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Pugh, Elaine Upton

"THE ART ITSELF IS NATURE": THE FASHIONING OF SHAKESPEARE'S HEROINES

The Ohio State University

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"THE ART ITSELF IS NATURE": THE FASHIONING OF
SHAKESPEARE'S HEROINES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Elaine Upton Pugh, B.A., M.A.

* * * *
The Ohio State University
1983

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE ON THE TEXT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART ONE: MALES FASHIONING FEMALES

I. Peerless Miranda and the Insubstantial Pageant: 
   Prospero's Art of De-Naturalization in 
   The Tempest                                                                  | 20   |

II. "Desdemona Dead": Nature into Art in Othello.                             | 48   |

## PART TWO: FEMALE SELF-FASHIONING

III. "Thy Mother Plays": Kinetic and Static Art in 
     The Winter's Tale                                                          | 85   |

IV. "A Pageant Truly Play'd": The Natural Art of 
    Rosalind and Cleopatra                                                     | 114  |

BIBLIOGRAPHY                                                               | 151  |
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I would also like to thank my parents, Louise and Alvin Upton, my first educators.
DEDICATION

To

Barbara F. Benz
Quotations from Shakespeare, except where otherwise noted, are from the New Arden Editions, general editors Harold F. Brooks and Harold Jenkins.
INTRODUCTION

This is a study of women as art creations and artists in the plays of Shakespeare. Often a male character in a play—a husband, lover, or father—attempts to "fashion" (a sixteenth century term for shaping a self or creating an art object)¹ a wife, lover, or daughter into a literal or metaphorical statue or painting, that is, into a relatively static art object. Sometimes a lively, versatile female character appropriates the male activity of fashioning a woman; the female then becomes an artist shaping herself in the kinetic art of the theater. I shall explore differences between males' fashioning of females and females' fashioning of themselves, and explore how female self-fashioning produces a unity of art and nature.

I do not focus on Shakespeare's development in regard to theories of art and nature in his canon. Thus, I am not especially concerned with the chronology of the plays. Neither do I seek to arrive at Shakespeare's views of women, although I am influenced by recent writers such as the contributors to The Woman's Part, Marilyn French, and Linda Bamber, who have explored Shakespeare's views of women. Rather, my interest is in how the plays studied provide alternate views of the relationship of art and nature and in how this relationship is relevant to selected Shakespearean heroines.

A persistent concern of English Renaissance thinkers was the relationship of art and nature, or, in present-day terms, culture and nature. Several scholarly works have been devoted to this topic,² and
I need here only to review some major features of the art-nature discussion in order to explore its relevance to views of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and to the way these views inform Shakespeare's plays.

As Edward Tayler points out, the pairing of nature and art is more than a mere commonplace or topos in the Renaissance. The terms art and nature had a variety of significations [which] received ultimate meaning and precision in relation to the Elizabethan idea of an ordered universe: Nature and Art pointed to what appeared to be a 'real' division in man's experience of himself and the cosmos.³

The Elizabethan idea of an ordered universe, the sense of microcosmic-macrocosmic continuity, of ruler-subject hierarchy, male-female hierarchy, and so on, indeed led to a "variety of significations" of art and nature. The views held by thinkers from Plato to Petrarch to Sir Philip Sidney to George Puttenham suggest the varied and sometimes contradictory meanings assigned to the terms art and nature.⁴ Nevertheless, it is possible to identify basic Renaissance conceptions of what each term signified and of the relationship of the worlds of art and nature as this relationship is relevant to women.

Perhaps one of the more lucid explanations of what each term generally meant and of the significance of these terms for women is given by Carolyn Merchant in The Death of Nature, a historical study of the effect of the scientific revolution on "female" nature. Merchant explains,
Nature in ancient and early modern times had a number of interrelated meanings. It referred to the properties, inherent characters, and vital powers of persons, animals, or things, or more generally to human nature. It also meant an inherent impulse to act and to sustain action; conversely, 'to go against nature' was to disregard this innate impulse. With respect to the material world, it referred to a dynamic creative and regulatory principle that caused phenomena and their change and development.

Merchant goes on to say that there was a common distinction between "natura naturans, or nature creating, and natura naturata, the natural creation." The former is a higher principle of nature, a rational, orderly, god-like "regulatory principle," the "great creating Nature" of The Winter's Tale, whereas the latter, natura naturata, is the manifestation of that higher principle, the "phenomena and their change and development," the physical universe, the elements, cyclical or seasonal changes, the human body, mountains, rivers, floods, drought, and so on. This lower nature, however, was not always a clear manifestation of the higher principle, because nature was fallen from grace.

What was the place of women in this construct? As Merchant points out, physical nature, natura naturata, was usually personified as female. This female nature was alternately benevolent—as in Mother Nature—and associated with bliss, fruitfulness and bounty, or it was fallen, irrational, destructive, associated with witchcraft, pestilence, drought, unpredictability. These latter irrational and unpredictable processes were associated with the female body and lust which were opposed to the rational male mind. Males were capable of irrationality, but the female, more than the male, was infected by Eve's sin. Witches, like Eve, were
women in collusion with the devil and responsible for the unleashing of destructive forces in the world.⁶

Art, in contrast to nature, not only referred to aesthetic objects and aesthetic activity, but also as in Puttenham's sense, referred to the act of imitating, controlling, or improving lower nature.⁷ Art was techne, craft, skill, science, human activity directed toward nature.⁸ It was that which constituted culture and civilization, and as such, was primarily a male activity. Thus, as regards the order of things, the rational male was seen as superior and therefore responsible for controlling lower nature, especially as manifested in women. As I shall show, Prospero in The Tempest is the consummate male artist insofar as he both controls lower nature through his magic or skill, and creates what amounts to a female aesthetic object.

The view of women as more closely linked to nature has been examined by the anthropologist Sherry Ortner in her essay, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" Ortner's evaluation of cultures leads her to a view of the universality of female subordination to males, and while recent anthropologists have amended this view, Ortner's picture is still generally relevant to western civilization and to the historical identification of women with nature. Nature, in Ortner's words, is the thing "that culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself".⁹ She goes on to say that cultures are
engaged in the process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artifacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the givens of natural existence, bends them to its purposes, controls them in its interest. We may thus broadly equate culture with the notion of human consciousness (i.e., systems of thought, technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature.10

Women also can become agents of culture, but traditionally males have been the dominant figures in shaping culture and civilization, in forming history. Ortner follows Simone de Beauvoir's classic view that because of biological functions such as menstruation, reproduction, child rearing, and domestic duties closely associated with biological needs, women, more than men, have been the "prey of the species" or, enslaved by biology. Ortner goes on to say

In other words, woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, 'artificially,' through the medium of technology (symbols). In so doing, he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables—human beings.11

Ortner's study, along with de Beauvoir's ideological writings, continues to be relevant to the literary imagination of our own period and of the Renaissance. Her views support Merchant's explanations of the inferiority of female "nature." As Merchant's study shows, the Copernican revolution was characterized by distrust of the ancient view of the earth as nurturing mother. While the nostalgic view of benevolent pastoral nature as manifestation of a higher nature continued to exist in the Renaissance, the pejorative view of nature was increasingly prominent, and both the view of benevolence and of destructiveness of nature rendered women inferior.12 The benevolent view
renders women passive in terms of historical and cultural development.

Ortner's and Merchant's views are relevant to the literary imagination of the Renaissance. Merchant cites numerous literary works of the period that show the mistrust of and need to control female nature. For example, she cites Thomas Elyot's Boke Named the Governour (1531) and Richard Hooker's Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (1594), works that express a fear that higher order would break down and chaos would ensue if men did not control nature. Sir Francis Bacon's New Atlantis (1627) uses metaphors of female nature and discusses the need for its control by art. Katherine M. Rogers has written about the prevalence of a misogynistic tradition of bellettrist literature of the period, especially in the drama of writers such as Greene, Beaumont and Fletcher, Jonson, Chapman, and Webster. She notes that denunciation of the female sex for its irrationality and its actual or often alleged unchastity was a popular device in the drama.

Rosemary Radford Ruether locates the distrust of female nature more specifically in the early church and especially in the writings of St. Augustine. Ruether observes that a "dualistic psychology was the basis of a patristic doctrine of man." She notes an ambivalence between "misogyny and the praise of the virginal woman." Women are either idealized, the Virgin Mary being the archetype, or they are regarded as daughters of Eve. But again, the passive virgin, like benevolent pastoral nature, is inferior. She is idealized, but nevertheless, subtly placed outside the mainstream of cultural and historical events. Either as virgin or chaste married woman, or as Eve's daughter, the woman's role is subordinate and women are plagued by the dualistic psychology that separates virgin and whore, body and soul,
or mind. In this dualistic conception, Ruether finds Augustine naming and emphasizing "male spirituality" and "female corporeality." Ruether explains,

The assimilation of male-female dualism into soul-body dualism in patristic theology conditions basically the definition of woman, both in terms of her subordination to the male in the order of nature and her 'carnality' in the disorder of sin... [There is the] definition of femaleness as a body... and flesh must be subject to the spirit in the right ordering of nature.16

Thus, the alternatives for women are to be equated with the fallen body of lower nature or to be deified and rendered relatively passive in virginity or chastity.

In Chaste, Silent, and Obedient Suzanne W. Hull examines Renaissance prose writings about women. She notes that the so-called querelles des femmes reached a peak in France in 1400 with Christine de Pisan du Castel's defense of women.17 Christine de Pisan's work, Le Livre de la Cete des Dames, translated into English in 1521, presented models of women of virtue and argued for increased education of women. Renaissance humanists such as Vives, Erasmus, and Thomas More also spoke out in defense of women and argued for women's education, but according to the historian Lawrence Stone, this period of interest in women's progress in England lasted for only about forty years from 1520-1560.18

The tradition of satire against women, on the other hand, as Frances Lee Utley tells us in The Crooked Rib, has a long tradition. Misogynistic and satirical writings seem inherently more interesting than words of defense or praise. An age dominated by a woman, Queen Elizabeth, was nevertheless rife with conditions which, in Utley's words, "sharpen the perennial taste for satire," conditions such as "the long succession of
Henry's queens, the dissolution of monastic life, the quarrels over the legitimacy of Mary and Elizabeth, and the Statute of Six Articles (1539), which hampered the reforming tendency by reaffirming the celibacy of the priesthood.\textsuperscript{19} The assumption here is that celibate priests did not pay sufficient attention to the values of marriage and the roles of women in marriage. Yet, apparently Catholic and Protestant engaged in satire against women. John Knox's \textit{First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women} (1558, the year of Elizabeth's accession) is, in part at least, an indication of Protestant feeling. Elizabeth seems to have been one of the few women who held significant power in spite of the views against women.

When women were praised, as Hull, and also Ruth Kelso in her \textit{Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance}, tell us, it was for their chastity above all, and then for other virtues, most often silence and obedience.\textsuperscript{20} Hull's and Kelso's studies are consistent with Stone's findings. Stone informs us that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant reform brought an increased emphasis on marriage in the upper classes, but contrary to Juliet Dusinberre's view in \textit{Shakespeare and the Nature of Women},\textsuperscript{21} Stone finds that this reform did not lead to an increase in women's autonomy. Rather, he finds that women had to be obedient to fathers and husbands and that patriarchy was reinforced as the centuries passed. Although women gained a few legal rights in the period, the husband "acquired absolute control of his wife's personal property, which he could sell at will." Stone also notes that in spite of some praise of women, the emphasis was placed on women as fallen creatures. The language describing women's flaws is much more energetic than that praising them.\textsuperscript{22}
Jean Kelly-Gadol's classic essay, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" gives eloquent testimony to the subordination of women in the Italian Renaissance, but her work is significant not only because it goes against Jacob Burckhardt's widely accepted view that women achieved equality in Renaissance Italy, but also because it clearly suggests a continuity between the position of women in the Italian Renaissance and in the English Renaissance. Italian writings influenced English thinking. The double standard of sexual morality that idealized chaste women can be seen in influential continental writings. From Dante's view of the chaste, remote Beatrice to Petrarch's Laura to Castiglione's assignation of decorative roles to women in The Book of the Courtier we can see the subordination of women masked as idealization that in turn influenced English sonneteers such as Sidney, Drayton, and Daniel.

In The Book of the Courtier, Castiglione does not overtly espouse misogynistic views of women, but his emphasis is placed on their charm, social graces, chastity, obedience to males, and relative silence rather than on broad education, physical activity as in strenuous sports, political and cultural power, and autonomy. Significantly, in his discussion of the Renaissance lady, Castiglione evokes the myth of Pygmalion, who created his bride from a statue. Castiglione says that he wishes, like Pygmalion, to fashion the ideal lady.

In the Pygmalion myth, the argument for controlling women through male art is crystallized. Not only Castiglione, but numerous English Renaissance writers were deeply interested in the Pygmalion story, among them George Sandys, John Marston, and of course Shakespeare, who used it as a source for the statue scene in The Winter's Tale. Part I of my study is
concerned with the manifestation of, on the one hand, the inferiority of female nature in Shakespeare's plays as well as with what was, on the other hand, a confining idealization of women. I examine the perceived need to control women in a static statuesque Pygmalion-like art.

The concept of fashioning the ideal lady is derived from the Renaissance male desire, like Pygmalion's, for a creature who is free of nature's vagaries. Stephen Greenblatt's study, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, discusses the concept of self-fashioning in males, and because it is a Renaissance male concept, the view of fashioning explained by Greenblatt is relevant to men's fashioning of women. Greenblatt explains that for the Renaissance male the term to fashion meant to make or shape a self, to control identity. In The Faerie Queen, Spenser speaks of fashioning a gentleman. If men were in need of fashioning, then it follows that because of women's inferior nature, because of their flaws that discouraged Pygmalion from taking a living woman, women were in even greater need of being fashioned.

Part I of my study begins with The Tempest and with Prospero's fashioning of Miranda as the ideal chaste, obedient Renaissance lady, a creature in whom male art replaces nature. I begin with Shakespeare's last complete play because it shows the consummate male artist and shaper of civilization. Issues of nature and art which concerned Shakespeare in the sonnets and throughout the canon come together and form a central motif in The Tempest, and perhaps the editors of the First Folio had this in mind when they placed the play first. Prospero practices a Pygmalion-like art in his creation of Miranda. Pygmalion seems to create life through art, but in essence, he controls life, displaces women's earthly nature, or kills
nature into art because his ideal bride presumably will remain his creation, a creature apart from the uncertainties of nature.

As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest, that women have been "killed into art" is nearly a given in the literature of patriarchal western civilization. Perhaps that is why the Pygmalion myth has been so popular, in the Renaissance especially, but also in the modern period, as evidenced by Shaw's Pygmalion and its musical version, My Fair Lady, and recently in William Styron's Sophie's Choice, where, in the mode of Edgar Allan Poe, a beautiful dead woman is more desirable than a natural living woman. Gilbert and Gubar find the motif of killing women into art prominent in nineteenth century fiction and their work points to a universal problem in the literature of patriarchy, where females are subordinate to males and are marginal parts of culture. As Virginia Woolf says, women have been absent from history and present in art. Not only do women have marginal roles in the making of history and culture, generally speaking, but as Merchant explains, it is the mistrust of female nature that leads to the male attempt to subdue them in art.

Numerous plays in Shakespeare's canon show an intense concern with the inferiority of female nature, and many male characters either seek chastity and obedience in women or are frustrated by the failure of reason, chastity, and obedience to other patriarchal values. Joan La Pucelle (Joan of Arc) of the Henry VI plays is seen as a witch and is an object of male scorn. The Taming of the Shrew has become the subject of considerable controversy in its presentation of the subjugation of Kate, a woman of unruly nature. Imogen's and Marina's chastity are subjects of concern in Cymbeline and in Pericles, respectively. Hamlet is apparently obsessed with his mother's adultery and with Ophelia's potential for infidelity and with the
general problem of woman's "frailty." Women's association with inferior nature, witchcraft, or their alleged and actual unchastity motivates much of the plot of such plays as Macbeth, Troilus and Cressida, and King Lear. Although Cordelia represents, in John Danby's words, "utopian nature" (she is the ideal chaste lady) and although male incontinence is a subject in Measure for Measure, Shakespeare's plays nevertheless derive much of their energy from individual characters' misogynistic views of women. I have chosen to focus on Othello, not only because it is one of the most sustained treatments of a male's distrust of female chastity and reliability, but also because it manifests the Judeo-Christian and patriarchal dualities that render women inferior to men and nature (natura naturata) inferior to art. Othello moves from idealization to mistrust of Desdemona, and he exhibits an interesting variation of the Pygmalion-like impulse to create a static female in art. In both Othello and The Tempest female characters are eventually subdued in male art.

In Part II, I begin with a study of The Winter's Tale and am concerned with how females take over the process of fashioning themselves and, to some extent, their male partners. Again, several plays recommend themselves to such concern. As Irene Dash has shown, the women of Love's Labours Lost exhibit a considerable autonomy and subvert patriarchal views of marriage. Spirited heroines like Beatrice of Much Ado About Nothing or disguised heroines like Viola of Twelfth Night, and even more, Portia of The Merchant of Venice also show some autonomy and the potential to shape themselves and their lives. Yet, I will focus on Rosalind of As You Like It and Cleopatra of Antony and Cleopatra because they seem to me to go furthest in fashioning themselves. These heroines enlarge the process of self-fashioning which is partly achieved by the women of The Winter's Tale.
Rosalind is a heroine in a comedy, but Cleopatra, too, is sometimes seen as a comic figure, albeit within a tragedy. Yet, in spite of tragedy Cleopatra, like Rosalind, is successful in transcending much of the traditional opposition between art and nature. Both characters are artists who essentially redefine fashioning by producing a unity of art and nature and by creating an unbounded "self." Art for these women is theater, acting, but their acting is also part of nature. In Merchant's words, part of the definition of nature is the "properties, inherent characters, and vital powers of persons . . . an inherent impulse to act and to sustain action."

To act, then, is natural; theatrical action is both contrived and inherent. As Paula S. Berggren suggests in her essay on female disguise, acting is inherent to males as well as females. Hamlet, for example, seems to continually disguise himself, but Hamlet longs for an ordered patriarchal world and for self-definition, "to be," and when unable to find this he seeks closure in death, "not to be," out of nature. This desire for closure results from a frustration with the vagaries of nature as they interrupt civilization, the ordered life of Denmark where the father is ruler and mother and son have their rightful place. But Rosalind and Cleopatra enact and find delight in the vagaries of nature, and Cleopatra's death is not portrayed as closure, but as a natural transformation.

Between my study of males fashioning females and the self fashioning of Rosalind and Cleopatra, I examine The Winter's Tale. The women of The Winter's Tale, Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita, present a peculiar problem insofar as they make large strides in overcoming the male arts that subdue them, and yet submit to the patriarchal values of chastity and obedience and to Leontes' powerful artistic mode. Critics have tended to view this play as a tragicomic romance in which Leontes is reformed and society is
renewed. Indeed, Leontes changes to some extent, and an apparent renewal is achieved, but it is achieved partly through the women's submission to the oppressive male mode in the play. The process of self-definition and self-fashioning achieved by Rosalind and Cleopatra is only partly achieved by the women of *The Winter's Tale*.

As Gilbert and Gubar point out, "for the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself." One way to attempt to cope with this lack of self is to play roles, to act, to assume disguise. Even though males can take on disguise, their disguise and role-playing, like male self-fashioning in Greenblatt's study, is undertaken most often to achieve public and political validity and power. Marianne Novy looks at women as actresses in Shakespeare's plays and she observes that whatever Cleopatra is doing she "is likely to be role-playing." The same can be said of Rosalind. In discussing the woman as stranger or alien, a concept somewhat like Simone de Beauvoir's view of the woman as Other, Leslie Fiedler points to the tendency of Rosalind to overcome alienation through play, but Fiedler does not develop this notion in a discussion of Rosalind. Rosalind and Cleopatra have more freedom to play, to disguise and re-disguise themselves, than do the women of *The Winter's Tale*. Rosalind's and Cleopatra's self-fashioning is an extended and varied role-playing.

As I shall show, female self-fashioning or role-playing creates a kinetic art, not the static Pygmalion-like art of males fashioning females. Female theater in *As You Like It* and in *Antony and Cleopatra* follows the commedia dell'arte mode of uniting the artificial and the natural and thereby displacing many of the categorical conceptions of ordinary reality in patriarchal society. Because nature is mutable, female acting in these
plays does not create the bounded self that Greenblatt sees as the goal of male self-fashioning. Femal' self-fashioning does not result in the control of identity. Rather, it results, at most, in only temporary control of elusive and dynamic beings in a changing universe.
NOTES


3. Tayler, p. 3.


6. Ibid., p. 171.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., pp. 60, 75.

12. See Merchant's discussion, pp. 7-9.

13. Ibid., pp. 170-176.


16. Ibid., p. 156.


19. Frances Lee Utley, The Crooked Rib: An Analytical Index to the Argument about Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568 (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. 1944), pp. 5, 8, 73.


PART ONE - MALES FASHIONING FEMALES

Pygmalion seeing these to spend their times
So beast-like, frightened with many crimes
That rule in women, chose a single life,
And long forebore the pleasures of a wife.
Meanwhile, in ivory with happy art
A statue carves, so graceful in each part
As women never equalled it . . .
It seemed a virgin, full of living flame,
That would have moved if not withheld by shame.

—from George Sandys’s *Ovid’s Metamorphosis*, 1626

Twixt nature and Pygmalion there might appear great strife,
So seemly was this image wrought, it lacked nothing but life.

—from Tottel’s Miscellany, 1557

Once there was an old man whose name was Nahokoboni. He was troubled in his mind because he had no daughter, and who could look after him if he had no son-in-law? Being a witch doctor, he therefore carved himself a daughter out of a plum tree . . .

—from a fairy tale of the Guiana Indians, quoted in *Art and Illusion*, E. H. Gombrich

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster child of silence and slow time

—from "Ode on a Grecian Urn," John Keats
I. Peerless Miranda and the 'Insubstantial Pageant':

Prospero's Art of De-Naturalization

in The Tempest

The Tempest might be subtitled "The Unfolding of An Illusion." Its storms and spectacles are exposed as the airy nothing of an insubstantial pageant. The action moves from the trappings and noise of a fictive storm in Act I to the epilogue where Prospero stands solus on a bare stage seeming to unveil himself before the audience. The play exposes the fragility of the dream of civilization and discloses the dubiousness of art. At the center of this art that exposes art is Miranda, perceived as a wonder or miracle, as the artist's, Prospero's, ideal creation who will fulfill male hopes for posterity and prosperity. Yet, Miranda, a creature of art divorced from earthly nature, is as much a mirage as miracle. She is the focus of Prospero's dream of a harmonious civilization; yet, she has been fashioned as one in whom the mutability, irregularities, and uncertainties of earthly nature (natura naturata) are virtually absent. Like Pygmalion, Prospero would create a perfect wife, in this case a daughter who becomes a wife and in turn, serves a son-in-law. But unlike Pygmalion, Prospero cannot abide the goddess Venus, and he hesitates to let Miranda feel the full breath of life. As a manifestation of Prospero's denial of earthly nature, Miranda's static portrait reveals problems of art, mortality, regeneration, and immortality, the problems with which Shakespeare was deeply concerned in the sonnets.

This study of The Tempest seeks to show Prospero's distrust of nature.
particularly nature as associated with women, his doubt about his identity in the context of nature, and his attempt to create a secure world of art, chiefly through fashioning Miranda as the ideal Renaissance lady who is outside history, the passing of time, and natural mutability. But art divorced from nature has questionable value, and in an attempt to maintain his power as artist and to secure his identity as a powerful and civilized man, Prospero must paradoxically expose his art and at the same time manipulate the audience, even as he controls Miranda and others in the play.

Several critics, notably Frank Kermode, have discussed the opposition of art and nature in *The Tempest*. Kermode states that the "main opposition is between the worlds of Prospero's Art and Caliban's Nature." But it seems more precise to say that Prospero would go beyond opposition to eliminating nature, or replacing it, so that art alone exists. Colorful though he is, Caliban is easily subdued, if not reformed. He is a clown-slave who is never a real threat to Prospero's control of Miranda and of his world. His potential for raping Miranda is turned into a laughing matter in his mindless quip that he would people the island with Calibans. Although Prospero distrusts nature, Caliban is hardly the origin of that distrust.

**Art and Nature**

Prospero's first concern is with shaping Miranda for his own political needs, and this concern involves, not so much nurturing her apparently noble nature as freezing her in art. Nowhere on Prospero's stage, not even in Caliban, does nature exist in the raw. Every scene, every gesture, every spectacle, every noise is within the realm of Prospero's art. Prospero is
the consummate Renaissance artist. He is a creator of fine art--theatrical display, pageantry, music, and he is a mage and scientist who seems to command the elements and manipulate the physical creation of human nature. In fashioning Miranda, he is a mage controlling female nature and an artist like Pygmalion who fashions a beautiful and ideal creature. Thus art in The Tempest is not only that which opposes but also attempts to displace nature.

The very word "nature" in The Tempest unleashes vast semantic uncertainties. As Kermode points out, there are numerous uses of the word in the play. However, most of the uncertainty surrounds the concept of natura naturata, the irrational elements in female nature and in the physical creation. It is this nature that Prospero needs to control and eliminate, if possible. The Tempest, then, is not as Northrop Frye would have it, one of the four comic romances that present "a vision of reconciliation of man with nature." Physical nature is repeatedly subdued and women are virtually absent.

Through Prospero's distrust of the natural world, the scene of The Tempest, to a significant degree, turns away from art opposing, or even imitating, nature and the play becomes art about art, metadrama, or a play about play-making, stage entertainment that reveals its own devices of narration, plot, timing, acting, and spectacle. Barbara Mowat's enlightening study, The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances, shows how what she calls 'presentational' devices, obtrusive reminders of the artificiality of play, are prominent in The Tempest. These devices take on as much as, if not more, importance than the 'representational' devices of traditional drama in which art imitates nature or refers to a world outside itself. Prospero's
art does not tend toward imitating nature, nor toward contesting with it. Rather, Prospero seeks a world of art that exposes its art and therefore generates itself as art.

E. H. Gombrich discusses this sense of art in relation to the Pygmalion myth. Pygmalion did not attempt to imitate nature because nature in women was often thought to be destructive or undesirable. Pygmalion created a statue from ivory, and "life" was generated from the statue, from art, not from nature. As Gombrich explains, the story of Pygmalion is the most famous of many myths that "crystallize belief in the power of art to create rather than to portray."  

Nature—human nature, physical and biological processes, passion—is irrational and contrary to civilization and reason. Prospero, then, must eradicate nature and create an artificial world. There is no "real" or natural storm, but only the appearance of a storm, Prospero's contrivance that leads to other of his contrivances. The island seems to be a world of nature, a pastoral scene, but there are no shepherds peacefully attending their flock, and the various creatures and insects of the island are products of Prospero's structured world. The island's other inhabitants, Caliban and Ariel, are fantastic creations, and finally everything fades like the spirits in the masque and there is only the "bare island," as I shall discuss, the bare stage of the epilogue. Art produces art; the stage is exposed as stage.

Female Nature and the Mothers

Prospero's distrust of nature and his attempt to replace it with art can be seen at several moments in the play, but nature is especially suspect in its association with the female, sexuality, and biological reproduction.
As Linda Bamber observes, "The feminine is not a source of gifts in The Tempest but a challenge to self-possession and restraint. So the sexuality of the play is strained. There is, in any event, very little sexuality in The Tempest; and when the issue does come up, it is mostly a matter of prohibition." And Prospero's suspicions of female sexuality are linked with his uncertainties about his identity as a man, as a ruler of state and perhaps even as a father. David Sundelson points out that Prospero reveals some uncertainty about whether he is Miranda's natural father. In response to Miranda's question, "Sir, are you not my father?" Prospero replies,

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father
Was Duke of Milan ... (I.ii.56-58).

It may seem that these lines are merely an instance of Prospero's torturously indirect style. However, the style itself suggests a man who is removed from spontaneous, 'natural,' feeling, and as Sundelson tells us, "the shift from first to third person and the disjunctive syntax separate Prospero from both daughter and dukedom." Whatever one makes of these lines, the question of paternity is linked to Prospero's wife's sexual behavior. The question is transferred from the father to the mother's virtue or her potential incontinence, and although Prospero attests to his dead wife's virtue, he reveals, however slightly, doubt about the consistency of women's chastity. Thus, even if dimly so far in Act I, the spectre of the irrational, unknowable, unpredictable stranger, the Other, the female, hangs over the play. The common
patriarchal emphasis on lineage, the father's concern with the legitimacy of his children is at least briefly suggested in The Tempest, although this is a larger issue in The Winter's Tale. Looking into "the dark backward and abysm of time," Prospero is uncertain of his relation to female nature and thus uncertain of himself, not only as Duke but perhaps also as natural father of Miranda.

Prospero's sense of his own political, if not biological frailty is linked, as Sundelson explains, in the metaphor Prospero uses to describe his brother Antonio's usurping of his Dukedom. To Miranda Prospero says that Antonio was "The ivy which hid my princely trunk/And sucked my verdure out on't" (I.ii.86-87). The image is one of Prospero's political and physical vitality being sapped.

And again through Antonio, evil nature is linked to motherhood, to female nature. In comparing her father and his brother Antonio, Miranda declares, "Good wombs have borne bad sons" (I.ii.120). Here she follows Prospero's precedent in relating the question of virtue to females, and although in this statement, as in Prospero's earlier statement about his wife, the mother's virtue is apparently vindicated, it is nevertheless interesting, that following her father, Miranda has learned to connect evil and good natures with motherhood and the womb. However good the womb may be, the possibility of its generating evil remains and threatens civilized order.

The linkage of motherhood and dubious nature is made not only through Miranda's mother and grandmother, but more blatantly through Caliban's deceased mother, Sycorax. Although Prospero claims responsibility for Caliban when he says, "This thing of darkness, I acknowledge mine"
the most direct responsibility for Caliban's unregenerate nature is placed on to the mother. Prospero is an Adam once removed from responsibility for evil nature in comparison to an Eve, Sycorax, the mother who is directly responsible for evil in the world. Prospero gives Sycorax many of the features of the archetypal devouring mother, seductive woman, and witch. Sycorax took Ariel's freedom by confining him in a 'cloven pine' for twelve years. Speaking of Caliban, Prospero tells Antonio and Sebastian,

... This mis-shapen knave,
His mother was a witch; and one so strong
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs
(V.i.267-270).

Sycorax was destructive and practiced a black magic in contrast to what has been perceived as Prospero's benevolent white magic. As Kermode points out, her resemblance to Circe of the Greek myth suggests that she is a seductive figure who works on the senses and reduces men to beasts. Her offspring, Caliban, is "not honour'd with a human shape" (I.i.282-283). Further, as Kermode notes, Medea is another possible source for Sycorax. Medea is both devouring mother and sorcerer. Sycorax's responsibility for Caliban's evil is pronounced in his first lines of the play:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
... Drop on you both! a south-wet blow on ye
And blister you all o'er! (I.i.323-326).
And he continues his identification with the evil in his mother as he claims "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother ... All the charms/Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you" (I.ii.333-342).

Of course, no such charms will light on Prospero and Ariel because Caliban's nature is not real. His island is, in fact, Prospero's stage. Nevertheless, when Prospero conceives of nature and when Caliban attempts to evoke it, nature is then the nature of female evil or otherness.

The Chaste Daughter: Nature Displaced by Art

It is interesting to note that in The Tempest, as in King Lear, As You Like It, Cymbeline, and several other plays, mothers for daughters are conspicuously absent. In some plays this shortage may be explained as due to a dearth of boy actors to play the parts of women, but this seems hardly an adequate explanation for the absence of women, particularly mothers, in The Tempest. Mothers and attendant women are referred to but are not part of the dramatis personae of the play. Miranda is the only female, and she like other Shakespearean daughters, may, as Cyrus Hoy, Charles Frey, and Lynda Boose believe, be part of a pattern of deliverance and redemption in the romances, but as The Winter's Tale shows, the presence of a daughter as a source of renewal does not necessitate the absence of mothers and other females. The absence of women in The Tempest suggests perhaps Shakespeare's as well as Prospero's suspicions and desire to eliminate potentially irrational and uncontrollable female nature. Young daughters are generally thought to be more malleable than adult women, more amenable to the father's fashioning. With only Miranda, a daughter, to shape, the control of female nature, the attempt to freeze it in art, can be more complete.
As Carolyn Merchant explains, "That nature's order might break down was a persistent concern of Renaissance Elizabethan writers" such as Thomas Elyot and Richard Hooker, who thought that chaos would reign if nature were not controlled. Further, Merchant informs us that the Copernican Revolution and the "new science" displaced female earth as the center of the universe and the male sun became the center.\textsuperscript{15} Gary Schmidgall traces the association of King James I and Prospero and shows how they both are Apollonian or sun figures.\textsuperscript{16} They represent the "new science" through the male gift of divine reason and its forging of clarity and order. In \textit{The Tempest}, the female mother earth is displaced by male reason, by Prospero's science which is art. Only an innocent daughter can potentially serve the needs of his art and his plan for civilization.

Because Miranda is the only female in the play, it can truly be said that she is "peerless" (III.i.47). She is not a woman among women. Miranda has no existence in history, in time, except that which Prospero gives her in his narrative. She is the audience for his narrative construction of his own history and the object of his art. Prospero tells her, "I have done nothing but in care of thee" (I.i.i.16), and we know that what he has done in twelve years on the island is to perfect his art. Miranda, then, becomes Prospero's daughter not so much through nature as through art.

Shakespeare's concern with the failure to achieve immortality through biological reproduction in the early sonnets becomes Prospero's concern with renewal, self-realization, and immortality as achieved through art. Prospero shapes Miranda in order to identify and renew himself as artist, that is, as god-like creator. He wishes to repeatedly create a world on
the stage. This is a stage where he fashions Miranda through his narrative in Act I and manipulates the audience to return again and again and renew him in the theater.

In scene two of Act I we are made to feel that Prospero has fostered development of virtue in Miranda. She appears to the audience as the ideal Renaissance lady described by Ruth Kelso in her study of the male's expectations for noble women in the Renaissance.\(^\text{17}\) Miranda is tender-hearted, obedient, relatively silent, and above all, virginal. Ferdinand's reaction to her leads us to believe that she is beautiful, although no explicit statement about her beauty is made in the play. Of course, as Kelso points out, beauty meant not only harmony of physical features, but also harmony in the soul which was outwardly manifest.\(^\text{18}\) Miranda is also like the ideal lady of the period in that she is fashioned to become a wife, yet, as I shall show, her progress toward marriage is at least symbolically interrupted.

In scene two of Act I when Miranda first appears, Prospero continues what we are made to feel has been his practice of controlling Miranda through his art. He tells a story and thereby creates her life in art and attempts to verify himself as artist. The audience is continually reminded that the narrative is a narrative. Although Prospero takes off his magic robe, the artifice of story-telling remains, and as Mowat points out, the narrative is a 'presentational' rather more than 'representational' device;\(^\text{19}\) that is, it is art revealing itself as art more than art representing nature. Miranda says to Prospero, "You have often/begun to tell me what I am, but stopp'd" (I.ii.3-34), and Prospero proceeds to forge his own uncertain identity through constructing
Miranda's. It may seem that Prospero's removal of his robe and his consenting to tell Miranda who she is marks a concern with "reality," or with art that refers to a natural world outside the play. But the images that initiate the story are Miranda's and Prospero's images of unreal or unfathomable worlds. Miranda says the past is "rather like a dream than an assurance" (I.ii.45), and in this same passage Prospero's image of the past is the "dark backward and abysm of time." Apparently like Miranda, who is constantly on the verge of falling asleep, the audience can never be fully absorbed in the story as reality, but rather is constantly reminded that Prospero is telling a story. He interrupts his narrative with, "I pray thee, mark me" and "Dost thou attend me?" or "Dost thou hear?" And the audience's responses are manipulated through Miranda's responses.

Moreover, Shakespeare gives Miranda a speech that shows the artfulness, not naturalness, of her response to Prospero's art. When Prospero tells Miranda of their direful escape from Milan, Miranda exclaims,

Alack for pity!
I, not remembering how I cried out then,
Will cry it o'er again: it is a hint
That wrings mine eyes to't (I.ii.133-135).

Miranda here is an actress, not a self-determined actress, but one controlled to respond on cue to Prospero's stage direction. The past is not real, and having no history except that which Prospero gives her, Miranda exists with only a limited range of behaviors. She has been shaped to breathe the words Prospero would hear from an ideally obedient daughter who will gain for him a son-in-law. Her tears are contrived
rather than natural. She continues to ask "the right" questions and to emit the appropriate ejaculations as her father talks, and Prospero's tale is an artful attempt not only to give her a history, but also to establish before the audience his virtue as an artist and to minimize his frailty as a man by exposing the evil of others.

Prospero's tale to Miranda concludes with an account of how, in spite of many dangers at sea, the two of them eventually came ashore. This is an event that parallels the storm of the first scene and the paralleling of the two "sea sorrows" suggests the artificiality of Prospero's and Miranda's sorrow as well as that of the other Milanese and Neapolitans. Prospero tells Miranda that he and she came ashore "by Providence divine" (I.ii.169), and he thereby equates his own art of rescuing the shipwrecked of the first scene with the act of God that rescued him and Miranda. Thus, from Miranda's opening lines, "If by your Art, my dearest father, you have/Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them" (I.ii.1-2), to his concluding reference to divine Providence, Prospero seeks to establish himself as more supernatural than natural, more god-like artist or creator than man. Miranda's history, her innocence, her obedience, her chastity are all part of Prospero's creations, contrived in order to overcome his own uncertain future in nature and to achieve immortality in art.

Prospero's art and his conception of himself and of civilization are divorced from nature and its changes; his art is a static art. Although Prospero seeks continuity through Miranda, he mistrusts and denies natural processes, and thus is suspended between life and death, but finally haunted by death. Prospero's art hinders Miranda's natural progression
toward motherhood and creation of life. As noted already, critics have viewed Miranda, like the other daughters in the romances, as a source of renewal in the play, but these same critics have ignored how Prospero's art removes her from nature and freezes her; thus, the civilization Prospero would shape, the golden world he seeks, can only renew itself by repetition on the stage and not by natural regeneration. Miranda, then, in this respect, is like Elizabeth I who, as virginal model, represents the return to the golden world, not through nature (biological reproduction), but through artistic image. The eternal golden world represented by Elizabeth was itself in part at least an artificial construction, presented through the portraiture, court entertainments and pageantry associated with Elizabeth. While Elizabeth certainly brought political stability and cultural renewal in England, it was perhaps through the created public image of Petrarchan beauty, virtue, chastity, and immortality more than through the presentation of the natural mortal woman that England was able to thrive for a space of 45 years.

In her introduction to *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, Jean Wilson tells us that "the most important thing about Elizabeth I was her sex." Femaleness and rulership, traditionally masculine rulership, had to be reconciled in Elizabeth. Elizabeth was elevated above, or placed outside, her sex and became, in turn, moon goddess (Cynthia, or Diana, not the fickle moon of fortune), the masculine and kingly sun, the phoenix, and the virgin queen. She was represented through numerous images that separated her from her sex and from physical womanhood. Often portraits of Elizabeth did not aim at making a likeness of the supposedly real
33

woman. Rather, like Pygmalion, the painters of Elizabeth became creators of a woman who was removed from the flaws of her sex. Elizabeth herself adopted and participated in this image making, but my present concern is with Elizabeth as seen through male art, with how she, like Miranda, was frozen in art as the ideal virgin lady, and how, again like Miranda, she became the ideal actor and audience for court entertainments.

As Leonard Forster explains, "The way in which the Queen Elizabeth is presented in the literature and art of the time bears a close resemblance to the descriptions of the ideal lady of the petrarchistic convention." Laura, Petrarch's ideal lady, was a "picture in words," painted by the poet, more than a living woman, and the extant portraits of Elizabeth are amazingly similar to the pictures in words of Petrarch's sonnets. Forster lists the Petrarchan features in Elizabethan portraits: "her personal beauty, her red gold hair, the fair complexion . . . , her long beautiful hands, the dignity of her whole person." Moreover, her motto, Semper eadem, amid all changes the same, "expresses one aspect of Petrarch's Laura," her immortality, as Forster observes. 22 She was the Queen, admired, but beyond the reach of mortals, immortalized in art.

Elizabeth was Spenser's Gloriana and Belphoebe. Like Belphoebe, Elizabeth's image was that of a chaste creature in whom reason dominated over passion, over the whimsical, destructive aspects of female nature. Stephen Greenblatt remarks that Spenser was appealing to an "image of female power--the benevolent and nurturing life force--that transcends a local habitation and a name." 23 Yet, I would add that by this very appeal
to transcending the "local," or earthly, Spenser cancels much that is sexual and motherly, so that the natural is subsumed in art. As Frances Yates points out, Elizabeth became a secularized image of the Virgin Mary, and as several art historians show, numerous elaborate cults developed around the Queen, and she became an 'icon' as much as a historical person.

Shakespeare's own image of Elizabeth can be seen briefly in another of his late plays, Henry VIII. Frey observes that "In Henry VIII, we find the familiar romance patterns of ostracized queen, restorative daughter, and great hopes for the younger generation, but now the daughter, Elizabeth, becomes exalted in virginal radiance." In Henry VIII, the birth of Elizabeth is a sign of prosperity in England:

... all the virtues that attend the good,  
Shall still be doubled on her. Truth shall nurse her,  
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her;  
She shall be loved and feared. Her own shall bless her;  
... Good grows with her;  
In her days shall every man eat in safety  
...  
Nor shall this peace sleep with her; but as when  
The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,  
Her ashes new create another heir  
As great in admiration as herself.

But Frey sees this exalting of Elizabeth's virginity as a transcendence of the romance patterns in Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, Pericles, and The Tempest, because Elizabeth, the phoenix, does not need to elect a husband to fulfill hopes for a golden future. However, the portrait of Elizabeth as exalted virgin is not significantly different from the portrait of Miranda in The Tempest. Even as Shakespeare's Elizabeth becomes
the focus of dreams held by her father, Henry, and his male courtiers, so is Miranda the focus of Prospero's dreams for restoration of civilized order. Miranda's virginity and inner beauty is viewed no less as the key to the salvation she is to provide than is Elizabeth's.

Shakespeare gives Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, not only the speech that announces Elizabeth's birth and prophecizes her virginal purity and the prosperity she will bring, but also the words that eulogize Elizabeth:

...but she must die,
She must, the saints must have her; yet a virgin,
A most unspotted lily shall she pass
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her (V.v.59-62).

Elizabeth is to die a virgin, and apparently in contrast, Miranda is to have a husband, Ferdinand, in order to produce a new heir to rule Milan and Naples. However, The Tempest does much to expose the potential illusion of future married and civilized bliss. The play shows us the artist creating art and displacing nature.

**Prospero as Pygmalion: Artificial Life**

Like Elizabeth, Miranda, as a creature of art, cannot participate in natural processes such as sexual consummation of a marriage and childbearing. Her pre-marital virginity is a major concern of both Ferdinand and Prospero. Prospero warns Ferdinand not to "break her virgin-knot before/All sanctimonious ceremonies may/With full and holy rite be minister'd" (IV.i.15-17). But Hymen's torch is never lighted; the play does not end with a marriage ceremony. Instead, like the scene of
Prospero's narrative in Act I, three other scenes further expose the artificiality of the play world and suggest that the ideal golden world is only a promise in art, never realized in nature. In the chess-game scene, Prospero shows a Pygmalion-like artistry, but the interrupted wedding masque of Act IV pervades the masque-like quality of the play as a whole, and suggests the extension of his Pygmalion-like control of Miranda in art. Then, his epilogue is the final revelation of the displacement of nature by his art.

The last scene in which we focus on Ferdinand and Miranda is the scene in which the two play chess. This scene shows the perfection in Prospero's Pygmalion-like art. Pygmalion created a beautiful and graceful ivory statue, a delight for the eyes to look on. Prospero creates a chaste daughter, who is to be a wife, and in this scene he has not sculpted her but has nevertheless created an art object, has framed his picture of the beautiful and graceful lady. This is a discovery scene in which the cast is gathered together by Prospero, who introduces, as he says, "a wonder." The staginess and artificiality of this scene is further revealed by Prospero's speech that begins by his telling Alonso that he lost his daughter "In this last tempest" (V.i.153). This statement introduces Ferdinand and Miranda's love as another of Prospero's artful or contrived storms, or another "sea change." Then, the wonder that the audience and the cast is asked to behold is strangely a picture of the two lovers wrangling at chess, a game in which Ferdinand might play Miranda false "for a score of kingdoms." But whatever the source of this unusual chess scene in Shakespeare, there is a suggestion that the course of love never runs smooth and that the golden world is not so easily or
honestly achieved. The playing of chess is itself a symbol of artificiality. Miranda says to Ferdinand, "Sweet love, you play me false" (v.i.172). But the artificiality is not only located in the suggestion of dishonesty, but also in the fact that this framed discovery scene is about a game. Not in reality, but in a game, Miranda and Ferdinand wrangle for kingdoms. Their dominion over Naples, their continuing life, their marriage is all a contrived illusion. Miranda is never allowed to explore the world where Ferdinand may wrangle for kingdoms; he is never allowed to enter a civilization that combines nature and art. She remains within the frame of the discovery scene, part of "a wonder," "a most high miracle!" a "goddess."

Although Ferdinand says in this scene that she is mortal, he says that she is his by "immortal Providence." These words echo Prospero's words in Act I in which he equates himself with divine Providence and becomes the artist who creates tempests and creates a daughter. Ferdinand is also controlled by Prospero, who Ferdinand says is his "second father." However, the character, Ferdinand, represents at least a modicum of an existence outside Prospero's control. Prospero did not control Ferdinand from birth. But Miranda remains Prospero's creation, "a wonder," the central art object within the art of Shakespeare's play. She is framed "peerless," a goddess in whom female nature or verisimilitude to nature is virtually non-existent. She remains, like Elizabeth, "a most unspotted lily," and just as Shakespeare's Elizabeth, the phoenix, is to be reproduced asexually, "unnatrually," if Prospero and Shakespeare are successful with the audience, so is Miranda reproduced in art, through repeated portrayal on the stage.
The artificiality of the interrupted wedding masque in Act IV pervades the entire play. The masque is central to the portrait of Miranda as the virgin frozen in art. In this masque that celebrates the pending marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand, Iris, the presenter of the masque, calls on Ceres, who, though a "bounteous lady," makes "cold nymphs chaste crowns." The image here is of a royal goddess of passionate love, who works sexual or "wanton charm" upon a "man and maid" (IV.ii.95). Venus is not allowed to appear in the masque. Ceres forswears the "scandal'd company" of Venus and her son Cupid (IV.ii.91). Here, unlike Pygmalion, Prospero will not be associated with the Paphos cult that worshipped Venus and he has no use for the goddess Venus in his creation. After Pygmalion creates the statue, he goes to pray to Venus that she might give the statue life, albeit a life Pygmalion will control because the statue is his creation. Yet, Prospero, not being a husband like Pygmalion, cannot kiss his creation to life and consummate a marriage. Incest is taboo. Prospero, like Pygmalion, seeks control, but he must find other means of control. He controls nature by symbolically displacing and rejecting it in the masque. Venus must not be allowed to give life to art.

Thus, the marriage blessing for Ferdinand and Miranda, "long continuance and increasing . . . Earth's increase and foison plenty," (IV.ii.106-110), the evocation of natural fertility, is undercut by Venus's absence, and as Ferdinand and Prospero speak during the masque, the audience is reminded that the spirits are not natural but part of Prospero's art, part of a transient enactment of his "present fancies." They are only present fancies, and Ferdinand's wish, "Let me live here
forever" (IV.11.122), cannot be realized because this paradise in which there is talk of life increasing is only a "majestic vision" (IV.11.118). The images of autumn harvest that Juno and Ceres evoke are only images. The harvest never comes. Miranda and Ferdinand will not produce offspring in nature. Paradise exists only in art, not in fallen nature.

Soon after the Nymphs and Reapers begin to dance, Prospero, in a fury, breaks off the dance and the masque is aborted. It is significant that the masque is interrupted during the dance, for as Jean Wilson says of masques, "the dance with which the masque concludes is crucial." The ideal vision of a harmonious society with natural regeneration, a golden world of "long continuance and increasing," should be validated in the dance in which 1) the spirit actors, 2) the "spectator-actors" of the masque, and by implication, 3) the audience as well all participate to create an image of unity and harmony. But instead, as Rolf Soellner observes, the masque of The Tempest, like the banquet of Timon of Athens reveals social disorder rather than harmony. Soellner says that Apemantus in Timon "makes a ceremony glorifying order into a mocking exposure of disorder," and indeed in The Tempest as in Timon the notion of societal order is undermined as Prospero interrupts the masque and reminds us of the disturbing presence of Caliban and more, of the artificiality of his creation.

Clifford Leech notes that Prospero's interrupting the masque is like the:

... ending of an antimasque at court ... It is right, in a profound sense, that Prospero should put on this antic affair and should proceed to his famous speech on the mutability of
all things. This speech puts all masques, all human ambition and pretense, into a small place within the frame of the All, even if this all is only sleep.31

But more, the aborted masque is not just a sign of the "mutability of all things;" it is also another exposure of the artificiality of Prospero's world as stage. No dance of harmony and completion of nature's cycles can take place or even be fully represented in this world, because it is a stage on which Prospero displaces nature. Like Elizabeth, Miranda will never consummate a marriage. The Elizabethan golden civilization could not be maintained except in the artist's imagination. The interruption of the masque as well as the framed chess-game scene suggest that Miranda, too, will remain forever the unravished bride in art. The Tempest like Elizabethan portraiture, offers an illusion, or, at best, a dream of a world that can perhaps never be fully realized in nature.

One cannot, then, confidently assert as Gary Schmidgall does, that The Tempest is "a highly compact version of Virgil's epic of a lost civilization rewon" where Troia recidiva becomes Milan recidiva.32 Not only does the play constantly remind us that it is art, spectacle staged for the spectator, but it also suggests that the whole notion of a golden world might simply be a fiction. The reality of the golden world is further undermined by Caliban's continual presence as a deformed creature, through Trinculo's and Stephano's knavery, and through the never clearly repented evil of Sebastian and Antonio. Further, Gonzalo's speech on the golden world as a place of communistic sharing where nature brings forth "all abundance" (II.i) is revealed as the words of a kindly and well-meaning but somewhat feeble old man.
The masque-like quality of the play as a whole may seem to suggest an alternative to this bleak view of art as merely presenting a frozen and impotent image of the golden world. Again, the portrayal of Miranda and Elizabeth provides an enlightening parallel. Elizabeth was fashioned not only by painters and poets such as Spenser, but also by writers of masques and entertainments, Sir Philip Sidney being the most notable of these writers. The masques and entertainments, such as Sidney's Lady of May, that celebrated Elizabeth's reign called upon her to remove herself from nature (as a living woman in the audience) and to become an object of art by becoming an actor-spectator in the masque and also by being represented in the masque by an actor who portrayed her as the ideal ruler, transcending or standing outside her sex. According to Wilson, Elizabeth, like other rulers, became the cynosure of masques celebrating the ruler and harmonious civilization. She was to be "both perfect witness and perfect participant," both audience and actor.

In The Tempest, Miranda is an actor, played by a boy, and the character Miranda is an audience for Prospero's narrative in Act I. She is both object of and witness to Prospero's art, both during the narrative and in the wedding masque scene. Like Elizabeth, Miranda is there to merge the roles of actor and audience, and thereby to suggest a unity of art and nature, of the stage world and the "real" world of the audience. In this respect, Miranda is potentially the fulcrum of a metatheater like the masque that seems to blur distinctions between spectator and spectacle, world and stage, reality and illusion.

Yet, this apparently unifying potential of art is not clearly sustained in The Tempest. We have observed the artificiality of even
Miranda's role as audience. Her responses to Prospero's narrative are shaped by Prospero's art, and her tears, as we have seen, are staged. The masque that is to represent her potential as a natural source of renewal is interrupted and exposed as part of the "baseless fabric" of Prospero's vision. The world created in art, and Miranda as the central part of this world (as the audience-actor cynosure and as Prospero's portrait of the wondrous virgin in the chess game scene) are revealed as insubstantial.

As Prospero laments,

The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. (IV.i.152-156).

This is not just a lament for the passing of the so-called real world; it is a lament for the potential transience and insubstantiality of the world of art created, for example, in Prospero's masque, and by implication, a lament for the contrived world of the entire play.

Art as Propaganda

Prospero has denied nature, has been suspicious of the female, and uncertain of himself as a man. But the art that denies nature cannot create a lasting and harmonious world. Finally, then, Prospero, the artist-mage, would, it seems, become a man, a creature of nature, a mortal. He uses Miranda in an attempt to form a bridge to mortals, the members of the audience. Continually he reminds us that his time as artist is, apparently, coming to an end and that in one last gesture he
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will cast of his "rough magic." As Howard Felperin notes, Prospero's epilogue shows what appears to be his final attempt to become a man. He tells the audience,

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
And what strength I have's mine own,  
Which is most faint . . . (Epilogue, 1-3).

However, for Prospero to achieve this status as a man, the audience must have been sufficiently manipulated to suspend its disbelief, in this case to forget that he is still an actor and stage manager. Yet, as Felperin points out, the epilogue itself is "an artful sleight-of-hand." Prospero's gesture of standing as a man divested of his magic is just that, a gesture, another posture of control. The audience is really being asked to remove itself from nature and to participate in art by becoming the artist. He pleads,

. . . Let me not,  
Since I have my dukedom got,  
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell  
In this bare island by your spell;  
But release me from my bands  
With the help of your good hands:  
Gentle breath of yours my sails  
Must fill, or else my project fails (5-12).

Not through Nature, but through an artistic act of imagination can the audience create a "spell" that releases Prospero from the island. Only through another spectacle can we see "calm seas and auspicious gales," see Miranda and Ferdinand happily married, having children, and restoring order in Milan.
The audience is being asked to use art, as Prospero has done, to deny nature and create the illusion of nature, the illusion of a harmonious and predictable world. The golden world is not nature but the artist's denial of the uncertainties of nature and the artist's portrayal of selected images of well-being in nature. But as with Prospero's masque, the illusion cannot last. Prospero must, supposedly, return to Milan to die. Neither art nor nature can provide permanence, but art can repeatedly provide the illusion of permanence.

Like the iconography surrounding Elizabeth, the art of The Tempest, with Miranda at its center, is propaganda. But the propaganda of The Tempest is complex. The artists creating Elizabeth sought to transcend female nature in order to create a feeling of national well-being. The artist of The Tempest, Prospero, seeks to deny nature, particularly female nature, in order to reveal the supremacy of art. This is not art as verisimilitude to nature, for that aspect of art has continually been exposed to reveal art as art. The "tempest" itself, the storm of the first scene, is revealed as art, not nature, and the "last tempest," the love of Ferdinand and the incomparable Miranda, who has no parallel in nature, is staged as a discovery scene, as the artist's portrait.

Does the artist's propaganda, Prospero's and perhaps Shakespeare's, work? Seeing their sex mistrusted, absented from the action, and frozen, like Miranda, in art, can women as well as men forgive Prospero his "crimes" from which he asks to be absolved in the epilogue? The issue of gender and audience response is a difficult issue. If Lori Jerrell Leininger's assessment of The Tempest in The Woman's Part expresses a feminist view of the play, then Prospero's crimes are considerable.
Leininger sees Prospero as guilty of sexism in his treatment of Miranda as his "foot, [his] tutor," and in his over-emphasizing her virginity. Leininger sees Prospero as guilty of racism in his treatment of Caliban as an unregenerate slave like an Indian or African.  

Indeed, Prospero places great emphasis on Miranda's virginity and freezes life in art, but whatever Prospero's crimes—denial of nature, sexism, racism, the failure of the artist to create life, and so on—he performs the "rarer action" and forgives Sebastian, Alonso, and Antonio, and it is difficult not to feel the resonance of the golden rule in his last words, "As you from crimes would pardoned be/Let your indulgence set me free." It is a plea to the audience to transport the playwright-actor-artist to the realm of life and death, to natural mutability, but still it is a plea with the trappings of art, made from the stage. For the audience the process of response is vertiginous. The audience is asked to release itself from nature and participate in art, and at the same time, to release the artist from art, and thereby perhaps release the actors who saw Miranda as a wonder.

The art of The Tempest is an art that takes away, by denying nature and the feminine, but it also attempts to give by presenting grotesque, airy, and peerless figures, storm, masque, and magical robes donned and doffed. Prospero seeks to create and yet expose the illusion of permanence. More, Shakespeare creates an art that gives by letting the audience at least recognize the "crimes," the manipulations, the folly, the illusions of art. Only as the mature artist can Shakespeare risk such exposure and perhaps still leave us dazzled by the colorful baroque staginess of the play. Yet, there remains the disturbing experience of Prospero's desire to subdue and cancel nature in the dream of art.
NOTES


2Kermode, p. xlvii. Kermode discusses a wide range of meanings of "nature" in The Tempest. Nature can be vile or can even refer to the supernatural, or natura naturans, great creating nature. The nature that Prospero mistrusts is often sexual nature as found in the female.


4Barbara Mowat, The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1976), see for example, pp. 36-37 and p. 62.


8Sundelson, p. 36.

9The concepts of the female as Other and as stranger are taken from Simone de Beauvoir and Leslie Fiedler, respectively. See Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Bantam, 1961) and Leslie Fiedler, The Stranger in Shakespeare (New York: Stein and Day, 1973).

10Sundelson, p. 35.


13Ibid.


17Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956, 1978 rpt.), especially see pp. 24-25 and 97-100 on chastity as the chief virtue, however, and chastity as virginity in unmarried women.


19Mowat, p. 62.


22Ibid., pp. 125-127.

23Greenblatt, p. 178.


26Frey, p. 304.


28Kermode gives possible sources for this scene. See the Arden edition note on p. 123.

29Wilson, p. 10.

31 Clifford Leech, "Masking and Unmasking in the Last Plays" in Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered, p. 54.

32 Schmidgall, p. 75.

33 See Wilson's discussion of Lady of May, pp. 57-58.

34 Ibid., p. 9.


36 Ibid.

II. "Desdemona Dead": Nature into Art

The Tempest ends just short of Miranda's and Ferdinand's marriage and consummation of that marriage. The wedding masque was interrupted and Miranda is framed and frozen as a virgin in the "insubstantial pageant" that is Prospero's art. But Desdemona is literally killed by Othello so that she might become again and remain forever chaste as his statue of "smooth . . . monumental alabaster" (V.ii.5). The frozen or statuesque body is a dispossessed body, for all practical purposes, no body, in effect, insubstantial. Male art (that of Prospero and of Othello) can mirror the physical or material world, but it is not itself the physical creation, the natura naturata or lower nature.

Higher nature (Nature), natura naturans is a rational, benevolent force in Othello. But the creation itself, lower nature, is fallen as a result of error, the sin of a woman. Therefore, like Prospero, Othello has an inherent mistrust and fear of lower nature—the processes of reproduction, growth, mutability, and potential unchastity that are embodied in female nature (i.e., in female sexuality). Iago tells Roderigo that love is a mere "lust of the blood" (I.iii.335), and Othello comes to mistrust love and to be obsessed with female bodily lust and cunning. As Marilyn French asserts, "Nowhere in Shakespeare are relations between males and females more searchingly, painfully probed" than in Othello.¹

Males in Othello are mainly soldiers. Othello and Iago are soldiers.
The soldier's way to conquer is to kill, and to die oneself as a soldier is to die in honor, to separate the body from the soul and to eternalize the soul and spirit. But the tragedy in the world of Othello lies in this very separation of body and soul, in the attempt to save the soul by simplifying and stabilizing the lower creation of nature, the body, into a static, separate entity.

Othello, the masculine soldier, exists in a state of paradox, that is, he "lives" with death. Othello, the alien (in this respect, like a female), or as Leslie Fiedler has aptly taken Iago's name for him, Othello, the "stranger" in Venice, is full of uncertainty and thus seeks certainty and permanence in a world where, then as now, the one sure thing seems to be death. Thus, the action of Othello funnels through hateful, violent relationships towards death. As critics have pointed out, Othello has a comic structure, particularly in Act I, but Othello's (and Iago's) predilection for violence signals death and tragedy.

In his important study of Othello, Magic in the Web, Robert Heilman gives an intriguing account of the relationship of love and war in the play, but the conflict caused by this seemingly odd relationship can be further understood in the light of other complex dualities as they intersect with the dramatic action that climaxes in the bedroom scene, where, through a variation of Pygmalion-like artistry, Othello fashions Desdemona into a dead objet d'art.

The problematic male-female duality in the play results from what Edgar A. Snow calls male sexual anxiety, but Snow locates the tragedy partly in Desdemona's failure to overcome male Oedipal restraints. Like Snow, Coppélia Kahn uses a psychoanalytic approach to the play, but
Kahn sees Othello's anxiety about being cuckolded as a result of three things: misogyny in general, the double standard of sexual morality for males and females, and patriarchal marriage. Indeed, though the Oedipal restraints discussed by Snow are significant in the play, it is this threefold condition which Kahn writes of that constitutes the male order. But this condition itself results from what I will discuss as the dichotomizing of experience to achieve certainty in the male self by separating, killing, and objectifying the Other, the female.

This dichotomization of experience, which is part of what Kahn calls misogyny in general is informed by what the philosopher Georges Bataille calls the Christian taboo against sexuality. Although Othello is a Moor, he has adopted parts of the asceticism of Christian culture and espouses this as well as his pre-Christian belief in magic. As Stephen Greenblatt explains, "Christian orthodoxy in both Catholic and Protestant Europe could envision a fervent love between husband and wife," but Pauline influences lead to assertion of male authority and male anxiety over sensuality produces a tension in marriage where the female is subordinate and subject to that anxiety and authority. This tension and taboo surrounding sexuality causes the failure of love in the tragedies with a Christian setting. As David Scott Kastan points out in an essay on women's roles in the various Shakespearean genres, mutuality and wholeness is difficult to achieve. "Wholeness is always the goal that tragedy frustrates." This separation of the whole into parts, the Pauline dichotimizing of experience, supports the conception of the woman as alien, and the dualizing of male and female is connected to a dualizing of soul and body, reality and appearance, as well as art and nature.
Numerous interrelated dichotomies foster alienization and constitute the tragedy of Othello.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female (irrational, alien)</th>
<th>Male (enforced order, statesman)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life (love, sexuality leads to threat of discontinuity, uncertainty)</td>
<td>Death (war, strife, eroticism leads to chastity, static continuity, permanence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body (transitory, irrational)</td>
<td>Soul (permanence, order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance (lie, transitory)</td>
<td>Reality (honesty, permanence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature (lower nature, irregular, uncertain)</td>
<td>Art (permanence, certainty)</td>
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It is this dualization that produces anxiety, and finally, not order, but chaos. The female, separated as Other, is shrouded in suspicion and subject to male anxieties and modes of order. Or, as French explains, the "masculine" is thought to be more human, and the "feminine" as represented by Eve (not Mary) is "outlaw," contrary to civilization. 11

Although at various moments in the play Desdemona is viewed by males (by Cassio, Othello, and her father) as the Renaissance ideal lady—chaste, gentle, well-trained in music, beautiful, the "divine Desdemona" and so on—she increasingly becomes an object of mistrust. Her body, linked more closely with nature than the male body, is thought to be the instrument of deceit, cunning, unchastity. In the misogynistic tradition of the Renaissance, the woman lacks reason and is frail. The theme of varia et
mutabilis, femina, Hamlet's "Frailty, thy name is woman!", dominates the minds of Othello and Iago as the play progresses. The irrational female, subject to male order and self-affirmation, becomes the object of male art. Just as Othello as alien or stranger is, as Greenblatt demonstrates, object of Iago's fashioning, so as female and alien who provokes male uncertainty, Desdemona is the object of male (her father's and more, Iago's and Othello's) fashioning. This fashioning of the female into a static predictable sculpture shows a preference for conflict and war rather than love. The fashioning is an attempt to subdue the body to the soul and to kill nature in art.

Life (Love) and Death (War).

Othello's preference for an erotic battleground that leads to death can be seen at numerous moments in the play. Othello juxtaposes matters of state, mainly matters of war or the soldier's way of life with private matters of love and marriage. Iago is awake all night and seems never to be at home with his wife; the pair meets in public places. The business of Duke, Senators, and soldiers is mixed with the concern over Desdemona's and Othello's elopement. State politics and sexual politics share the stage, and sexual politics color and are colored by the politics of war and government. As Madelon Gohlke points out in an essay on Shakespeare's tragic paradigms, "Sexual politics may be at the heart of human culture, of our constantly shifting and evolving world view." Love and war, sex and politics and violence are placed side by side in Othello as in Antony and Cleopatra and Troilus and Cressida.

In the very first scene of Act I of Othello, Iago's and Roderigo's dialogue points to this odd mixture of war matters—Cassio's being
promoted over Iago and Iago's hatred of Othello—and life-love matters--Roderigo's disappointment because he failed to win Desdemona's love. Othello's first speech in Act I connects his love for Desdemona to his services to the Venetian signiory, and he goes on to tell Iago,

But that I love the gentle Desdemona
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth (I.1.25-28).

This speech suggests that Othello does not marry easily because marriage can become loss of the soldier's liberty and confinement to a domestic sphere. Yet the "gentle Desdemona" is paradoxically thought to be a "fair warrior" (II.1.84), Othello's partner in war, rather than a woman to be loved in peace and in the sphere of domestic values, and although the war with the Turks never really gets underway, as Heilman points out, "the action is under the shadow of war." In his defense speech, Othello tells the Senate that Desdemona "lov'd me for the dangers I had passed, and I lov'd her that she did pity them" (I.iii.167-168). In this speech we can glimpse Othello's initial fashioning of Desdemona as a fellow combatant. He shapes her curiosity and desire for adventure. When he finds that she eagerly listens to the story of his danger-filled life, he says,

... I observing,
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart,
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcel she had something heard,
But not intentively: I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears
When I did speak of some distressed stroke
That my youth suffered . . . (I.iii.150-157).

Like Prospero, who tells the story of his life to Miranda and thereby shapes her history and identity and evokes her tears about the dangers he has passed, so Othello evokes Desdemona's tears by telling her of dangers that are "strange . . . passing strange" (I.iii.160) to her. Thus Othello wins her as his wife and "fair warrior."

The initially trusting Othello, however, apparently has no awareness of the alleged vagaries of female nature, of the woman's potential for adultery and deceit. He is himself one who never married, who knows only the "feats of broil and battle" (I.iii.82). It needs Brabantio, and more, Iago to raise to consciousness Othello's suspicion of women. After Brabantio warns,

Look to her Moor, have a quick eye to see:
She has deceived her father, may do thee (I.iii.292-293),

and after Iago's poison begins to work, Othello's innate suspicions and fear and even disgust of female, and thereby male, sexuality begin to surface. When the suspicions and disgust surface, the meeting of love and war, life and death enters a new phase in which they are no longer mingled but emerge as conflict. War and death must subdue love and life. No longer his "fair warrior," Desdemona becomes Othello's "unhandsome warrior," a lustful opponent, devil, to be struggled against and conquered. A few years later John Donne was to express a similar view of disdain for women, reproductive sexuality,
and marriage. He, too, sees marriage and sex as essentially violent. In "The Anatomy of the World" he reflects on the marriage of Adam and Eve and union of male and female becomes murderous:

For that marriage was our funerall:
One woman at one blow, then kill'd us all.
And singly, one by one, they kill us now
... and profusely blind
We kill ourselves to propogate our kinde.\textsuperscript{15}

Again, the woman and sexuality are opponents to be struggled against.

Throughout the play, Othello shows a Pauline mistrust of passion and a desire to conquer it. It is not that Iago or Brabantio cause Othello's mistrust of women and passion. Iago only encourages what was already present in Othello's psyche. Othello's disdain for the pleasure of sex and love, even in marriage, is shown when he asks that Desdemona be allowed to go with him to Cyprus. He asks that she go, not

To please the palate of my appetite
Nor to comply with heat ...
But to be free and bounteous of her mind (I.iii.262-265).

This perhaps seemingly noble expression of preference for Desdemona's mind is followed quickly by his boasting about the supremacy of soldiering. Thus, it is not so much as Heilman suggests that love \textit{is} war,\textsuperscript{16} but that Othello shows a decided preference for the business of war. Love and sex must be subdued to the terms and modes of combat. Othello exclaims,
. . . no, when light wing'd toys,
And feather'd Cupid, foils with wanton dullness
My speculative and active instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillst of my helm,
And all indign and base adversaries
Make head against my reputation! (I.iii.268-274).

For Donne marriage and sexuality mean the female's violence against and defeat of the male. For Othello, marriage to the female is also defeat if the man gives up his "unhoused free condition." To submit to the woman is to be conquered by dullness. Thus, Othello would resist being conquered by conquering. His helmet, a sign of war, not the housewife's skillet, must be the sign of marriage.

Gohlke writes that in Shakespeare's tragedies, heterosexual relations are conceived primarily in terms of violence. The tragedies follow the consequences of Theseus' lines to Hippolyta in A Midsummer Night's Dream. He tells Hippolyta, "I wooed thee with my sword" (I.1.16). Indeed, Othello's stories of violence and danger have won Desdemona's hand in marriage. But violence is essentially disruptive, not unifying. Thus war rather than love, and death rather than life become Othello's as well as Iago's goal. The violence of Othello's tales becomes literal in the play as Iago slanders Desdemona and Othello verbally abuses her, strikes her, and finally kills her in Act V.

Body (Appearance) and Soul (Reality)

Othello's mistrust of marriage, his fear that his freedom will be circumscribed, and his disdain for pleasing "the palate" of lustful appetite is apparently countered by his preference for the inner person, the soul or mind of Desdemona. His sentiments echo the Pauline view
that it is better not to marry, but if one marries, one should abstain from sexual activity when possible. Paul writes,

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I {unmarried}. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.18

Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians that the virgin (male and female) is holy in body and spirit because the virgin is not distracted by the body and by "things of the world." Before they part for Cyprus, Othello tells Desdemona that he has only an hour for "worldly matters" of love and sex. As much as possible, Othello wishes to avoid "feather'd Cupid," to repress sexual desire.

The Pauline antithesis of body and soul is also the antithesis of bestial and celestial in Othello. Peter Milward notes Shakespeare's frequent presentation of the body-soul dichotomy in the histories and tragedies that have a Christian setting.19 Cassio's consternation after his night of drunken behavior points up this dichotomous conception in Othello:

I have lost the immortal part of Myself and what remains is bestial (II.iii.

Othello, the alien, seeks certainty and certainty is to be found in the celestial. As Wolfgang Clemen has demonstrated, initially it is Othello's habit to speak using imagery of the heavens until he is reminded by Iago of the earthy, bestial, lustful side of existence.20
Othello idealizes the soul or mind, but the body, especially in connection with the female, is increasingly a source of tantalization, pain, and disgust.

The love of the pair is first presented as pure because Othello desires Desdemona's mind, and she tells the Senate that she "saw Othello's visage in his mind" (I.iii.252). Further, Othello shows pride in what he calls "my parts, my title, and my perfect soul" (I.ii.31), and Desdemona consecrates her soul to "his valiant parts" (I.iii.254). "Parts" for the Elizabethans could refer to either body parts or qualities of mind. But Desdemona here seems to refer to transcendant parts, qualities of mind or soul. Thus, it is unlikely that the Othello who shows disdain for Cupid and who subdues love to war could be boastful about body parts except as instruments of war. The final strength of his defense rests in his "perfect soul," his clear conscience.

In Othello, the body mainly is the female body, and it is the source of lust that provokes anxiety and disgust in the male. The female body, beautiful though it may sometimes be, is also deceiving. The body imprisons the soul. This thought is expressed in Shakespeare's Sonnet 146: "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth." The imprisoned soul must find release in death.

Iago, the pragmatic materialist, reduces all human experience to selfishness, greed for earthly gain, and bodily lust. Those "valiant parts" of which Othello and Desdemona speak have no value for Iago. For him, virtue is merely a fig. Reputation is merely an appearance, and love is not part of reason, he tells Roderigo. Love is merely "a lust of the blood and a permission of the will" (I.iii.335-336). But Iago's
view of lust is largely applied to Desdemona, of whom he says, "When she is sated with his [Othello's] body, she will find the error of her choice; she must have change, she must" (I.iii.351-353). Whether Iago believes this or not, his view impresses Roderigo and eventually Othello. In Iago's stated view, and later in Othello's, Desdemona is like the woman described in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. She is more lustful than the man and must be continually satisfied. If her husband dies, "She must have a stallion, a champion; she must and will marry again."21 The bestial imagery here is similar to Iago's and later Othello's references to sex and unchastity. Iago refers to Othello and Desdemona's marriage, not as a union of souls but in pejorative animal imagery. Disguised by the darkness of night, he warns Brabantio that he has lost half his soul to the animal passions of the pair.

Even now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping with your white ewe . . . (I.i.88-89).

He continues, "Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs (115-117).

Although Othello tells the Senate that he did not marry Desdemona for lust, the play increasingly focuses on the supposed lust of Desdemona and on women in general as sexual beings and whores. Female nature is presented as wayward. Not only Iago, and Othello but also Brabantio and even Cassio reveal their mistrust of female constancy. Cassio cohabits with the prostitute, Bianca, and refuses to take her seriously as a reliable person. Brabantio not only feels that Desdemona has deceived him in marrying the Moor, but he expresses disgust for sex
and reproduction when he says, "I had rather to adopt a child than get it" (I.iii.191). True, Iago seems to know of Desdemona's actual innocence as regards adultery with Cassio; however, Iago's use of Desdemona as scapegoat in his hatred of the Moor and his success at convincing Roderigo and Othello suggest that Brabantio's warning about Desdemona's ability to deceive is a view commonly held by males in the world of Othello.

Iago turns the attention of the audience and the male spectators in the play away from women's potential nobility, away from their inner or soul qualities to attention to their exterior or apparent world. He focuses on Desdemona's alleged bodily lust and manipulates the mind of Othello so that Othello, if not the audience, is led to focus on appearances. Iago's playful banter with Desdemona as they wait on Othello's ship to arrive in Act II quickly overshadows Cassio's view of Desdemona's qualities of soul. Cassio's view in this scene is of a Desdemona who "paragons description . . . excels the quirks of blazoning pens and bears all excellency" (II.i.61-64). But Iago's portrait of the "real" woman dominates this scene. He says to Desdemona, "You are players in your housewifery; and housewives in your beds" (II.i.112-113), "housewives" here meaning "wantons." The ideal woman is one who could "see suitors following, and not look behind" (II.i.158), but Iago goes on to say that he doubts that such a woman exists. And although the audience may know, as Desdemona implies, that Iago twists the truth by praising the "worst as best" (II.i.143), Othello does not until the end know of "honest" Iago's lies and neither does Cassio. Thus appearance becomes reality: chaste women become whores, fair and black are
reversed, and the body replaces the soul.

Iago manipulates appearances and continually focuses on the alleged lust of the female body. To Othello he echoes Brabantio's words:

She did deceive her father, marrying you
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She lov'd them most  (III.iii.210-213).

Othello, beginning to have his consciousness lowered to the bestial realm, replies, "And so she did." Iago's words here constitute a complex confounding of appearance and reality, of inner person and external behavior. He takes what may be thought of as an actual instance of deceit (Desdemona's deceiving her father) and combines this with a seeming instance of deceit ("she seem'd to shake and fear your looks") so that all appears to be appearance, and reality (chaste constancy) is cancelled as Othello concedes. Thus, the mind and inner quality of Desdemona become false, and the unchaste body becomes the new reality. Yet, because that reality is false, dizzying chaos ensues.

Desdemona's lying in bed is a symbol of her ability to tell lies. Physical action taints and subdues the soul and mind. Brabantio's injunction in Act I, "Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds" (I.ii.170) turns attention to the body, to the woman's ability to "lie," to commit adultery and to distort the mind by deceit. Iago leads Othello to a pitch of passion in which Othello desperately searches out the meanings of the word "lie."
Oth. But what?
Iago. Lie.
Oth. With her?
Iago. With her, on her, what you will.
Oth. Lie with her, lie on her?—We say lie on her when they belie her—lie with her, zounds, that's fulsome! (IV.i.32-35).

Othello's eloquent rhetoric of pride and control breaks down here. He cannot find words. Words are lies; the lies are the body. "... It is not words that shake me thus./Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible? ..." (41-42). The chaos of the mind wrought by the imagination of the unreliable female body results appropriately here in Othello's apparently epileptic seizure.

Gradually through the play, then, Desdemona is reduced to an unchaste body. She is fashioned first through Iago's insinuations, his direction of the stage action, and his manipulation of appearance. As the materialist and reductivist who destroys Othello's balanced rhetoric and his celestial view of experience, Iago fashions Desdemona as a whore; and Othello, in an attempt to regain control of his honor, would fashion the whore into chaste woman again in her death. Emilia unwittingly sums up Desdemona's fashioning by Iago:

Emilia: Has she forsook so many noble matches, 
Her father, and her country, all her friends, 
To be called whore? ...

Des. It is my wretched fortune (IV.ii.127-130).

Emilia continues, again unwittingly, remarking on her husband's fictive shaping of Desdemona:
I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
Some busy and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office
Have not devis'd this slander, I'll be hang'd else (132-135).

Emilia's words here, as Carol Thomas Neely notes, point to Desdemona's innocence and to Iago's guilt. But Emilia, for all practical purposes, is not heard, and Desdemona, who cannot say the word "whore," passively and helplessly submits to Iago's fashioning, when, desperate with Othello's verbal abuse of her, she asks Iago to name her.

Des. Am I that name, Iago?
Iago. What name, fair lady?
Des. Such as she [Emilia] says my lord did say I was?
Emil. He called her whore . . . (IV.ii.119-122).

In this scene, Iago names through insinuation and indirection. In the preceding passage, Othello names and thus shapes Desdemona's future directly. He shouts at her, "Impudent strumpet!" and "Are you not a strumpet? . . . What, not a whore?" Desdemona is no longer one with a desirable mind, but simply an unchaste physical creature.

Lest "her body and beauty unprovide [his] mind," (IV.i.201-202), Othello must preserve his mind and kill her body. The body, not the soul, is objectionable. In the bedroom scene of Act V, Othello is careful to point out to Desdemona,

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit
No, heaven forfend, I would not kill thy soul (V.i.31-32).
But her body must be killed; it is, in the Pauline sense, no longer her husband's and no longer the temple of the spirit. Again, to the Corinthians Paul writes,

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God . . . therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6: 19-20).

And in another chapter he writes,

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. (I Corinthians 7:4).

Thus, according to Othello, Desdemona has violated not only herself but her husband, and she has defiled the temple of God, the body that houses the soul or spirit. The wayward body, "the flesh," as Bataille reminds us, "is the born enemy of people haunted by Christian taboos."²⁵ In Othello's case, the Christian taboo eventually leads to his act of mortifying the flesh.

The "poor soul" of the sonnet must be released from "sinful earth." Desdemona must die, not just because of what Snow calls "the pathological male animus toward sexuality,"²⁶ but more precisely because, the "valiant parts" of the soul have been enslaved and defiled by the bestial body. The Pauline concept that dualizes body and soul has become a source of anxiety as reality and appearance, Desdemona's truth and "honest" Iago's lies become confounded in Othello's vertiginous imagination.
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not
I think thou art just and think thou art not (III.iii.390-391).

No certainty exists for the alien Moor. Death provides certainty, relieves anxiety.

Roderigo, who, like Othello, is gullied by Iago and disappointed in his love for Desdemona, thinks that "death is our physician" (I.iii.309-310). When women and enslavement to the body cannot be conquered then, as in Sonnet 147, "Desire is death." This is the desire that cures desire, that cures the raging fever of love. Desire is no longer connected to life and to sexual reproduction, but is what Bataille calls "eroticism." "Eroticism," says Bataille, "unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal: reproduction and the desire for children." Sexuality is transferred to erotic desire which is "akin to death."27

Shakespeare links eroticism and death not only in the sonnets but also in the dying of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony kills himself with his sword, an obviously phallic symbol, in the presence of Eros, and for Cleopatra, death is as "a lover's pinch." But the difference between the two is that Cleopatra also links death with motherhood. The asps suck the milk of her motherly breasts so that the kiss is one of death and of a life where she goes to meet Antony. For Antony, however, death is not linked with reproduction or with a new life, but with defeating Caesar and dying a hero's death. In the monument scene, Antony seeks Cleopatra's kisses, not for life, but for easeful death, release from the body.
The contrast between male and female approaches to bodily joy and life and to erotic death can perhaps be more clearly seen in Othello, with its Christian setting. Desire and sexual longing for Desdemona are seen in terms of reproduction, increase. In Othello's case, "Desire is death;" desire is the cessation of the uncertainties of living. In Bataille's sense, Desdemona's desire is "sexual" and Othello's is "erotic." Othello mistrusts the sexual. In his discussion of eroticism, Bataille goes on to say,

> The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still. The transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of discontinuity.\(^\text{28}\)

The difference between Othello's and Desdemona's attitudes toward bodily desire and fulfillment are encapsulated in Act II when Othello arrives safely after the stormy sea voyage. The pair greet joyfully, but Othello's attitude calls to mind Prospero's sudden interruption of the wedding masque that symbolizes consummation of a marriage. As Carol Thomas Neely points out, "Othello's greeting on Cyprus reveals his preference for a perpetually unconsummated courtship."\(^\text{29}\) More, the greeting reveals his preference for death over life and reproduction of life.

> Oth. O my fair warrior!
> Des. My dear Othello!
> Oth. It gives me wonder great as my content To see you here before me: O my soul's joy, If after every tempest come such calmness, May the winds blow, till they have wakn'd death
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas,
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

Des. The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase,
Even as our days do grow

Though seeming to be at this moment a "mutual pair," Othello and Desdemona really talk at cross purposes. They manifest two different attitudes to the climax of joy and fulfillment of desire. The images of tempest and calmness and the "labouring bark climbing hills of seas," are sexual images. For Desdemona this moment of bliss is connected with sexuality, increase or reproduction, but for Othello, the soldier, such moments are connected with war, strife, erotic death. Bataille's observation that the goal of eroticism is to achieve a state so that the heart stands still is seen as Othello continues,

I cannot speak enough of this content,
It stops me here, it is too much of joy. (196-197).

Then they kiss, but this kiss prefigures the death kiss in Act V. Othello cannot accept the body and its increase and he speaks of this kiss, perhaps unwittingly, as "discord," and Iago is present to remind the audience that this apparently harmonious music of joy and peace is really a progression toward the soldier's mode of "discord" and strife.
Iago. (Aside) O, you are well tun'd now, 
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music, 
As honest as I am (199-201).

Even as Iago, who is false, appears to be honest, so the appearance of harmony is marred by the insidious presence of Othello's anxiety about the mutable and unreliable body and its increase.

Nature

The word "nature" in Othello, though sometimes used to refer to human nature (the Moor is of "a free and noble nature"), usually refers to Natura naturans, the "great creating Nature" of The Winter's Tale. This nature is a force of order and reason that supports the masculine order of society. But lower nature also exists in Othello and this lower nature is subject to perversion, a perversion often embodied in the female's unchastity and deceit.

Witchcraft is a perversion of the benevolent force of Nature. As Carolyn Merchant explains, witchcraft is the disordering of Nature insofar as witches, in the Renaissance, were viewed as partners of the devil and often thought to engage in lewd sexuality and other uncivilized acts. Othello and Iago speak of unchaste women as being under the influence of the devil.

Oth. Naked abed, Iago, and not mean harm? 
It is hypocrisy against the devil: 
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so, 
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven (IV.1.5-8).
But initially in Othello the work of the devil, witchcraft is associated with the male, not the female. The male association with witchcraft is then projected onto the female. Brabantio accuses Othello of practicing witchcraft and black magic on Desdemona, and Othello replies to this charge that story-telling is the only charm or witchcraft he has used. Iago conceives of his own treacherous acts as poisonous deeds. He sets Othello "on the rack" through his sorcerous imagination.

The Moor already changes with my poison:
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood
Burn like the mines of sulphur . . . (III.iii.330-334).

Later, after Othello's allegedly epileptic seizure, Iago excitedly urges, "Work on, my medicine, work . . . " (IV.i.43-44).

The witchcraft that Othello is accused of and the sorcery that Iago practices are perversions of an essentially benevolent Nature. Brabantio thinks that fundamentally rational Nature can only "so preposterously err (Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense)," through witchcraft (I.iii.62-63). Further, according to Brabantio, Desdemona's attraction to the Moor is "against all rules of Nature" (I.iii.101), and she has been deluded by Othello's use of "some mixtures powerful o'er the blood" (I.iii.104).

But the alleged (Othello's) or actual (Iago's) perversion of Nature practiced by males is eventually transferred to the realm of the alleged cunning, deceit, and adultery of the female. Desdemona's potential for adultery is said by Iago to be the result of natural
instincts. These for Iago are the bestial instincts of lower nature. She will seek other men because "very nature/will instruct her to it" (II.i.232-233). Iago develops this theme by saying of Desdemona, "Her eye must be fed, and what delight shall she have to look on the devil?" (II.i.224-225). Further, when Brabantio and all others assembled learn from Desdemona's testimony in Act I that Othello has not used any drugs or potions on her, Desdemona is judged by Brabantio as being capable of deceit and of perverting the higher order of nature. Brabantio will never trust her again. Like Eve, she is a fallen woman and Nature has been corrupted by her.

Iago's insistence that Desdemona "must have change, she must!" (I.iii.351-352) is later reflected in Othello's view of Desdemona's propensity for fickleness. Desdemona's unreliability is compared by Othello to "the bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets" (IV.i.ii. 80). Moreover, Othello thinks that Desdemona's perverse nature reveals itself through her hot, moist hand and through her losing and lying about the handkerchief he gave her. In Act III, Othello's Puritan anxiety about sensuality leads him to think that Desdemona's hand is too liberal and that what she needs is a "sequester from liberty; fasting and praying/Much castigation, exercise devout" (III.iv.35-36).

Again, Othello's view echoes the Pauline injunction to husbands and wives:

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (ICorinthians 7:5).
Desdemona must engage in religious rites to free herself from excessive desire. Othello's ascetic Christian view here is mixed with folklore about hot, moist hands as revelations of licentiousness. His subsequent statement seems to contradict his earlier words that show mistrust of Desdemona. After observing what he believes are too free hands, he then remarks that she has "a good hand, a frank one," but in light of the dialogue that follows, an actor might speak these lines as though Othello continues his mistrust and merely tests Desdemona's virtue. Immediately he begins to question her about the handkerchief. His speech here suggests that he thinks that if her hand is really a frank one, she will not lie to him about the loss of the handkerchief; or she will not have lost it. But Desdemona, for whatever reason, does lie, and Othello takes this lie about what for most Venetians is a "trifle light as air" as an indication of her capacity to deceive him with Cassio.

The web of magic in the handkerchief becomes the web that ensnares Desdemona more deeply in the male imagination of the perverse and cunning female. Lynda E. Boose gives an enlightening account of the significance of the handkerchief in Othello. She explains that the strawberries woven into the cloth were associated in the sixteenth century with virginity, and that the strawberry was thought by Elizabethan gardeners to be the most perfect fruit and part of the rose family. Further, the strawberries in the handkerchief symbolized virginity because they represented the blood-stained wedding sheet that was proof of the wife's virginity. Boose writes that the handkerchief in Othello is "a visually recognizable reduction of Othello's and
Desdemona's wedding sheets. Thus, Othello's obsession with the handkerchief in this scene is not for him an obsession with a "trifle." The loss of the handkerchief signals unchastity, and that Cassio is connected with the loss only enlarges the sign of incontinence.

The female's disturbance of nature is further suggested when Desdemona, not Iago, is associated in Othello's mind with the devil. Again, this is a projection of the male onto the female, for Othello is thought to practice witchcraft and is referred to by Iago as "the devil" (II.i.225). But in Act IV when Othello is thinking of killing Desdemona, he strikes her, calling her a devil, and when she cries, her seemingly false tears are linked to the cunning of the devil. In Act III, when Othello and Iago kneel and pledge their vows of revenge, Othello exclaims,

Damn her, lewd minx: O damn her!
. . . I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil . . . (III.iii.482-485).

But this scene is filled with the irony of the projection of male falseness onto the female. Desdemona is called a devil, but it is Iago and Othello who kneel, like Mephistopheles and Faust, to make a devilish bond. Othello's blackness becomes Desdemona's; her fairness is only an appearance, he thinks, the cunning of the devil.

Desdemona's qualities become reversed and confounded. Nature is disturbed. The "fair warrior" becomes "unhandsome warrior." Her lie about the handkerchief is a trifle, but her honesty becomes a lie. She is a "fair paper," but made to write "whore" upon (IV.ii.74). Her
obedience is "a well-painted passion" (IV.i.253). The universe is chaotic.

The disordering of nature that was feared by Renaissance writers has found its setting in Othello as well as in tragedies such as King Lear and Macbeth. In all three plays the disordering is intimately linked with witchcraft or female evil, but in Othello the disorder exists in the hero's disturbed mind more than in the external world. In all of these plays, Shakespeare had not yet created a Prospero who could control tempests, villains, sons-in-law, and potentially unchaste daughters and wives.

Art: Othello as Pygmalion

Because nature is disordered, in Othello, as in The Tempest, art becomes important as a means of controlling and displacing nature, especially nature as embodied in the female. Merchant discusses how Francis Bacon, in his essay entitled "The Masculine Birth of Time," refers to nature as a female who must be controlled, and in "De Augmentis" Bacon argues that art must be used for control. Of nature he says, "She is put in constraint, molded, and made as it were new by art, and the hand of man." This control must be taken because she [nature] can show "perverseness, insolence, and forwardness." 32

Othello thinks that Desdemona is not only an adulteress but also disobedient and forward. Her suit for Cassio is unseemly and she grates on Othello's nerves as she repeatedly insists that he reinstate Cassio to his former place in Othello's army. For him Desdemona is no longer chaste, but also no longer obedient and not often enough silent, and as Kelso and Hull explain, chastity, silence, and obedience were
chief virtues in the Renaissance lady. Thus, out of control, Desdemona must again be brought under Othello's dominion. When she calls him "my lord" in Act V, he no longer believes that she speaks truly.

Othello must fashion Desdemona by first reversing and then re-enacting Pygmalion's art. Pygmalion, like Othello, mistrusts women and lives for years without a wife until he sculpts his ideal bride and prays to Venus to give her the breath of life. In Golding's translation of Ovid we read that Pygmalion's creation is beautiful, "of such proportion, shape, and grace as nature never gave," and through Castiglione's discussion of fashioning the ideal woman we see that the Renaissance saw Pygmalion's creation as chaste, relatively silent, and obedient as well. But unlike Pygmalion's bride, Desdemona has a prior existence in nature, and she has allegedly become an unchaste woman. Thus, Othello must make Desdemona chaste again by sculpting her into the stillness and obedience of a statue. In murdering Desdemona Othello thinks of killing and then recreating. Looking on Desdemona in the bedroom scene of Act V, he thinks,

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me . . . (V.i.8-9).

Othello here addresses the candle, but the candle as "flaming minister" alludes to the fiendish light and life of Desdemona's apparently unchaste body. Thus, Othello thinks of quenching the literal light as well as the life of his wife. Pygmalion first creates the statue, places it in his bed, and then goes to Venus to pray for the breath of life for his
creation. Othello creates a statue in an attempt to kill the evil in the body, the devilish "flaming minister." He then would pray to have the pure life, the soul life, restored.

But the pure life for Othello, the Pauline dualist, is the life of the soul. This is the light he wishes to recreate. He enters the bedchamber where Desdemona sleeps and speaks to heaven,

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars (V.ii.1-2).

He thinks of heaven and thinks of saving his soul as well as hers. Yet, even while speaking to heaven about chastity, he thinks of and desires the beauty of the body. He continues,

It is the cause, yet I'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster (3-5).

But the body he speaks of here, the sculpted body of "monumental alabaster," is the body subdued by the transcendent soul, not the body imprisoning the soul as in Shakespeare's sonnet.

Othello's desire here is Bataille's eroticism, the attempt, as in the reunion scene in Act II, to transcend reproductive sexuality, the desire that traverses the body, but aims for death. Thus, Othello gently commands the silent, sleeping Desdemona as he kisses her,

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after ... (V.ii.18-19).
In sleep as in death, Desdemona is controllable, silent, chaste. Nature is subdued. A dead or sleeping body is a safe body, like a statue. Thus, Othello can love it. He is like Hamlet, who, as Gohlke observes, only feels free to love Ophelia when she is dead. Like the bride in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the dead Desdemona is a bride forever "unravish'd" in art.

Othello demonstrates the male fear of what can happen when a woman is alive, her body subject to lower nature, rather than still in art. Although the starting point for Othello and Pygmalion is different (insofar as Desdemona is already alive, while Pygmalion's wife has no prior existence in nature), both men use art as a means of control. Pygmalion mistrusts living women and prefers his own sculpture, that which he creates and rules. After having prayed to Venus, Pygmalion kisses his statue to life, but it is a life over which he has dominion. Othello gives a death kiss because Desdemona is safe, tamed in death.

Both Pygmalion and Othello control their brides in bed. In Golding's translation, Pygmalion came home, and

... straightway Pygmalion did repair
Unto the image of his wench, and leaning on the bed
Did kiss her. In her body a warmthness seemed to spread;
He put his mouth again to hers, and on her breasts did lay
His hand ... 37

The wife here is a sexual object. The bed is the setting for Pygmalion's art. The bed is also the scene of Othello's art, but Othello's sexual ethic will not allow him to fully enjoy the pleasures of the bed or the warmthness of Desdemona's body. The soldier must inject violence into the
bed that he feels has been violated. The bed is the scene of strife, combat. Sexuality and erotic death, love and war, lie and truth, appearance and reality confront each other in battle in this climactic scene where nature is killed into art. The clashing of opposites here comprises the final "tragic lodging" of Othello's and Desdemona's bed.38

The scene is tragic here because of the confusion of lie and truth, the subjection of love to war, and the violent separation of the body and soul by human hands. Othello comprehends the Pauline ethic in his mistrust of the flesh, but he fails to comprehend the larger Christian rejection of violence. His mistrust of lower nature leads him to divide experience and reject one half of it through violence. But in violating lower nature, he also violates the higher order of nature. Thus, Desdemona tells Othello as she learns of his intention to kill her, "That death's unnatural that kills for loving" (V.ii.42). The Pauline ethic strains under Othello's alien and pre-Christian sense of justice.

Othello's polarization of experience constitutes his failure. He has not understood that appearance (Desdemona's) can be reality. Instead, he thinks that Desdemona, like the Bianca whom Iago uses, is a whore, and he thinks that whores (women) are the agents of the devil. Too late, he learns that the devil can reside in men who appear to be honest. Too late, Othello asks Cassio to talk to Iago:

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body (V.ii.302-303).
His soul and body are lost, not through Desdemona, but through his own and Iago's disdain for a world of women, peace, and natural increase. After killing Desdemona and thereby rejecting feminine values and the world of nature, he comes to think that he will be rejected in heaven and that his soul and body will find their union in hell:

... Where should Othello go? Now: how dost thou [Desdemona] look now? O ill-starr'd wench Pale as thy smock, when we shall meet at count, This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven And fiends will snatch at it ... (V.ii.272-275).

Speaking to the dead Desdemona, he continues

... cold, cold my girl Even like thy chastity ... (275-276).

What is to be done with chastity? What is to be done with a cold statue? Unlike Pygmalion, Othello cannot pray to Venus for warmth and life for his creation because he, himself, has taken away that warmth. For warmth and fire, he can only turn in this moment to his partner, the devil he feared in nature.

Whip me, you devils From the possession of this heavenly sight, Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur, Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! (278-281)

The chaos of nature in Othello, harsh winds and fires, is found to exist in men's (Othello's and Iago's) murderous imaginations.
It is quite possible to see Othello in this passage, as Greenblatt sees him, engaging in a "necrophilic fantasy." Again we see that Othello can now only love the dead Desdemona. He continues,

O Desdemona, Desdemona dead,  
Oh, oh, oh.

He can lean on Desdemona's bed here, and in the presence of the dead woman who is out of nature, he can be in nature, be sexual. Like the young man in Sandys's version of the Pygmalion story, Othello may be seen in this passage as desperately seeking an alternative to the cold chastity of the statue that he has created. The young man, it is said, ran to the temple where the statue of the beautiful woman was kept and he attempted to warm it with his kisses, but "contaminated it with his lust." The implicit DeSadian sexuality of this scene is one more erotic moment where Othello is moved by death, not life. He wounds Iago, and boasts, "For in my sense, 'tis happiness to die" (291).

The world of Othello contains a spiritual darkness which resides in the evil Iago, the gullible Roderigo, the intolerant Brabantio, and the ineffectual Cassio as well as in the Moor. Most of the scenes are night scenes. The world of Othello is a world of chaos which is companion to darkness, but it is not the feared chaos of women's nature. The chaos lies in the senseless movement between the opposites that pervade the world of the play. Thus, there is no real catharsis in this play. Othello's eroticism and his static art creation fail to bring
transcendence, and the play itself, Shakespeare's art, displays no viable alternative to Othello's fashioning of a woman.

Rather, what fills the stage is Othello's dazzling but insubstantial rhetoric. His dying words, like his speech to the Senate in Act I, are another dizzying display of the disjunction between love and violence.

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,
Killing myself to die upon a kiss (V.ii.359-360).

His last speech, a tale of his service to Venice by killing a Turk, is but another of his tales of strife and war. His tale evokes death, but even as killing for love is "unnatural," so the art of storytelling that promotes death is unnatural. Nature is dead. Desdemona does not listen anymore.
NOTES


2 Terms such as soul, mind, spirit are used interchangeably to name the incorporeal in Othello because the play does not seem to necessitate distinctions being made between, for example, soul and spirit. See the reference to Rosemary Radford Ruether in my Introduction, p.6, on how the female is linked to the corporeal and the male to the spiritual.


10 David Scott Kastan, "Shakespeare and the Way of Womenkind," Daedalus, III, No. 3 (Summer 1982), p. 120.


12 Greenblatt, see Chapter Six, especially pp. 238 ff.

14 Heilman, p. 181.


16 Heilman, pp. 187, 181-188.

17 Gohlke, p. 170.

18 King James Bible, I Corinthians 7: 8-9. Other references to the Bible are taken from the King James version and cited in the text.


23 See Greenblatt, on Iago's fashioning Othello, pp. 234, 237, especially. Iago indirectly and directly fashions Desdemona.

24 Carol Thomas Neely, "Women and Men in Othello: 'What should such a fool do with such a good woman',' in The Woman's Part, pp. 211-239. Neely sees Emilia as fulcrum of the drama, one who "recognizes the central conflict" between men and women.


26 Snow, p. 388.

27 Bataille, p. 11.

28 Ibid., p. 17.

29 Neely, p. 217.


32 Sir Francis Bacon, "The Masculine Birth of Time," in The Philosophy of Francis Bacon, ed. and trans. Benjamin Farrington (Liverpool, England:

33 See earlier references to Kelso and Hull in my Introduction, pp. 7, 8.


36 Gohlke, p. 173.

37 Golding's translation of Ovid's Metamorphosis, 11.304-308.

38 See Ridley's note in the Arden edition on "loading" and "lodging," p. 197.

39 Greenblatt, p. 252.

PART TWO - FEMALE SELF-FASHIONING

To play with mimesis is, therefore, for a woman, to attempt to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse . . . It is also to "unveil" the fact that if women mime so well, they do not simply reabsorb themselves in this function. They also remain elsewhere.

-Luce Irigaray in "Pouvoir du discours," translated by Mary Jacobus
III. "Thy mother plays": Kinetic and Static Art in The Winter's Tale

Of the studies of art and nature in The Winter's Tale, that of Patricia Southard Gourlay is most concerned with art and nature as female properties in the play. Gourlay sees the three major female characters—Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita—as agents of the "subversive and creative power of love, art and nature." According to Gourlay, the women of The Winter's Tale use art and nature to triumph totally over Leontes' and the general male sense of order and reason. Yet, a closer examination of the presentation of art and nature in The Winter's Tale suggests that although female characters are vital in the play, Paulina's art and Hermione's participation in that art are not so subversive as to triumph completely over male order. Gourlay discusses Paulina's use of subversive art, yet she does not discuss the narrative aspect of The Winter's Tale and what appears to me to be a powerful male narrative mode. Although Leontes is finally influenced by the women of the play and is led by them to repentance, nevertheless patriarchal order, the valuing of male legitimacy and female chastity, remains throughout the play. It is necessary, then, to explore general distinctions between male and female approaches to art in The Winter's Tale and to look at the relationship of these arts to nature.

Although women may engage in narrative art and men in dramatic art, it nevertheless appears to me that the narrative mode is used more significantly by males and the dramatic mode is used more by females.
Mainly Leontes, but also other males conceive of art in a narrative mode (storytelling) that eventually leads to the static visual mode of Hermione's frozen statue. The women of The Winter's Tale are mainly kinetic or dramatic artists, who use the cyclical and unpredictable changes of nature to create a theater for regenerating life, but their art is transient.

As in The Tempest and Othello, the male protagonist of The Winter's Tale (both husband and father) distrusts nature as revealed in female sexuality. Female sexuality and reproductive processes as seen in Hermione's pregnancy and suggested by her potentially volatile, charming, and apparently unchaste behavior with Polixenes form the scene of a theater that Leontes finds threatening. Leontes attempts to control this threatening drama by directing female dramatic movement into what becomes for him a more predictable narrative, and eventually results in an acceptable pictorial artistic mode. Certainly the pictorial art of the statue appearing after Hermione's long absence is dramatically effective. Yet, what at first appears in Act V as Julio Romano's Pygmalion-like creation and as Paulina's property is really a static art form which, at least indirectly, results from Leontes' jealousy. This jealousy leads Hermione to a silent, static, death-like state for sixteen years. The women, Paulina and Hermione, temporarily create drama out of this static male art, but finally they are at least somewhat 'subdued again by Leontes' powerful, although newly modified, narrative mode.
Male Narrative and the Need for Control

Barbara Mowat observes the need for serious study of the narrative within the dramatic mode of Shakespeare's Romances, and she notes that the narrative within these plays not only "breaks the dramatic illusion by creating aesthetic distance," but it also serves as a structural device to fill in the gaps created by the breakdown of dramatic form.³ The narrative to which Mowat refers in The Winter's Tale is that of "Father Time" in Act IV and that of the gentlemen, who narrate the recognition scene, V.ii, in which Perdita is restored to Leontes.⁴ To Mowat's concern with narration as structural and formal device must be added a sense of the sexual politics and human desires that determine the relationship between narrative and dramatic modes.

The relationships between male and female characters, husband and wife, father and daughter, and the desire of the male to control the female Other results in a peculiarly male use of narrative in The Tempest, Othello, and in The Winter's Tale. In The Tempest, Prospero fashions Miranda's identity by narrating her history. As Greenblatt has explained, both Iago and Othello adopt narrative modes,⁵ and Othello tells Desdemona the story of his life and thereby fashions her as his wife and temporarily, as his "fair warrior." The male narrative of events in The Winter's Tale is less overt than in The Tempest and Othello, but Leontes' narrative is more sustained than Othello's and Prospero's and is significant as an attempt to replace female drama whose substance is mutable and unpredictable nature. In the recognition scene of V.ii, for example, male narrative asserts itself. Shakespeare does not show the audience, but rather lets three males tell
the audience of what happens when Perdita is restored to Sicilia. The use of narration rather than staging does not merely create "aesthetic distance," but, more specifically, distances the audience from vital and direct experience of Perdita's importance. This narration renders the male perception of events dominant. Perdita remains absent and her voice is silent here.

Writing on the difference between the narrative and the dramatic mode, Robert Kellogg and Robert Scholes remind us that characters in drama directly act out behavior for an audience, whereas in narrative, a storyteller must be present to describe actions. The difference is one between telling and showing, between control by the teller in narrative and potentially less control by the author in drama where characters act on stage. Further, one may observe that narrative moves in linear time, that is, along a forward moving line of events. While narrative may move backward, as in flashbacks, the movement remains linear; the events described are mainly the events of male history and female silence. As Julia Kristeva explains in her essay, "Women's Time," linear time is essentially male, the time of historical progression. This, then, is the time of what I am calling male narrative and female silence.

Cyclical time, according to Kristeva, is female, or "woman's time." It is the time or rhythm of nature's seasonal changes and of female biological and reproductive changes, the time in which death is transformed by rebirth. In contrast to linear time, cyclical time is multidimensional and thus less predictable and susceptible to control because the phases of a cycle do not always occur exactly as before. Thus, cyclical time is more akin to the dramatic mode and its
multidimensional movement in space and time. The dramatic mode is one in which a variety of gesture, business, music, and disguise occurs. This mode blends temporal and visual arts, and is therefore kinetic rather than static.

Interestingly, in Shakespeare's plays, it is female characters who most notably act by assuming disguise. As noted previously, although men are seen as capable of dissembling and deceit, in the popular Renaissance view, women more than men are seen as false actors, capable of a variety of faces and disguises. Women are seductive, the daughters of Eve. Thus, women's acting must be brought under control by men. In The Winter's Tale Leontes distrusts female sexuality which he connects to female acting, and he seeks to control this acting.

As critics such as Anne Barton and Robert Egan have pointed out, The Winter's Tale abounds in theater metaphors, and Leontes, as well as other characters, frequently uses these metaphors. He may, therefore, initially be perceived as an advocate of dramatic art. However, Leontes' view of acting, especially in relation to women, is like the popular Renaissance view, a negative view. Somewhat like Prospero, Leontes wishes to control and even cancel dramatic action on the stage, and like Shakespeare himself, Leontes submits drama and time to a constricting narration of events.

As patristic ruler, Leontes attempts to control the Sicilian world of The Winter's Tale and especially to control his wife. He chides Antigonus and holds him in disdain for not being able to control Paulina. Observing Hermione's behavior with Polixenes in Act I, Leontes is aware of the dimension of life as a theater. Like Prospero, who
continually calls the audience's attention to the artificiality of the theater world, Leontes calls our attention to Hermione's action. He mistrusts theater, and he moves his world from dramatic free-play to a linear and constraining narrative process that eventually leads to closure in death and in static visual art. Leontes is obsessed with the patriarchal concerns of female chastity and male legitimacy. His wife must fulfill his desire for the ideal chaste and obedient Renaissance lady, and he must be certain that he has an heir to his throne, preferably a male heir. As The Winter's Tale opens, Leontes has what he desires, a male heir, Mamillius, and his wife, Hermione, is his high-born, peerless, compliant, and even silent wife. But as he enjoins her to speak and act on his behalf in order to keep Polixenes in Sicilia, Leontes perceives the action that ensues as no longer under his control.

When Leontes first appears in Act I, he functions as director of the scene of Hermione's and Polixenes' dialogue. His first words to Hermione are directorial: "Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you" (I.11.27). Hermione, the obedient wife, complies with his wishes and proceeds to persuade Polixenes to remain in Sicilia. She begins to jest with Polixenes about his and Leontes' boyhood "tricks" and sexual temptations. But the familiarity and jouissance in Hermione's dialogue with Polixenes, her gestures (walking with him and giving her hand to him as the text seems to call for) are too much for Leontes to cope with. C. L. Barber argues that Leontes projects his own homosexual desire for Polixenes onto Hermione in this scene;¹¹ but whatever Leontes' interest in Polixenes, Leontes mainly doubts Hermione's behavior as the play...
progresses. After Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, Leontes is enraged and in an aside angrily mutters, "

... Too hot, too hot.
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances
But not for joy--not joy  (I.ii.108-111).

He is anxious about the nature of his friendship with Polixenes, but his anxiety about Hermione's too free and too hot a hand is reminiscent of Othello's jealous suspicions aroused by Desdemona's allegedly too free a hand that reveals itself in its hotness and moistness. Leontes continues:

... This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent: 'tmay I grant:
But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practis'd smiles
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' th' deer --0, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows. Mamillius,
Art thou my boy?    (I.ii.111-120).

The stage action described here is no longer favorable to Leontes, and he equates Hermione's gestures with liberty, fertility, and unchastity, and thus at least briefly questions the legitimacy of his son, Mamillius, and this prefigures his concern with the legitimacy of the second child. As the scene that Leontes cannot control progresses, his attention becomes increasingly focused on Hermione's apparent unchastity and on his role as a cuckold. As Polixenes and Hermione leave the stage, Leontes, feeling powerless and frustrated, exclaims,
Like Othello, the soldier, whose "occupation" has gone when he thinks
Desdemona is unchaste, so Leontes, the actor-manager, can no longer
play a dominant role. He can only play a disgraced part, the cuckold,
if Hermione plays. As J. H. P. Pafford points out, the word "play"
here has several meanings, but in Leontes' view, Hermione goes beyond
her part as wife and plays the role of adulteress. "Play" here, then,
points to actress-adulteress.

When Hermione seemingly plays the role of adulteress, Leontes
can no longer control the action and he slips from his role as actor-
director into the realm of his insane imagination where he becomes
narrator of Hermione's story and attempts to control her fate. What
he then says is no longer consistent with what the audience sees on the
stage. Leontes constructs a story for Camillo. He apparently believes,
and tells Camillo, that the people of Sicily gossip about his (Leontes')
cuckoldry. In his tale to Camillo, he fashions Hermione as a whore.

Leontes: Ha' not you seen, Camillo?
(But that's past doubt: you have, or your eye
Is thicker than a cuckold's horn) or heard?
(For to a vision so apparent rumor
Cannot be mute) or thought? (for cogitation
Resides not in that man that does not think)
My wife is slippery? If thou wilt confess,
Or else be impudently negative,
To have nor eyes, nor ears, nor thought, then
My wife's a hobby horse, deserves a name
As rank as any flax-wench that puts to
Before her troth-plight: say't and justify it!
(I.ii.267-278).
While continually evoking what should be visible to the eye, what should be performed, Leontes can provide no evidence for his accusations. The action he implies is never seen on stage. The telling must suffice. Word is law: "say't and justify it!" Obsessed with what neither Camillo nor the audience can see, Leontes continues to create a narrative imposition which he mainly masks through his use of the interrogative mood.

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
Of laughter with a sign (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty)? horning foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
Blind with the pin and web, but theirs; theirs only
(I.ii.284-291).

Leontes' imagination is full. Unlike Othello, he is no outsider and needs no Iago to insinuate that his wife is unfaithful. He speaks with the authority of one schooled in correct social behavior and of one who knows the signs of infidelity.

But whether Leontes is a reliable or unreliable narrator, he is the ruler in Sicilia, and he uses his apparent omniscience to make of fiction a reality. Leontes usurps what Gerald Else, referring to Aristotle, calls the "sovereignty" of the narrative mode. The narrator can seem to be anywhere in time and space, and thereby report a variety of actions. Leontes appropriates the sovereignty of the narrator in order to meet the demands of the patriarchal family and male legitimacy, in order to fulfill the continuous linear movement
of male history in which his legitimate son, Mamillius, will inherit his throne. If the wife is unfaithful, she must be subdued and imprisoned, so that she will not have a detrimental effect upon the education of the prince. Thus, Hermione must be kept away from Mamillius, and any bastard she produces must be expelled from Sicilia. Leontes' imagination leads to such a plot, a plot realized not through stage action, but through Leontes' sovereign words.

Leontes has the major function as narrator in *The Winter's Tale*, but that narrative is generally a male prerogative can be seen in the parts of Antigonus, Autolycus, and most significantly, of Mamillius, the prince. Like Leontes, Polixenes exhibits in Act I a mistrust of female sexuality. He equates loss of innocence with women's temptations or their seduction of men. Seen briefly as ruler and father, Polixenes' role largely parallels Leontes'. As Coppélia Kahn points out, Polixenes is Leontes' double. As Robert Egan says, only Camillo, who is neither father, husband, nor ruler, shows some resistance to Leontes' narrative construction. Camillo vouches for Hermione's virtue, and makes possible Perdita's and Florizel's escape from Bohemia. Yet, as Leontes' subject, Camillo is not opposed to the king's sovereignty; he is only opposed to his erroneous judgment.

Initially, Antigonus seems to reject Leontes' story and to concur with Paulina's judgment of Hermione as innocent. However, in the last scene of Act III before he is killed by the bear, Antigonus recounts the dream he had. His interpretation and narration of his dream presents, not the truth of Hermione's innocence, but rather, continues Leontes' false narrative. Antigonus narrates a causal line of action:
Antigonus' dream is a dream of adultery, bastardry, and death. It is the same dream that informs Leontes' narrative. Male dreams of adultery become equated with male narrative in The Winter's Tale. In her trial scene, Hermione answers Leontes' accusations of adultery with,

Sir,
You speak a language that I understand not:
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down. (III.ii.79-82).

Leontes answers, "Your actions are my dreams./You had a bastard by Polixenes" (83-84). Leontes' and Antigonus' dreams are false tales that can only propagate destruction and death.

Autolycus, a clownish figure, also tells false tales to the shepherds in the play, but in keeping with the festive mood of Bohemia, Autolycus' tales are playful and fanciful; they parody Leontes' tale. Joan Hartwig and J. H. P. Pafford discuss the parallels between Autolycus and Leontes. As Hartwig suggests, Autolycus becomes an "onstage substitute" for Leontes in some parts of the Bohemia scenes. Autolycus' tale of robbery inverts vice and virtue even as Leontes turns Hermione's virtue into vice. Also, Autolycus tells a tale of a chaste maid whose flesh

Hermione has suffered death; and that Apollo would, this being indeed the issue Of King Polixenes, it [the baby] should be here laid, Either for life or death, upon the earth Of its right father... poor wretch, That for thy mother's fault art thus expos'd To loss and what may follow... (III.iii.42-51).
was turned into a cold fish. As Autolycus explains to Mopsa and Dorca, this is a sad tale, and as such, it reflects the morbidity of first part of The Winter's Tale and the essential morbidity in Hermione's fate as a chaste woman whose body must be transformed into a cold art through Leontes' plotting of her destiny.

But Autolycus' tales are easily recognized as fictions, and they are subsumed in the realm of the Bohemian festive theater. No such festivity is able to absorb Mamillius' penchant for telling sad tales. The first scene of Act II in which Mamillius is seen with his mother and her attendants is a scene which vividly demonstrates how male narrative is set against female acting or play. The seven year old prince speaks authoritatively in this scene, telling the women about women's make-up or false faces. He is asked by his playful but tired mother to fill the time with a tale. While the pregnant Hermione shows a jovial attitude about a tale of "sprites and goblins," Mamillius thinks of his tale as sad. Hermione's pregnancy and the women's playfulness in this scene suggest a mood of spring and renewal that follows winter, but Mamillius' insertion of a sad tale prefigures the continuance of winter and grief, and the coming of death.

As Mamillius begins to tale his tale in his mother's ear, Leontes enters and the characters become further embroiled in his narrative.

Leontes: How blest am I!
In my just censure! in my true opinion!

Camillo was his [Polixenes'] help in this, his pandar:
There is a plot against my life, my crown;
All's true that is mistrusted; that false villain,
Whom I employ'd, was pre-employ'd by him:
He has discovered my design, and I
Remain a pinched thing; yea, a very trick
For them to play at will (II.1.36-52).

Actions connected with Hermione's alleged adultery continue to a
theatrical nightmare that Leontes must stop by imagining and telling
his own plot. According to Leontes, Hermione plays and others "play
at will," with her, but Leontes himself is played with, deceived. Thus,
he must appropriate language, the primary tool of the narrator, and he
attempts the God-like act of commanding and naming a world into being.
Before his assembled lords he verbally establishes reality:

. . . I have said
She's an adulteress; I have said with whom:
More; she's a traitor, and Camillo is
A fedary with her, and one that knows,
What she should shame to know herself
But with her most vile principal, that she's
A bed-swerver, even as bad as those
That vulgars give bolds't titles; ay, and privy
To this their late escape (II.1.87-95).

Leontes here continues his practice, "say't and justify it."

After Hermione is sent to prison, Paulina first enters the play,
and initially it seems that her verbosity will excel Leontes' and that
she might usurp his role as teller of tales. Her plan is to tell
Leontes the counter-tale of Hermione's innocence.

He must be told on't and he shall: the office
Becomes a woman best. I'll take't upon me:
If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-look'd anger be
The trumpet any more . . . (II.ii.31-34).

But until Leontes has caused Hermione's apparent death, he out-tongues
Paulina, and she finally can only attempt to persuade him with silence,
the natural innocence and silence of the newborn baby.

The silence oft of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails (II.ii.41-42).

But Leontes cannot be persuaded by the life-giving forces of nature
represented through the baby. The only silence that moves him is the
silence of death and frozen art.

Leontes' story silences all contrary stories and halts the portrayal
of innocence and virtue. In the trial scene, Hermione explains to
Leontes:

. . . You, my lord, best know
(Who lest will seem to do so) my past life
Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true,
As I am now unhappy; which is more
Than history can pattern, through devis'd
And played to take spectators . . . (II.ii.32-37).

In Leontes' world, no play can portray Hermione's unhappiness, which
results from her slandered name. Not even the word of Apollo holds
power for Leontes. Hermione, like the baby, must be made silent and
be absent for sixteen years.

Like Othello, Leontes fashions the allegedly unchaste woman by
silencing her in death. As Peter Brooks explains in an essay on
narrative, "The desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the
end," for quiescence, death, for non-narratibility. Narrative must
destroy itself; narrative manifests the desire for absolute control that
leads to closure. Thus, only a static art can be the end of narrative
movement.

Only the violence of Mamillius' death can release Leontes' from his
myopic and linear construction of history and lead him, tentatively at
least, to embrace the truth of action, or play.

Leontes: I'll reconcile me to Polixenes
     New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo
     (III.ii.155-156).

But it is apparently too late for Leontes to act, to join Hermione in
the sexual play of wooing, the very capacity that he has earlier mistrusted
in her. Soon after Mamillius' death Hermione seems to be dead, and as
Hermione has said, grief is "more than history can pattern." There is
no story left to tell in Sicilia, and the scene shifts to new-found life
and drama in Bohemia.

Nature and Female Dramatic Art

In Sicilia, nature, particularly in relation to women, is held in
suspicion by males. In Act I Polixenes explains that his wife and
Hermione were sources of temptation, and in the dialogue which ensues,
Hermione asks if women are devils. Women in the Renaissance were often
connected with the devil, witchcraft, and nature's disorder. Women's
temptating men to sex marks for Polixenes his and Leontes' fall from
innocence. In Act II, Leontes calls Paulina a "mankind witch. A most intelligencing bawd" (II.iii.68-69). It is to him as though Paulina, like Hermione, is partner to the devil as she carries what appears to be a bastard child. Leontes interrupts a conversation with Mamillius to mutter to himself about unfaithful wifes, and he links them to a corrupt and chaotic nature:

. . . Physic for't there's none;
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
Where 'tis predominant, and 'tis powerful, think it,
From east, west, north, and south; be it concluded,
No barricado for a belly. Know't
It will let in and out the enemy,
With bag and baggage . . . (I.ii.200-206).

Hermione's swollen belly is not a sign of prosperity but of bawdy nature, of lack of control of bawdy desires, of chaos. Leontes' linear imagination, his desire for control, is disturbed by the cyclical and multi-dimensional aspect of earthly nature in women's sexuality and reproductive processes. The roundness of earth and women's bellies signals loss of direction, sexual indiscretion, and unpredictability.

Hermione, on the other hand, an alleged "player," has a more mobile imagination and a more accommodating and hopeful view of nature's cycles. She, too, connects unfavorable events with nature, but for her nature is variable and undergoes rejuvenating phases as well as unfavorable ones. In distress, she is nevertheless hopeful.

There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient til the heavens look
With an aspect more favorable . . . (II.ii.105-107).
Paulina also expresses a tentatively positive view of nature as she encounters Hermione's baby daughter. She tells the gaoler,

This child was prisoner to the womb, and is
By law and process of great nature, thence
Free'd and enfranchis'd . . . (II.ii.59-61).

Lower nature, the physical creation, as seen here in the womb is viewed as a prison, but "great nature," higher nature, frees one from civil­ization, and its restrictions, from the prison of Sicilia. Further, Paulina sees this higher nature as female and redemptive:

And thou, good goddess Nature, which has made it [the baby]
So like to him that got it . . . (II.iii.103-104).

Great Nature provides assurance that the child is Leontes' offspring because the child resembles him.

One of the two central displays of the beneficence of nature in its connection females is seen in what Tayler calls Perdita's natural (artless and instinctual) playing (dramatizing or ritualizing) of a scene. She practices a paradoxically natural or artless art.21 In the sheep-shearing festivity scene, Perdita combines aspects of nature and playmaking to produce joyful entertainment, not the destructive enter­tainment of women that Leontes envisioned in Act I.

It may seem that Polixenes is the exponent of the unity of art and nature in the festivity scene, when he explains to Perdita,
... so, over that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does not mend nature—change it rather—but
The art itself is nature (IV.iv.93-97).

But as critics such as Pafford and Edward Tayler point out, Polixenes' lines are filled with dramatic irony insofar as he "appears conscious only of the horticultural application of his words," while later obstructing the marriage of Perdita and Florizel. In human practice, Polixenes cannot support the marriage of a supposedly baser kind to a "gentler scion."

The entire nature-art debate between Perdita and Polixenes is complex and, as Tayler suggests, is made more complex by Shakespeare's "equivocal vocabulary." Neither Polixenes nor Perdita shows a full acceptance of nature. Polixenes speaks of grafting, which is the imposition of human art onto nature, and Perdita rejects gillyvors as the bastards of nature. She mistrusts the apparently false art of painted women, and she mistrusts lower nature, but affirms the supremacy of "great creating Nature," (IV.iv.88), natura naturans. Yet, if again one looks at actual practice, it can be seen that Perdita, not Polixenes, is identified with the cyclical and regenerative powers of nature and its union with theatrical art in The Winter's Tale.

Perdita's actions combine art and nature. Her art is not the false art of deceit, or "playing" in the pejorative sense of cunning or trickery, but neither is her art the narrative art of control that
Leontes practices. Perdita engages in the less predictable and kinetic art of the theater. She "plays" insofar as she is an actress enjoining others to act. But if Perdita's acting is not false, neither is her pastoral theater like that of Prospero. Prospero continually reminds the audience of the artificiality of his theater in order to displace nature and retard female sexuality. The theater over which Perdita presides is like the ancient shepherds' festivals that Robert Weimann tells us influenced Shakespeare's writing. In such a festivity theater, writes Weimann,

> the function of the theater itself is utopian, bringing regeneration to the spirit and solidarity to the community. It is a theater old and new, but consistently original in its incipient awareness of the spatial, temporal, verbal, and emotional correlatives of dramatic action. "

The theater over which Perdita presides exhibits these various "correlatives of dramatic action" and brings unity to the community. The sheep-shearing festivity of *The Winter's Tale* is a theater of speech, dance, music, and disguise, and one where love is enacted between Florizel and Perdita. Perdita's role is to exhibit the cyclical aspect and healing powers of nature in the variety of seasonal flowers and herbs that she gives to her guests. Where Polixenes, like Leontes, is divisive, Perdita is a force of unity between old and young, noblemen and shepherds, males and females.

In the disguise which Florizel has unwittingly created for her, Perdita is a self-conscious player, who takes the pastoral world as her stage.
Methinks I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals. Sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition (IV.iv.133-135).

Although males, too, are disguised in this scene, it is Perdita's
disguise that conspicuously combines art and nature because the disguise
as Whitsun queen is an art that yet reveals Perdita's true nature, that
is, her noble disposition.

The disguise also reveals Perdita's sensuality and her penchant for
play, for acting to create fun and entertainment. Florizel presents
himself as the chaste constant lover, like Leontes, the representative
of civilization, who holds bodily desires and the heat of lust in
disdain. Perdita's value for Florizel lies in her beauty, but also in
her chastity. Florizel explains,

 Đặc biệt... my desires
Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
Burn hotter than my fait (IV.iv.3-5).

While Florizel speaks for restraint on desires, Perdita, in contrast
to the typical critical perception of her, is frankly sensual. She
laments the malady of maidenhood--death, and speaks for love and life.
When Florizel asks if the garlands of love she wishes to give him
might be like those put on a corpse, his imagination, like Leontes',
links love, sexuality, and death. Perdita, however, answers him that
the garlands she would give are
like a bank, for love to lie and play on: 
Not like a corpse: or if—not to be buried,
But quick and in my arms. Come, take your flowers 
(IV.iv.130-132).

Like Hermione, Perdita is an instrument of nature's cycles, a creature of play, a spokeswoman for life, not death.

Much has been written about Perdita as a Persephone (and Hermione as a Demeter) figure, but the analogy between Perdita and Persephone seems especially important in the light of Shakespeare's commingling of female cyclical nature and drama in the festivity scene. The ancient spring rituals of renewal that underlie the festivity scene of The Winter's Tale portray nature as female through the earth's capacity for regeneration.

Anne Barton observes that Shakespeare's disillusionment with his own theater, the Globe, is suggested by his sustained portrayal of country festivals in the last plays. It is as though he felt that civilized society and city theater could not sustain the elemental features of drama. In The Winter's Tale specifically, not Leontes' court nor Polixenes' Bohemia, but the shepherd's Bohemia, where Perdita is central, becomes the stage on which nature and its seasonal cycles become part of life-giving play.

Only through the return of Perdita, who represents wholesome play, can Hermione return to life and harmony be at least tentatively restored in Sicilia. The statue scene of Sicilia is, of course, the other central display of the beneficience of nature in its connection with theatrical or ritualistic art. Critics have tended to see the statue
scene as representing a rather complete renewal of society through the unity of art and nature. Yet, the union is not as complete as that achieved in *As You Like It* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. However, the women of *The Winter's Tale* do attempt to combine art and nature; Hermione participates temporarily in her re-fashioning insofar as she lets herself be released from Leontes' narrative and from the static art of the Pygmalion-like statue to become through Paulina's play part of the physical, or natural creation again. Paulina and Hermione take over the male, Pygmalion-like act of fashioning a bride by sculpting her. The audience is told that the famed Julio Romano sculpted the likeness of Hermione and perfectly aped nature, but a statue can never be a perfect imitation of nature because it lacks nature's movement, its mutability. Finally, we are confronted, not with what Julio Romano may have created, but with what Paulina and Hermione do with the apparent statue. Temporarily, they combine play (mocking with art and theatrical art) with nature (the living woman).

As D'Orsay Pearson explains, Paulina is seemingly an unruly witch-like woman, but Paulina's play is not that of the harmful witch in collusion with the devil. Her play shows her, rather, as a devotee of the "great goddess Nature" and as one faithful to Apollo's prophecy which declares that Leontes cannot have a wife again until that which is lost (Perdita) be found. The static art into which Hermione has been frozen for sixteen years by Leontes' narrative is transformed through Paulina's theatrical display. Hermione's "playing" with Polixenes in Act I and Perdita's playing in the festivity scene of Act IV are revealed in the statue scene of Act V as lawful and healthful play through Paulina's redemptive mocking art.
As Paulina prepares to open the curtain on the statue, she exclaims,

... But here it is: prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well
(V.iii.18-20).

In Golding's version of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Pygmalion kisses his cold statue to life and at the same time impregnates the woman he created. But it is first Perdita, not Leontes, who speaks of kissing the statue. Thus, the scene suggests that nature and life are propelled not merely by the male's sexual relation to the female but also by maternal and daughterly love. Furthermore, the males, particularly Leontes are rendered passive by the sight of the statue, subdued temporarily, Leontes says,

What you can make her do,
I am content to look on: what to speak
I am content to hear, ... (91-93).

The woman, Hermione, then, becomes the aggressive partner, the suitor, the actress. Polixenes and Camillo describe the stage action: "She embraces him!/She hangs about his neck!" (111-112).

Leontes is struck dumb in amazement and eventually able to utter only expletives and laudatory phrases. Paulina's theater cancels, at least temporarily, his narrative of adultery and death, suspends the art of telling tales. Only the living, moving stage act, not the tale, can restore belief and hope.
Paulina: That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale: but it appears she lives
Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while
(To Perdita) Please you to interpose, fair madam, kneel
And pray your mother's blessing. (To Hermione)
Turn, good lady,
Our Perdita is found (115-121).

Then, through Paulina's direction, Hermione, the actress, speaks praising the gods that Perdita is found. Both Paulina's and Hermione's focus on Perdita shows the female mode of renewal through the mother-daughter relationship and through cycles of birth and death, loss and gain. Old tales are shunned in this scene and the male mode of patrilinear succession and death is temporarily displaced. The women bring magic, play, and the time, not of historical progression as seen in the narrator-chorus, but instead they bring the cyclical temporality of music. This is the music of Paulina's theater that plays while faith is awakened.

The Return to Narrative

For all of the wonder that the women of The Winter's Tale provide, their healthy play is but a hiatus or festive holiday from patriarchal society and male historicity. Ultimately, Hermione, Perdita, and Paulina are under Leontes' aegis. He remains husband, father, and king. Perdita has adopted the values of patriarchy insofar as she rejects bastardry, and, as discussed earlier, although Paulina and Hermione have a more accommodating attitude toward nature than does Leontes, they, too, recognize the existence of "ill planets" and an imprisoning lower nature. Though Perdita is openly sensual and Hermione
engages in what Leontes calls play with Polixenes, the women never go beyond the bounds of chastity. Chastity and male legitimacy remain as values to be espoused.

In her last speech, Hermione is prepared to submit herself to narrative, a mode that the women's theater has only temporarily suspended. But one change occurs in narrativity; Hermione calls for the inclusion of the female voice within the realm of male narrative. This is the voice that has been silenced for sixteen years and which continued to be silenced in the narrated recognition scene of IV.iv. In her last speech, Hermione asks Perdita,

... Tell me, mine own,
Where has thou been preserv'd? Where liv'd? how found
Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the Oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd
Myself to see the issue (123-128).

Hermione desires that to Leontes' tale of bawdy nature, female unchastity, and death be added Perdita's tale of mutable and restorative nature. But nature cannot be revealed merely in verbal language; its processes must be enacted and experienced. The audience is able to know something of Perdita's story because it has seen the story dramatized, has participated in the ancient spring ritual, and been amazed by Hermione's dramatized return to life.

Yet, the world of nature and play where women fashion themselves is only an interlude in The Winter's Tale. Leontes tells Paulina to remove the actors and audience from her theatrical domain to his historical realm of control.
... Good Paulina,
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand, and answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were disserv'd; hastily lead away.

As in Act I, here Leontes uses the play metaphor, but in part at least
to mask his penchant for narrative, for the sovereign control of nature
and women through his mode of storytelling. Although, as critics such
as Gourlay have observed, Leontes repents and is full of wonder and awe
at Hermione's and Perdita's return, his desire for narrative art again
imposes itself onto the drama of art and nature. He knows that Hermione
is innocent of unchaste behavior, yet his and the other characters'
views of chastity, male dominance, and male legitimacy remain. In the
end there is at least an air of difference in Leontes' pursuit of
narrative. Each one telling his or her part will, appropriately, now
include the women's voices as well as the men's. However, the stories
to be told will involve a recounting of Hermione's sadness and death-
like absence as well as Perdita's recounting of an apparently blissful
life. Perhaps we feel more emphasis on life in the end. As such, the
play is a comedy, but it is one informed by tragedy. It contains the
female dramas of spring and renewal of life informed by tales, like
Mamillius', of a wintry mood and of death. In this light, it seems
appropriate that Shakespeare chose to call this play The Winter's Tale.
NOTES


4 Ibid.


8 Ibid., p. 17.


12 For a discussion of Othello and cuckoldry see Coppelia Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), pp. 120-121, 140-146.


Kahn, p. 215.

Egan, p. 56.


Tayler, p. 136.

Tayler, p. 138; Pafford, p. 94.

Tayler, p. 136.


See for example Tayler's discussion of Perdita's innocence, p. 130.

See for example Frey's discussion of the Proserpina myth, pp. 61-62.

Barton, p. 192.


30 For a discussion of the uses of to mock in The Winter's Tale see Peter Berek, "'As we are mocked with art': From Scorn to Transfiguration," in Studies in English Literature, 18, pp. 289-305.


IV. "A pageant truly play'd":

The Natural Art of Rosalind and Cleopatra

In The Winter's Tale, Polixenes peaks of the unity of art and nature, and in As You Like It Jaques proclaims that "all the world's a stage," thereby suggesting a oneness of the natural world and contrived or artificial place like the theater. Yet, although it is male characters who speak of or suggest a unity of art and nature, it is female characters who primarily enact it in these plays. Rosalind of As You Like It and Cleopatra of Antony and Cleopatra both intensify and sustain the theatrical artistry employed by Perdita, Paulina, and Hermione in The Winter's Tale. Yet, Rosalind and Cleopatra more fully fashion themselves; their kinetic theatrical art goes beyond that of the women in The Winter's Tale to further blur distinction between the theoretically separate domains of art and nature.

The world represented in Antony and Cleopatra is geographically vast, and it seems appropriate to this play that the characters use much hyperbole. In contrast, the world represented in As You Like It seems narrow, but the worlds dominated by the heroines of these plays, Egypt and Arden, both contain an internal vastness, a seeming boundlessness revealed through the infinity of inner (emotional and mental) resources employed in Cleopatra's and Rosalind's staging of performances. In Arden, as in Egypt, the resources of nature are used so as to transcend the level of male suspicions of that nature as embodied in women. Female
chastity is devalued and the dichotomous conceptions of patriarchal civilization are dissolved. Nothing like Othello's, Leontes', or Prospero's suppression of the feminine is allowed to dominate in Arden or Egypt.

Male narrative and graphic arts do not control or displace female nature in these worlds. Kent Talbot van den Berg notes a change from "narrative artifice" in the opening scenes of As You Like It to "theatrical artifice" in the forest scenes. Yet, he sees the "theatrical situation as an image of real life." The displacement of narrative by theatrical artifice is indeed important; however, in As You Like It as in Antony and Cleopatra, the theater of the heroines is unlike Jaques' theater; it is not simply "an image of real life." Rather, in the spirit of the Italian commedia dell'arte, the heroines of these plays play with mimesis, challenge and transgress the limits of ordinary reality and many of the categorical assumptions of patriarchal civilisation. Nature and art become interchangeable. Not only the dualistic perspectives separating nature and art, but also distinctions between truth and fiction, appearance and reality, male and female, are confounded in Cleopatra's and Rosalind's worlds. More than Perdita, Rosalind and Cleopatra confound dualistic perspectives through the oxymoronic quality of their "natural" role playing and staging of scenes, that is, through their instinctual or seemingly inherent tendency to assume a variety of postures. What is natural is also contrived, or artificial. Rosalind's and Cleopatra's natural art is so pervasive as to cancel any significant return to the patriarchal world of order and reason, legitimacy, chastity, and constancy.
Constancy and Chastity Devalued

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare gives the most sustained portrayal of one of his major love motifs: the interchangeability and inconstancy of lovers. In *As You Like It* the motif is elevated to a point of deliberation through Rosalind's self-conscious acting. Although chastity is maintained by the lovers, *As You Like It* plays havoc with the notion of constancy in love, and thereby suggests the potential for unchastity insofar as inconstancy is a form of emotional infidelity. This potential for emotional unchastity is repeatedly exposed through Rosalind's playing. In Act I, Celia and Rosalind prepare the stage for the mockery of constancy and truth in love.

Celia. . . . my sweet Rose, my
dear Rose, be merry.

Rosalind. From henceforth I will, coz, and devise sports, let
me see, what think you of falling in love?

Celia. Marry I prithee do, to make sport withal. But love
no man in good earnest, nor no further in sport
neither, than with safety of a pure blush thou mayst
in honour come off again (I.i.ii.21-28).

Celia encourages Rosalind to make a sport, or play of love, and to discontinue the play only at the point of losing her "honour," or chastity. Nevertheless, the thrust of Rosalind's action is toward play, mockery, counterfeiting, toward arts opposed to chaste constancy in spirit, if not in actuality. "Constancy," writes Marilyn Fench, "attaches language to unambiguous meaning, thus uniting heart and tongue, appearance and reality."² Celia's injunction to Rosalind to "love no man in good earnest" is anything but a command to constancy, to uniting
heart and tongue, appearance and reality. Yet, rather than holding up women's constancy as a subject of scorn in As You Like It, Shakespeare makes inconstancy, or emotional unchastity (both in males and females), an object of fun and a requisite of dynamic existence in the natural and artificial world of Arden.

Rosalind and Celia continue their dialogue with a discussion of chastity and beauty, Nature and Fortune. The very language of this dialogue is so slippery that no "unambiguous meaning" or sense of constancy can be found. There is not only uncertainty about what are the different gifts of nature and fortune, but also uncertainty about the relationship of "honesty" (chastity) to beauty or ugliness. Truth and beauty, appearance and reality are exposed early in As You Like It as inconstant, or ephemeral conceptions.

Numerous critics, for example, C. L. Barber, D. J. Palmer, and David Young, have commented on the quality of libertinism and relativity in As You Like It. Young traces what he calls the "equivocal tendencies" of the pastoral tradition in the play, and he notes the play's emphasis on "relativity, subjectivity, paradox, continual shifts of attitude and judgment." Chiefly through Rosalind's theatrical blending of action and language, but also through the commentary of Celia and the verbal sparring of Touchstone, Jaques, and Orlando, and the confusions in the minds of Silvius and Phebe, the relativity and equivocality on the stage of Arden continually divert the playgoer from focusing on or finding significance in the lovers' physical chasteness. The saturnalian spirit of the play is evoked as Act I ends and Rosalind and Celia leave for Arden, and Celia declares,
. . . Now go we in content
To liberty, and not to banishment (I.iii.133-134).

The uncertainty, freedom, and transgressions of Arden begin as Rosalind and Celia take on disguise. Britomart, in Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, takes on a male disguise and finds her chastity, among other virtues, challenged and finally rewarded. Rosalind's male disguise, however, forms an occasion to challenge the romantic notions of constancy and virtue held by Orlando and Silvius. Once in Arden, except for Oliver and Celia whose role in Arden is overshadowed by Rosalind's, the lovers undergo a series of encounters that define liberty as subjectivity, contradiction, emotional inconstancy, and confounding of opposites, qualities that make Arden delightful to an audience. The fool, Touchstone, is shown to be wise, and the courtly and wise (Rosalind and apparently Jaques) have qualities of the fool. Rosalind challenges Orlando's promise of constancy and Touchstone underscores this mood of inconstancy when he says he will marry an imperfect woman, Audrey, so that he can leave her after they are married. Silvius loves Phebe and Phebe loves Ganymede. Ganymede loves no one and Orlando, having no Rosalind, must pretend to love Ganymede. The traditional roles of male and female, wooer and wooed, often are reversed. Role-playing, mainly Rosalind's, becomes part of the variability and delightful inconstancy of human nature.

Rosalind is not only an actor in disguise, but also the manipulator/director of the circle of lovers. She presides over the lovers' inconstancy. As she begins to educate Orlando and to re-fashion herself and Orlando as lovers, Rosalind delivers a discourse on the unreliability of women as lovers. She tells Orlando how she will respond to his wooing:
. . . I, being but a
moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable,
longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish,
shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles, for
every passion something and for no passion truly
anything, as boys and women are for the most part
cattle of this colour; would now like him, now
loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear
him; now weep for him, then spit at him; that I
drave my suitor from his mad humour of love to a
living humour of madness . . . (III.iii.387-407).

Rosalind's self-consciousness here, aided by her disguise, suggests an
attitude toward inconstancy that is developed far beyond the unconscious
ludicrousness of the lovers of A Midsummer Night's Dream and beyond
Orsino's and Olivia's quick changes of love to round out the plot of
Twelfth Night. Inconstancy here is deliberately evoked by Rosalind as
play; it is for the audience a source of entertainment.

In The Winter's Tale, Leontes views Hermione's playing as an enter­
tainment that he does not like, and he sees himself as a cuckold in her
play. Hermione's alleged playing drives Leontes mad because it disturbs
his need for civilized order and control. However, in As You Like It, not
only does Rosalind speak deliberately of driving the lover, Orlando, mad,
but also madness becomes a cure for madness. To confront inconstancy is
to be cured of the madness that leads men to value constancy. Further,
Rosalind not only evokes female inconstancy, but also erases the double
standard of morality by calling male constancy into question. Not only
women, but also men are seen as fickle in Arden. When Orlando swears to
love Rosalind "forever, and a day," Rosalind-Ganymede replies,
Say a day, without the ever. No, no, Orlando, men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives (IV.i.138-141).

Although they remain chaste, neither Celia nor Rosalind are enamored of chastity. Celia realizes what Othello can only realize after Desdemona's death, namely that chastity is cold, lifeless. Of Orlando, Celia mockingly observes,

He hath bought a pair of cast lips of Diana. A nun of winter's sisterhood kisses not more religiously, the very ice of chastity is in them (III.iv.14-16).

The moment Orlando's chastity is established its value is also undermined by metaphors of rigidity and coldness, and if that is not enough, Orlando's chastity is not only undermined, but also his constancy called into question in Rosalind's rejoinder to Celia,

But why did he swear he would come this morning and comes not? (II.iv.17-18).

Celia replies that "there is no truth in him" (iv.19), and we become further entrenched in the play's mode of equivocality. Orlando is constant, yet inconstant, true, yet not true, has "hair of the dissembling color" yet of "good colour" (III.iv.6,9). Further, according to Rosalind and Celia in this same dialogue, he is brave, but his bravery is weakness: "All's brave that youth mounts and folly guides" (III.iv.41).
If As You Like It plays with the value of chaste constancy and creates delight in the potential for inconstancy, it stops short of presenting physical unchastity. However, in Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare approaches the Jacobean mood of Webster's The White Devil where Vittoria Corombona's unchastity becomes, if not the major attraction, certainly one of the major attractions of the play. The Roman focus on Cleopatra as an unchaste woman who embodies the fickleness of female nature and makes of Antony a fool is revealed by the opening scene of the play as Philo announces,

Look, where they come:
Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see (I.i.10-13).

Yet, this is the Roman view, not that of Cleopatra and ultimately not that of Antony in Egypt. Just as Vittoria's adultery is the center of interest and a major source of entertainment in Webster's play, so for Shakespeare's audience, Antony's and Cleopatra's adultery and Cleopatra's varied role playing and seeming inconstancy become the center of interest and a source of delight and finally of wonder. In the opening scene, Shakespeare immediately provides an alternative to the Roman view expressed by Philo, an alternative to the demand for chastity and patriarchal propriety. Antony and Cleopatra come onto the stage and, the audience is likely to be engaged, even overwhelmed, by the lovers' indifference to Philo and Demetrius, by the hyperbole in Antony's imagination, and by Cleopatra's boldness and her beauty.

In As You Like It, inconstancy in love is emotional unchastity which creates the potential for physical unchastity, but in Antony and Cleopatra,
constancy in love is ultimately upheld, while physical chastity is not a value. As French rightly observes, *Antony and Cleopatra* separates constancy from chastity. In French's words, the play presents "the removal of a high value placed on chastity . . ."\(^6\) Antony and Cleopatra are not chaste, but their love is dominant in the end. As French's discussion implies, it is the unchaste Cleopatra rather than the "chaste, constant, meek, and mild" Octavia who appeals to us.\(^7\)

Miranda, Hermione, and Desdemona are idealized by males when they resemble static statuesque or visual objects, cold and chaste, out of nature. Octavia, too, is statuesque, but her virtue is minimized in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cleopatra's messenger describes Octavia:

> She creeps:  
> Her motion and her station are as one  
> She shows a body rather than a life,  
> A statue, than a breather (III.iii.18-21).

The static art created by Prospero and Othello and caused by Leontes' jealousy has no place in Egypt.

What accounts for this reversal of values is in large part the delight the audience and other characters in the play take in Cleopatra's, like Rosalind's, theatrical artistry. This is an artistry informed not by the control of nature, but by the substance of human nature as revealed in female behavior, its infinite variety paired with the dynamic presence of the physical nature of Egypt. Arden combines art and nature insofar as the pastoral, the realm of benevolent physical nature is also artificial, that is, is presented through a variety of literary and dramatic conventions.\(^8\) Yet, more importantly, Arden combines art and nature through Rosalind's
evocation of the natural (inherent and inevitable, yet unpredictable and desirable) tendency of humans to play roles (engage in theatrical art). Egypt is far from being the idyll of Arden, but nevertheless through Cleopatra's acting and stage-managing, the artful in Egypt, as in Arden, is part of the natural. As several critics have noted, Cleopatra's mutability is allied with the cyclical and regenerative world of the Nile. Changes in the external physical world are both inevitable and unpredictable. The Nile annually floods and recedes, but it is not always possible to predict the exact time and amount of the flood. Regularity encompasses irregularity. Cleopatra's art shows constancy encompassing inconstancy, and the vitality and fertility of the Nile is the vitality and fertility of Cleopatra's being that makes Octavia's chaste constancy pale in contrast.

Octavius, like Philo, thinks that Antony has "given his empire/Up to a whore" (III.vi.66-67), and Antony himself in a moment of anger and military defeat calls Cleopatra "false soul of Egypt" (IV.xii.25) and "triple-turn'd whore" (IV.xii.13). Yet, Cleopatra is made more memorable because the rich and sensual language associated with her elevates her and nature. As Julian Markels explains, the "protean language" and "style of the play shapes and reflects the whole process of the action," and as Markels notes, part of that action is the "transforming [of] Cleopatra's whoredom into greatness." Much of the language directly or indirectly associates Cleopatra with the destructive and life-giving powers of the Nile. Her sexual seductiveness and her ability to dominate even to the point of destruction is expressed in Antony's vivid imagery,
... By the fire
That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
As thou affects . . . (I.iii.68-71).

We hear from her that Antony amorously calls her his "serpent of old Nile"
(I.v.25), and one of the more sensual and laudatory passages that link
Cleopatra with the sensual world of the Nile is Antony's description to
the soldiers aboard Pompey's galley:

... The higher Nilus swells,
The more it promises: as it ebbs, the seedsman
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
And shortly comes to harvest (II.vii.20-23).

Antony continues, describing the crocodile, or "strange serpent," that
is much like Cleopatra herself:

It is shap'd, sir, like itself, and it is as broad
as it hath
breadth: it is just so high as it is, and it moves with its
own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth it, and
the elements once out of it, it transmigrates (II.vii.41-44).

Antony creates an image of a Nile that is as sensual as Cleopatra and of
a serpent that is as instinctual and self-determined as she is. Further,
the serpent's transmigration prefigures the manner of Cleopatra's own death
in Act V when she speaks of releasing the lower elements from her being.

Yet, it is not only Antony's and Enobarbus' well known descriptions
of Cleopatra (for example, Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra's barge),
but also Cleopatra's own vivid poetic language that fashions or creates
an image of her as heroic. Kathy L. Greenwood, in her study of Cleopatra and Falstaff, observes that these two characters poetically transform their worlds; they "revitalize and even remake their worlds solely in the province of the imagination." Cleopatra not only transforms her world, but also herself and Antony as she proclaims,

\begin{quote}
Eternity was in our lips and eyes, 
Bliss in our brows' bent, none our parts so poor 
But was a race of heaven. They are so still 
\end{quote}

(I.iii.35-37).

Earthy or lower nature here becomes transformed into higher nature. The motif of transmigration and elevation, a particular mutability in nature, is found in Cleopatra's own words. The natural becomes supernatural. The world of the Nile is in flux, and Cleopatra, the strumpet, is yet more than "e'en a woman" (IV.xv.73).

The value of female chastity is further displaced in Egypt through Cleopatra's acting. The inconstancy revealed in her quick changes of mood and various disguises evoke either laughter or amazement in an audience. Like Rosalind, Cleopatra's acting is self-conscious, a mode of self-fashioning. It is conceptualized as well as instinctual and sensual. Her natural tendency to dissemble and to see experience as theatrical can be seen for example in Act I when in response to Antony's declarations of love she says,

\begin{quote}
Excellent falsehood! 
I'll seem the fool I am not. Antony 
Will be himself \( (I.i.40-43) \).
\end{quote}

And again to Antony she says,
... Good now, play one scene
Of excellent dissembling, and let it look
Like perfect honour (I.iii.78-80).

Cleopatra here, like Rosalind, is actress, and also director of another's actions. Her awareness of the theatricality of experience enables her to undermine the Roman attempt to fashion her as whore-actress:

The quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels: Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore (V.ii.215-220).

The implication here is that the Romans who name her strumpet, whore, do not properly understand her; she casts doubt upon the Roman view and leads the audience to view the varied dimensions of her role as heroine. The audience must experience her "infinite variety" and perhaps be pleased, exasperated, and like Antony happily exhausted by her inconstancy and contradictions.

Antony. Fie, wrangling queen!
Whom everything becomes—to chide, to laugh
To weep; whose every passion fully strives
To make itself in thee fair and admir'd
(I.i.48-51).

Whenever one thinks of Antony, it is difficult to disregard his assessment of her contradictions, and difficult not to find delight in Cleopatra's inconstancy. Her greatness cannot be simply reduced to "the posture of a whore."
A World Elsewhere: Patriarchal Civilization Dissolved Through Rosalind's Play

Not only constancy and chastity, but other patriarchal notions are exposed or disposed of in Arden and in Egypt. The dualistic and hierarchical conceptions that subdue female nature in art are displaced or altered in Antony and Cleopatra and in As You Like It. Rosalind's and Cleopatra's acting does not create a stage that is a mere verisimilitude of a "workaday world" outside the stage. Rather, like the commedia dell'arte Harlequin, their acting evokes a vertiginous universe and releases the unpredictable mutability of nature that eludes the categorizations of civilized society.

The verbal play among various characters in Arden, and particularly Rosalind's role playing, call forth a topsy-turvy world. As a Harlequin-like quick-change artist, Rosalind's acts mirror, not the external acts of ordinary everyday life, but rather the inner variability of human nature. The release of this inner inquietude informs the liberty of the Forest of Arden and marks the difference between Arden and the world of the court and male rule.

In the patriarchal court world of Act I there is much talk of fathers. Orlando is important because he is son to a noble father. Yet, all of this is somewhat changed in the forest. Celia and Rosalind go to Arden because Celia rebels against her father, the usurping Duke Frederick, and once in the forest, Rosalind dismisses the thought of her father with "what talk we of fathers when there is such a man as Orlando in the forest" (III.iv.34-35). However, neither Orlando nor any other male is allowed to upstage Rosalind or subdue her to a passive role.

Initially, Orlando attempts to fashion Rosalind by literally imposing his art onto nature. He writes verses and hangs them on the trees of Arden.
Yet, Rosalind's and Touchstone's ridicule quickly exposes the lame sentimentality of Orlando's art, his "very false gallop of verses" (III.ii.111). Rosalind refuses to be objectified through male notions of the ideal woman, refuses to submit to Orlando's portrait of "the fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she" (III.ii.10).

Yet, if male art is not superior, neither is nature in Arden. As Ralph Berry points out, Arden is not simply a version of the golden world of nature. Although Duke Senior pontificates on the sweet uses of adversity and sees "books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything" (II.i.16-17), Arden is nevertheless a world of "winter and rough weather" (II.v.8), and as noted earlier, human nature in Arden is exposed as full of inconstancy, a quality that does not produce harmony. However, Rosalind's playing not only distorts the male and female hierarchy and exposes a delight in inconstancy, but also cancels the opposition of art and nature. Art is no longer the mode of male civilization, which controls nature by extracting and imitating its desirable aspects. Art is nature and nature is art insofar as Rosalind's playing and the playing she instigates is both contrived and natural. Rosalind's theater is like the commedia dell'arte theater where, as Allardyce Nicoll informs us, laughter is produced through disguise and chaotic entanglements created by actors' speeches. The unexpected, the spontaneous, the lively imagination of improvising actors forms the life of the stage. But "improvisation," natural or spontaneous acting, is, as Nicoll points out, "meaningless when interpreted strictly." The harlequinade theater used set speeches or patterned, mannered dialogue, but used them each time differently, or in a variety of places and situations within performances.
harlequinade, as Nicoll explains, the impression created was that acting is natural, that is, spontaneous, fresh, infinitely variable. The commedia dell'arte did not aim at a "dull reproduction of life . . . an absurd aim." It did not simply mimic the everyday life of society, yet neither was it an escape from life. Rather, it attempted to "effact immediate reality to get at a vaster reality." Dialogue and witty language, more than physical acrobatics, was of central importance and, along with the use of masks, was the prime means of effacing ordinary reality.\textsuperscript{15}

In As You Like It, as in the harlequinade theater, dialogues of witty language, disguise, and chaotic entanglements are the means of collapsing traditional hierarchies and dualities. As noted earlier, the dialogues between Rosalind and Touchstone and between Touchstone and Jaques confound ordinary distinctions of wisdom and folly. Rosalind's disguises break down distinctions of male and female. Moreover, the disguises and the consciousness of experience as theatrical creates the sense of a "vaster reality," an internal vastness in human nature where distinctions of cultural and natural are simply not valid. This commingling of the cultural, the realm mediated by art, and the natural is especially visible in the fifth scene of Act III in the dialogues between Silvius and Phebe and between Rosalind and Phebe. This scene is important as a condensed image of the relationship between Orlando and Rosalind. Corin, the representative of natural wisdom and simplicity is nevertheless aware of art, of the dimensions of life as a theater, and he introduces the scene with an apparently oxymoronic phrase spoken to Celia and Rosalind:
If you will see a pageant truly play'd
Between the pale complexion of true love
And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
Go hence a little, and I shall conduct you
If you will mark it (III.iv.48-52).

Corin's sense of a "pageant truly play'd" and the ensuing dialogues echo Touchstone's words that the "truest poetry is the most feigning" (III.iii.16). Truth and falsehood, acting and being natural, appearance reality, love and disdain, male and female--the dualities that plague the world of Othello--are seen as interchangeable metaphors, a continuum of signifier and signified in the world of Arden.

Following Corin's lead, Rosalind continues and her speech deepens the perspective on the relationship of the artful and the natural, the theatricality and the truth of love.

O, come, let us remove.
The sight of lovers feedeth those in love.
Bring us to this sight, and you shall say
I'll prove a busy actor in their play (III.iv.52-55).

Love is mediated by art. Art here does not simply imitate nature, but informs the apparently natural tendency to love. "The sight" of lovers (the pageant or theater) "feedeth those in love" (presumably those in nature, the audience). In the scene that follows, the audience is Rosalind-Ganymede who in turn becomes "a busy actor" in Silvius and Phebe's play and a director of the action. Not only actor-actress and audience are interchangeable, but the naturals Silvius and Phebe, are perceived as actor and actress.
The dialogue is reminiscent of the commedia dell'arte "scene of disdain" in which the disdain of one lover for another seems improvised, spontaneous, instinctual and yet is mediated by art, by highly mannered, formal patterns and conceited language.\textsuperscript{16}

Silvius. Sweet Phebe do not scorn me, do not Phebe. Say that you love me not, but say not so In bitterness. The common executioner, Whose heart the accustom'd sight of death makes hard, Falls not the axe upon the humbled neck But first begs pardon. Will you not sterner be Than he that dies and lives by bloody drops?

Phebe. I would not be thy executioner; I fly thee, for I would not injure thee. Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye: 'Tis pretty, sure, and very probable, That eyes, that are the frail'st and softest things, Who shut their coward gates on atomies, Should be call'd tyrants, butchers, murderers. Now I do frown on thee with all my heart, And if mine eyes can wound, now let them kill thee. Now counterfeit to swoon: why now fall down, Or if thou canst not, O for shame, for shame, Lie, not, to say mine eyes are murderers. Now show the wound mine eye hath made in thee. . . . but now mine eyes, Which I have darted at thee, hurt thee not, Nor, I am sure, there is no force in eyes That can do hurt.

Silvius. O dear Phebe, If ever, as that ever may be near, You meet in some fresh cheek the power of fancy, Then shall you know the wounds invisible That love's keen arrows make.

Phebe. But till that time Come not thou near me; and when that time comes, Afflict me with thy mocks, pity me not, As till that time I shall not pity thee

(III.v.1-34).
The pageant here begun by Silvius and Phebe is, like Jean Genet's theater, a theater of mirrors where each thing or relationship becomes a reflection of another thing or relationship. The "naturals" speak artfully. Nature reveals art and art reveals nature. This scene is an image of the more broadly portrayed love play and "scenes of disdain" between Rosalind and Orlando. Truly, Rosalind can see herself in Phebe. Phebe shows disdain for Silvius' love, even as Rosalind-Ganymede feigns condescension toward Orlando's love. Further, the shepherds of nature show that they well know how to conduct a mannered dialogue laced by the conceit of the lover as the executioner and by the cliché of the lover as wounding with "keen arrows." Moreover, the supposedly natural or untutored Phebe has a clear sense, like Rosalind's, of love acts as artificial, counterfeited, played. Phebe's words here echo Rosalind's words of disdain after Rosalind has rehearsed the "patterns of love," the artistic archetypes, for Orlando. She tells Orlando, "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (IV.i.101-102).

Yet, when Rosalind appears on Phebe and Silvius' stage, Phebe appears to come out of her posture of disdain into a natural or spontaneous love for Rosalind-Ganymede. As Rosalind's comes into view, Phebe exclaims,

\[
\text{Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,}
\]
\[
\text{'Whoever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?'}
\]
\[
\text{(III.v.81-82).}
\]

Phebe is a natural whose responses are nevertheless mediated by art, by Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, which she quotes. The pastoral is artificial. Further, the blending of natural and artificial is increased as Rosalind
alludes to her disguise by reminding the audience that she is "falser than vows made in wine" (III.v.73). The natural continues to reveal and be revealed by the artificial as Rosalind directs Phebe's mode of disdain to Phebe herself. Rosalind tells Phebe that she is no more than "Nature's sale-work," and then turns to Silvius to say,

'Tis not her glass but you that flatters her,
And out of you she sees herself more proper
Than any of her lineaments can show her. (III.v.54-56).

The same could be said of Rosalind, who out of Phebe "sees herself more proper." Silvius' imagination, full of romantic archetypes and artificial language, transforms Phebe's naturalness. Rosalind's disguise evokes Phebe's artificiality. There is no resting point in this continually moving cycle of natural and artificial.

The formal structure of this theater of naturals is extended in the second scene of Act V where Rosalind, Orlando, Silvius, and Phebe meet and perform the circular ritual of love declarations. This scene expands the commedia dell'arte trick of using repeated phrases to form a dialogue of lovers in which, as Nicoll says, "every speech of each ends with a similar phrase." In such a scene spontaneous play and art again merge.

Phebe. Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

Silvius. It is to be all made of sighs and tears,
And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe. And I for Ganymede.

Orlando. And I for Rosalind.
Rosalind. And I for no woman.

Silvius. It is to be all made of faith and service. And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe. And I for Ganymede (V.ii.82-90).

And so on. Illusion and truth, appearance and reality become relative terms motivated by Silvius', Phebe's, and Orlando's romantic imaginations that are both artistic and natural, and by Rosalind's disguise which provokes the whole scene. Natural instincts are extended in and determined by ritual, mask, and play.

Finally, Rosalind's epilogue, like Prospero's, calls attention to the artificiality of the theater. But unlike Prospero who divests himself of his magic robes, Rosalind does not remove her disguise. Rosalind's acting in the epilogue is consistent with her acting throughout the play. Prospero in the end wishes to become a man, but also a ruler who continues to direct the audience's imagination in an attempt to control and displace nature. Rosalind remains an actor-actress, an androgynous harlequin. She fashions herself as a tentative figure who is neither wholly male nor female. She will not be ruled by her father in a patriarchal society, nor by a husband, Orlando. Hugh Richmond points out that Rosalind remains "witty and skeptical enough never to be trapped in an expedient role." In spite of the final marriage ceremony, Rosalind never commits herself to the Renaissance role of submissive wife. She has married Orlando in a mock marriage; and the final wedding scene, like the entire play in Arden, is, as Maura S. Kuhn demonstrates, characterized by the conditional. The marriage vows are punctuated by "if." Further, in his discourse on "a lie seven times removed," Touchstone concludes, "Your if is the only peacemaker"
As Kuhn points out, thinking in Arden remains outside the categories of traditional logic. "As You Like It is a series of inspired improvisations in the key of If."21 The truths of the so-called real world are never stabilized in Arden, and the heroine of Arden who is the center of these harlequinade improvisations is Rosalind. She does not engage in Harlequin's physical acrobatics, but she nevertheless shows a remarkable agility in feeling and thinking. She is apparently in love, yet like Harlequin, makes fun of love and shuns ambition at court. Like Harlequin, she can change appearance in a flash.22 She is again like Harlequin insofar as she is a conjurer who provokes not a comedy of errors but a pageant displaying the instinct for feigning and the human proclivity for play.

... My way is to conjure you, and I'll begin with the women. I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you. And I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women—as I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them—that between you and the women the play may please. If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me and breaths that I defied not ... (Epilogue, 208-217).

This world of play is, in spirit, a long way from Leontes' negative view of Hermione's playing. Rosalind continually fashions and re-fashions herself by playing with disguise. She begins the epilogue by saying that "it is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue," yet she will stand as the lady. Then again, she denies her womanhood in the very same speech. Further, she plays with the word play itself. As Palmer explains, play
refers both to love-play between men and women and to the theatrical piece. Rosalind's aim is to please and it is through fashioning herself as a player that she pleases. Pleasure, as we like it, is created not by the stage that merely mimics the civilized world, but by the inner world of mutable feeling and perception that is liberated through the equivocality of an apparently natural theater.

A World Elsewhere: Civilization Dissolved Through Cleopatra's Play

The worlds of Arden and Egypt are unstable, mutable. To fashion a self as heroine in these worlds is to re-define fashioning. Fashioning becomes not merely making or creating a self, but making and un-making a self. To be an actress is to create a tentative self, a migratory entity like nature itself. Such an active natural self cannot be reduced to static art. Through the final scene, Rosalind remains tentative, in the "key of If." Similarly, Cleopatra fashions a protean self and inhabits a protean universe that defies the power of Rome and evokes the image of the dissolution of Roman civilization. As Antony and Cleopatra ends, Rome is not destroyed, but its victory seems insignificant, and its values of chastity and fidelity in women, discipline, duty, and military might, rule of kingdoms, and order do not capture our imagination, but rather are exposed as arid and sterile. Much has been written about the contrast of Egypt and Rome, but I wish to focus on how Egypt, like Arden, is a space of natural theater informed by the commedia dell'arte spirit of effacing ordinary reality to get at a vaster reality. Like Rosalind's acting, Cleopatra's self-conscious acting contributes not only to the devaluing of chastity, but also to an image of Rome and of Egypt, insofar as Egypt is determined by
Rome, as transcended. Yet, Egypt, not Rome, provides the artistic space in which the natural is transformed into the supernatural.

Egypt, like Arden, is pervaded by an exuberance for the variability in human and in external nature. Duncan Harris observes that the play "provides little basis for secure judgment."\(^{24}\) \textit{Antony and Cleopatra} provokes what Janet Adelman calls "a crisis of belief,"\(^{25}\) or, in the words of Phyllis Rackin, "the play seems perfectly calculated to . . . disappoint rational expectation . . ." Rackin points out that the play shows a disregard for neoclassical decorum and that a quality of "recklessness is apparent also in the language of the play."\(^{26}\) Critics such as Maurice Charney have noted the imagery of dissolution in the abundance of words like "melt," "dislimn," "discandying," "sink," and "unpeople."\(^{27}\) To be sure, Cleopatra maintains her servants, and Roman reason, order, and hierarchy exists in the end, especially in the person of Octavius Caesar, just as order exists at the end of \textit{Hamlet} in the person of Fortinbras. Yet, as Markels explains, Shakespeare transforms the ideal of order "from the \textit{raison d'être} to the mere \textit{donnée} of human action."\(^{28}\) Indeed, Roman order hardly matters in the end. The instability and relative irrationality of Cleopatra's natural-artful world moves us from a sense of tragedy in her and Antony's failure to achieve reason and order to a sense of a transcendant order. Markels makes the point succinctly when he says that besides the tragic sense "there is another dimension of feeling communicated in which the mutability of experience becomes a condition of its vitality and deceptiveness and instability, the signs of an infinitely protean community of existence."\(^{29}\)
Thus, we move from the Roman view of duty, chastity, military might and enforced order to the Egyptian world of play and mutability in nature, and eventually to the supernatural, that visionary realm where Antony and Cleopatra are "a race of heaven," Antony first enters the stage exclaiming, "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch/Of the rang'd empire fall!" (I.i.33-34). Yet, Antony for a while vacillates between the festivity and love-play of Egypt and the reason and duty of Rome. Cleopatra explains Antony's predicament to Enobarbus as Antony prepares to leave for military duty:

He was dispos'd to mirth; but on the sudden  
A Roman thought hath struck him (I.ii.79-80).

As in The Winter's Tale, the female world of play is here opposed to the male world of reason and order.

Cleopatra, like Rosalind, is a playful harlequin figure in her nimble changes of mood, in the acrobatics of feeling that lead her to "chide, laugh, weep," and so on in quick succession. But more significantly, in the spirit of the commedia dell'arte Cleopatra is a buffoon and conjurer who disrupts civilized order and creates a chaos that effaces ordinary reality. Her decision to involve herself in the male business of war elicits the topsy-turvydom, disillusionment, and loss of masculine identity that occurs in Acts III and IV. Desdemona goes to war with Othello, but she remains essentially passive in relation to the military affairs in Cyprus. Cleopatra, however, temporarily changes from her role as female who remains at home. In spite of Enobarbus' warning, she tells him that she will involve herself in war. She says, "And, as the president of my kingdom,
[I] will/Appear there for a man" (III.vii.17-18). Like Rosalind in As You Like It, Cleopatra's actions, then, provoke confusion of masculine and feminine identity. Canidius tells another Roman soldier, "So our leader's led,/And we are women's men" (III.vii.69-70), and Enobarbus later pleads to Antony not to follow Cleopatra: "For shame!/Transform us not to women" (IV.ii.35-36). And when Antony is facing defeat, he thinks not of Rome as his conqueror, but says to Cleopatra, "you were my conqueror" and he tells her that his sword, a clearly phallic symbol in this play, is "made weak by [his] affection" (III.xi.66-67).

In this "scene of disdain" where Antony upbraids Cleopatra for causing him to fight at sea and lose his power, Cleopatra's actions appear as both improvised (spontaneous, natural) and contrived (artful). One is reminded of Enobarbus' words in Act I that Cleopatra "hath such a celerity in dying" (I.ii.141-142), and it is difficult to distinguish between the natural and artificial, the sincere and insincere in her acts of remorse and "dying." As Antony chides her, she appears to faint, then to seek his pardon, then to cry. Antony submits to her. Chaos ensues; victory and loss are confounded.

Antony. Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss (III.xi.69-70).

That Cleopatra's playing breaks down the Roman hierarchies of duty over love, war over sensual pleasure, masculine behavior over female behavior is seen clearly in the scene in which Cleopatra becomes Antony's armourer. On the morning of serious and decisive battle, Cleopatra
conceives only of love and play. She offers to take over the role of Eros, Antony's servant.

Cleopatra. Nay, I'll help too. What's this for?
Antony. Ah, let be, let be! Thou art The armourer of my heart. False, false; this, this.
Cleopatra. Sooth, la, I'll help. Thus it must be.
Antony. Well, well; We shall thrive now . . .
Cleopatra. Is this not buckled well?
Antony. Rarely, rarely!
(IV.iii.5-11).

Cleopatra speaks little in this scene, but her playful gestures staged in her bedchamber suggest the mingling of love and war. This is a mixture that confuses Othello, and one that Octavius and other Roman soldiers hold in disregard. Antony's mixture of patience and impatience in this scene indicates that Cleopatra does not properly arm him for war, but for love, and thus he goes to battle with his manly prerogatives already reversed.

In the previous scene, ominous music plays and Hercules leaves Antony, and after the battle, when Antony thinks Cleopatra is dead, there is a further dissolution of his masculine and warrior self. Again, it is Cleopatra's play-acting and directing that produces the image and the experience of dissolution.
Cleopatra.  To th' monument!
   Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself;
   Say that the last I spoke was 'Antony'
   And word it, prithee, piteously. Hence,
   Mardian,
   And bring me how he takes my death . . .
   (IV.xii.6-10).

Under Cleopatra's direction, Antony creates an image of himself and the
world as melting. Before he hears of her apparent death, he suffers from
military defeat which he feels she has led him to.

   Antony. That which is now a horse, even with a thought
   The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct,
   As water is in water    (IV.xiv.9-11).

Not only does he see nature (horses, clouds, mountains) dislimning, but
also himself.

   . . . Here I am Antony;
   Yet I cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.
   I made these wars for Egypt . . .
   she, Eros, has
   Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false play'd my glory
   (IV.xiv.13-19).

And again he says, "She has robb'd me of my sword" (IV.xiv.23), once again
alluding to his masculinity. Cleopatra, like Harlequin, is elusive; she is
a false player (feigning death) and not false (does not betray Antony to
Caesar). Her playing, both false and true, natural and artificial,
wreaks chaos and leads Antony to death. Yet, his death, like hers,
reverses Roman values, at least in part, by prioritizing love. As he prepares for death, Antony exclaims,

Eros!—I come, my queen.—Eros!—Stay for me; Where souls do couch on 'lowers, we'll hand in hand, And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze. Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops, And all the haunts be ours . . . (IV.xiv.50-54).

Cleopatra's playful exuberance is a mime, not of civilized life, but of nature's mutability as in the movement of the Nile. Her acting finally leads not only away from Roman order and traditional masculine values, but leads through the fluctuations of earthly nature in Egypt to a vision of the supernatural. Cleopatra's imagination, like Antony's, rises beyond Rome, and she employs a theatrical art to enact her imaginative vision and to fashion herself and Antony as beings larger than life.

As Antony prepares to die, he says

... I will be A bridegroom in my death, and run into't As to a lover's bed . . . (IV.xiv.99-101).

But unlike Othello, Antony is not the bridegroom and lover who kills his bride into art. Cleopatra has so far only played at death, and she appears in the monument scene of Act IV to continue her playing and to make of Antony's death a transcendent vision of living and loving. As Antony is borne in by the guards, Cleopatra directs the scene and helps make Antony's death a glorious show through her variety of humor, sadness, selfishness, boldness, sensuality, and praise of him. She directs:
... But come, come, Antony—
Help me, my women— we must draw thee up (IV.xv.29-30).

As she prepares to elevate Antony, she playfully exclaims, "Here's sport indeed!" (xv.32). What Charney calls a "presentational image," an image visually manifest on the stage, is Cleopatra's attempt to elevate Antony in this scene; thus, through play she creates an image of love and transcendence in death. She continues to Antony, "Die where thou has liv'd/
Quicken with kissing" (xv.38-39), thereby linking dying to loving and living anew.

In this scene her imagination complements that of Antony in Act I when he evoked the image of finding "new heaven, new earth" (I.i.17). As Antony dies Cleopatra presents us with the image of dissolution of this world, both Roman civilization and Egypt.

Noblest of men, woo't die?
Hast thou no care of me? Shall I abide
In this dull world, which in thy absence is
No better than a sty? O, see, my women:
The crown o' the earth doth melt. [Antony dies.] My Lord?
O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n! Young boys and girls
Are level now with men: The odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon (IV.xv.59-68).

Cleopatra, the actress-director, suggests to us how her large vision of Antony and of the dissolution of the world should be enacted on the stage. The light should dim and flatten, and the stage finally grow dark except for an image of her "noblest of men" elevated in light.
Throughout the play, Cleopatra has been closely identified with nature, and now that Antony is removed from the natural or earthly realm, she becomes the artist who envisions the dynamic continuum of nature and art that leads to a world beyond this one. Before she prepares to die, she tells her dream of Antony to Dolabella:

Its past the size of dreaming: nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy, yet t' imagine
An Antony were nature's piece, 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite (V.ii.97-100).

In the first half of this passage, Cleopatra thinks that nature cannot compete with fancy or artistic imagination. But the very complexity of this passage results from Cleopatra's own agile imagination that is able to transform the inferior relationship of nature to art. "Yet t' imagine . . . nature's piece, 'gainst fancy" is a paradoxical statement. Art (imagination) creates nature, but nature subdues art (works against fancy). Antony is both a creature of nature and of art. As such, he becomes a supernatural and a super-art creation, "past the size of dreaming."

When Antony dies, there is no one left with whom to play, and Cleopatra must gather her imagination to fashion herself in one last grand act of play that will unite her with the Antony that both her and his vision helped to create. In her death she does not think of killing nature into art, but rather fashions herself by enacting the dynamic union of nature and art that informs our vision of the supernatural. For a moment, it seems that Cleopatra will freeze or kill nature in art as she says,
... I have nothing
of a woman in me. Now from head to foot
I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon
No more planet is of mine (V.ii.236-239).

L. L. Schücking, who looks for consistency in Shakespeare's development of
Cleopatra's character, sees this moment as constituting a change in her
character, a change that Schucking finds to be a disturbing contradiction. Yet, inquiries like Schücking's overlook the fact that Cleopatra is full of
inconstancy, continually changing, and that this variability is a positive
aspect of her character. Cleopatra can never be constant like Octavia;
neither can she be "monumental alabaster" like Desdemona. This latest
pose is but another of her infinite variety of poses, another of her
harlequin-like tricks. As Duncan Harris points out, in her dying scene,
Cleopatra plays many roles: mother, wife, queen, lover. She blurs
patriarchal distinctions between wife and illicit lover. As the clown
enters with the asps and irritates her with his seemingly endless bauble,
her "marble-constant" pose dissolves.

Greenwood notes that Cleopatra creates "honest fictions" through her
poetic language or "verbal scenemaking" more than through stage business. Indeed, there is less stage business in Cleopatra's dying scene than in the
monument scene of Act IV. Yet, Cleopatra is not only a poet, but also an
actress, and her various rapidly changing poses are part of self-fashioning.
Through gesture as well as language she creates theatrical fictions. Without
an earthly kingdom, she puts on her robe and crown. This should be a grand
gesture through which she plays at being queen. Without a husband, she plays
at being a wife. And, as throughout the play, she shows jealousy, impatience,
hastiness, humor. Finally, without any children present and without her lover, she takes the props available to her, the asps, and by enacting her imagination, becomes the lover and nourishing mother. Through her numerous harlequin-like changes of posture she fashions and re-fashions herself. Her mutability transcends the finality of death. As the clown's explanation of the asp indicates, "his biting is immortal." Cleopatra, then, does not kill nature, but rather out of lower nature, she fashions herself into higher nature:

I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life . . . (287-288).

As she dies, Cleopatra speaks two lines that give the lie to her earlier words, "I have nothing/of woman in me . . . I am marble-constant." She says,

O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too.
[Applying another asp]
What should I stay - (310-311).

Charmian's response, "In this vile world?", suggests that Cleopatra, changeable as ever, considers both living and dying in the same breath. She remains the mutable woman. Death for her is leaving this "vile world" to go to a world beyond. Further, these last two lines emphasize both her naturalness (mutability) and theatricality. Before the monument scene of Act IV, Cleopatra takes on one of her, according to Enobarbus, many dying poses. She says to Mardian, "Say that the last I spoke was 'Antony'"
(IV.xiii.8). She thereby rehearses how she will play her death scene. Thus, these last two lines, this final call to Antony in Act V, is a reminder that she is an actress blending the natural (dying) and artificial (staging death), and confounding distinctions between the false and the true. In this respect, the clown's words seem the perfect description of and prescription for Cleopatra, herself, a sometime harlequin-clown who effaces ordinary reality:

... a very honest woman, but something given to lie, as a woman should not do but in the way of honesty (251-253).

The equivocality of the clown's words evokes the figure of Rosalind as well as of Cleopatra. Rosalind's and Cleopatra's acting does not establish truth and does not create a stable self that serves the needs of civilized society. The "seven ages" of man described by Jaques have no place in Rosalind's and Cleopatra's theater. Neither do the discrete categories of appearance and reality, lie and truth, male ruler and female subject. The image of Cleopatra, continually changing, and of Rosalind, disguised within disguise, are images without consistency. They suggest what Jacques Derrida calls "a primordial non-self presence." The postures of Cleopatra and Rosalind are a seemingly infinite series of metaphors, signs behind which stands no signified, no certainty, no "absolute ground of authority," no fixed truth, no static art divorced from nature. The self fashioned by these heroines is provisional, provocative, sometime destructive, and liberating.
NOTES

1 Kent Talbot van den Berg, "Theatrical Fiction and the Reality of Love in As You Like It," PMLA, 90 (1975), p. 886.


3 See Agnes Latham's note in the Arden edition, p. 12.


5 Young, p. 71.

6 French, p. 257.

7 Ibid.

8 For discussions of pastoral conventions in As You Like It see Young's The Heart's Forest cited above and Charles W. Hieatt, "The Quality of Pastoral in As You Like It," Genre, 7 (1974), pp. 164-182.


149

15Ibid., pp. 17, 38, 40-41.

16Ibid., pp. 32, 37-39.

17I am indebted to Jan Kott, who discusses the qualities of Genet's theater, pp. 213-218.

18Nicoll, p. 37.


21Ibid., pp. 47, 50.

22Kott, pp. 128-129.


28Markels, p. 148.

29Ibid., p. 168.

30Charney, p. 7.


32Harris, p. 230.

33Greenwood, pp. 1, 7, 284.

34See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion in the Preface to Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974,

Spivak, lxxii.
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