from one rulership to another. Instead, Lear wants to retain the dominion he theoretically casts off and to “manage those authorities / That he hath given away” (1.3.17–18). Likewise, the bequest of his daughter is actually an attempt to keep her, a motive betrayed by the very words he uses. When he *disclaims* “all my paternal care” and orders Cordelia “as a stranger to my heart and me / Hold thee from this for ever” (113, 115–16), his verb holds to his heart rather than expels from it the daughter he says is “adopted to our hate” (203), another verbal usage that betrays his retentive motives. His disastrous attempts to keep the two dominions he sheds are structurally linked through the parodic divestiture of his kingdom as dowry. In recognition of the family’s economic interest in

marriage, the terms of sixteenth-century dowries were required to be fully fixed before the wedding, thus making the property settlement a precondition for the wedding (see n. 13).<sup>20</sup> But Lear the father will not freely give his daughter her endowment unless she purchases it with pledges that would nullify those required by the wedding ceremony. If she will not love him all, she will mar her fortunes, lose her dowry, and thus forfeit the symbolic separation. And yet, as she asserts, she cannot marry if she loves her father all. The circularity of Lear's proposition frustrates the ritual phase of separation: by disinheriting Cordelia, Lear casts her away not to let her go but to prevent her from going. In Lévi-Strauss' terms, Lear has to give up Cordelia because the father must obey the basic social rule of reciprocity, which has a necessarily communal effect, functioning as a "distribution to undo excess." Lear's refusal is likewise communal in its effect, and it helps create the universe that he has "ta'en too little care of."

Insofar as Burgundy's suit is concerned, Lear's quantitatively constructed presumption works. Playing the mime priest and intentionally desecrating the sacramental ritual question he imitates, Lear asks the first bridegroom-candidate:

Will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,  
Dow'r'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our  
oath,  
Take her, or leave her? (1.1.202–05)

Burgundy's hedged response is what Lear anticipates—this suitor will gladly "take Cordelia by the hand" only if Lear will give "but that portion which yourself propos'd" (243, 242). Shrewdly intuiting that France cannot be dissuaded by so quantitative a reason as "her price is fallen," Lear then adopts a strategy based on qualitative assumptions in his attempt to discourage the rival he most greatly fears. Insisting to France that

For you, great King  
I would not from your love make such a stray  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
T'avert your liking a more worthier way (208–11)

Lear tries to avoid even making the required ritual offer. By calling his own daughter "a

wretch whom Nature is asham'd / Almost t'acknowledge hers" (212–13), Lear implies by innuendo the existence of some unnatural impediment in Cordelia that would make her unfit to marry and would thus prevent her separation. Effectively, the scene presents an altar tableau much like that in *Much Ado*, with a bride being publicly pronounced unfit for marriage. In *Lear*, however, it is the father rather than the groom who defames the character of the bride, and his motives are to retain her rather than to reject her. In this violated ceremony, the slandered daughter—instead of fainting—staunchly denies the alleged impediments by demanding that her accuser "make known / It is no vicious blot . . . No unchaste action, or dishonored step, / That hath deprived me of your grace and favor" (226–29). And here the groom himself takes up the role implicit in his vows, defending Cordelia's suborned virtue by his statement that to believe Lear's slanders would require "a faith that reason without miracle / Should never plant in me" (222–23). The physical separation of the daughter from the father is finally achieved only by France's perception that "this unpriz'd precious maid . . . is herself a dowry" (259, 241); France recognizes the qualitative meaning of the dowry that Burgundy could only understand quantitatively.

In Cordelia's almost archetypal definition of a daughter's proper loyalties (1.1.95–104), Shakespeare uses a pun to link the fundamental predicament of the daughter—held under the aegis of the father—to its only possible resolution in the marriage troth: "That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry / Half my love with him" (101–02), says Cordelia. When France later addresses his bride as "Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor, / Most choice forsaken, and most lov'd despis'd" (250–51), he echoes the husband's traditional pledge to love "for richer, for poorer" the daughter who has "forsaken all others." And France himself then endows Lear's "dow'rless daughter" with all his worldly goods by making her "queen of us, of ours, and our fair France" (256–57). His statement "Be it lawful I take up what's cast away" (253) even suggests a buried stage direction through its implied allusion to the traditional conclusion of the *consensus nuptialis* as explained in the Sarum and

York manuals: the moment when the bride, in token of receiving a dowry of land from her husband, prostrates herself at her husband's feet and he responds by lifting her up again (*Rathen* 36, Legg 190, Howard 306–07).

The visual and verbal texts of this important opening scene allude to the separation phase of the marriage ritual; the ritual features are emphasized because here, unlike the similar scene in *Othello*, the daughter's right to choose a husband she loves is not at issue. Because the ritual is sacred, Cordelia dispassionately refuses to follow her sisters in prostituting it. Lear, in contrast, passionately destroys his kingdom in order to thwart the fixed movement of the ritual pattern and to convert the pattern's linear progression away from the father into a circular return to him.<sup>21</sup> The discord his violation engenders continues to be projected through accumulating ritual substructures: in a parody of giving his daughter's hand, Lear instead gives her "father's heart from her" (126); in a parody of the ring rite, Lear takes the golden round uniting king and country and parts it, an act that both dramatizes the consequences of dividing his realm and demonstrates the anguish he feels at losing his daughter to a husband.

Once Lear has shattered the invoked sacred space by collapsing two incompatible rituals into it, he shatters also all claims to paternal authority. From this scene onward, the question of Lear's paternal relation to his daughters and his kingdom pervades the drama through the King's ceremonial invocations of sterility against the daughters he has generated and the land he has ruled. In the prototype of a harmonious wedding that concludes *As You Like It*, Hymen—who "peoples every town"—defines Duke Senior's correct paternal role as that of the exogamous giver of the daughter created in heaven:

Hymen from heaven brought her,  
 Yea, brought her hither,  
 That thou mightst join her hand with his  
 Whose heart within his bosom is.  
 (5.4.112–15)<sup>22</sup>

Hymen characterizes the generating of children as a gift from heaven, an essential spending of the self designed to increase the world. By contrast, Lear's image of the father is the "barbarous Scythian, / Or he that makes his genera-

tion menses / To gorge his appetite" (1.1.116–18). The definition is opposite to the very character of ritual. It precludes the possibility of transformation, for the father devours the flesh he begets. Here, generation becomes primarily an autogamous act, a retention and recycling of the procreative energies, which become mere extensions of private appetite feeding on its own production. The unnatural appetite of the father devouring his paternity is implicit even in the motive Lear reveals behind his plan to set his rest on Cordelia's "kind nursery" (124), an image in which the father pictures himself as an infant nursing from his daughter. The implied relationship is unnatural because it allows the father to deflect his original incestuous passions into Oedipal ones, thus effecting a newly incestuous proximity to the daughter, from whom the marriage ritual is designed to detach him. And when this form of appetite is thwarted by France's intervention, Lear effects yet another substitution of state for daughter: having ordered Cornwall and Albany to "digest the third" part of his kingdom, he and his gluttonous knights proceed to feed off it and through their "Epicurism and lust / Make . . . it more like a tavern or a brothel / Than a grac'd palace" (1.4.244–46). Compelled by nature to give up his daughter, he unnaturally gives up his kingdom; when his appetites cannot feed on her, they instead devour the paternity of his land.

The father devouring his own flesh is the monstrous extension of the circular terms of Lear's dowry proposal. The image belongs not only to the play's pervasive cluster of monsters from the deep but also to its dominant spatial pattern of circularity. Within both the narrative movement and the repeated spatial structure inside the drama, the father's retentive passions deny the child's rite of passage. When Cordelia departs from the father's realm for a new life in her husband's, ostensibly fulfilling the ritual separation, the journey is condemned to futility at its outset, for Cordelia departs dowered with Lear's curse: "Without our grace, our love, our benison" (1.1.265). Although the bride and groom have exchanged vows, the denial of the father's blessing renders the separation incomplete and the daughter's future blighted. Cordelia, like Rosalind, must therefore return to be reincorporated with her father before she can

undergo the ritual severance that will enable her to progress. She thus chooses father over husband, returning to Lear to ask his blessing: "look upon me, sir, / And hold your hand in benediction o'er me" (4.7.56–57). In lines that indicate how futile the attempt at incorporation has been when the precedent rites of passage have been perverted, Cordelia asserts, "O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about" (4.4.23–24), and characterizes her life with France as having been one of constant mourning for the father to whom she is still bound.

Shakespeare rewrote the source play *Leir* to make Cordelia remain in England alone (rather than with France at her side) to fight, lose, and die with her father, a revision that vividly illustrates the tragic failure of the family unit to divide, recombine, and regenerate. The only respite from pain the tragedy offers is the beauty of Lear's reunion with Cordelia, but that reunion takes place at the cost of both the daughter's life and the future life of the family. And for all the poignancy of this reunion, the father's intransigence—which in this play both initiates and conditions the tragedy—remains unchanged: it is still writ large in his fantasy that he and his daughter will be forever imprisoned together like birds in a cage.<sup>23</sup> At the end of the play, excluding any thought of Cordelia's new life with France, Lear focuses solely on the father-daughter merger, which he joyfully envisions enclosed in a perpetuity where no interlopers—short of a divine messenger—can threaten it: "He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven, / And fire us hence like foxes" (5.3.22–23). The rejoining is the precise opposite of that in *As You Like It*. To Rosalind's question, "if I bring in your Rosalind, / You will bestow her on Orlando here?" Duke Senior responds, "That would I, had I kingdoms to give with her" (*AYL* 5.4.6–7, 8). In the Duke's characterization of Orlando's newly received endowment as "a potent Dukedom" (5.4.169), the implied fertility of both kingdom and family is ensured through the father's submission to the necessary movement of ritual. In *King Lear*, the father who imagined that he "gave his daughters all" extracts from his daughter at the end of the play the same price he demanded in the opening scene—that she love her father all. The play's tragic circles find their counterpart in its ritual

movements. Cordelia returns to her father, and the final scene stages the most sterile of altar tableaux: a dead father with his three dead daughters, the wheel having come full circle back to the opening scene of the play. Initially barren of mothers, the play concludes with the death of all the fathers and all the daughters; the only figures who survive to emphasize the sterility of the final tableau are Albany, a widower, and Edgar, an unmarried son.

In Shakespearean tragedy, the cost demanded of the daughter is appallingly high. No matter how wrongheaded the inflexible father may be, the child who severs herself from him—even from allegiance to his impossible demands—becomes guiltlessly agentive in the wrack of the original family and tragically incapable of creating a new one. Such images of amputation and sterility are implicit in Gratiano's address to the dead young wife of Othello:

Poor Desdemon! I am glad thy father's dead.  
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief  
Shore his old thread in twain.

(*Oth.* 5.2.204–06)

Even Juliet, the most determinedly independent of all the daughters of tragedy, never considers what would seem to be the most practical solution to Romeo's banishment, that is, leaping over Verona's walls and going with him to Mantua. Instead, Juliet tries to effect a resolution that—even at the symbolic cost of her own life—will reunite her with her husband inside the structure of the Capulet family tomb. If the alternatives thus posed are equally unattractive, the dilemma thereby created is quintessentially Shakespearean: the "unresolvably problematic sense of experience" that raises questions we can "neither ignore nor answer" (Rabkin 29, 31) but affords no easy answers.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare gives us two versions of the daughter's solution to the repressive demands of the father. In each, the father follows the folktale motif of trying to lock up his daughter and retain her for himself. Portia's physical self has been symbolically locked up inside a lead casket by her dead father's "will," a term that suggests the father's desire to maintain both legal and physical possession of her. Jessica, meanwhile, is literally locked up inside her father's house—a house

that becomes, through Shylock's calling it "my sober house" and its casements "my house's ears" (2.5.36, 34), an anthropomorphic refiguration of the father himself.

In this play, each father's determination to lock up his daughter sets up the test by which the daughter defines herself. While more theologically oriented readings have seen Jessica as a nominative figuration of the House of Jesse and her flight from Venice to Belmont as a symbol for the transition from Old to New Testament law, an allegorical interpretation of Shakespeare's characters that did not allow for the possibility of irony would end up making Gratiano—surely the most graceless figure in the play—an emblem of a theological concept he seems as incapable of representing as does Jessica. While biblical allusion is clearly important in *The Merchant*, we must remember that Shakespeare is writing drama, not theological allegory. Jessica serves as a dramatic foil to Portia; against Portia's relationship with both her wealthy father and her impoverished suitor we are implicitly invited to measure Jessica's. And inasmuch as the play gives us two specific test objects—the caskets and the rings—that enable Portia to engineer her transition from filial to conjugal bonds, they should likewise be understood as test objects that measure the success of Jessica's rite of passage.

To escape the repressive will of her father, Jessica climbs out the casement windows carrying "a casket" full of Shylock's jewels and money, gilding herself with her father's ducats and essentially selling herself to a Lorenzo who seems as interested in the acquired ducats as in the daughter who stole them. Jessica's theft here is dual. From the symbolic house of the father she simultaneously steals both herself and her father's fortune, leaving the House of Shylock empty in every sense. When in court the defeated Jew states:

Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that:  
 You take my house when you do take the prop  
 That doth sustain my house; you take my life  
 When you do take the means whereby I live  
 (4.1.374–77)

the voice that speaks is not only the miser's. It is also the father's.

Shylock's daughter, who defies all the struc-

tures and denies the bond—a term fundamental to the tragic plot of the play—ends up symbolically disavowing the sanctity of the conjugal bond of her own heredity, a point that receives comic allusion through Launce's hope "that you are not the Jew's daughter" and Jessica's response, "That were a kind of bastard hope indeed; so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me" (3.5.11–14). In purchasing her escape to an imagined freedom, the daughter sells her mother's "ring" and her father's "stones," symbolic representations of the female and male generative organs. And in figuratively delegitimizing herself, the daughter reciprocally disinherits and defiles the father in a way that alludes to the Old Testament family laws of Shylock's faith. For in the same chapter of Leviticus that ostracizes any sons of Aaron who have "cuttings in their flesh" as being polluted before the Lord and states that if the "daughter fall to playe the whore, she polluteth her father," it is also written that any man who may "haue *his* stones broken" is defiled and shall not "come nere to offer the sacrifices of the Lord" (21.5, 9, 20, 21).<sup>24</sup> The Old Testament precedent suggests that in demanding a pound of Antonio's flesh, Shylock is calling for a retributive defilement against the man who has spat on Shylock's Jewish gabardine, broken the legal bond, and furthermore—at least in Shylock's mind (see 2.7.1–10)—joined with the other Christians in severing Shylock's flesh. For "my daughter," Shylock tells us, "is my flesh and blood" (3.1.37). The precedent also makes Solanio's metaphorical use of "stones" a cruelly appropriate means of mocking Shylock's anguish over Jessica's disavowal of a heritage that to her father is "rich and precious." Behind Solanio's gleeful mimicry of the comic hoarder ranting in the streets for his stolen ducats lies the figure of the tragic father castrated by his daughter and disinherited from the future:

A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,  
 Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!  
 And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious  
 stones,  
 Stol'n by my daughter! (2.8.18–21)<sup>25</sup>

What Jessica buys in return for the symbols of her parents' procreative act is a monkey, a grotesque imitation of the infant human form. And

in act 5, scene 1, she is left singing a moonlight duet with Lorenzo that—beneath the beauty of its lyrical surface—uneasily equates their love to that of Troilus and Cressida, Pyramus and Thisbe, Aeneas and Dido, and Jason and Medea, all ominous archetypes of bonds somehow shattered in conjunction with attempts to invalidate family or cultural allegiances. Lorenzo's line "In such a night / Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew, / And with an unthrift love did run from Venice" (5.1.14–16) unwittingly suggests a poverty implicit in Jessica's purchase on the night of her gilded stealth. The daughter who meant to discard her paternity is furthermore left with an ironic dependence on her father's money, a fortune obtained not by legacy but by robbery, as Lorenzo unwittingly suggests in his joke about acquiring "thieves for wives" (2.6.23). The final bitter irony of Jessica's stolen dowry comes at the end of the play, when Lorenzo describes the second seized fortune they will get from Shylock as "manna" dropped from heaven. The reference echoes Portia's courtroom paean to the quality of mercy and simultaneously alludes to the sustenance that the Old Testament Father freely gave the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness en route from bondage to freedom in the Promised Land. Jessica's attempt to make the transition from filial to conjugal bonds by means of theft is, in its ritual implications, as unsuccessful as Shylock's attempt to lock up and possess his treasure, the family treasure that is ultimately the daughter herself.

In contrast to Shylock, Portia's father has not conflated his ducats and his daughter but has understood that his true treasure is Portia. What he has locked up inside the casket is not his jewels but his daughter's "counterfeit," the image of the family fortune. In the riddle game the successful suitor will be the one who values Portia enough to choose not the gold or silver she brings with her as dowry but the lead casket that requires him to "give and hazard all." What France recognizes as true of Cordelia is likewise true of Portia: she is herself a dowry.

Like Jessica, Portia chafes against the restrictions of this bond. With a quibble on her use of "will," she laments:

O me, the word choose! I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a

living daughter curb'd by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard . . . that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?  
(1.2.22–26)

But, unlike Jessica, Portia does not try to ensure her happiness by throwing away the filial bonds—any more than she will ensure Antonio's freedom by denying Shylock's claim or by overturning the legal structure outright. Instead, she characteristically works out a solution that amounts to fudging a bit. She resolves the strictures of institutional bonds by readjusting them to her own will, thus achieving a sort of independence within the given structures. In the marriage riddle, she must passively rely on the base natures of the suitors themselves to cause them to choose wrongly. But she does—without actually disobeying her father—manage to guide Bassanio's choice by first telling him to "pause a day or two / Before you *hazard*" (3.2.1–2; my italic) and then giving him a hint that she gave no previous suitor, in the form of the music and the song whose end lines rhyme with the word "lead."

To attribute to Portia a conscious complicity in directing Bassanio's choice is not to demean her integrity. Rather, it is to do justice to her role as the daughter-heroine of comedy who must play a part in shaping her own future. While the death of the father does free a male heir like Petruchio to choose an independent future, it does not likewise free the heiress richly left in Belmont. Nor for that matter does the marriage ritual allow even the fatherless daughter to walk independently down the aisle and give herself away; fatherless or not, she is always a property to be bequeathed by some figuratively paternal authority. And to resolve the potentially unacceptable alternatives symbolically posed by the paternal structures surrounding her, the daughter-heroine of comedy must often resort to disguise, either literal or figurative. Since Portia, as she says, can neither "choose one, nor refuse none," she must subtly find a way to lead the suitor she first silently chooses to choose her. Faced with the predicament dramatized in the marriage ceremony, she enacts the archetypal resolution frequently defined in folk-tale romance. Led to the altar, "given" to the husband by the father before she herself is ever asked to acknowledge that she will "take this man," she must either acquiesce to her father's

will or violate the ritual by refusing—unless she can ensure by contrivance that the hand to which she is transferred is the one she herself has already chosen. In mythic terms, the daughter escapes her father's castle not by climbing out of its casements but by symbolically throwing down the key to the suitor she chooses. Like Rapunzel, who lets down her hair, Portia directs Bassanio to discover the key that will unlock "Portia's self" from confinement. Jessica—like Desdemona, a daughter inside tragedy—chooses to escape at the cost of violating the family house and all it represents; Portia also "chooses," but in a way that leaves the structure intact for the future.

And unlike Jessica, who in selling her mother's betrothal ring rejects the value of the conjugal bond it represents, Portia insists on the value of her ring and on the family ties it symbolizes. When Bassanio gives away her ring at Antonio's request, here acceding to the demand that his friend's love be "valued 'gainst your wife's commandment" (4.2.450), the act is not one that Portia dismisses lightly. At the end of the play, having first induced Bassanio to repeat his vows of faith, Portia puts Antonio into the role of surrogate priest and bonded witness to the sanctity of those vows. By acting as Bassanio's "surety," Antonio figuratively takes out a bond once again for Bassanio; only this bond guarantees the validity of Bassanio's marriage at the pledge of Antonio's soul rather than, as previously, of his flesh: "I dare be bound again, / My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord / Will never more break faith advisedly" (5.1.251–53).<sup>26</sup> In a further mimesis of the ceremonial pledge to "love, honor and keep" the recipient of the ring, Portia makes Antonio the priest, giving him the ring and telling him to give it to Bassanio with the instructions to "bid him *keep it better*" (5.1.255; my italic). The comedy thus ends with a correct ritual enactment, which resolves the threat to union implied by Bassanio's transfer of Portia's ring.

Not only in *The Merchant of Venice* but frequently throughout the canon, Shakespeare draws on ritual substructures for the conclusions of his plays. Within these patterns, tragedy ends with an emphasis on broken or inverted ritual designs; comedy ends with the scattered elements of ritual regrouped and correctly enacted.

And in the four late romances—plays in which oracular prophecies and the sudden descent of divine beings constantly reshape the linear narrative—the shattered human world, through obsessive reenactments of broken rituals, strives to recapture what has been lost and thus to reconnect itself with the sacred world of its origins. The design closely approximates Mircea Eliade's description of the ritual process as humanity's attempt to effect the "myth of the eternal return." Within these late plays, the declining world of inflexible paternal authority rediscovers a redemptive teleology through the ritualized reclamation of that particular bond which could only be viewed as a liability to the family's prospects for economic and patrilineal prosperity. In *The Winter's Tale*, the murderous wrath Leontes directs against his innocent wife and daughter is punished by the immediately conjunctive death of the son he imagines will carry his lineal posterity. Only when he comes to value "that which has been lost"—the daughter Perdita, who is a matrilineal rather than a patrilineal extension—is Leontes allowed the partial restitution implicit in his adoption of Florizel. And even this compensation is made possible only through the return and affirmation of the hitherto unvalued daughter.

In *Pericles*, another play in which redemption depends on reclaiming the lost female child, a riddle game and caskets again serve as ritual structures through which the father-daughter relation is expressed. The Prince of Tyre, perceiving the horrible truth that explains how Antiochus can be "father, son, and husband mild" to his own daughter (*Per.* 1.1.68), flees from this daughter, whom he calls a "glorious casket stor'd with ill" (77). Parallel to Lear's barbarous Scythian who gorges on his own generation, the daughter in Antioch is "an eater of her mother's flesh" (130); both are autophagous and monstrous images of generative consummation perverted into degenerative consumption. Antiochus' daughter is a type of living death. While Portia was the family jewel inside the lead casket, the life locked into the symbolically maternal container by the "will" of her dead father, this daughter is the casket itself, containing inside her the deadly ill of the father's incestuous generation.

As D. W. Harding aptly points out, whether

or not Shakespeare wrote this opening of *Pericles*, the events at Antioch “have a sharply defined significance for the broad topic of the relation between father and daughter, since they ask us to contemplate, and decisively reject, the possibility of incest” (59). The background story of Antioch, which Gower narrates at the beginning of the play, is a mirror of that leading up to Pericles’ recognition of Marina in act 5. Gower tells of a great king who

unto him took a peer,  
Who died and left a female heir,  
So buxom, blithe, and full of face  
As heaven had lent her all his grace;  
With whom the father liking took.

(1.21–25)

While yet oblivious to the deadly perversion in Antioch, Pericles had thanked Antiochus for having “taught / My frail mortality to know itself, / . . . For death remembered should be like a mirror” (1.1.41–42, 45); once aware, he calls the princess a “Fair glass of light” from whom his “thoughts revolt” (76, 78). Yet this scene has still another mirror, one that frames the other two and reflects the unnatural reality of the relationship: the mirror of ritual enactment. The scene features a father, a bride, and a groom and parodies the appropriate and expected progression of a marriage ceremony. Instead of enacting the father’s role of bringing in and giving away his bridal-decked daughter to a waiting husband, Antiochus demands—while music plays—“Bring in our daughter, clothed like a bride / For embracements even of Jove himself” (6–7). The father has here positioned himself in the groom’s role to receive and embrace this daughter, who is clothed *like* a bride but is not one, and he embraces her in the incongruous person of Jove the father. Instead of relinquishing her to a husband’s hand, Antiochus warns the daughter’s suitor to “touch not, upon thy life, / For that’s an article within our law” (87–88). Here, the daughter’s necessary search for a husband to supplant the father, the successful metamorphosis of love in *As You Like It*, is prevented by the insidious bond of “kindness,” culminating in the relationship of unnatural kin and kind semantically alluded to in the princess’ riddle: “I sought a husband, in

which labor / I found that kindness in a father” (66–67).

Although the rest of the play can rightly be called a flight from incest, years later Pericles is aroused from his silent apathy only by the sight of an unidentified young woman who reminds him suddenly of his dead wife, the triggering association that lies at the heart of the father’s incestuous love for his daughter. Having spent the play fleeing the punishment of recognizing the father’s ugly secret in Antioch, he finds himself, now a father, aroused to life by his own daughter. But having once looked into the deadly mirrors of the first scene, Pericles can go on to reject the implicit seductiveness of the situation reflected in his own response to Marina.

In this play, which is characterized by a highly symbolic, mythic set of connections, the lust between Antiochus and his daughter is condignly punished by fire from heaven, which consumes them. The punishment meted out to Pericles throughout the play has no such obvious cause, and it seems in fact so basically causeless that it makes him appear almost Job-like. The implicit “cause,” however, is rooted in the matter of Antioch that begins and ends the play and that Pericles’ actions unconsciously mirror. Pericles, mistakenly presuming his wife dead, had thrown “her overboard with these very arms” (5.3.19), abandoning the woman who, locked up in a casket, at that moment gave birth to the daughter whom he ultimately finds in the brothel in Mytilene. Symbolically, this action reflects the same choice that the father in Antioch made. Such a choice discards the conjugal bond and the treasure of legitimate family generation, which here, as in *The Merchant of Venice*, is represented by the emblematic womb-tomb of casket-coffin.

Only after Pericles, having wandered for years, comes full circle back to face the terrifying secret from which he had fled can he release Marina from the brothel in which he finds her; and only after the father has freed his daughter from the structure to which the image of his own desire has symbolically consigned her can the husband again move forward in his own life. At the end of the play Pericles sets off again to reestablish the legitimate order of the family by reclaiming the lost treasure that is rightly his. In recovering Thaisa and asking her to “come, be

buried / A second time within these arms" (43–44), Pericles effects the reclamation and rebirth of the family "fortune," here reversing his earlier act of throwing it away in a coffin.

Through the daughter's return—and only through her return—can the king in both *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* proceed to recover the mother, whom the daughter resembles yet who symbolically "died" in conjunction with the daughter's birth. In both plays the physical presence of the daughter exerts a unique, enormously evocative power over the father, initially attracting him in a way that is definably incestuous. Yet from this attraction and from it alone springs the force of regeneration incipient in all the father-daughter relationships, even the tragic ones. The spiraling inwardness of Leontes' and Pericles' paternal narcissism leads both of them to the threatened incestuous moment. But the recognition obtained in this frightening instant generates an impulse to create life anew, the exogamous impulse that compels the father to relinquish his daughter and bring back to life the abandoned mother. The final scene of each play moves into a markedly mythic structure to enact what becomes a dual progression of the ritual passage, the separation of daughter and father leading to the incorporation of the daughter into a new union, simultaneous with the reincorporation of the father into the one he had cast away. As opposed to the sterile circularity of the violated ritual in *King Lear*, the structure of these plays returns to its origin so that the family can be recreated through the redemption of the ritual now correctly enacted. The recreation is made possible by the daughter's regenerating both the mother and the father who generated her. She becomes, in Pericles' words, the force "that beget'st him that did thee beget" (5.1.195).

The father-daughter relation in *The Tempest*, the last of the romances, is somewhat similar, in that Miranda, like Perdita and Marina, is the force that preserves her father. Here, however, there is no mother for Prospero to rediscover when he at last gives up his daughter and abandons his island. Instead of the miraculous reunion with a lost daughter as the force that suddenly resuscitates life, *The Tempest* shows us a father who has never lost his child and whose concern for her welfare has always given him his will to live. And of all the Shakespearean fathers

of daughters, Prospero is undoubtedly the most successful in enacting his proper role. His purpose, much like that defined by Hymen in *As You Like It*, has always been to educate, discipline, and nurture Miranda so that he can set her free, as he does Ariel. Prospero understands the need to play the father's mock role as the barrier to young love, the need to make Ferdinand realize the value of his daughter through laboring to earn her lest "too light winning / Make the prize light" (1.2.452–53). He also understands the need for the daughter to choose her husband over her father, a choice that Desdemona and Cordelia could not make their fathers accept. When he commands Miranda not to talk with his prisoner or reveal her name, he is purposely acting to fulfill both roles. While Lear casts Cordelia away so that he can keep her, Prospero ties Miranda to him so that she will disobey his commands and initiate the required transition of loyalties from father to husband. Yet, for all his awareness, Prospero turns aside from watching Miranda and Ferdinand play out the parts he himself has written for them and makes the pained comment "So glad of this as they I cannot be" (3.1.92).

Shakespeare shows us that it is no easier for Prospero to give up Miranda, even to a husband he himself has chosen, than it was for poor Brabantio to relinquish Desdemona. Throughout the play Prospero remains disproportionately preoccupied with tormenting thoughts of his daughter sexually possessed by another male, an obsession that has its analogue in Brabantio's dream. Hence the father lectures Ferdinand—the future son-in-law whom old Prospero never manages to like very much—that

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before  
All sanctimonious ceremonies may . . . be minist' red,  
. . . barren hate . . . and discord shall bestrew  
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly  
That you shall hate it both. (4.1.15–22)

And hence he sets Ferdinand to work hauling logs, doing the labor that Caliban refused to do, thereby domesticating Ferdinand's energies in a way that could never reform the uneducable lust of Caliban. In his betrothal gift to Miranda and Ferdinand, the dowry masque he evokes out of the powers of his mind, Prospero includes the rainbow goddess Iris, the emblematic fertility of

Ceres, and the archetypal wife-consort Juno. Significantly, from this vision the father banishes Venus and her son, turning them back on their way to the celebration, where he fears they would have done “some wanton charm upon this man and maid, / Whose vows are, that no bed-right shall be paid / Till Hymen’s torch be lighted” (4.1.95–97).

The forces of erotic chaos that Prospero hoped to banish from his daughter’s prothalamion are, however, not so easily vanquished. For before the masque has ended, Prospero realizes that Caliban and his confederates are on their way, and the very thought of the would-be rapist abruptly dissolves the insubstantial pageant into thin air.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero essentially overcomes his incestuous desire to retain his daughter imprisoned on his island. He recognizes his own repressed but monstrous wishes in confessing that Caliban, who would people the island with Calibans, is a “thing of darkness I / [must] Acknowledge mine” (5.1.275–76). Caliban, the monster of *The Tempest*, whose name suggests an anagram for “cannibal,” refigures the incestuous, self-consumptive desires imaged in Lear’s “barbarous Scythian” and in the “monstrous lust” between Antiochus and his daughter in *Pericles*. He is also a force on whose nature nurture will not stick. And so while daughter and father are simultaneously released from the enchantment of living together forever isolated on an island controlled by the father’s shaping fancies, Caliban must remain enslaved on it. Their release and their ability to return to the natural order of civilization are made possible only by the arrival of Ferdinand, who comes—like the prince of the fairy tale—to take the bride away from her father’s fortress and lead her out into generative space and time.

The end of *The Tempest* leaves us with a father who has learned what nature requires of

him: the father must take part with his nobler reason against his fury and let his admired Miranda go. Yet doing so leaves Prospero with the lonely emptiness apparent in his confession to Alonso: “I / Have lost my daughter . . . In this last tempest” (5.1.147–48, 153). As in *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*, the ritual dissolution of the father-daughter bond is dramatically realized; but in this final play the relationship gains added depth through the exploration of the central paradox always inherent in its resolution. Here, we are not left entirely with the “brave new world” imagined by Miranda and in some respects promised to the reclaimed families of the two earlier romances. For Shakespeare goes beyond the happy ending to show us the pain and loss bequeathed to the isolated father who has acted out the required rite of separation. For while at first glance the church ceremony might seem only to dramatize the transfer of a passive female object from one male to another, in reality it ritualizes the community’s coercion, not of the bride, but of her father. Ultimately, it is he who must pay the true “bride price” at the altar and, by doing so, become the displaced and dispossessed actor. As the celebratory reunification that concludes Shakespeare’s comedy begins in the final scene, it is therefore left up to Prospero to complete the demands dictated by his role and—like every father of every bride—retire from the scene to seek out his seat in the congregation. Thus Prospero concludes the ritual and the play with his only remaining expectation:

to see the nuptial  
Of these our dear-belov’d solemnized,  
And thence retire me to my Milan, where  
Every third thought shall be my grave.  
(5.1.309–12)

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stone accounts for the drama and poetry of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by modifying his “rather pessimistic view of a society with little love and generally low affect” to allow for “romantic love and sexual intrigue . . . in one very restricted social group . . . that is the households of princes and great

nobles” (*Family* 103–04). This qualification does not extend to his view of parent-child relationships.

<sup>2</sup> Stone also points out that the high infant-mortality rate, “which made it folly to invest too much emotional capital in such ephemeral beings,” was as much responsible for this lack of affective family ties as were

any economic motives (*Family* 105). For Stone, paternal authority—not affection—was the almost exclusive source of the family's coherence. Furthermore, the domestic patriarchy of the sixteenth century was not merely a replica of family structures inherited from the past but a social pattern consciously exploited and reinforced by the state to emphasize the injunctions of obedience and authority; nor was it replaced until absolute monarchy was overthrown (see *Family* 151–218). Meanwhile, because of the prevalent child-rearing practices, the maternal impact was relatively insignificant, hence not nearly so important to the psychological process of maturation; in Stone's estimate, our familiar "maternal, child-oriented, affectionate and permissive mode" of child rearing did not emerge till about 1800 (*Family* 405). During the Elizabethan era, the upper-class practice of transferring a newborn infant immediately to a village wet nurse, who nurtured the child for two years, substantially muted any maternal influence on child development and no doubt created an inestimable psychological distance between mother and child. Stone cites the strained and formal relationship between Juliet and Lady Capulet as vivid testimony of the absence of affective mother-child bonds that results from such an arrangement (106); in the Capulet household, it is even left up to the nurse, not the mother, to remember Juliet's birthday. Yet Stone does not measure the relationship between Juliet and her father against his hypothesis of the absence of affect. Old Capulet is indeed the authoritarian dictator of Stone's model, but he is also a "careful father" who deeply loves his child. Instead of being eager to have her off his hands, Capulet is notably reluctant to give up the daughter he calls "the hopeful lady of my earth" (1.2.15; all Shakespeare quotations are from the Evans ed.); his bull-headed determination to marry her to Paris following Tybalt's death is born, paradoxically enough, from the deeply rooted affection that Stone's hypothesis excludes.

<sup>3</sup> As Christopher Hill suggests in his review of Stone's *Family*, much of the evidence used could well imply its opposite: "The vigour of the preachers' propaganda on behalf . . . of breaking children's wills, suggests that such attitudes were by no means so universally accepted as they would have wished" (461). Hill and others have criticized Stone for asserting that love and affection were negligible social phenomena before 1700 and for presuming throughout "that values percolate downwards from the upper to the lower classes" (Hill 462). Because of the scope and importance of Stone's subject, his book has been widely reviewed. As David Berkowitz comments, "the possibility of endless symposia on Stone's vision and performance looms as a fashionable activity for the next half-dozen years" (396). Hill's review and the reviews by Keith Thomas and John Demos seem particularly well balanced.

<sup>4</sup> One could chart the new emphasis on the family by reviewing the Shakespeare topics at recent MLA conventions. The 1979 convention featured *Marriage and the Family in Shakespeare*, Shirley Nelson Garner chairing, as its Shakespeare Division topic and also

included a related special session, *The Love between Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters*, Paul A. Jorgensen chairing. Before becoming the division topic, the subject had been examined in special sessions for three consecutive years: 1976, Marianne Novy chairing; 1977, John Bean and Coppélia Kahn chairing; and 1978, Carol Thomas Neely chairing. Special sessions continued in 1980 and 1981, with Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon S. Gohlke as chairs. A parallel phenomenon has meanwhile been taking place in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century historical scholarship, which Hill explains by saying that ". . . the family as an institution rather suddenly became fashionable, perhaps as a by-product of the women's liberation movement" (450).

Most of the work on fathers and daughters in Shakespeare has been done, as might be expected, on the romances. See the essays by Cyrus Hoy, D. W. Harding, and Charles Frey. Of particular interest is the Schwartz and Kahn collection, which was published after I had written this paper but which includes several essays that express views related to my own. See esp. David Sundelson's "So Rare a Wonder'd Father: Prospero's *Tempest*," C. L. Barber's "The Family in Shakespeare's Development: Tragedy and Sacredness," and Coppélia Kahn's "The Providential *Tempest* and the Shakespearean Family."

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Loftus Ranald has done substantial work on the legal background of marriage in Shakespeare plays. I have found no marriages (or funerals) staged literally in the plays of Shakespeare or of his contemporaries. Although, for instance, the marriage of Kate and Petruchio would seem to offer a rich opportunity for an indecorously comic scene appropriate for *The Taming of the Shrew*, the action occurs offstage and we only hear of it secondhand. Nor do we witness the Olivia-Sebastian marriage in *Twelfth Night*. Even the fragment of the botched ceremony in *Much Ado* does not follow the liturgy with any precision but presents a dramatized version of it. This omission—apparently consistent in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama—may have resulted from the 1559 Act of Uniformity of Common Prayer and Divine Service in the Church, which stipulates sanctions against "any persone or persones whatsoever . . . [who] shall in anye Entreludes Playes Songes, Rymes or by other open Woordes, declare or speake anye thing in the derogation depraving or despising of the same Booke, or of any thing therein conteyned" (1 Elizabeth I, c. 2, in *Statutes* 4:355–58). Given the rising tempo of the Puritan attack on the theaters at this time, we may reasonably infer that the omission of liturgy reflects the dramatists' conscientious wish to avoid conflict. Richmond Noble's study corroborates this assumption (82). Of the services to which Shakespeare does refer, Noble notes that the allusions to "distinctive features, words, and phrases of Holy Matrimony are extremely numerous" (83).

<sup>6</sup> Van Gennep built his study on the work of Hartland, Frazer, Ciszewski, Hertz, Crowley, and others who had noted resemblances among the components of various disparate rites. His tripartite diachronic structure provides the basis for Victor W. Turner's discus-

sions in the essay "Liminality and Communitas" (*Ritual Process* 94–203).

<sup>7</sup> The church canons of 1604 seem to have confused the situation further by continuing to recognize the validity of the nuptial pledge but forbidding persons under twenty-one to marry without parental consent; this ruling would make the marriage of minors illegal but nonetheless binding for life and hence valid (Stone, *Family* 32). Until the passage of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753, confusion was rife over what constituted a legal marriage and what a valid one. In addition to bringing coherence to the marriage laws, this act was designed to protect increasingly threatened parental interests by denying the validity as well as the legality of a religious ceremony performed without certain conditions, including parental consent for parties under twenty-one (Stone, *Family* 35–36).

The concern for parental approval has always focused on, and in fact ritualized, the consent of the bride's father. In 1858, the Reverend Charles Wheatly, a noted authority on church law, attributed the father's giving away his daughter as signifying the care that must be taken of the female sex, "who are always supposed to be under the tuition of a father or guardian, whose consent is necessary to make their acts valid" (496). For supportive authority Wheatly looks back to Richard Hooker, whose phrasing is substantially harsher. Hooker felt that the retention of the custom "hath still this vse that it putteth we men in mind of a dutie whereunto the verie imbecillitie of their [women's] nature and sex doth binde them, namely to be alwaies directed, guided and ordered by others . . ." (215).

Even though the validity of a marriage was not vested in parental consent, "the Protestants, including the Anglicans, considered the consent of the parents to be as essential to the marriage as the consent of the bride and bridegroom" (Flandrin 131). Paradoxically, "both Church and State claimed to be supporting, at one and the same time, freedom of marriage and the authority of parents" (Flandrin 132). The ambiguity arose because the child was obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to obey the parent. Technically, the child was free to choose a marriage partner, but since the church never took steps against the prerogatives of the father, the notion of choice was problematic.

<sup>8</sup> Given the high parent mortality rate, a number of brides necessarily went to the altar on the arms of their legal guardians. Peter Laslett notes that in Manchester between 1553–1657 over half of the girls marrying for the first time were fatherless (103), but some historians have criticized his reliance on parish registers as the principal demographic barometer.

<sup>9</sup> The groom's pledge suggests the wedding ring's dual sexual and material symbolism. Historically, the ring symbolizes the dowry payment that the woman will receive from her husband by the entitlement of marriage; it apparently superseded the custom of placing tokens of espousal on the prayer book (see *Book of Common Prayer* 408). It also signifies the physical consummation, a point frequently exploited in Renaissance drama and also implied by the rubrics in the older Roman Catholic manuals, which direct the placing of the ring.

The Martène manual specifies that the bride is to wear it on the left hand to signify "a difference between the estate and the episcopal order, by whom the ring is publicly worn on the right hand as a symbol of full and entire chastity" (Legg 207). *The Rathen Manual*, which follows the Use of Sarum, contains a rather charming piece of folklore widely believed through the eighteenth century. It, too, allusively suggests the sexual significance of the ring: "For in the fourth finger there is a certain vein proceeding to the heart and by the chime of silver there is represented the internal affection which ought always to be fresh between them" (35–36; see also Wheatly 503). Even after the priest took over the ceremonial role of transferring the bride's hand from her father's to her husband's, he did not also become the intermediary in transferring the ring from the groom's keeping to the bride's finger. Such an incorporation of duties might seem logical were it not that this part of the ritual simultaneously imitates and licenses the sexual act.

The English reformers retained both the symbol of the ring and the groom's accompanying pledge to "worship" his wife's body, a retention that generated considerable attack from the more radical reformers. The controversy over this wording occupies the major portion of Hooker's defense of the Anglican marriage rite (see also Stone, *Family* 522, on the attempts in 1641 and 1661 to alter the wording of the vow from "worship" to "honor"). Hooker justifies the husband's "worship" as a means of transferring to the wife the "dignitie" incipient in her husband's legitimizing of the children he now allows her to bear. She furthermore receives, by this annexation of his worship, a right to participate in his material possessions. The movement of the vow, from sexual to material pledge, thus sequences a formal rite of passage, a pattern alluded to in Hooker's phrase, "the former branch hauing granted the principall, the latter graunteth that which is annexed thereunto" (216).

<sup>10</sup> The ceremonial transfer of the father's authority to the husband is acknowledged by the Reverend John Shepherd in his historical commentary accompanying the 1853 *Family Prayer Book*: ". . . the ceremony shows the father's consent; and that the authority, which he before possessed, he now resigns to the husband" (Brownell 465). By implication, however, the ceremony resolves the incestuous attraction between father and daughter by ritualizing his "gift" of her hand, a signification unlikely to be discussed in the commentary of church historians. When first the congregation and next the couple are asked to name any impediments to the marriage, there are, Wheatly says, three specific impediments the church is charging all knowledgeable parties to declare: a preceding marriage or contract, consanguinity or affinity, and want of consent (483). The final act of Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* enumerates all the possible legal impediments that might be subsumed under these three.

The bride's father, by virtue of his special prominence in the ritual, functions as a select witness whose presence attests to the validity of the contract. The Friar in *Much Ado* asks Hero and Claudio whether

they “know any inward impediment why you should not be cojoin’d” (4.1.12–13). Leonato dares to respond for Claudio, “I dare make his answer, none,” because, as father of the bride, he presumes to have full knowledge that no impediment exists. When he learns of Hero’s supposed taint, the rage he vents over the loss of his own honor is the more comprehensible when we understand his special position in the ceremony as a sworn witness to the transfer of an intact daughter.

<sup>11</sup> The sections on the celebration of “Festiual daies” and times of fast that precede Hooker’s defense of the English “Celebration of Matrimonie” are especially helpful in understanding Elizabethan ritual, for in these sections Hooker expands his defense of the Anglican rites into an explanation of, and rationale for, the whole notion of ritual. Having first isolated three sequential elements necessary for festival—praise, bounty, and rest—he goes on to justify “bountie” in terms remarkably compatible with the theories of both Bataille and Lévi-Strauss on the essential “spending-gift” nature of marriage. To Hooker, the “bountie” essential to celebration represents the expression of a “charitable largenesse of somewhat more then common bountie. . . . Plentifull and liberall expense is required in them that abounde, partly as a signe of their owne ioy in the goodnesse of God towards them” (292, 293). Bounty is important to all festival rites, but within the marriage rite this “spending” quality incorporates the specific idea of sexual orgasm as the ultimate and precious expenditure given the bride by her husband, a notion alluded to in Bataille and one that functioned as a standard Elizabethan metaphor apparent in phrases like “Th’ expense of spirit” (sonnet 129) or Othello’s comment to Desdemona, “The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue; / That profit’s yet to come ’tween me and you” (2.3.9–10). The wedding ceremony ritualizes this notion of bounty as the gift of life by having the father give the groom the family treasure, which the father cannot “use” but can only bequeath or hoard. The groom, who ritually places coins or a gold ring on the prayer book as a token “bride price,” then fully “purchases” the father’s treasure through his own physical expenditure, an act that guarantees the father’s “interest” through future generations. This money-sex image complex is pervasive and important in many of Shakespeare’s plays. The pattern and its relation to festival are especially evident in Juliet’s ecstatic and impatient speech urging night to come and bring her husband:

O, I have bought the mansion of a love,  
But not possess’d it, and though I am sold,  
Not yet enjoy’d. So tedious is this day  
As is the night before some festival.

(3.2.26–29).

In another context, this pattern enables us fully to understand Shylock’s miserly refusal to give or spend and the implications of his simultaneous loss of daughter and hoarded fortune. His confusion of daughter and ducats is foreshadowed when he recounts the story of Jacob and equates the increase of the flock through

the “work of generation” to the increase of money through retentive “use.” To Antonio’s question, “Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?” Shylock responds, “I cannot tell, I make it breed as fast” (*MV* 1.3.95–96).

<sup>12</sup> McCown discusses the use and inversion of epithalamic conventions in Juliet’s address to the night (3.2.1–31). My article “Othello’s Handkerchief” analyzes the handkerchief in terms of Elizabethan wedding customs. For examinations of epithalamic traditions in Renaissance poetry, see also the works by Virginia Tufte and R. V. LeClercq.

<sup>13</sup> The bride was expected to bring with her either property or a substantial cash sum as her “dowry.” In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this money usually went directly to the father of the groom, who often used it as a dowry to marry off one of his own daughters. In return, the groom’s father guaranteed the bride an annuity, called a “jointure,” to provide for her if she survived her husband (see Stone, *Family* 88–89, and Ranald 69). In the closing moments of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare creates an irony of pathos by referring to this custom. Juliet has in truth “survived” her husband by dying after him; the “jointure” that old Capulet here requests from the groom’s family on behalf of his daughter is the dowry that has been crucially missing throughout the play, the cessation of enmity represented in Capulet’s demand for his “brother Montague’s hand.” The terms of the dowry and jointure settlements were fixed before the wedding and were often made public during the ceremony by the priest’s asking the groom, immediately following the ring rite, “What shall the morwyn gift be?” (*Rathen* 2, 36). In the York and Sarum manuals the question was what “dower” the woman should receive from her husband (see Howard 1:306–07). The significance of these negotiations as a precondition of the wedding is evident in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Petruchio delineates Kate’s jointure to her father even before he begins his otherwise unorthodox wooing and where the choice of Bianca’s husband clearly rests entirely on which suitor can ensure the shrewd old Baptista the largest jointure for his daughter.

<sup>14</sup> In his famous *Essai sur le Don* (1923), Marcel Mauss concludes that exchange in primitive societies involves not so much economic transactions as reciprocal gifts. Building on these conclusions, Lévi-Strauss analyzes exogamy and the prohibition of incest as substantially identical rules of kinship that reflect a reciprocal gift system based on the condition of surpassing sumptuousness. He stresses that the idea of a mysterious advantage attached to reciprocal gifts is not confined to primitive society but is inherent in our own notion of the father “giving away” the bride (52–62). The parodic dowries concluding *Romeo and Juliet* reflect the same reciprocity of escalating generosity.

<sup>15</sup> Hooker also makes the point that the sacramentality invoked by ritual is profaned when festival celebration overflows the measure or when the form of ceremony becomes parodic. Hooker asserts that the festivals of the “Israelites and heathens,” though they contained the necessary elements, “failed in the ende

it self, so neither could they discern rightly what forme and measure Religion therein should obserue. . . . they are in every degree noted to haue done amisse, their Hymnes or songs of praise were idolatrie, their bountie excesse, and their rest wantonnesse" (294). On the use of ritual as the human means to recover the sacred dimension of existence, see Eliade:

Driven from religious life in the strict sense, the *celestial sacred* remains active through symbolism. A religious symbol conveys its message even if it is no longer consciously understood in every part. For a symbol speaks to the whole human being and not only to the intelligence. . . . Hence the supreme function of the myth is to "fix" the paradigmatic models for all rites and all significant human activities. . . . By the continuous reactualization of paradigmatic divine gestures, the world is sanctified. (129, 98–99)

Unquestionably, the late C. L. Barber's study is the best book to date on the relation of Shakespeare's plays to underlying patterns of ritual.

<sup>16</sup> Hooker also stresses the necessary separation of festival and fast, celebration and mourning, for "as oft as ioy is the cause of the one and grief the welspring of the other, they are incompatible" (212); "Seeing therefore all things are done in time, and many offices are not possible at one and the same time to be discharged, duties of all sortes must haue necessarily their seuerall successions and seasons . . ." (197). When Theseus bids Philostrate call forth the nuptial revels, he directs that mourning be banished—"Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth; / Turn melancholy forth to funerals" (*MND* 1.1.13–14). Likewise Spenser, acting as his own poetic master of revels in *Epithalamion*, ritually banishes all evil spirits, sounds of mourning, or other activities that would counter the mood of marriage celebration. This felt imperative governing the segregation of ritual activities underlies Shakespeare's strategic use of colliding ritual structures.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Herrick, who gave us detailed pictures of May Day customs that did not survive in later generations ("Corinna's Going A-Maying"), also recorded a number of now forgotten Elizabethan wedding customs, including that of shrouding the bride in her wedding sheets:

But since it must be done, despatch, and sew  
Up in a sheet your bride; and what if so  
It be with rock, or walls of brass  
Ye tower her up, as Danae was,  
Think you that this  
Or hell itself a powerful bulwark is?  
I tell ye no; but like a  
Bold bolt of thunder he will make his way,  
And rend the cloud, and throw  
The sheet about like flakes of snow. (141–50)

<sup>18</sup> The divorce trials of Henry VIII provide a wealth of information on the conditions recognized as impedi-

ments to marriage, since of course Henry at one time or another tried nearly every legally acceptable means to extricate himself from his numerous marriages. The accusation that he had been "seduced and constrained by witchcraft" was one he considered leveling at the hapless Anne Boleyn. After all—Richard III had succeeded in nullifying (at least temporarily) his brother Edward IV's marriage to Henry's grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville, and the marriage between Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and Eleanor Cobham had been annulled on the same grounds. These details are included in Henry Ansgar Kelly's highly informative study (241–42). See also *Church and the Law of Nullity*, which notes that the impediment of *vis et metus* remained unchanged by the Reformation (58).

<sup>19</sup> C. L. Barber also notes the ritual connection: "*Lear* begins with a failure of the passage that might be handled by the marriage service, as it is structured to persuade the father to give up his daughter. Regan and Goneril, though married, pretend to meet Lear's demand on them in all-but-incestuous terms. Cordelia defends herself by reference to the service" (in Schwartz and Kahn 197).

<sup>20</sup> *Measure for Measure* provides the most dramatic testimony to the importance of fixing the dowry provisions before the wedding. Although Juliet is nearly nine months pregnant and although she and Claudio believe themselves spiritually married, they have not legalized the wedding in church because of still unresolved dowry provisions.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Dundes points out the psychological dimensions of various folktale types underlying a number of Shakespeare's plays; significantly, the central figure in the folktale is usually the daughter-heroine. The theme of incest, which Freud himself recognized as a powerful undercurrent in *King Lear*, is manifest in the folktale father who demands that his daughter marry him; Shakespeare transforms the overt demand into a love test requiring that she love her father all (358). In Dundes' interpretation, the more obvious father-daughter incest wish is actually an Electral daughter-father desire that has been transformed through projection. Dundes also lists other discussions of the father-daughter incest theme in *King Lear* (359).

<sup>22</sup> Hymen's verses emphasize the religious sense of the marriage ritual. In this context the genetic father is only a surrogate parent, appointed by the heavenly parent to act out the specific role of bequeathing the daughter to a new union; Hymen himself functioning as the mythic priest, the agent authorized by heaven to oversee the transfer. Wheatly's notes reflect this same sense of the religious meaning of the roles played by father and priest: ". . . the woman is to be given not to the man, but to the Minister; for the rubric orders, that the minister shall receive her *at her father's or friend's hands*; which signifies, to be sure, that the father resigns her up to God, and that it is God, who, by His Priest, now gives her in marriage . . ." (497).

<sup>23</sup> See Barber's essay in Schwartz and Kahn, esp. pp. 198–221. Barber additionally provides a striking iconographic association, noting the image of Lear with Cordelia in his arms as being effectively "a *pietà* with

the roles reversed, not Holy Mother with her Dead Son, but father with his dead daughter" (200).

<sup>24</sup> *Geneva*. Deuteronomy 23.1 contains a similar text that the 1611 King James Bible translates as "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his priuie member cut off, shall not enter the Congregation of the Lord." "Stones" is not only an Old Testament term but Elizabethan cant for testicles (Partridge).

<sup>25</sup> When Iago shouts to Brabantio, "Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags! Thieves, thieves!" (*Oth*. 1.1.80–81), his innuendo is the same as Solanio's.

<sup>26</sup> A similar incident took place in connection with Shakespeare's own marriage when Anne Hathaway's father appointed two friends to guarantee the wedding (Schoenbaum 78–79). The bond for Shakespeare's

marriage, dated 28 Nov. 1582, is an extant record. The sureties who purchased it were named later as "trusty" friends in the will of Richard Hathaway, Anne's father. That the bond mentions no spokesmen for Shakespeare's family has generated a number of suspicions, including Sir Sidney Lee's feeling that it was taken out to prevent a reluctant bridegroom from evading his obligation to marry the pregnant bride. Schoenbaum, however, thinks that it was customary for the bondsmen to be friends of the bride's family, to ensure an unmarried heiress protection from fortune-hunting suitors. If so, then Shakespeare would seem to be flouting tradition in his conclusion to *The Merchant of Venice*, for the bondsman here is clearly a friend of the groom's.

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