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Remembering Mothers: Representations of Maternity in Early Modern English Literature

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Remembering Mothers: Representations of Maternity
in Early Modern English Literature

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Abstract

This psychoanalytic study focuses on representations of the maternal in early modern English literature, beginning with Erreur and Glaucce in Spenser's 1596 *The Faerie Queene* (Books One and Three) before shifting to analyses of the maternal on stage, from Gertrude and Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, to the Duchess, Cariola, and the Old Woman midwife in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and closing with Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The close readings of the literature are contextualized by a study of early modern beliefs surrounding female flesh, pregnancy, foetal development, and childbirth as presented in the medical treatises of the period. While the medical treatises contextualize the literary presentations of maternity, they also provide an introduction to Melanie Klein's phantastic mother and the development of the paranoid-schizoid position as a mode of human experience. This theoretical frame is further developed in a discussion of object relational theory's growth through the works of Hanna Segal, D.W. Winnicott, Thomas Ogden, Jessica Benjamin, and, to a certain degree, Julia Kristeva.

As traditional scholarship tends to emphasize the Oedipal over the preOedipal, much of it enacts the same kind of forgetting as the literature itself, erasing the mother's relevance to contemplations of the body, subjectivity and even dramatic structure. Further, maternal figures are frequently mistaken for the phantasies projected upon them, instead of contemplated as characters in their own right. Arguing that the medical treatises and literature alike participate in the paranoid-schizoid position provides one means to articulating the continued importance of the maternal - beyond a mother's particular presence on stage. This dissertation explores the male imaginary as it revolves around a maternal body forced to enact its phantasies. It does so in an unyielding effort to dismantle the phantasy and to discover the mother in her difference, or, at the very least, to remember the possibility of that difference so as to contemplate her figure *in relation to* but not the same as the phantasies she is forced to enact.
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Part One: An Introduction to the Embodied Imaginary

Chapter One. The Early Modern Medical Treatises and a Patriarchal Imaginary

The early modern medical treatises rely on a Hippocratic understanding of the absorptive nature of female flesh and Galen’s amplification of that belief in humoral theory. By definition, the early modern body is biologically predisposed to a flooding of fantasies, affect, and sensations due to imbalances in the humors. In this sense, early modern medical treatises, like Melanie Klein’s object relational studies, explore the ramifications of the forces felt inside and outside the body. Of any psychoanalytic analyst, Klein perceived how the object world was not only colored by phantasy, affect, sensations, and impressions, but in how that world (embodied by the mother) was imagined to absorb and return them. In the early modern literature I study, the mother is very much caught in the crossfires as relationships between the object world and the perception of that world are, or more often, are not negotiated.

As object relations theorist Thomas Ogden describes the paranoid-schizoid mode of experience, “[i]nstead of the experience of ambivalence, there is the experience of unmasking the truth. This results in a continual rewriting of history such that the present experience of the object is projected backward and forward in time creating an eternal present” (Ogden 19). Based on the intimacy shared between the mother child dyad, “there is virtually no space between symbol and symbolized; the two are emotionally equivalent” (20). Most important to my purposes is the experience of the self as “predominantly a self as object, a self buffeted by thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as if they were external forces or physical objects occupying or bombarding oneself” (21-22). Situated within an understanding of this mode of experience, the “boundary confusion” that Celia Daileader explicates in her introduction to Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage acquires a rather particular focus in my work, one that appreciates how the maternal figure serves as both microcosm and macrocosm for many of the
male protagonists that I study (6). To be blunt, the mother fleshes out male phantasy.

This language of early modern professional medicine highlights the psychoanalytic structures of the paranoid-schizoid mode of experience. The “boundary confusion” (Daileader 6) between a body’s inside and outside and the struggle over whose body is whose, for example, are symptomatic, as are the many descriptions of the passions as if they were external forces acting upon the object-body or as if they inexplicably rise up from within the body made object to them. The required purging, in effort to balance the humors, is one more example of the intimate relation between the internal and external as necessary to the body’s very survival. The functions of this position materialize in the depictions of the maternal body as especially vulnerable to the passions and as a system of containment for cultural fears, anxiety, and hate over the same. In much of the literature I study, the mother is forced to engage in this play of the maternal, her character overwhelmed by the number of adult children calling upon her and/or the largesse of their phantasies.

Many of the literary texts I study are particularly designed to devalue or obfuscate the mother's relevance: Red Cross Knight murders Errour at the start of his quest; Ophelia drowns off stage; the Duchess of Malfi gives birth off stage; Hermione “dies” off stage in the play's third act and remains so until she returns in the final scene cloaked in statue; Gertrude is overcome by Hamlet in 3.4 and arguably recites his lines for the rest of the play. However, as Janet Adelman argues in the final paragraph of her Introduction to *Suffocating Mothers*:

But the mother occluded in these plays returns with a vengeance in *Hamlet*; and it is the thesis of this book that the plays from *Hamlet* on all follow from her return. For the masculine selfhood discovered and deflected in Richard III – selfhood grounded in paternal absence and in the fantasy of overwhelming contamination at the site of origin – becomes the tragic burden of Hamlet and the men who come after him. And they do not
bear the burden alone: again and again, it is passed onto the women, who must pay the price for the fantasies of maternal power invested in them. (10)

Like Janet Adelman. I, too, make a study of this return, and I am interested in “the price.” However, while I acknowledge the mother's relegation to off stage space, I hesitate to think of the figure as “destroyed,” for her destruction itself is imagined, a kind of wish fulfillment that certain historical facts contradict despite all the literature to the contrary.¹ And the texts, themselves, acknowledge this contradiction not only when a mother returns, as Hermione does in the statue, but because the paranoid-schizoid position she informs continues to play even as she is “off stage,” as when Hermione appears enraged in the storm and the bear. In fact, as I will show, the paranoid-schizoid position, in some cases, even explains the structure of a play. Hamlet's two fathers, for example, are an indication of Hamlet's splitting – and the need for a Gertrude who would contain them both on her son's behalf. Thus, I understand the mother as a certain kind of metaphor. Indeed, the figure of the mother functions as a container for cultural tensions, conflicted beliefs, and turbulent passions. Her “hysteria” is not a symptom of her own illness, as the Greek and early modern treatises depict. Rather, her hysteria is the “price” she pays as a cultural patriarchy projects its own weakness, fears, and anxieties outward for her to contain.²

My project, however, does not end there. I write in search for the mother who survives this deathly containment. I desire a scholarship that does not allow the patriarchal elements of a text to become the “law” of interpretation. Like Carol Chillington Rutter, I write toward alternative readings and performances of these play texts. I ask for a Hamlet that becomes more interested in the interplay

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¹ Much of the more recent work regarding the practice of midwifery, for example, contradicts the literary depictions of the midwife and the medical treatises' more theoretical approach to pregnancy and childbirth. See the works of Helen King, Laura Gowing, Chris Laoutrais, and Doris Evenden, for example, all of whom acknowledge midwifery as a professional practice that required an apprenticeship.

² As Melanie Klein understood, the mother's function rests with her ability to contain all a child's projected badness – a badness that inevitably turns on the infant – larger and more frightening than before.
between Gertrude and Ophelia; a *Duchess of Malfi* that contemplates Bosola as a midwife, the Duchess as a mother, and Cariola as her friend; a *Winter's Tale* as intrigued by the lines on Hermione's face in the final scene as the line written about them. Rutter asks how a corpse might play, and I take this as a very serious question with very real interpretive consequences. It certainly informs my approach to Ophelia's drowning, most especially. Independently, however, I ask how a *mother* might play – when she is living – and with an eye toward her difference from those words taken to define her or the phantasy she is forced to enact. Consequently, I am left with small scenes: the brief exchange between Gertrude and Ophelia over her prayer book, the Duchess's final request of Cariola – to care for her children, and a bear's exacting rage against Polixnes when he abandons Hermione's infant. While I, like Adelman, contemplate the male “fantasies of maternal power” (10), my goal is to write my way out of the phantasy and into the mother in relation with others. I am frequently left wanting, but wanting is a place to start.

The Medical Treatises as a Patriarchal Imaginary

As Gail Kern Paster has pointed out, reading the humoral body requires a sensitivity to the permeability and changeability of that body and its passions. But I want – for the moment – to focus more specifically on the material of humoral theory. William Bynum, for example, makes sense of humoral theory's explanatory power by focusing on its deep investment in the body as a liquidic object:

> Bodily fluids and their effects are features that someone caring for a sick person *notices*. The skin becomes flushed when the sick person is febrile; people cough up phlegm or blood; eyes water and noses run; the urine turns dark if there is jaundice or dehydration; the skin can become clammy, sweaty, or pale; and diarrhoea or vomiting may be prominent features of illness. (11 *emph. added*)
His description begins to underline the degree to which early moderns confused a symptom with the disease. Sweaty skin or vomiting result from a humoral imbalance; the sweat and vomit are read both as evidence of that excess (the humoral surplus is the cause of the illness) and as the body's attempt to purge that excess (the externalization of the surplus is the result of the body's healing process). A physician's decision to bleed a patient is an attempt to follow nature's example and to aid the body in its healing process – to balance the humours. Just as Gail Kern Paster has shown, the humoral body is a permeable body always in the process of absorbing and excreting, but at its most fundamental, humoral theory aims to explain what a person “notices” about illness. Early moderns attempt to read through the skin into the flesh and core, perceiving the inside in the coloration of the skin and by the humors (or infants) that pour, spring, leak, or break out.

Despite the emphasis humoral theory places on the body's processual materiality, the medical explanations are clearly imaginary, in part, due to “cultural prohibitions against dissecting human bodies” (Bynum 11). William Harvey, for example, dissected “snakes, toads, and other cold blooded creatures … in his quest to understand the ‘motion of the heart’ and circulation of the blood” (92) before publishing *de Motu Cordis* in 1628. With regards to the anatomy theaters, Jonathan Sawday observes, “the early modern period sees the emergence of a new image of the human interior, together with a new means of studying that interior” (viii). The “culture of dissection” and the birth of science, as Sawday argues, “was to transform entirely people’s understanding not only of themselves and their sense of identity or ‘selfhood,’ but of the relationship between their minds to their bodies” (viii-ix). But as William Kerwin has shown, this scientific knowledge did not go unchallenged: “where the 1517 law establishing the College of Physicians gave it regulatory authority, a 1542-1543 Act… pushed in the opposite direction by defending the rights of individual unlearned practitioners” (100). Further, “With the chartering of the College and the protection of popular medical practice, centralization and
decentralization were occurring simultaneously. These two narratives – growth in the number of non-physician practitioners, and increased attempts by physicians to assert a legal monopoly – continued for the next hundred years” (101).

While the scientific method gained momentum over that period, magical thinking continued to provide a powerful explanatory framework for bodily phenomena that could not be otherwise explained. Certain beliefs, such as the belief that a blood vessel carried menstrual blood to the breast where it became milk, continued even after the said vessel could not be found. Bodily excretions and the coloration of the skin remain two key means to diagnosing an illness, and treatments that rested on the ability to balance the four humors through diet, purging or bleeding mimicked the body’s own efforts to purge the excess. As Bynum reminds us, the wonder of humoral theory is its fantastic mixture of detailed description of bodily phenomena and an imaginary yet “powerful framework of health and disease” that explained those phenomena (11). The combination of humoral theory's focus on corporeal phenomena and the imaginariness of its explanatory framework is the reason I believe Melanie Klein's work is so well suited for a psychoanalytic account of early modern attitudes toward the maternal body. Klein's study of the preOedipal emphasizes the phantastic nature of corporeal phenomena before differentiation takes place. The early modern medical treatises imagine explanations of corporeal phenomena. My point is not only that the treatises imagine a knowledge they do not have, but that the treatises fail to acknowledge the difference between humoral theory's explanatory power and the body it is designed to explain.

The fact that humoral theory's explanatory framework is incredibly gendered has been well established. Helen King's more gendered appreciation of the Hippocratic corpus and the balancing of

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3 See Gail Kern Paster's counter to Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves* in the introduction to *Humoring the Body* (1-23), for just one direct address of humoral theory's unavoidable gender issues. Whereas Schoenfeldt prefers to read the process of balancing the humors as one that makes an autonomous and coherent selfhood possible, Paster “finds a much greater emphasis on change and penetrability” (22), especially for women whose bodies are deemed more vulnerable
the fluids that humoral theory required, for example, support her provocative assertion that female flesh was fundamentally different from male flesh. Women, she argues, were not simply wetter than men; rather, this very idea “results from the flesh throughout [women's] bodies being of softer and more spongy texture, absorbing more fluid from their diet” (King 12). To support this claim, King relies on two texts: Hippocrates' *Places in Man* and *Diseases in Women*. Hippocrates' *Places in Man* 47 makes the now infamous claim that “the womb is the cause of all diseases” (Craik 86, qtd. King *Midwifery* 11), noting that “for wherever the womb has moved from its proper place it causes” what became known by Plato as the “wandering womb” and by the Renaissance as “the suffocation of the mother.”

*Diseases in Women* 1.62 is of special interest to King, however, for here Hippocrates claims that “the treatment (iesis) of the diseases of women differs greatly from that of men” (Littre 8.126, qtd. King 11), as if “arguing for a more extensive degree of difference, spreading throughout the female body” (King 11). Galen follows Hippocrates in *Glands 16* when he claims that “women's bodies retain more moisture because they are loose-textured (araios), spongy (chaunos), and like wool (eirion)” (trans. Littre 8.10-14, qtd. King 12).

By asserting women's predisposition to illness, the medical treatises reinforce the need to police the female body and women's character. The organ most in need of such policing is the womb. Helen King notes that Giambattista du Monte, known as "the 'second Galen" (King 53), argued “that the womb was a privileged locus of the body, where the heart, the brain, the liver, the nerves and the belly were brought into sympathy each with the other, and where animal, natural, and vital faculties were all

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4 Hysteria, of course, can be traced all the way to Freud's biologically essentialist readings of nineteenth century hysterics. Lacanian theory and object relations theory develop theories on hysteria important for feminist arguments. Both psychoanalytic schools of thought agree that the hysteric subject relies on the other for desire for the simple fact of due to not successfully learning to separate self from mOther through a resolution of the Oedipal complex. - A special thanks to Dr. Beth Ash for help in clarifying these issues. See her “Hysteric Subjects in the Wings of the Dove” forthcoming.
affected” (King 53). Further, he believed the womb “to concoct, to make blood, to distribute it, attract it, return it and expel it” (53). Within humoral theory, the womb's key purpose is not necessarily reproductive as much as it is to balance the humors absorbed through the flesh and to maintain women's overall health:

Women's fluid collects in the body and eventually comes out as menstrual blood; the menstrual function is the evidence for, as well as the direct result of, the different texture of flesh throughout the female body. Hippocratic gynaecology performed by men whose practice also included the diseases of men, therefore covered far more than the organs of generation, because every inch of female flesh was thought to be different [from male flesh]. This is not 'the same' flesh with different levels of moisture: it is 'different' flesh, which is why it responds to moisture in a different way. (King 12)

This is not to say that the womb's humoral balancing act did not have consequences for reproduction. Early modern medical treatises depict the womb as a “sympathetic” organ. For example, it was commonly believed that the foetus fed on menstrual blood within the womb. The mother's reproductive body literally reproduces and contains the humoral world nourishing the infant.

The womb's “sympathy” argues for a kind of maternalized mimesis that functions inward as much as outward. For example, the womb's supposed “sympathy” links female organ to female organ in the following passage from the popular medical treatise *A Private Looking Glass for the Female Sex* contained within *Aristotle's Masterpiece*:

> The whole body is affected by any disorder of the womb, and especially the heart, the

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5 See Giambattista's *De uterinis affectibus* (1554) and his source text Galen's *On the causes of symptoms* 3. King *Midwifery*, 53.

6 The Aristotelian corpus is of particular interest to my study, for it clearly aligns itself with the “Famous Philosopher” in an attempt to assert its authority, at the same time that it is often not an Aristotelian text. *Aristotle's Masterpiece, A Private Looking Glass, and Aristotle's Complete and Experienced Midwife* provide a lovely mix of sixteenth century popular folk medicine and Galenic arguments. I will return to these treatises throughout this work for their particular brand of imaginarity, along with *Aristotle's Book of Problems*. 
liver, and the brain, and there is a singular sympathy between the womb and those three organs. Firstly, the womb communicates with the heart by the mediation of those arteries which come from the aorta. Hence, when menstruation is suppressed, fainting, swooning, a very low pulse, and shortness of breath will ensue. Secondly, it communicates with the liver by the veins derived from the hollow vein. Obstructions, jaundice, dropsy, inducation of the spleen will follow. Thirdly, it communicates with the brain by nerves and membranes of the back; hence epilepsy, madness, fits of melancholy, pains in the back of the head, unaccountable fears and inability to speak. I may, therefore, well agree with Hippocrates that if menstruation is suppressed, many dangerous diseases will follow.

(“Of the Retention of the Courses” 83-84 emph. added)

Chamberlain, also, considered the hysteric’s “mental symptoms, 'their frenzies, or frantick fits, their dumb silence, and indeed inability to speak or utter themselves, their strange fancies of fear, some times loathing their lives, yet fearing beyond measure to die', result from 'sympathy' between the womb and the brain” (Eccles 78). Likewise, Edward Jorden argued that “A power of ‘sympathy’ linked the womb to the rest of the body: to the head [to the brain, to the imagination], to the senses … [feelings]; and finally to the ‘animal soul’ that governed motion, thereby producing the twitches, paroxysms, palsies, convulsive dancing… and other terrifying behaviors” (Rousseau 119).

At its most abject, the womb has been compared to a sewer or sieve where all unhealthy fluids merge before pouring forth. But the word “sympathy” might also be said to argue for a kind of nurturing sustenance that reaches from the womb through the flesh, the body entire. When menstruation is suppressed, “the whole body is … troubled with swellings, or at least the thighs, legs, and ankles, all above the heals; there is also a weariness of the body without any reason for it” (AM “Of
the Green-Sickness of Virgins” 50), these “gross, vicious and rude humours” (“Of the Green-Sickness in Virgins” 50) threaten to overcome a woman's body which, thanks to her “different” and overly absorptive flesh, proves endlessly vulnerable to her environment. But the female humoral body also imbues the world, and, in that, she is an incredibly powerful figure. As Gail Kern Paster puts it:

But the passions - thanks to their close functional relation to the four bodily humors of blood, choler, black bile, and phlegm - had a more than analogical relation to the liquid states and forces of nature. In an important sense, the passions actually were liquid forces of nature, because, in this cosmology, the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body were composed of the same elemental materials. This is a literal early modern understanding of the relation of body to world, as old as Greek thought and derived ultimately from it. (*Humoring the Body* 4)

The imagination theory does not follow so far behind – the idea that a woman must guard against external or internal affronts, as she might “communicate” the resultant images or feelings to the foetus and thus “mark” the infant. In what follows, I provide brief summaries of the medical treatises’ ideas regarding conception, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. These summaries also begin to introduce a Kleinian reading of the early modern attitude toward maternity. I return to Klein's work more thoroughly in the next chapter and expand upon the object relations school of psychoanalytic thought for the theoretical underpinnings of my argument.

Conception: Sucking the Seed, Splitting Difference

According to the medical treatises, the womb sucks and closes in around the male seed. For example, Nicholas Culpeper depicts conception as activated when the womb sucks in the penis: “If she keeps the seed, it is a sign she hath conceived, and a man may know that the seed is kept, if he find in Copulation that his Yard is sucked and drawn by the womb” ("Of the Signs of Conception" 155). Jane
Sharp observes the womb has “two mouths, the inward mouth and the outward mouth,” and seems to envision both as capable of the sucking Culpeper described: “The womb is always shut but in time of generation, and then the bottom draws in the seed, and it presently shuts so close that no needle, as I saith, can find entrance” (Sharp 56). Sharp portrays a mouth that sucks in and “embraces” (202) the seed, but rejects the domesticated needle-phallus. Sharp adds that “the beginning of conception is not so soon as the seed is cast into the womb, for then a woman would conceive every time she receives it. But the perfect mixing of the seed of both sexes is the beginning of conception, and it is hard to believe that the womb that is so small at first that it will hardly hold a bean, and having but one cell, can mingle the man and woman's seed together exactly” (202). Sharp's reading of conception is certainly more subtle; the exact mingling of the seeds portrays a womb capable of the delicate balance so explicitly called for in humoral theory, while the “perfect mixing of the seed of both sexes” concedes a mutual investment in conception (202).

However, the idea that the womb sucks in the Yard and/or the seed, also hints at the underlying fear of the vagina dentata and works to materialize the belief in woman's whorish lust as a biological character trait: in humoral theory, lust materializes in the womb, a womb that sucks (devours) and embraces so tightly it threatens suffocation. The best defense is to take the seed's “passivity” and recreate the womb as a passive container. For example, the early modern foetus instigates childbirth when it actively breaks the membranes – as if already an individual asserting its otherness. As Culpeper describes it, “When the child can no longer be contained in to small a place, being grown, and requiring nourishment, it kicks, and breaks the membranes and Ligaments that held it, and the womb by an expelling faculty, sends it forth with great straining, and this is called Travel” ("Of Child-bearing in General" 170).

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7 Sharp follows the two seed theory, in contrast to the ovum theory – concepts I will analyze more thoroughly in an oncoming paragraph.
In contrast to Culpeper and Sharp's texts, *Aristotle's Experienced Midwife*, portrays even conception as a result of the seed's urge toward generation:

> [T]he first thing that is operative in conception is the spirit whereof the seed is full, which, nature quickening by the heat of the womb, stirs up the action. The internal spirits, therefore, separate the parts that are less pure, which are thick, cold and clammy, from those that are more pure and noble. The less pure are cast to the outside, and with these seed is circled round and the membrane made, in which that the seed that is most pure is wrapped round and kept close together, that it may be defended from cold and other accidents, and operate better.

("Of the Formation of the Child in the Womb" 99)

This description of conception lays the groundwork for much of my argument, for not only does it reveal the gendered nature of passivity versus activity in understandings of conception, it clearly participates in Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position. The good qualities are introjected or kept close and made parts of the “self” while the bad qualities are projected outward into the mother, in a case of splitting. This magical inflection of the seed with the male qualities of spirit, individuation, separation, independence, and autonomy reflect those qualities the patriarchy would like to see assigned to the male. In contrast, the womb is already equated to the passive “oven” that merely keeps the “bun” warm.

As Janet Adelman has observed, “neither popular nor scientific embryologies could wholly rid themselves of the Aristotelian dualities linking the male with spirit or form and the female with matter” (6). In this example from *Aristotle's Experienced Midwife*, the womb is made passive, and yet – as humoral matter – it is the stuff of conception that makes the foetus. The capacity to “separate the parts that are less pure … from those that are more pure and noble” depicts a spirit fully capable of
differentiation, of “naming” parts ("Of the Formation of the Child in the Womb" 99). The male seed's spirits decide what matter is pure and impure, what matter is noble and what matter is base. Further, the spirits introject the pure in an act of self-creation, while ejecting the less pure (the “thick, cold and clammy” parts) into the now neutralized maternal cavity ("Of the Formation of the Child in the Womb" 99). This differentiation of matter – pure from impure – is an example of the psychological function of splitting, for it idealizes the foetus at the mother’s expense. The mother’s body is imagined to contain the “impure” and the “base” so that the foetus might be imagined “pure and noble” (99).  

Unlike earlier medical treatises, and despite its own status as popular reading, Aristotle's Experienced Midwife makes the argument for the ovum theory over the two-seed theory. While the discovery that women produce eggs proves the more sound theory scientifically, it unfortunately laid further ground for the association between women and passivity. As Eccles points out, “[t]he ovists tended to support the very old idea that the power of the mother's imagination imprinted the likeness of one or other parent, or even of more distant relatives, on the foetus” (46 emph. added), while the male seed carried within it the active agents that made life possible. As such, the mother's only contribution to conception is relegated to “her” imagination – what she feels or perceives she shares with the foetus. When discussing the “passions of the mind,” for example, Guillimeau's Childbirth, or the Happy Delivery of Women asserts that:

"a woman must be pleasant and merry, shunning all melancholy-like and troublesome signs that may vex or molest her mind. For as Aristotle saith, a woman with child must

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8 I am again referring to Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position by emphasizing the function of splitting. This passage from Aristotle's Experienced Midwife, especially, seems to me an all too obvious example of the imaginary Klein articulates – not only for its glaring distance from reality or scientific fact, but for its heightened focus on the material of conception. Such corporeality / materiality, as I will show, is one key difference between an imaginary informed by Melanie Klein and one based purely on Lacan's own work. Julia Kristeva's work is perhaps the best example of what happens when you merge Klein's work with Lacan's. In fact, Kristeva brings the materiality Klein emphasizes to bear on Lacan's imaginary register and creates one of her own: the semiotic.

9 The mother's imagination is just one more point to the argument that women were vulnerable to their environment and must rigorously take care not to place themselves in any situation that might cause an extreme reaction or cause their minds to fixate on a particular image. Both the resultant passions and the mental image might mark the child.
have a settled and quiet mind. … that those which have conceived ought to be preserved from fear, sadness, and disquietness of mind, without speaking or doing anything that may offend or vex them. So that discreet women and such as desire to have children will not give ear to lamentable and fearful tales or stories, nor cast their eyes upon pictures or persons which are ugly or deformed, lest the imagination imprint on the child the similitude of said person or picture. Which doing, women shall be sure to be well and happily delivered. (296)

The womb's “sympathy” and the mother's impressionable state mean that she must also police her own behavior, in order that she does not imprint the child's physical and psychological character.  

*Aristotle's Experienced Midwife* goes so far as to make the explicit claim that the man's seed proves active while the woman's egg passive and accuses women adhering to the two-seed theory of an “imaginary felicity”: “there are in the generation of the foetus, or young ones, two principles, active and passive, the active is the man's seed elaborated in the testicles out of the arterial blood and animal spirits; the passive principle is the ovum or egg, impregnated by the man's seed; for to say that women have true seed, they say, is erroneous” ("Of the Difference between the ancient and modern Physicians, touching the woman's contributing seed for the Formation of the Child" 87). At the “bottom of the womb,” the seed “begins to swell bigger and bigger, and drinks in the moisture that is so plentifully sent hither” (87) But if women who “are sensible of the emission of their seed” feel all the evidence they need, then their knowledge is simply an imaginary corporeal, argues *Aristotle's Experienced Midwife* (87).

In Utero: Sucking the Abject, Birthing the Corpse

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10 Janet Adelman begins her Introduction with this very notion, in her response to Richard's III meditation over the “Love foresworne [him] in [his] mother's womb” (3.2.153). See *Suffocating Mothers*. 1.
Wee have a winding sheete in our Mothers wombe, which growes with us from our conception, and wee come into the world, wound up in that *winding sheet*, for wee come to *seeke a grave*.


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The first thing that is formed is the amnios; the next the chorion; and they enwrap the seed round like a curtain. Soon after this (for the seed thus shut up in the woman lies not idle), the navel vein is bred, which pierceth those skins, being yet very tender, and carries a drop of blood from the veins of the mother's womb to the seed; from which drip the vena cava, or chief vein, proceeds, from which all the rest of the veins which nourish the body spring; and now the seed hath something to nourish it, whilst it performs the rest of nature's work, and also blood administered to every part of it, to form flesh.


Early modern texts on foetal development relied on the experience of the mother as abject. John Donne's description of the winding sheet in utero leaves little to the imagination. In fact, the medical treatises reveal a bit more nuance – describing foetal development as a kind of decomposition in reverse. As *Aristotle's Experienced Midwife* describes the process, the foetus is made of maternal matter, the mother's blood. The circulatory system springs forth from a single drop and spreads through the body made flesh. Eccles relies on Rueff's *The Expert Midwife* (1637) for her description of the same process:

According to [Rueff], on conception the male and female seed curdled together in a mass, membranes promptly enclosed the mass and little fibres formed throughout, then three specks formed – the future brain, liver and heart. The outer layer of the brain-speck was baked and hardened by heat of the womb into the skull, and from it nerves and sinews grew down the spine. Bones, cartilages and membranes were formed from seed, whereas flesh, heart, liver and lungs came from blood. The foetus was a milky blob for six days, then a blood-mass, then flesh, and by 18 days a fully-formed tiny human being.
Notably, the maternal matter makes for the body soft, while her heat bakes and hardens the sinews into their stretch down the spine. Donne would surely perceive this as a womb-hell – for, to be made of such stuff, the skull baked by a maternal heat, underlines the foetus's own status as abject, sinful, and material, and the human as prone to illness and dying – until all that is left are the seed formed bones.

Donne's reference to the winding sheet metaphorizes the early modern belief that the in uterine membranes contained foetal sweat and urine. While there was much debate over the number of membranes and their respective purposes, it was fairly accepted that they were important to “foetal nutrition, excretion, and respiration” (Eccles 48) and that the womb must, in some form, contain foetal waste. These debates proceed from the contradictory beliefs a mother was made to contain. On the one hand, early moderns followed the classics in perceiving a foetus always at risk to its own and its mother's abject fluids. On the other hand, early moderns followed the Hippocratics in their belief that the foetus was nourished on menstrual blood.

When describing the last of four membranes in “Of the Parts Proper to a Child in the Womb,” for example, Aristotle's Experienced Midwife asserts that the third, “the secundine in the alantois […] receives the urine” and that the last, the “amnios... not only … enwrap[s] the child, but also … receives the urine” ("Of the Secundine or After-birth" 98). Contrary to what Donne depicts, however, “its office is to keep it [the foetus] separate from the sweat, that the saltiness it may not offend the tender skin of the child” (98). Roesslin's Birth of Mankind asserts the existence of three cauls “in the which the birth is contained and lapped,” that are also protective: the secundine “or the after-birth,” for example, "defendeth the birth from noisome and ill humors increasing in the matrice after conception by retention of the flowers... the which ill humors, if they should touch or come near to the birth, would
greatly perish and hurt the same” (279). Depending on whether one focused on the maternal blood or the spiritous seed as the source of the membranes, the membranes might be depicted as either a suffocating material or a protective separation. Roesslin's reference to the increase of menstrual blood or the “noisome and ill humors” point to such contradictions inherent in humoral conceptions of pregnancy.

In addition to the problem of foetal waste, early moderns continued “the Hippocratic idea that the child sucks [menstrual] blood from the placenta for nourishment” (Eccles 49). Culpeper believed the foetus sucked the blood from the mother's navel. Raynald understood that a woman who did not menstruate could not give birth “because although she might conceive, there would be no nutriment for the child to grow” (Eccles 50). As Rueff depicted it, this menstrual blood flowed to the breasts via two veins where it became breast milk (Eccles 52), but was not immediately purified. Roesslin, for example, suggested a woman “wear a chain of gold about her neck” as soon as “she knows herself to be with child,” so that “the too great quantity of blood” does not curdle and putrefy as milk (296), and requested outright that women wait some days before nursing the newborn: “it shall be that the child suck not of the mother's breast by and by as soon as it is born, but rather of some other woman's for a day or two, for because the cream, as they call it, straight after birth, the first day in all women doth thicken and congeal” (Roesslin 161). Like Roesslin, many physicians believed newborns should not nurse for the first three days due to this anxiety over colostrum and because breast milk was not perceived as nutritive until after the lochia was passed.

As Janet Adelman emphasizes in the Introduction to *Suffocating Mothers*, such cultural beliefs

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11 Roesslin continues, “The second caul with the which the birth is covered compasseth the same birth from the navel downward, covering all the inferior parts of the infant. And this skin or caul is as it were full of pleats and wrinkles. And through this caul the birth is defended and kept from ill and sharp humors as urine or piss issuing from the infant, sweat, etc. The third suiting or caul likewise containeth all the birth in it, defending also the same from humors and urine and from the boisterousness of the secundien or first caul, and this is called the armor or defence of birth” (279). I return to these depictions of the cauls in my analysis of Spenser's Red Cross Knight – whose armor, I argue, carries remnants of the mother as much as the father.
and the practice of wet nursing meant for an extended infancy that had consequences for the “shape of infant fantasy”:

If the infant survived, the period of infancy was both dangerous and long: poor nutrition and perhaps rickets sometimes delayed the appearance of teeth – and hence weaning and the routine eating of solid food – until the child was two or three; similar conditions sometimes restricted the child's mobility, delaying the onset of walking also until two or three. What we know of the actual conditions that shape infantile fantasy suggests, that is, that many would have experienced a prolonged period of infantile dependency, during which they were subject to pleasures and dangers especially associated with nursing and the maternal body. (4-5)

The early modern infant was born into a culture that thought it born of the abject, that perceived the maternal in its flesh and blood, that refused it the appropriate level of nutrients, and that believed those nutrients contaminated. Perhaps even more importantly, the early modern infant was born to a culture that expected its death. In the face of all these threats to its survival, as Adelman reminds us, the infant depended on the maternal for its survival all the more. It needed a mother who “sympathized,” who contained the infant's fear of death and embodied its survival (by surviving). The male characters in the plays I study – Hamlet, King Claudius, King Hamlet, Laertes, Bosola, Ferdinand, Antonio, and Leontes – all ask for the mother's return in some form. In almost every case, she returns. But she does not always play to the phantasy of her. She provokes them with her difference and achieves the possibility for relating outside what the patriarchal imaginary would have for her.

The remainder of Part One introduces my key arguments in the chapters that follow. Chapter Two develops a more thorough exploration of Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position and the object relations school of thought that grew from it. My understanding of the paranoid-schizoid
position coincides with Thomas Ogden's argument that the position should not be thought of as “primitive,” but rather as one position in dialectic with others. I finish the chapter focused on the work of two psychoanalytic feminists, Julia Kristeva and Jessica Benjamin. With regards to Kristeva, I write a corrective. The influence of Klein's position on Kristeva's concepts of the abject and semiotic has been vastly undervalued by literary scholars. I return her work to its fuller context – as a synthesis of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position and Lacan's three registers of experience. Unless Klein's influence on Kristeva, an influence she has freely admitted and continues to explore, is more fully appreciated, the mother's relevance to Kristeva's own work is grievously undervalued and, consequently, so is the insight her work might provide into the figure of the mother.

While Kristeva tends toward synthesis, Jessica Benjamin maintains the relational habit of containing more than one position. Her work, then, helps articulate the contradictory positions any one character or a play take – as promoting a kind of dialectical holding. She thus perceives activity in the maternal holding phase, where others might perceive a cultural passivity. She provides the theoretical underpinnings to those figures of containment of particular interest to me, such as Gertrude's closet, Bosola's reimagining of the midwife's closet, Ferdinand's tableau, Hermione's statue, and Errour's cave. Chapter Three provides a close reading of Redcrosse Knight's battle with Errour – within the context of early modern perceptions of the maternal as represented in the medical treatises. I contemplate the knight's armor not only as a figment of the Father; rather, I perceive the armor as in relation to the uterine membranes and the caul (see 16 of this chapter). After all, Errour is “Halfe like a serpent horribly displaid, / But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine” (1.1.14.7-8) – she is the combined parent that object relations theorists perceive as a figment of phantasy. I turn to Britomart’s relations with Glauce, Malecasta, and Amoret as I contemplate Errour’s significance to episodes in other books of The Faerie Queene: Who and what does she fight? And how does her armor signify?
Part Two focuses on questions of maternal presence beyond the mother's “destruction” in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale*, and in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. I begin with *Hamlet*, with the sole purpose of writing through the misogyny and to the mother. Obviously, Hamlet's phantasies cannot be ignored. They are the substance of the play; however, as I have already indicated, from an object relations view, the mother (and all objects) begin as objects of phantasy. The maternal corpse, the maternal whore, the maternal redeemed and redeeming are all symptoms of Hamlet's paranoid-schizoid state. He *needs* Gertrude to be different, although he wants her playing the phantasy. By ignoring Gertrude — as a mother who is potentially different — and by ignoring the pressures placed upon her as such, psychoanalytic and literary scholars have perpetuated the play's misogyny. By writing through the misogyny, pockets that carry the potential for alternative forms of relating come to light. The play's tragedy is in not perceiving them.

When contemplating these “pockets of potential,” I rely on an object relational view of mirroring, a mirror stage in which the mother enacts the reflection, revealing aspects of self for an infant to introject. One such pocket is the brief exchange shared between Gertrude and Ophelia 3.1.36-41 before Ophelia and her prayer book serve as bait. Their situations mirror each other — both Gertrude and Ophelia are ultimately trapped by patriarchal schemes beyond their control. Together they “hope” and “wish” for a different Hamlet... and, by extension, for a different play. Not having that, I am left to contemplate the maternal in Carol Chillingworth Rutter's revision of Ophelia's burial, in which the bloated corpse stands large and pregnant. But Ophelia's funeral, I argue, might play differently when the potential I see between Gertrude and Ophelia in 3.1 continues to play between them in 5.1. How would Gertrude respond, knowing her own part in Ophelia's death? Seeing herself and her own mother in the bloated corpse staring back at her? What responses can we imagine for Gertrude by contemplating her as a mother and (once) a daughter? How might this explain her revised behavior (her rejection of
Claudius and her return to Hamlet) later in the play? For I see the same potential for relational experience between Gertrude and Hamlet when she wipes his face in the play's final scene. Who might she search for in his face? Who – if for a moment – looks back to her? Remembering these lost relations, being open to these questions, means we might feel the tragedy.

My fourth chapter grows from the understanding that even the living pregnant body caused a great deal of anxiety that did not end with a successful childbirth. John Webster's play amplifies the cultural anxiety over diagnosing pregnancy and proving paternity by making the Duchess's marriage, pregnancy, and her children extended secrets. Her steward and brothers are kept in a continual state of doubt regarding both but are repeatedly on the verge of uncovering a pregnancy, Antonio, and her children. Bosola and Ferdinand, especially, are driven to differing cases of male hysteria. Both characters confess to feeling the mother-Duchess in their own flesh and both of them play at creating containers – Ferdinand in the tableau and Bosola when he reimagines the midwife's closet – imitating what they seek to destroy. In addition, then, to examining the forms of their misogyny, I examine the containers they imagine to hold it. I follow the medical treatises' assertion that the mother's matter forms the flesh and internal organs in order to explore the mother in Ferdinand and Bosola. What, I ask, might this felt-sense of the mother in flesh mean for relations with the mother – both external and internal – and for a self fashioned in a patriarchal culture? What does it mean for relations with their own humoral bodies? Bosola, especially, struggles to birth a self in a burgeoning capitalism and through his misogynistic beliefs surrounding the pregnant body.

I examine the scene surrounding the Duchess's child birth as another moment of male hysteria that confronts the patriarchy's lack of knowledge and control. The childbirth, so central yet decentralized, occurs off stage while Bosola and Antonio wander in the dark uncertain even if they heard “A noise even now?” and “From whence?” it came (2.3.15). They fumble like children, in
ignorance, and it becomes a real question of who is being born, what is being staged, and what it is they hear, questions of some relevance especially to Bosola, who, I argue, finds his parental mirrors in the midwife and Castruchio. By his own description, Bosola “bear[s] about” himself the “dead body” he associates both with the plague ridden midwife (2.1.57-58) and the figure of a deformed and monstrous mole (see 2.1.45-61). He identifies with both. Bosola, I argue, is thus caught in the bind of wanting to save the Duchess and wanting to kill her, wanting both to have her and to be her. When he finally asks “What would I do, were this to do again?” (4.2.329), he engages this contradiction relationally. As Janet Adelman would say, he asks for the mother's return. But he does not ask her to contain his conflict. No, he asks for his difference from who or what he has been. His question allows for an imaginative space where the dead Duchess breathes and has her family back again. One might say he makes a mother of her.

His question invites a different response to his always conflicted dialogue between the symbolic role and sense of self – a self in and of itself full of contradictions. Asking the question facilitates a certain amount of acceptance of his own ambiguous state and enables him to hold it long enough to work toward a different ending to the play. While his death wish may win out, it is just one symptom of the contradictions his character comes to accept and contain. That death wish is also indicative of a patriarchal seizing of the genre, but the fact that a figure such as Bosola finds the her in himself is one very important difference between Shakespeare's Hamlet and Webster's Duchess.

My coda provides a much needed relief from such tragedy and the overwhelming atmosphere of misogyny in Hamlet and The Duchess of Malfi. I return to the idea of the pregnant body but with less threat of the abject. My theoretical apparatus makes a shift away from Kristeva and toward D.W. Winnicott whose concepts of transitional phenomena, potential space, and the adaptive environment a mother embodies for the infant help me contemplate Hermione's disguised return. Hermione realizes
that, as guilty, she exists only at this strange level of imagination and dream. During her trial, she confesses to Leontes “Sir, / You speak a language that I understand not. / My life stands in the level of your dreams” (3.2.77-79). Understanding this, she calls for the Oracle to combat one dream with another. Physically, Leontes has abused her condition in every sense: she has no contact with her children; she no longer plays with Mamillius and she does not hold her daughter. She describes Perdita as torn from her “breast, / the innocent milk in it[s] innocent mouth” (3.2.7-8). Not only this enforced separation, but her trial interrupts what is hers by right: “a period of bedrest and seclusion” (2910 note 1). Robert Greene's Pandosto listens to the Oracle – too late. Shakespeare's Leontes, in contrast, rages against the Oracle itself, unwilling to supplant his “dreams” by a likewise otherworldly, if sacred, text. My point is that, despite Hermione's “understanding,” she has cause to rage. Keeping in mind Leontes's tendency toward phantasy, the best place for her to do battle is in dream itself. With her “death,” Hermione enters dreamscape and returns in the tempest and the Bear.

In Hermione I find a range of possibility, for the simple fact that she appreciates the “level” of Leontes's dreams. More than any mother thus far, she is made large by the varied contradictions she is asked to hold. She consumes sea and sky to such a degree that “Betwixt the firmament and it [the sea] you cannot thrust a bodkin's point” (3.3.80-81). The sky and sea, then, are clearly aligned with the maternal. Simply put, the bear might just as easily be interpreted as a further condensation of Hermione's rage as any displacement of Leontes's. I rely on Edward Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts* (1607) to contextualize my reading. Traditionally, scholars have contemplated the bear as a figure of Leontes, and used Topsell's *History* to do so. However, Topsell includes as many passages regarding the she-Bear. The fearsome environment of the shore adapts to Perdita's needs; it is both protective and enraged – and in between. What does this reading of Hermione mean for her final return

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12 A notable reference to the “needle” cited by Culpeper and Sharpe (see 16 of this Introduction).
as the statue and the loss of Mamillius? While I argue she finds Perdita in 3.3, she loses Mamillius – whose name bears obvious commentary. Rather than return to Leontes for an analysis of this son, I maintain my focus on Hermione, a mother whose grief surely fueled her rage and, rage spent, is left to reconcile the loss. I am left, of course, to imagine one more time. But I do not (finally!) ask the question of the child (What does it mean to lose the mother?). Rather, I ask of the mother what does it mean to lose the child? Hermione is a mother who knows her difference. She survives. But her child does not. In a culture that believes the mother's matter makes the child, her loss seems greater than what Leontes can only imagine it might be.
Chapter Two. An Object Relational View

... women have become historically complicit in their growing status as knowable subjects. This has taken place through a biomedical process which situates the accumulation of embryological and obstetric knowledge – and by implication the safeguarding of women's own health and safety during the birthing process – within a schema of gradual visual penetration in which the perspective of the mother recedes as the hidden world of the womb is drawn ever closer.


My view of the self is informed by object relations theory as founded by Melanie Klein and continued by the likes of Hanna Segal, D.W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and, to some degree, Julia Kristeva. I am interested in representations of selfhood as developing in relation with the material world – the environment and its objects. I study representations of self, accepting self as dialogically negotiated through others, the first other being a mother figure. I, thus, maintain a special eye toward representations of the maternal and aim, whenever possible, to read through the abject status to which the maternal is frequently relegated by a patriarchy, in order to contemplate the mother's ongoing relevance to relationality.

Following object relations theory, I perceive a mother's activity where others might only see her culturally inflected passivity. She holds the infant in its distress, containing the uncontainable. This maternal holding is analogous with the body as a container for ambivalence and suffuses the entire external environment, culture at large. This sense of the environment as maternal informs my readings of Spencer's allegorical spaces, Hamlet's projective coloration of an entire play, the ocean and bear in *The Winter's Tale* and Hermione's return in the play's final scene, and the Duchess's torture at the hands of a brother who would keep her to himself. I also pay special heed to theatrical presentations of maternal containment, such as the closet (*Hamlet* 3.4 and Bosola's mediated account of the midwife's closet in *DoM*), statues (King Hamlet and Hermione), and the tableau (the Duchess's strangled family).
Moreover, relational theory’s appreciation of the relevance that the preOedipal has in adult life allows me to maintain a steady acceptance of the ambiguity of gender and object choice. As the pre-Oedipal child comes to identify with both parents, the homosexual object choice remains in play for Britomart; Ophelia, Gertude, and Hamlet; Hermione, Perdita, Leontes, and Mamillius; the Duchess of Malfi, her twin Ferdinand, and her servant Cariola. The process of identification and differentiation or rejection that informs relationality means that my readings entail an acceptance of the contradictory psychological positions any of these characters might hold. It is a basic premise of this work that rich human experience results from the dialogical interplay between various modes or positions of experience. I do not accept the “post-Oedipal” or Klein’s depressive position as “the full realization of the human potential” (Ogden 29), and though I emphasize the preOedipal, I certainly do not hold the belief that is healthy to remain so situated. I emphasize the preOedipal as a corrective – a reminder of the mother’s ongoing relevance, that human bisexuality is never completely overcome, and to contemplate similarity and analogical thinking as meaningful in an academic culture that tends to valorize difference and the text at the expense of the body and affect.  

Freud describes an affective presence that moves well beyond biology when his theories of the unconscious and preconscious are taken into account, as I mean to do. Freud discusses affect as early as 1895 when he and Breuer first researched hysteria. The hysterical symptom exists because affect “remains ’strangulated’” (Laplanche and Pontalis 13). Only when the subject remembers the originary trauma can the affect be felt and “discharged” (13), the symptom thus subsiding. Within the

13 I take my psychoanalytic approach with an acute awareness that psychoanalytic theory is currently “out of fashion” (Shakespeare and Emotion panelist SAA 2012). So popular is affect theory that the panel had to be split into two separate sessions; so unpopular is psychoanalytic theory that I sat the sole member to contemplate the unconscious, let alone its relation to representations of the maternal. Popularity and fashion aside, there are important differences between affect theory and psychoanalytic theory. Affect is certainly a concern in psychoanalysis; however, I will argue that the two theories differ on what is meant even by the word “affect.” I want to thank Dr. Cora Fox and guest commentator Dr. Curtis Perry for their encouragement following the panel discussion. My gratitude is heartfelt.

preconscious, affect can transform, it can be displaced, and – and this is where I think affect theorists might situate themselves – affect can be exchanged (14). As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth seem aware in their introduction to The Affect Theory Reader (2010), Freud's sense of affect is closely related to the drives. However, Freud's ideas as to affect lead him to use the word “suppression” over repression: “For Freud, the ideational representative of the instinct is alone repressed, while the affect, for its part, cannot become unconscious: it is either transformed into another affect or else suppressed 'so that no trace of it is found' … or so that 'all that corresponds [to it in the unconscious system] is a potential beginning which is prevented from developing'” (Pontalis “Suppression” 439). Freud, thus, situates affect not in the drive itself, for affect functions along the lines of what he conceives of as preconscious. As Freud describes it, affect might *detach* from the idea of the instinct (instincts are always unconscious, they can only be conceived consciously as an idea) and find expression through an *other* feeling all together.16

Where Freud conceives of a body that responds to affect – in a hysterical symptom or as discharged affect –, relational theorists hear the potential for a dialogic selfhood as initiated by the mother. Self reflexivity involves a subject's ability to respond to emotions, feelings, and affect more consciously. The mother teaches and embodies these lessons, for the mother's body holds an infant's tensions. Consequently, the capacity for reflexivity begins as a maternal function: she warms the infant and creates an affective environment that is safe and nurturing. She embodies the space that informs the child's growing sense of the world, objects and the resulting environment. She helps the child learn

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15 “The fourth [approach to affect theory] occurs in certain lines of psychological and psychoanalytic inquiry where a relatively unabashed biologism remains co-creatively open to ongoing impingements and pressures from intersubjective and interobjective systems of social desiring” (Gregg and Seigworth 7). This is an interesting remark, to my view, for Melanie Klein, a contemporary of Freud's, founded a school of psychoanalytic thought that continues to make advances regarding relationality and the unconscious. Object relations theory emphasizes the “*in-between-ness*” and “*beside-ness*” (2), as well as the both/and that seems so important to many affect theorists, and yet it is largely ignored – at the cost of any consideration of the human *psyche*. See Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth, Eds. “An Inventory of Shimmers.” The Affect Theory Reader. Durham: Duke U.P., 2010. 1-25.

16 In addition to using the word “affect’ as related to the drives, Freud also used the term to describe “the emotional repercussions of an experience – usually a powerful one” (Pontalis 14).
how to negotiate the differences between the internal (psychic) world and the external (material) world. As such, the maternal figure has an incredible influence on the child's perception of the world and capacity to relate to others. As the first object, she is the bridge to material culture, and she becomes a metaphor for the environment, informing future relations and interactions with others.

Gregg and Seigworth's all inclusive definition of affect in the introductory chapter to The Affect Theory Reader starkly contrasts the affect I've described thus far – as grounded in psychoanalytic reasoning:

Affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability.

(1)

Affect in this passage seems to me curiously more driven than relational. On the one hand, the passage acknowledges that “visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing” exist (authorial emphasis 1), alluding to the unconscious. On the other hand, Seigworth and Gregg use
affect theory to “propose that persons differ from other creatures and things only quantitatively, by the number and complexity of the planes of experience that intersect, and intensively, through the particular connections and engagements that the human body is capable of supporting” (15). I accept, of course, Darwin's notion that humans and animals differ not in kind, but degree. However, I would argue that “degree” allows for the development of an unconscious (Bailey private correspondence). And yet, people are not only driven to act nor are they simply objects of those acts. The body is not simply a mechanical suspension held in neutral because it is overwrought with being acted upon.17

Part of my exception with these descriptions of affect is the inherent absence of any self-reflexivity on the part of the person or object being affected or affecting. As the introductory chapter to *The Affect Theory Reader* depicts it, affect theorists deal with the body/mind split by ignoring the mind. Relations with others require a certain dialogic relation with the self. As object relations theorist Jessica Benjamin would remind those scholars18 I have quoted above, the “person who remains unable to process bodily tension except through motoric discharge or somatic symptoms could be described not as lacking speech or symbolic capacity, but as lacking a *relationship* that is the condition of that capacity” (*Shadow of the Other* 26-27). Before there can be language, there must be separation – this is the very act that constitutes the human unconscious and the psychological subject, and as I have already described, object relations theorists value the maternal as facilitating this transition:

> Psychoanalytic developmental theory has intensively explored various metaphors – for the maternal activity that is necessary to form the somatic sense of self and to perceive and think about the me and not-me environment; in other words, to become one's own container, able to own affects rather than be overwhelmed by them. The mother acts as an outside other who is able to help the subject to process and tolerate internal states of

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17 Thanks to Byron Bailey for responding to my initial thoughts about Gregg and Seigworth's introductory chapter to *The Affect Theory Reader*. His early correspondence is reflected in this paragraph.
18 I mean to include Freud in this list.
tension. (Shadow 27)

Benjamin's sense of these “internal states of tension,” of course, begins with the drives; however, she also has in mind those contradictory positions in which any mature subject finds him– or herself.

Benjamin would surely hear the problem in an “accretion of force-relations... that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability” (Seigworth 1). By her definition, this is not a description of relationality at all.

Those scholars familiar with psychoanalytic theory are also complicit in some of the problems I indicate here. Those informed by psychoanalytic theory have tended to focus largely on the work of Freud and Lacan, two theorists who, for different reasons, under-theorize the preOedipal and promulgate the positive Oedipal complex over the negative, de-emphasizing the maternal role on both counts. Part of my purpose, then, in the following character studies is to remind literary critics concerned with affect, relations, and materiality that psychoanalysis has hardly been exhausted as a field of study. This includes Lacan's own work, whose mirror stage, while a favorite piece with psychoanalytic critics for some time, was never intended to be an endpoint. To Lacan's view, the mirror stage is an early indication of the problem to come, as it sets the child up for a split he or she will always have to combat. The mirror poses the imaginary, the very realm Lacan wants his patients to leave for the symbolic. Object relations theorists would not deny the existence of these realms; however, they would add that almost from birth the infant ego is under construction and that the infant's felt experience of that process informs his future relations. To the object relations’ view, there is no one rupture or mirror moment, but rather a constant influx between the external and internal, self and (m)others.

One critique of my response to affect theory would be Lacan's premise that there is no relationality, and that to say there is such a thing as object relations is simply reflective of my blind
faith in the imaginary over any engagement with the symbolic. As Lacanian psychoanalyst Bruce Fink explains, Lacan sees “certain forms of object relations theory... as focusing on an imaginary order or set of relations that is, in fact, superseded by the symbolic and that is inaccessible to psychoanalysis, whose sole medium is speech” (*A Clinical Introduction* 88-89). This fundamental disagreement between these two schools of psychoanalytic thought can be viewed most effectively in their variant approaches to the mirror stage, a subject I will explicate in more detail in a future section of this chapter. Suffice it to say for now that on this front I do believe the object relations school remains the more generous. Part of this generosity rests on Melanie Klein's coining of the term “position” over “stage,” but this generosity is even more fully embodied by Jessica Benjamin who, as informed by feminist theory as much as psychoanalytic, accepts both schools and even welcomes their contradictions. Object relations theorists would not deny the cultural fact of “the 'first repression’” (Fink 91): “The father – as name, noun, or No! - cancels out the mother (as desiring or desired), neutralizes her, replaces her; loosely speaking, the father puts himself as name or prohibition in her stead” (91). But they do continue to see evidence of preOedipal functions deployed throughout life where Lacanian theory connects issues of separation with neurosis. To my view, studying them is one way to keep the mother relevant.

To give an extended example of how object relations might prove useful rather than Lacanian influenced theory, I turn to Peter Stallybrass's inversion of Althusser's interpellation. Stallybrass reinterprets Althusser's work as follows:

It would surely be more exact [than Althusser] to say that within a capitalist mode of production, ideology interpellated, not the individual as the subject, but the *subject* as the *individual*. For the individual is not the simple given of bourgeois social formations. On the contrary, he/she is a labourious construction in the political defeat of absolution
when political freedom is gained at the expense of the occlusion of economic dependence. (Stallybrass 593, qtd. Selleck 14)

Stallybrass's passage ignores the psychoanalytic subject embedded within Althusser's concept of interpellation. As informed by Lacan's concept of the psychoanalytic subject as one split by language, Althusser poses a subject interpellated once he heeds a call. This heeding interests me – from a relational standpoint. As Althusser describes it, in order to be born a subject, one would have to respond to the interpellating “hail.” The response, then, requires a choice. The perception of that hail relies on the person's sense of relations and a capacity to recognize difference, skills that grow from the preOedipal phase Klein studied. The subject's subjection may, thus, be negotiated. Where Lacan emphasizes the impossibility of relations, object relations theorists emphasize a relationality based on a process of identification and rejection. Further, while object relations theorists would agree with Stallybrass that a person is not born an individual, they certainly have a different idea about why.

According to object relations theory, a human is not born an individual because the experience of selfhood is synonymous with the experience of the world. As Klein understood, an infant has no sense of boundary or differentiation. In the case of primary narcissism, the child experiences the world as self. Reciprocity begins only as the child learns difference and becomes aware of a field of choice. Lacan also thinks that becoming a subject is a second birth.

In *The Interpersonal Idiom*, Nancy Selleck includes Stallybrass’s passage (above) as a theoretical premise to her focus on “selves as objects […] as part of a reciprocally constitutive field” (15-16 emph added). She relies, in other words, on a rereading of a scholar heavily influenced by Lacan. This choice might emphasize the “constitutive” nature of the field she proposes to study; however, “reciprocity” between objects is better served by an understanding of object relations theory. While a self may have no choice as to how it functions, a self can learn to choose how to use those
functions. For example, per object relations psychoanalytic theory, the self is an experience of holding and splitting. A self can learn to hold ambivalence, to hate and love, and to continue being even in that state, without splitting the bad from the good, without projecting the bad into the other – without, in other words, overwhelming his sense of the world with his own psychic material. Contrary to what Selleck implies in her reliance on Stallybrass’s revision of Althusser, conceiving of a subject as split or interpellated does not necessarily mean that the self is an object or thing.

I appreciate the sentiment behind Nancy Selleck's claim that “the current interest in the objects of material culture is part of this movement toward relational approaches, suggesting that we cannot adequately understand subjects apart from their interactions with material contexts” (15), but we do have a fundamental disagreement. Selleck observes that The Interpersonal Idiom completes a “study [that] looks at selves as objects [...] as part of a reciprocally constitutive social field” (15-16), but this seems to me a more complicated remark than Selleck depicts. Where Selleck proposes “selves as objects,” I conceive of a multitude of potential identifications and differentiations that help negotiate not only a subject's status, but the intrapsychic with the interpersonal. I remain interested in representations of the bodily and psychic experience of selfhood, and I am interested in how that experience informs relations between persons, subjects or objects, and in how it might play on stage.

The “reciprocally constitutive social field” that Selleck emphasizes in her description demands more than a concept of person as object of Freudian drives or Althusserian ideology. Within psychoanalytic theory, the conception of the object has changed with the evolution of object relations theory. Freud referred to people as “objects” because he considered them the objects of drives. The revision of this view is first captured by Fairbairn's coinage of the term “object relations theory,” a term largely associated with Melanie Klein, although she herself continued to claim that her work did not revise Freud as much as it explicated the preOedipal positions Freud's work did not directly address.
Klein understood the breast as a “part object,” in that it was part of the mother and the primary focus for infant drives. While Klein's objects remain for the most part internal objects, her work paves the way for D.W. Winnicott's consideration of the relationality between a child's internal objects and external objects. Further, Jessica Benjamin poses her focus on social relations and reciprocity as “subject-subject” relations. According to Benjamin, to experience love and basic contact between selves, both subjects must recognize the other, not as a mirror of self or a cast off of self (not as an “object” nestled in the imaginary), but as different and whole, as a person, as a subject, as a self.

The renewed fascination with affect and material objects in early modern studies is simply not a sufficient framework when contemplating the body in and of its self. The body may be material, but it is also a positionality that allows for both self and interpersonal reflexive awareness. As indicated by Selleck's own reference to the “interpersonal” and dialogic in her title, the subject position is a negotiated position. However, to a psychoanalytic view, the self is also dialogic, a state of being in the world, a mode of experience. Especially in the relational school of psychoanalytic thought, the self perceives the world through the body, through the senses – and reflexively. The body is never an object in this sense, but always alive, always receiving and giving, dialogic.

In order to clarify the logic behind the potential I see contained within female characters, maternal characters most especially, I first need to explain the object relations school of psychoanalysis. By ignoring this scholarship, critics participate in the cultural attack on women – by erasing the mother as a subject in her own right and as a person who has continual relevance to human experience and growth. In the sections that follow, I provide an overview of the key contributions of objects relations theory, beginning with Melanie Klein's concepts of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. I then contrast Jacques Lacan's mirror stage with D.W. Winnicott's revision of the

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19 In contrast to Winnicott's work, Freud and Lacan remain focused on the drive toward the love object.
stage, in order to help those more informed by Lacan's work to appreciate the points of divergence between the two theorists and their respective schools of thought, but also to emphasize their similar regard for the destroyed object, splitting, and difference. Finally, I provide brief readings of Kristeva's later work, sadly ignored by most literary critics, alongside that of Jessica Benjamin. Both theorists place the interpersonal and the intrapsychic models of the mind in dialogue, but Benjamin would counter Kristeva's emphasis on the abject and matricide with a psychoanalysis of the patriarchal culture that inflicts it. Simply put, there is no Kristeva without Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan, and there is no Jessica Benjamin without Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott.

Melanie Klein: that “inspired gut butcher with a child's eyes”

Melanie Klein's work covers a period just over forty years, 1921 – 1963. Like Freud himself, Klein continually revised her ideas based on close observation and study. Her work can be identified in three distinct phases: Klein's earliest work traces the Oedipal complex and “the super-ego to early developmental roots” (Segal 1). Next, Klein formulates “the depressive position and the manic defence mechanisms,” as described in “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of the Manic Depressive States” (1934) and “Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States” (1940). Her observations led her to believe that Freud's “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) held significance for infant and child psychic life. Whereas Freud theorized the psychic impact of losing a loved one and the incorporation of the lost person into the psyche, Klein theorized the psychic repercussions of losing the mother / breast when weaning. Finally, Klein focused on the earliest stage of infancy which she presented as the paranoid-schizoid position. The works of this period include “Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms” (1946) and her book *Envy and Gratitude* (1957). Klein intentionally referred to her concepts as positions because

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the functions of each return; Ogden revises this thought even further when he depicts them as “modes of experience” in dialectical relation to each other.\textsuperscript{21} In contrast to a developmental stage, her positions might be held simultaneously and in contradiction of each other. In the following explanation of Klein's work, I begin with Klein's later writings because they are focused on the earliest stage in human development, the paranoid-schizoid position. I then turn to Klein's conception of the depressive position, a position which ultimately lays the foundation for a successful resolution of the Oedipal complex.

The Paranoid-schizoid Position

Klein accepted an earlier ego, primitive and unorganized, subjected to feelings of extreme anxiety because its reality is ruled by phantasy: “... the child's earliest reality is wholly phantastic; he is surrounded with objects of anxiety, and in this respect excrement, organs, objects, things animate and inanimate are to begin with equivalent to one another” (Klein “Importance” 221). The infant exists in a world of part-objects, object equivalent to self, hence it lives with a constant threat of disintegration. The acts of splitting, introjection, projection, and introjective identification form the basis of the ego's defense against disintegration and its first steps toward the integrated maturity of the depressive position when the infant finally recognizes the mother and discovers relations with whole objects.

In the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant splits the good from the bad, separates “the endangered from the endangering” in order to “secure[s] safety” (Ogden 22). All of the other functions of this mode of experience are really based on this principle. Projection casts the bad material outside the self while retaining the good inside. Objects are felt to be either all good or all bad, and idealization and demonization result. This mode of experience “is characterized by omnipotent thinking” because

no differentiation has taken place; all objects are experienced as the self. Further, “[t]here is little to empathize with since one’s objects are not experienced as people with thoughts and feelings, but rather as loved, hated, or feared forces or things that impinge on the self” (Ogden 23). The death drive exists as a return to inchoate experience, and that threat is projected into the primary object, the mother's breast. Consequently, the mother's breast comes to appear threatening and persecutory, while any death instinct remaining in the infant turns to aggression. At the same time, the infant's libido attaches itself to the primary object in an act of idealization. This idealized breast is felt as life giving, nourishing love, qualities the infant would introject in order to keep safe and have all to himself – inside. Once introjected, the infant can form an identification with the idealized object, an act which ultimately strengthens the ego. The primary object is, thus, split into the threatening breast and the idealized breast.

Contrary to what her critics claim, Klein develops a concept of the inner world that is infinitely complex; under the influence of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and her own observations, she accepted the death and life drives as informing infant experience, especially because she appreciates the infant body's immaturity. Desire for the idealized nourishing breast and fear of the threatening punishing breast lead to sadistic attacks in which the mother is “in phantasy bitten, torn, cut or stamped to bits, … the subject's dominant aim [being] to possess himself of the contents of the mother's body and to destroy her” (“Importance” 219). This sadism “becomes a source of danger because it offers an occasion for the liberation of anxiety and also because the weapons employed to destroy the object are felt by the subject to be levelled at his own self as well” (220), thus Klein's perception of a nascent super-ego of a rather cruel and demanding sort. As the mother has been introjected, of course the attack on her is an attack on self; splitting the mother into good and bad splits the self. Thanks to splitting, the infant experiences these part objects as either wholly good or wholly bad: the good breast satisfies
hunger, the bad breast frustrates. The infant cannot and does not negotiate the two. No ambivalence exists in a world so ruled by the death instinct.

According to Klein, in the paranoid-schizoid position, the baby incorporates the breast and other part-objects and “feels them to be live people in his body in the concrete way in which deep unconscious phantasies are experienced” (“Mourning” 345). Of all Klein's remarks, I find her description of a child's “unconscious phantasies” as “concrete” and “live people in … body” especially fraught. Not only is she making an argument for a nascent super-ego that itself has no cohesion yet, subject to the infant body's immaturity. She also articulates an imaginary register that includes the body as much as the psyche, an imaginary that captures the confluence of body and mind in felt experience. Such an immature body only confirms the phantasy of disintegration and the punishing super-ego. In Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, this nascent super-ego can be especially cruel, capable of as much rage and hate as the infant is frustrated or frightened by the possibility of annihilation. The super-ego can also overwhelm the infant with its idealized goodness, consuming the infant to the point of extinction, swallowed whole by love. Klein identifies Freud's life and death drives in these unbounded experiences of love and hate.

In An Introduction to Object Relations, Lavinia Gomez responds to critiques of Klein's concept of “phantasy” as follows:

Klein believed the infant was born with pre-programmed 'knowledge' of the existence of the mother and basic body parts or functions, termed breast, penis, vagina; and that this pre-programmed knowledge enabled him to experience life in physical terms. Klein called this primitive and largely unconscious experience 'phantasy' … Phantasy is the mental aspect of instinctual impulse, sensations interpreted pre-symbolically as actions. Strange though this may sound, there is
some support for such ideas from developmental psychology, which has
established that new-born babies 'recognize' the human face, 'know' how to feed
from a breast, and are in fact pre-equipped with considerable knowledge and
capacity. (34)

As Gomez presents it, Klein's critics see her portrayal of this nascent super-ego as problematic – for its
reliance on the introjected breast and its “preoccupation with faeces, urine, and unborn babies” (Gomez
50). However, this would be part of what makes her theory so appealing for my purposes. Not unlike
humoral theorists, she forces a consideration of corporeal experience as inherently psychological. Her
argument that these “earthy and blunt” (50) objects continue to animate adult life is very helpful when
considering early modern descriptions of the embodied psychology according to humoral theory.

The fact that Klein also makes the mother central to these concerns means that the abject might
be contextualized within the paranoid-schizoid position – as just one possible expression of the death
drive. After all, the physical intimacy between a pregnant woman and the foetus finds its metaphorical
opposite in the infant “pregnant” with introjected material, objects that, despite entering the realm of
phantasy, maintain a felt materiality. Klein's description indicates an appreciation of the infant's body as
a collection of felt impulses and drives, but it also implies a concept of the infant's body as holding a
collection of part-objects with their own set of impulses and drives. Ogden, especially, emphasizes this
self as object in his description of the paranoid-schizoid mode of experience: “a self that is buffeted by
thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as if they were external forces or physical objects occupying or
bombarding oneself” (21-22). The infant's job – from the beginning – is to work toward integration,
despite the continual threat of disintegration (inside) or annihilation (outside).

While the internal and external objects correspond, the phantasy life and early impulses
influence the perception of the external mother's image. At the same time, the internal world relies on
the external for verification, for tangible and palpable proof that neither the internal nor external mother
is injured or lost. When describing Klein’s concept of the inner object, Hanna Segal concedes “these
internal objects are not 'objects' situated in the body or the psyche: like Freud, Melanie Klein is
describing unconscious phantasies which people have about what they contain” (12). For example, “the
first hunger and the instinctual striving to satisfy that hunger are accompanied by the phantasy of an
object capable of satisfying that hunger” (Segal 13). This interrelatedness between instinct and
phantasy is what informs human infant experience. Infants experience instincts as both somatic and
mental, both inside and outside. Until separation occurs and the reality principle is in place, these
phantasies are omnipotent because no differentiation between phantasy and reality exists. Notably,
Ogden’s description of this omnipotence is the stuff of drama:

These phantasied object relations are conducted in a realm of omnipotent thought with
heavy reliance on splitting and projective identification as modes of defense. It is a
world of heroes and villains, of persecutors and victims; a world in which object ties are
often addictive in nature, and loved objects are tantalizing and unattainable; a world in
which introjects are omniscient and conduct unrelentingly critical narratives of one’s
phantasied and actual behavior. For this individual, external objects are so thoroughly
eclipsed by transference projections of his internal object world that the qualities of the
external object are barely discernible. (85)

Here in this paragraph, wanders a Redcrosse Knight, a Britomart, a Hamlet and Gertrude, a Ferdinand
and Bosola, a Leontes.

In object relational theory, the negotiating between these two realms – internal and external,
phantasy and reality – begins at the primary object, at the breast: the infant's first desire outside the
womb is for food; the first gratification is being fed. Klein's child experiences desire for the breast
constantly; in phantasy the child “sucks the breast into himself, chews it up and swallows it... feels that he has actually got it there, that he possesses the mother's breast within himself, in both its good and in its bad aspects” (“Weaning” 291). In order for the infant to maintain a good internal breast (a good object), the infant must experience a certain level of satisfaction at the external breast, thus verifying that goodness. Hungry too long, and the bad breast receives verification over the good. The experiences of hunger and satisfaction, thus, inform the splitting that inevitably take place in the paranoid-schizoid position.

The pleasure of feeding resides in satisfied hunger, but also in the sensation of a rhythmic sucking: a corporeal wanting suck mirrored by the corporeal satisfying pump, vacuum and milk. Klein emphasizes as well the pleasure “experienced ... when the warm stream of milk runs down the throat and fills the stomach” (“Weaning” 290). Before language, the mouth wants, explores, touches, takes in not only warm milk and food, but “the world outside him” (291). Satisfied, the infant introjects, accepting good objects as part of the self.

But if the 'good' breast is all the world, then the 'bad' breast functions on the same scale: the infant “attributes to the breast itself all his own active hatred against it” (“Weaning” 291). Of course, the mother's world cannot, does not always satisfy. The pleasure-pain principle includes the inevitability of pain, dissatisfaction, and emptiness: an empty belly indicates the emptiness of the internal breast (or its deliberate cruelty). Pleasure frustrated, the baby reacts “with feelings of hatred and aggression” (“Weaning” 290), projecting them outward. Projection, then, is not only the casting out of what does not satisfy, but the casting out of hate itself, a hatred that then looms in the mother, in the world, and turns back on the persecuted child. That grief must be met by satisfying nourishment in order for the good internal breast's return.

Such splitting into good and bad objects is the infant's only defense against an otherwise
overwhelming world and its constant state of desire. By 1946, Klein notes “this splitting results in a severance of love and hate” (“Notes” 2), and acknowledges Winnicott's description of the pathological dangers inherent in a person's inability to overcome such states of “unintegration” (“Notes” 4). In other words, the function of splitting, so crucial to an infant's felt survival in the paranoid-schizoid position, threatens an adult's ability to experience a whole and connected world. In Benjamin's view, the aim of mature selfhood is to resist such splitting in favor of containing ambivalence in the body. When self is limited, so vulnerable to the external world, subject to it and passively coexistent, casting the bad from the good is felt as the only means of survival. In the negative case of this primary narcissism, omniscience rises to the fore as a means to deny psychic reality (“Notes” 7).

Klein identifies two versions of the phantasied mother and child: idealized and persecutory, both of which might be contemplated as cultural indicators of splitting (idealization and demonization). With regards to idealization, Klein had this to say:

Idealization is bound up with the splitting of the object, for the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against the fear of the persecuting breast.

While idealization is thus the corollary of persecutory fear, it also springs from the power of the instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification and therefore create the picture of an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast – an ideal breast. (“Notes” 7)

The idealized breast rises to confront the infant fear of persecution, as well as to satisfy a limitless want. Further, Klein notes two “phantasied onslaughts on the mother,” one “oral impulse to suck dry, bite up, scoop out and rob the mother's body of its good contents,” and one “anal and urethral impulse” to expunge “dangerous substances (excrements) out of the self and into the mother” (“Notes” 8).

These aggressive object relations are symptomatic of the early modern effort to theorize
pregnancy, birth, nursing, and the practice of midwifery, in the first place. As I will show, the attack on
the birth room or a woman's closet was an effort to “scoop out” and lay claim to what otherwise
remains unknowable. The “knowledge” projected into such spaces – via the medical treatises or
particularly misogynistic representations of women – expunge the self of such “dangerous substances”
(“Notes” 8). Both moves reveal the fear and anxiety over the psychic and biological need for a mother,
a mother who embodies the best and worst parts of self, and is idealized or demonized according to
need. The splitting of women into whore and virgin, sinner and saint, inflicted with genital sexuality,
rises with this same need for omnipotent control over the threatening and nurturing mother.

Klein goes so far as to add that “From the very beginning, these omnipotent phantasies, both the
destructive and the reparative ones, stimulate and enter into all other activities, interests, and
sublimations of the child” (“Mourning” 349). This is admittedly a great deal of importance to place on
one external love object, and a part-object at that. However, it requires also a lot of the infant who must
costantly turn to the outside in order to verify the inside, who must introject revised images and
project those bad objects that frustrate. When the external environment supports the inner, the child
becomes capable of trust, but the reverse is also true, and results in an ambivalence toward the
environment that invests the child with “anxieties about inner annihilation and external persecution”
(“Mourning” 347). In fear of annihilation, “the ego is driven … to build up omnipotent and violent
phantasies, partly for the purpose of controlling and mastering the 'bad' objects, partly in order to save
and restore the loved ones” (“Mourning” 349).

Melanie Klein's appreciation of this primitive phantasy life informs my use of the word
“environment” and substantiates my reasoning when I take issue with analyses of the material world
uninterested in the psychic repercussions of that material as represented in the literature of the period.
As Hanna Segal explains, “If unconscious phantasy is constantly influencing and altering the
perception or interpretation of reality, the converse is also true: reality impinges on unconscious phantasy. It is experienced, incorporated and exerts a very strong influence in unconscious phantasy itself” (15). To turn once more to Segal's transparent prose:

The importance of the environmental factor can only be correctly evaluated in relation to what it means in terms of the infant's own instincts and phantasies... it is when the infant has been under sway of angry phantasies, attacking the breast, that an actual bad experience becomes all the more important since it confirms, not only his feeling that the external world is bad, but also the sense of his own badness and the omnipotence of his malevolent phantasies. (15)

While Segal describes infant experience, she does so with an understanding of Klein's concept of the “position.” Experiences gather, if unconsciously, in body and mind. They return and replay; they merge with and influence every experience following, giving way for an increasingly complex system of feeling. They necessitate, in the adult, a self reflexivity capable of “reading” emotions while also feeling them. The functions of the paranoid-schizoid position avail themselves especially in the face of a loss that cannot be negotiated. By depreciating the maternal function, cultures make it difficult for such negotiations to take place, even for adult children. Malevolent phantasies gain in power and omnipotence when the mother is made weak, destroyed, or falls to matricide – and when scholars do not remember the patriarchal schema in which much literature is written. The omnipotent, malevolent phantasies that Segal describes in the above passage about infants replay in the early modern literature I study in this project.

The Depressive Position

This is the very logic to Klein's use of the term position over stage. In contrast to a stage's temporality, a position refers to a dialectical mode of experience that does not go away; the positions returns and must be renegotiated throughout various periods of an adult life.
While the paranoid-schizoid position is marked by anxiety (paranoid) and splitting (schizoid), the depressive position is marked by the infant's ability to mourn an object lost. In Klein's view, the child first experiences loss while weaning: “the object which is being mourned is the mother's breast and all that the breast and the milk have come to stand in for in the child's mind: namely love, goodness, and security” (“Mourning” 345). With the dawning of the depressive position (at about 4 months), the infant recognizes whole objects and gains a degree of subjectivity that allows for self reflexivity. Once this transition takes place (once the infant recognizes faces), an infant becomes capable of learning relations with other people. The world becomes available in a whole new way, and the ego is no longer so fragile, sliced through by innumerable projections / introjections, or split into bits. The mother, for example, is sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes present, sometimes absent, but she is always one whole person who can be both loved and hated (Segal 68). According to Hanna Segal, the main anxiety facing the depressive child is “that his own destructive impulses have destroyed or will destroy... the object that he loves and totally depends on” (69). In this sense, the infant is both self aware and aware of his or her impact on others. This awareness grows as the infant learns the limits of the phantasy life against reality.

In fact, the depressive position might be considered a period of reality testing; these negotiations from part to whole objects take some time and strengthen through introjective identification. As the infant comes to understand “his dependence on his object which he now perceives as independent and liable to go away” (Segal 70), he works toward keeping the object safe inside himself and all to himself. The ability to contain the tension between good and bad without splitting is matched by an experience of self as both protective and selfish. The child believes the object lost to the external world and feels guilt over its destruction – which he feels is due to his selfishness.

In the depressive position, destructiveness rises more from love than hate. The infant would
devour the mother in love; he introjects and identifies with her, thus stealing her from the outside world. He mourns that loss and, feeling responsible, would repair lost or destroyed objects. He learns to believe in his love as life sustaining and as a counter to his own aggression (death drive). In this way, outside reality draws closer to psychic reality. Reality testing strengthens the infant's capacity to “test out the power of his impulses and his object's resilience” (Segal 73). In Klein's view, the depressive position is never fully worked through, but if an infant is able to establish a good internal object, then when the position awakens the “depressive anxiety will… lead... to a fruitful working through, leading to further enrichment and creativity” (Segal 80). Symbolization, then, grows out of an ongoing process of identification and differentiation that requires engagement between intrapsychic and interpersonal, internal and external realms.

Destruction and Relationality: Winnicott, an Overview

D.W. Winnicott's contributions begin with his claim that the external mother must survive the child's sadistic attack in order for the infant to recognize the mother's difference. With this idea, Winnicott takes Melanie Klein's version of phantasy life, especially that surrounding the death drive, and places it more fully in the external object world. He does not, therefore, refer to death (Klein) or matricide (Kristeva) so much as he refers to the mother's “destruction” and the need for the mother to survive that destruction: The mother must be good enough not to turn on the child in anger, rage, or hurt. She must prove herself “other” than the envy and hate driving the infant. For Winnicott, destruction, plus the object’s survival of that destruction, place the object outside the realm of the subject’s projective mental mechanisms (Playing and Reality 94), thus breaking the child's omniscience while at the same time decreasing the child's need for defensiveness. By proving herself an external object not of the infant's phantasy – repeatedly – the mother slowly introduces the child to the external
Winnicott asks us to read differently – with an eye not just to the mother's destruction, but also to her survival. He asks that we watch for moments of continuity in addition to moments of rupture. He helps us read through some of the more misogynistic passages I study and to see a female character beckoning through the hate that would contain her. He helps me ask for the character I want because he asks for a performance that might play against such a text. Of course, Winnicott's paradox is that he accepts the mother's destruction. Following Klein, he recognizes the infant who out of frustration, anger, and rage at the challenge to omnipotence must destroy the object. The dialogue Winnicott asserts the child hears in this transaction plays along the following lines: “I destroyed you! How dare you show autonomy beyond my ever reaching scope of power!” Oddly, this child continues to speak to the object even after its destruction; it asks, as such, for the object's return: “I love you and you came back again.” Finally, “All the while I use you, I’ll continue to destroy you in an unconscious fantasy because I’d prefer you following my every whim.” Most objects can live with that.

According to Winnicott, destruction is fundamental to reality because it places the object finally outside of the self. As an object relations theorist and feminist, I expect the mother's survival and thus read for her. I understand that the object becomes “real” because it has been destroyed, and that it can be “used” in relation because it is “real.” The mother's withdrawal creates the child's frustration, but also means mental processing can begin – remembering, reliving, fantasizing, dreaming, and integrating past, present, and future. Her loss is real and continual, and as such she makes room for her real and material return.

Winnicott differs from Klein in that he adds the concern of a maternal psychosis alongside the infant's omniscience. As a paediatrician, Winnicott understood that a mother “automatically” knows what the child knows. Winnicott's mother mirrors the child: the child desires food and the mother's
breast appears. In this respect, Winnicott also reinterprets Freud, as the mother facilitates the infant's omniscience through wish fulfillment. The child believes the breast is created by a wish. If, when a child rages against the wish unfulfilled, a mother does not survive her destruction, the child grows into an adult who continues to expect and demand every wish satisfied, or, as Klein would have it, who would “possess himself of the contents of the mother's body and to destroy her” (“Importance” 219).

When the mother survives her destruction, Winnicott envisions the child’s transition from “me”-objects (the breast and I are one) to “not-me” objects (mother is a person of her own and not-me), as facilitated during a “holding” phase in which the child’s sense of external space transitions from matching the internal realm to a recognizable external realm different from but always connected to the child. Objects become “usable” only after they have been destroyed and survive that destruction, for only then can the child recognize the object as “other” than him- or herself. In yet another paradox, Winnicott asserts that this transitional object is never lost even as the child outgrows it, for the transitional object's meaning diffuses and infiltrates the world. In this, Winnicott agrees with Freud that sublimation is the basis for culture. He refers often to a subject's “environment” and it is these transitional phenomenon and cultural experiences, such as the arts and religion, which Winnicott has in mind. Mature religious, cultural, and social experience rely on “object-usage,” an ability to recognize the difference between the object's material and psychic significance.

Winnicott's “good enough” mother is somewhat different from Klein's phantastic mother, in that the good enough mother embodies a safe space, she instills a feeling of trust that does not change or disappear because the child has destroyed her. She continues to hold the child even as the child destroys her, and her survival informs a subject's ability to live creatively, to take creative risks without the threat of punishment, persecution, or death. She instills not only a regard for others but an experience of self as both connected to and separate from a similarly responsive environment. This understanding
is how Winnicott manages to revise Lacan's mirror stage.

D.W. Winnicott and Jacques Lacan: Split over the Mother

In contrast to Klein, Lacan does not conceive of the imaginary as particularly embodied, so it is ironic that he claims a “nursling in front of a mirror … adopt[s] a slightly leaning-forward position and take[s] in an instantaneous view of the image in order to fix it in his mind” (Ecrits: Complete 76). Lacan gives the infant a great deal of credit here when he claims the infant leans forward with the intent “to fix it in his mind,” especially when the moment is so “instantaneous” (76) and the infant prematurely born (78). While Lacan emphasizes the child's “identification” with the image, his sense of identification is, also, somewhat different from Klein's. Whereas Klein conceives of introjection, the acceptance of an object as part of the self and the experience of it “concrete” and “live … in [the] body” (“Mourning” 345), and the possibility of identifying with the good object, Lacan defines identification as “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [assume] an image” (Ecrits: Complete 76).23 This “assumed” image solidifies into a defense or an “armor” on behalf of the ego (“under the ego as structure of defense”). In part, this difference is due to the fact that Klein deals more closely with the id, while Lacan aligns himself with Anna Freud and works with the ego.24 But the difference is also due to the fact that Klein's environment begins in the experience of phantasy while Lacan's environment is already always external and mistaken, mistaken in that the infant sees it mistakenly and in that the mother confirms that mistake as “truth.”

The ocular nature of Lacan’s mirror stage is an important point of contrast with Winnicott’s revision of Lacan’s version. Because Winnicott's mirror begins with the mother physically holding the infant, the imaginary is embodied. That same body will help facilitate the child’s separation. In Lacan's


24 This is not to say that Lacan was an ego psychologist.
reformulation of the mirror stage, the body is already symbolic: “the mirror image takes on such importance as a result of the parent's recognition, acknowledgement, or approval – expressed in a nodding gesture that has already taken on symbolic meaning, or in such expressions as 'Yes, baby, that's you!' often uttered by ecstatic, admiring, or simply bemused parents” (Fink 88). The imaginary register is, thus, “overwritten' by the symbolic, by the words and phrases the parents use to express their views of the child” (88). This is exactly the place where Lacan sees the problem of “certain forms of object relations theory... as focusing on an imaginary order or set of relations that is, in fact, superseded by the symbolic and that is inaccessible to psychoanalysis, whose sole medium is speech” (88-89). As Bruce Fink stresses in his description of the reformulation of the mirror stage, the overwriting of the imaginary by the symbolic “leads to the suppression or at least the subordination of imaginary relations characterized by [the] rivalry and aggressivity [of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position] to symbolic relations dominated by concerns with ideals, authority figures, the law, performance, achievement, guilt, and so forth” (89).

Lacan's “ratification” replicates patriarchal culture as the father's speech cancels out the mother as desiring or desired and replaces her in a substitution. The father thus puts himself in her place and functions as a prohibition. Lacan means this prohibition as analogous to Freud's description of the Oedipal complex in which the child (the son) is forced to give up a relationship with the mother because of a threat from the father. Freud would refer to this as the primal repression; Lacan would add that with the loss of the mother, desire is born. In the case of Lacan, the mother's destruction does not rise from the infant (as in Klein's phantastically driven infant), but is rather enforced by the father and the culture he represents.

25 See Lacan's Seminar VIII Transference. In his Clinical Introduction, Fink references his own “forthcoming” translation of Transference to be published by Norton. However, it seems not to have been published. A PDF of the Seminar is available online, translated by Cormac Gallagher from “unedited manuscripts” and was published in 2002 by Karnac Books. I rely on Bruce Fink's description of Lacan's reformulation of the mirror stage in A Clinical Introduction. 87-90.
Importantly, Lacan does not say man’s nature is found in language, but that it is found in the structure of language. In “The Signification of the Phallus,” Lacan notes, “The passion of the signifier now becomes a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but that in man and through man it speaks, that his nature is woven by effects in which is to be found the structure of language, of which he becomes material, and therefore there resounds in him, beyond what could be conceived of by a psychology of ideas, the relation of speech” (Ecrits 578 emph added). It’s an important distinction that goes to the heart of his sense of the subject. For Lacan, the phallus is the transcendental signifier; it is the central function by which all others are organized, a simulacrum. And it is an absence. It implies a negative space, a scaffolding of absence, a structural hollowing out through which language will move, signify, and constitute the subject. Lacan continues by saying that the unconscious is formed here and the effects are determined by the combination and substitution of the signifier according to metaphor (condensation) and metonymy (displacement). These effects determine the subject regardless of gender. The third term must enter, must break the imaginary relations described in the mirror phase, and engage the child in the symbolic, Other, language. So doing, the subject is constituted.

In contrast to Lacan, D.W. Winnicott focuses on objects, not drives, on a cultural environment over a structural language, and allows that these early objects do not signify unless related to an inner world. He comes from the premise that before there is language there are icons, these objects being representative of the mother’s breast.26 His sense of mirroring is thus different from Lacan’s not only for the mother’s embodiment of the mirror, but because he understands mirroring as a back and forth process of illusion and disillusionment, a process he compares with weaning. At first the child is

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26 Winnicott does not contemplate issues of sexuality when theorizing relatedness, for he is more interested in analyzing the transfer of transitional phenomena into the realm of culture than any narcissistic wound or lack. This is a shortcoming that Jessica Benjamin addresses in her work. Like Kristeva, she holds the two schools of psychoanalytic thought in mind throughout the working of her ideas, specifically regarding gender.
hungry and the breast appears. The child believes that in all its omnipotence it has made the breast appear. In a reinterpretation of Freud, Winnicott observes the breast as wish fulfillment. Desire for Winnicott is consequently mirrored in the object: create the breast and only later realize, in a back and forth process, that the breast is “not me,” that the breast is an object.

Accordingly, the mother-child dyad does not break up because of any Oedipal complex, but because the mother becomes less available, less compliant, less ordered by the child’s omnipotent control. Through this gradual separation the child learns relatedness. Notably, Winnicott emphasizes continuity over felt lack, rupture, or misrecognition. For example, the transitional objects (the teddy bear, the blankie, the favorite doll) that represent the breast for the child should not be cleaned or washed because doing so would create a break in the child’s sense of history and identity. Winnicott emphasizes such continuity as important, whereas Lacan would see it as an impossible maintenance, the introduction of the order of the law an experience of rupture that is forever being negotiated in the language that caused that rupture.

Matricide and Symbolization: Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva

In order to resituate Julia Kristeva's work within the context of Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, I rely on her own more recent work. As I have already noted, Kristeva's appreciation of Melanie Klein's work informs her response to Lacan – the split subject and the birth of desire. In Volume 2 (2001) of Female Genius: Live, Madness, Words – Hannah Arendt, Melanie Klein, Collette, a trilogy, Kristeva offers a history of the development of Klein's ideas and an explanation of their usefulness to her own thinking. She begins the volume simply by reviewing the revised definitions of narcissism that came with Freud's 1923 The Ego and the Id in which he outlines a new structure of the psyche: the ego, id, and superego. Both “structures” of narcissism resurge throughout human life;
Kristeva defines secondary narcissism as “a function of ego investment through a surge of identifications withdrawing from objects,” and primary narcissism as “an objectless state characterized by the total absence of any relationships with other people and by a lack of any differentiation between the ego and the id. Intrauterine life and sleep,” Kristeva adds, “are the closest approximations we have of this objectless narcissistic state” (Melanie Klein 59). Primary narcissism predates even the discovery of the mother's breast as a part object. In a complete withdrawal of the external realm, everything is phantasy. This would be the active phantasy life Klein perceived in the infant.

For Kristeva the mirror stage is not only spectral. It begins sooner than Lacan acknowledged and it is embodied, setting the subject up for a different kind of imaginary. When Kristeva explains the development of the infant's ego, she emphasizes the importance of the mother's holding of the infant and, thus, containing the infant's drives. She quotes from Klein's *Envy and Gratitude*: “The mother's holding and handling of the baby impress him with a 'physical closeness' with the no less 'unstable' wholeness of an *Other* – or, more accurately, a *container*. It is a container that is merely part of the process of differentiating the ego. Isn't it true that the ego is founded upon 'some indefinite connection between the breast and other parts and aspects of the mother’?” (qtd. 63, *EG* 180). Kristeva depicts the ego as an “impress” resulting from “a 'physical closeness' with the no less 'unstable' wholeness of an *Other*” (63). Notably, Kristeva's “impress” (63) is the result of a “'physical closeness’” (qtd. 63, Klein 180) with the (part object) mother, not because the subject, “caught up in the lure of spatial identification,” has “finally donned armor of an alienating identity” (Lacan *Ecrits* 78). Of course, Kristeva's ego is still informed by the spatial, but it is the embodied space of the maternal holding
phase. Fragmentation is the result of a Kleinian appreciation of the part object: “the breast and other parts and aspects of the mother” (Kristeva 63). The “indefinite connection” occurs between what one might see as two bodies but that, for the infant, are experienced as one and the same, though fragmented into parts.

In fact, Kristeva is rather explicit about Klein's importance and emphasizes this fact by contrasting details of the paranoid-schizoid position with Lacan's more spectral sense of subject formation:

It is not only the drive that is projected and introjected (as love or hatred, desire or destruction), but bits of the baby as well (his organs – the mouth, the anus, and so forth – as well as his bodily products). Klein's view on this subject differs from Freud's. In addition, however much the internal object reflects the imaginary and attests to the presence of the fantasy in the early ego, it is also made up of substantive and sensorial elements: good or bad 'bits' of the breast are situated within the ego or expelled from it into the mother's breast. Nourishing substances such as the mother's milk or excremental substances such as urine and feces are projected and introjected. Klein's internal object is an amalgam of representations, sensations, and substances – in a word, it is a diverse array of heterogeneous internal objects. Her notion of the internal object is entirely distinct from Lacan's imaginary, for Lacan believed that narcissism takes hold through the intermediary of the object as a function of the subject's absorption into his mirror image – into the very place where he realizes he is an Other who is sustained by the alterity of a mother already placed under the rubric of a third-party phallus. And yet this spectral distortion […] is bereft of the heterogeneity that characterizes Klein's notions of the internal object and of fantasy. Klein's thinking here evokes a cornucopia of images,
sensations, and substances whose theoretical 'impurity' is superseded by the clinical advances she proposes: the complexity of the internal object, in Klein's view, is indispensible for tracking the specifics of the fantasy in childhood as well as in borderline states or psychosis. (63-64)

Often, I think, those relying on Kristeva's concepts of the abject and semiotic fail to appreciate that these concepts are born of Kristeva's intricate comprehension of the paranoid-schizoid position. This is a problem for such criticism because by neglecting Klein's influence on Kristeva, critics fail to appreciate the mother's true relevance to Kristeva's work and consequently the text being analyzed. She risks becoming, as in Lacan, a cultural mother or a mother defined within the realm patriarchy, rather than also being a mother who informs subject formation from the moment of birth.

Kristeva proposes a revised understanding of the unconscious and the imaginary, for she appreciates the maternal in infant phantasy, a phantasy life that, by definition, remains active in the unconscious and that animates future imaginary relations. Both the abject and the semiotic extend from a rich and complicated relationship between infant and mother, phantasy and reality, inside and outside. For Kristeva, symbolization can take hold only through an incredible loss. She recognizes a world of being that has psychic relevance beyond the preOedipal phase (in the paranoid-schizoid position) itself while Lacan simply places a bar without contemplating the repressed maternal in any developed way. This has consequences for how one is able to contemplate the repressed's return.

Similar to Lacan, Kristeva argues that the mother's loss provides the empty space necessary for symbolization to take hold, but she also appreciates that the paranoid-schizoid position teaches the skills necessary to the onset of language. Klein's thoughtful observations covering the function of splitting make clear to Kristeva "the importance of the capacity for making binary distinctions: in Klein's view, such a capacity ushers in an early form of semiosis that functions as an innate
precondition to the child's subsequent acquisition of the symbol” (64). The child hears the Father's “No!” only when he learns to differentiate it from the mother's “Yes, I am yours and all yours.” Where Winnicott poses the psychotic mother who so utterly identifies with her infant that she knows every want and need, Kristeva asks “Is the mother a quiet paranoid-schizophrenic who flirts with projective identification?” (72). Again, she asks a question that invites the relationality she studies, and she continues with a painfully sensitive understanding of phantasy as it relates to symbolization and language: “In truth, the totality of fantasy functioning, the birth of secondary symbolization, particularly that of language, and psychoanalytic interpretation are all concerned with projective identification – which, incidentally, is at the heart of the interpretive process itself. In any event, this is a hypothesis, a painful one if there ever was, that should be reflected upon by mothers... and by psychoanalysts” (72).

For Kristeva, language is never simply symbolic. It carries remnants of the lost. Language, she says, is “haloed in mourning” – it carries with it bits and pieces of the mother that attach themselves to objects, thus fostering an environment alive with affect – painful in its memorializing. In this sense, she is similar to Winnicott in that she appreciates the scope of the mother as informing the subject's experience of the world and culture at large. While Winnicott conceives of a world of icons and Kristeva a world of language, both conceive of a subject who by identifying outward brings the lost ever closer to an earlier experience of self. This imaginary “halos” language and animates the external/material world at large.

The Oedipal Complex: Melanie Klein to Julia Kristeva

Melanie Klein's work regarding the paranoid-schizoid position also meant a revised understanding of the Oedipal complex. Both male and female children experience a certain amount of
flux. They identify with and reject the mother as a love object, and identify with and reject the father as a love object. Also, because object relations theory conceives of both internal and external objects, identifications and rejections may find themselves at cross purposes. For example, penis envy is only one possible envy, and it might be experienced as much by the son as the daughter – as when he identifies himself with his internal mother. The multiplicity of these identifications and rejections makes way for multiple, often contradictory, positions that the mature self learns to contain. In this sense, a self is never singular or uni-vocal. In fact, the stability experienced by the mature self results from a capacity to contain, as did the mother, such contradictory material while managing the fear of an attack or annihilation, rather than any uni-vocality or singular identity. Klein's version of the Oedipal complex, thus, offers an important alternative to Freud and Lacan, as well as those feminist theorists who critique their work, such as Irigaray.

Klein came to see the depressive position as the beginning of the Oedipal complex, for as the depressive infant is able to recognize the mother as a whole object, separate and in relation to others, the child finally becomes aware of the special bond between the mother and father. Of course, the infant does not have the maturity of an adult. Relations are still colored by his own phantastic content: “his own libidinal and aggressive desires” (Segal 103) mean that he imagines the parents in “almost uninterrupted intercourse” (103), devouring each other in their love and hate. Consequently, object relations emphasizes an Oedipal complex that is always both positive and negative and gives rise to both heterosexual and homosexual positions:

An important role is played in the early Oedipus complex by the phantasy of the combined parents. This phantasy appears first when the infant becomes aware of his mother as a whole object but does not fully differentiate the father from her; he phantasies the penis or the father as a part of his mother, his idealization of her makes
him see her as the container of everything desirable, breast, babies, penises. Envious attacks and projections can make this figure into a threatening persecutor. (Segal 107)

In Klein's view, the child is aware of both male and female genitalia. The phallic mother is, thus, just one version of the combined parent, as the child fluctuates between oral and genital desires for both parents (or the combined). During the early Oedipal complex, any choice of a sexual object is consequently uncertain. Both parents are loved and hated, desired and destroyed; the attacks, thus, fall upon the relationship between parents, more than on the parents themselves.

Thanks to the multiplicity of identifications and rejections, the object relations subject can be quite polymorphous. For example, for both boys and girls in the oral stage, the penis serves as an alternate love object to the mother's breast. Girls' turn to the penis is heterosexual in that it paves the way for the genital situation, but it is also homosexual in that it is linked to identification and introjection (having one of her own). The boy's turn to the penis facilitates a homosexual tendency, while at the same time strengthens his heterosexuality through identification. As these oral impulses transition into the genital stage, relations may be felt as toward both the external parent or internal parent. Intercourse with the mother restores her; it is a reparative act that returns to her the penis, babies, and “fills her breasts with milk” (Segal 111). As an external object of desire, then, the mother facilitates the son's heterosexuality and the daughter's homosexuality. As an internal object with whom the child identifies, she facilitates her son's homosexuality and her daughter's heterosexuality. Only as the child becomes increasingly conscious of his or her own sex is the stage set for the positive Oedipal complex. The negative Oedipal complex, however, is never fully overcome or lost. Though repressed, it comes forth in symbolized form.28

Julia Kristeva's sense of symbolization is, of course, more informed by Jacques Lacan than what

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Hanna Segal has in mind here, but this is also exactly the place Kristeva situates her concept of the abject:

… if this future subject readily grants himself a 'presence' of other people that he internalizes as much as ... expels, he is not facing an object but, in fact, an *ab-ject*, with this *a* understood in the privative sense of the prefix, that is, as vitiating the object as well as the emerging subject. It is subject and object that, as such, are crystallized only through what Klein calls the 'depressive position' or, strictly speaking, through the castration ordeal, the resolution of the Oedipus conflict, and the creative acquisition of language and thought. (*Melanie Klein* 72-73)

Here Kristeva particularly merges her two influences, Klein and Lacan. Drawing on Klein's concept of splitting and Lacan's object *a*, she conceives of a relationality weakened by the fact that objects are only based on the loss that laid the foundations of the subject's own being.\(^\text{29}\) This does not mean that relationality is impossible. Rather, Kristeva concedes that through the depressive position, the child:

… directs his ambivalent fantasies toward his parents, particularly when his parents are united through intercourse. Accordingly, it is not the fear of castration, aphanesis, and death that causes the child to abandon his oedipal desires (which is what Freud believed), but – long before the onset of the genital stage – the ambivalence that characterizes the depressive position itself (the love for one's parents *combined with* the fear of hurting them through an ever-present destructive aggression). (*MK* 80-81)

Kristeva's sense of the Symbolic, I think, is somewhat other than Lacan's. Her symbolic remembers the mother. It's not simply that Kristeva's semiotic breaks the Symbolic in the name of the maternal Real, but that the maternal colors language. The maternal resides in the sounds of words and the rhythms of a

language that implicitly grieves the mother's loss and celebrates her memory. Kristeva settles on Klein's mother as an “archaic object” and unleashes Klein's “genius” by merging the archaic mother “into a consideration of the symbolic function of the father” (73). She places the two theorists in constructive relation, a thing Lacan resisted admitting despite Klein's influence on some of his own work.30

Jessica Benjamin: Redefining the Self – Relations, Gender, and Culture

Jessica Benjamin most emphasizes a human complexity that affect theory seems to ignore in the resistance to any contemplation of the psychoanalytic. Perhaps one of the misinterpretations of object relations theory is that the focus on identification and mirroring emphasizes similarity at the expense of difference.31 Yet, Jessica Benjamin, informed by both “the intrapsychic and intersubjective psychoanalytic models of the mind” ([LSLO 6]), argues that identifications allow a person to integrate difference, preserving rather than assimilating different self positions. For example, when alert to the preOedipal foundations for the Oedipal conflict, one must acknowledge the gender incoherence of every person. The figure of the combined parent indicates that boys and girls want both female and male genitalia. This would be an easily dismissed fact, but for Klein's coining of the term “position” over Freud's use of the word “stage.” Benjamin accepts that positions mean certain contradictory stages coexist and inter-relate.

The self does not mark progress from one stage to the next, but rather gathers voices and objects, learning to contain the tension between the positions and voices and to negotiate the cacophony. The mother's role, then, is incredibly active, re-enacted by a mature self who understands

30 See Kristeva, Julia. Melanie Klein. 139-141, 172-175, 225-230, 240 for Kristeva's elucidation of Lacan's efforts to fill in the gaps Klein left in her own work.
31 Interestingly, Irigaray makes a similar claim concerning Lacan when she argues that woman has been forced to mirror the man. See Speculum of the Other Woman. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Cornell U.P., 1985. 59-60. Of course, object relations would argue that the mother's mirroring serves as the bridge to culture, the problem being that in a patriarchal culture the mother's differentiation (or survival as an other) is simply not permitted.
his various positions (both internal and external) and manages his ambivalence. In *Shadow of the Other* (1998), Jessica Benjamin further explicates the difference she means between self and identity, emphasizing the mother's activity in contrast to the cultural conception of female passivity. Benjamin defines “identity” as rising with a singular voice and “self” as rising with many contradictory voices. The mature self allows for such asymmetry.  

To my view, Jessica Benjamin better appreciates the place of Lacan's work than did he, for she unpacks the cultural fact of the bar of repression while also calling to task psychoanalytic theory for its own promulgation of “the oedipal structure of heterosexual complementarity” (*LSLO* 18):

> … the complementary relationship works through splitting: the subject now fills the position of the other (sex) not with an outside, differentiated being but with the self’s disowned, unconscious experience, which appears as a threatening Other. This historical relation of women's subordination to men can be analyzed as the paradigmatic expression of splitting: the subject simultaneously denies the other's subjectivity and makes her, instead, into the object that embodies the split-off parts of self. (18)

Benjamin's sense of women's subordination as “the paradigmatic expression of splitting” informs much of my analysis of the objectification of women, particularly maternal figures, such as Error, Gertrude, Ophelia, Hermione, and the Duchess of Malfi. The phantasy of the omnipotent mother, Benjamin claims, informs “the twin acts of denying maternal subjectivity and repudiating identification” that result from the “men's dread of the mother, whether the dread is expressed as denigration or idealization of her as other” (19). Following Benjamin, I attempt to break up the ideal as much as the denigrated, in hopes of uncovering “a symbolic space within the early maternal dyad” (19).

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32 See especially Jessica Benjamin's third chapter, “The Shadow of the Other Subject.”: “First, the self is constituted by the identifications with the other that it deploys in an ongoing way, in particular to deny the loss and uncontrollability that otherness necessarily brings. Second, it is reciprocally constituted in relation to the other, depending on the other's recognition, which it cannot have without being negated, acted upon by the other, in a way that changes the self, making it nonidentical” (79). *Shadow of the Other*. (1998).
Granted, mother's voices in the medical treatises, midwifery handbooks, and prayer books are absent, instead ventriloquized by male writers, many of whom never even entered the birth room. Much of my work, consequently, analyzes the male imaginary where the mother figure is concerned, with an eye to her “real” function as the bridge to culture. Thus far, I have used the word mother as if referring only to the birth mother, but I have in mind a range of figures bearing maternal principles, from the midwife and wet nurse to the mother herself. Whenever possible, I work to elevate those voices to hearing range. I contemplate maternity as foundational to a patriarchal culture that would deny it voice.

As Chris Laoutaris describes, the mother's subjectivity recedes as her body becomes more visually penetrable. In the sixteenth century the anatomy theaters provided a core challenge to Galen's one-sex model, and in that, such visual penetration serves as a reminder that Galen's one-sex model was not the only model to be had. In fact, it was deeply contested. However, the visual is also culturally constructed, and as such, Laoutaris's point has as much relevance to the anatomy theaters as to abortion rights activists. Thus, I do mean to contemplate the body as involved in human experience and issues of selfhood.

To do so, I follow Jessica Benjamin, who in contrast to Freud, would work backward from speech to the maternal body. She contemplates the body as the primary dimension, a locus of sensation, energy, and affect. The maternal body holds the tension so that the mind is not overwhelmed by it; it becomes – metaphorically – a mental container that should not be dismissed as merely preOedipal. Rather, the body as container achieves metaphoric dimensions – as when Winnicott refers to the “environment” – and remains substrate of affective life. Through this container, two active subjects may exchange, express and receive; they may co-create a mutuality, that also allows for their separateness and difference.

This move, speech to body, has consequences for Benjamin's understanding of speech and
language. While she accepts the Lacanian Symbolic (for, as she theorizes, she contains multiple and contradictory voices), she also conceives of language as the “heir to [Winnicott's] transitional space … inasmuch as we see it … more relationally as forming the medium of the subject's acting and interacting with the world. Hence it constitutes a space of fluctuating convergence and divergence between inner and outer” (Shadow 28). This speech “is conditioned by the recognition between two subjects, rather than a property of the subject. Because communicative speech establishes a space of dialogue potentially outside the mental control of either or both participants, it is a site of mediation, the 'third term’” (28 emph. added). By “third term,” Benjamin refers to “the dance that is distinct from the dancers yet co created by them” (28 note 5). In this sense, language is also embodied. It can enact the dialogic relations that make tension manageable and, thus, facilitates the active containment first experienced as maternal. As Kristeva herself describes, language remembers the mother; yet, Benjamin's concept of language does not remember her in mourning. Rather, language makes the maternal present when facilitating a creative mediation between two minds.
Chapter Three. Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*: Making a Difference

Becoming and Unbecoming Errour

Redcrosse Knight's fight with Errour is less a victory or defeat, than a fraught study of the inextricability of lightness and darkness, difference and likeness, self in other and the otherness of self. As Susanne Wofford has pointed out, “Spenser's characters lack what we might feel to be the most important information that would allow them to proceed successfully in their world: that is, the knowledge that they are in an allegory. One of the fictional games that Spenser plays,” she continues, “is to present his characters with a situation that appears on the fictional plane of the story to be an external event, while the reader is able to recognize that the poem employs apparently external things or beings as signs of internal psychological events or ideas” (*Cambridge Companion* 116). Wofford's remark assumes a certain level of similarity between the interiority of Spenser's “characters” and the “external things or beings” they meet on their journey (116). This journey happens across a landscape likewise animated by a character's “internal psychic events or ideas” (116). By arguing that the character fails to recognize the psychically allegorical content of these “external things or being” (116), Wofford assumes a preOedipal landscape, one in which inside and outside are experienced as one and the same.

As object relations theorists have long understood, this process of learning difference is first facilitated by a maternal figure who embodies an infant's world and who introduces the infant to difference by enacting her own difference from the infant. When also taking the early modern medical treatises into account, Wofford's claim is made even more interesting, for what we would accept simply as “internal psychological events or ideas” are (116), in Spenser's world, experienced by a humoral body already vulnerable to external and internal passions. My point is that Spenser's use of allegory is
not so stunning for this assumption. Rather, it participates in a cultural imaginary regarding the humoral body's relation to others, the immediate environment, and the world at large.

Further, as I have already shown, the treatises propose that every body is made of maternal matter and vulnerable to “the mother” embedded in the flesh. I am thus interested in remembering the mother figured by and in Errour's cave, Britomart's bed, and the knights' respective suits of armor as informing the (material and psychic) construction of Spenser's knights. How do the maternal figures of Errour and Glauce embody Redcrosse Knight's and Britomart's worlds, respectively? What psychic struggles do they embody during the mirror stage, and what differences do they facilitate? As I will show, the processes of becoming and unbecoming that take place in Errour's cave continue to unfold throughout Spenser's narrative. This chapter rises from a sensitivity to such patterns of embodiment, in order to read Spenser's armored knights more relationally and more corporeally than has been done in the past. I move from Redcrosse Knight and Errour (Book 1) to Britomart and Glauce (Book 3) to Redcrosse Knight and Britomart (Book 3), contemplating the knights' growing awareness of difference and, hence, their introduction to the power of choice.

Errour “like a shade”: The Embodied Mirror Stage

Errour appears to Redcrosse Knight through a “glooming light, much like a shade” (1.1.14.5) cast from his own “glistring armor” (1.1.14.4). It's difficult to say who is mirroring what in this moment. Is Errour a mere shadow of Redcrosse Knight's armor, or a kind of negative space in which the armor's past bearers rise bringing their Hades with them? Or is it, as Wofford indicates, a “sign of [Redcrosse Knight's] internal psychological events and ideas,” a representation of the personal

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33 Joseph Campana's *The Pain of Reformation* (2012) provides some groundwork for this effort because his work addresses some of the shortcomings with Lacan's mirror stage when contemplating Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in favor of what I take to be a more relational view. See “Vulnerable Subjects” 187-203 for his analysis of Merlin's mirror, as one example. I return to his work more fully later in this chapter.
prehistory we do not receive as Redcrosse Knight “pricks across the plaine” in his ill-fitted armor (1.1.1.1)? Or is the armor itself an error in some way? Why else wrap the content in such a confusion of abject material? I refer, of course, to Errour's two halves and the content of her vomit.

Errour's supposed androgyny is not only a result of her two halves, but is a consequence of a two body merger. While Errour's top “halfe [that] did woman's shape retaine”(1.1.14.8) reflects her female gender, her bottom halfe is somewhat more complicated: “her huge long taile her den all ouerspred, / Yet was in knots and many boughtes vpwound” (1.1.15.2-3) portrays a phallus knotted up into a replication of the womb's corporeal labyrinth. From Plato's Timeaus the womb was portrayed as capable of sucking in the seed and “voluntary motion” (Eccles 28). The womb might, according to one medical treatise “come down to meet nature, sucking, and snatching the same” (Guillimeau Childbirth 107-108, qtd. Eccles 29). The reference to the “folds” in Errour's tail also aligns the organ as much with the vaginal canal and the womb's membranes as the phallus. As Audrey Eccles posits, the “muscular nature of the uterine wall was also important for conception, because it closed in on the seed to retain it while the two seeds mixed together” (29). The medical treatises include various accounts of the generative organs “mixing it up,” so to speak. But, also, the one-sex model posits an inherent intimacy between the two organs – one organ simply the inversion of the other makes for what object relations theorists would recognize as a figure of the combined parent. Hanna Segal describes the combined parent figure as such:

An important role is played in the early Oedipus complex by the phantasy of the combined parents. This phantasy appears first when the infant becomes aware of his mother as a whole object but does not fully differentiate the father from her; he phantasies the penis or the father as a part of his mother, his idealization of her makes him see her as the container of everything desirable, breast, babies, penises. Envious
attacks and projections can make this figure into a threatening persecutor.

(Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein 107)

The two parents Redcrosse Knight meets in the figure of Erreur, in other words, cannot be parted. Pushed to do so, one cannot really tell their difference even cutting her in half. Erreur rushes “forth, hurling her hideous taile / About her cursed head, whose folds displaid / Were stretched now forth at length” (1.1.16.2-4), as if Redcrosse is about to be wrapped in battle and swallowed whole in darkness. Redcrosse has unwittingly stumbled upon a phantastical primal scene, mother and father absorbed into a sexualized beast who would be, contain, or consume all things – including him.

In addition to Erreur's body, her vomit – “A floud of poyson horrible and blacke, / Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw” and “vomit full of bookes and papers was, / With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lack” (1.1.20.2-3 and 6-7) provides a graphic projection of her insides and consists of what Kristeva described as “an amalgam of representations, sensations, and substances - … a diverse array of heterogeneous internal objects” (63-64). Kristeva refers here to Melanie Klein's portrayal of infant phantasy as consisting of internal part objects, bodily phenomena, noises – a confusion of material that, Kristeva emphasizes, contrasts Lacan's more spectral sense of the imaginary. The infant feels these internal objects as working objects inside the body, suited to his corporeal disjointure. If Erreur does anything for what we would call the mirror stage, she would emphasize this kind of materiality, spewing forth maternal matter and paternal written artifact, alongside innumerable amphibious eyeless moles. Spewing forth such content, Erreur accuses Redcrosse of a blind prematurity, a prematurity she – at the same time – invites him to recognize with its visual play within and across the cave walls. That is, she invites him to see and enact his difference: “I embody and I project what you will not contain. Be different.”

34 See Kristeva's Melanie Klein for the context to this quote. Kristeva is making a comparison between Lacan's specular imaginary and Klein's heterogeneous and embodied imaginary.
As Lacan would have it, Errour's cave contains “a certain dehiscence at the very heart of the [premature] organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by signs of malaise and motor uncoordination” (“The Mirror Stage” 78). Kristeva adds, however, that the defensive act of splitting is a first step in learning difference, a skill required for any mature use of a symbol system such as language. Splitting means that the infant has a chance at seeing through the “malaise” (Lacan 78) and recognizing the difference between a symbol and the thing itself. Notably, Redcrosse Knight's episode with Errour entails a repetitious making and unmaking of her body – opening her mouth to her young ones as they run from the light, she performs childbirth in reverse. Spewing “out of her filthy maw / A flound of poysen horrible and blacke, / Full of great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw, / Which stunck so wildly, that it forst [Redcrosse Knight] slacke” (1.1.20.1-4) – she performs the most abject of births, one of “defecation,” according to Hamilton and Miller (Miller 247). Her “chaos” is actually rather ordered; it forms a pattern of making and unmaking, as if Redcrosse is searching out his difference from the fight, a fight he did not pause to choose. As Lacan would say, the flesh beneath the Redcrosse Knight's armor, carries “humoral residues of the maternal organism” (“The Mirror Stage” 78). The knight's armor thus works to re-member an otherwise uncoordinated, admittedly impulsive, humoral body. A knight is flesh encased in darkness, raw gobbets armored in the upright. But this armor is a problem if it does not give to the processes of splitting, introjection, and projection that form the basis of discovering difference and articulating a self other than the allegorical. I mean to say that while Redcrosse Knight cannot choose the shape of his allegory, he can choose how to respond. The making and unmaking of Errour's body, its projections and introjections, underline a Redcrosse Knight attempting to engage a process of

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I return to this quote in the second half of this chapter which is focused on Britomart. The quote is one example of the language Campana calls into question in his analysis of the mirror stage – not for its concept of the chaotic female body as much as for the problematic chronology when applying it to Britomart. Britomart's experience of “a certain dehiscence at [her] very heart” does not occur until she looks in Merlin's mirror and sees the image of Arthegall: “In Britomart's case, it is the mirror scene that catapults her into chaos from her relatively staid and stable existence as a daughter and wife to be” (Campana 191).
splitting, in difference making. “Chaos” might have a purpose, if Redcrosse Knight ever learns to see Erreur differently or to wear his own ambivalence.

But this first episode presents a Redcrosse Knight caught in an in-flux and out-flux of confused material – attempting a game of fort-da with a materialized “shade” of his own undecidability. For example, Erreur attempts to leave the fight: She “sought backe to turn againe; / For light she hated as deadly bale, / Ay wont in desert darknesse to remaine, / Where plaine none might her see, nor she see any plaine” (1.1.16.6-9). She would assert her distaste for the light, her difference from Redcrosse Knight and his glistening armor, by leaving the scene. She would leave him to face his own empty history. In response, Redcrosse Knight “with his trenched blade her boldly kept / From turning backe, and forced her to stay” (1.1.17.3-4). He makes for an Erreur who doubles and redoubles as the womb-cave. His “glistring” light (1.1.14.4) drives the “thousand yong ones” (1.1.15.5) down Erreur's mouth, just as it drives Erreur further into the dark: Redcrosse Knight's decision to keep up the pretense of a fight with Erreur only prolongs his capture.

Errour's absence would also leave Redcrosse Knight to make meaning of a mission he is not yet ready to fulfill. His fight with Erreur sets him on a pattern of delay, for it means the deferment of Gloriana's assignment. If he fights Erreur to assert his difference, then his “premature blindness” is not so much about ignored warnings as it is his effort to deny how much he needs Erreur to show him how – how to be different and yet wear the mantle of allegory, how to inhabit an ambivalent flesh and a self made of contradictions. In response to her detainment, Erreur leaps “fierce upon his shield and her huge traine, / All suddenly about his body wound” (1.1.18.6-7 emph. added). Wrapped around Redcrosse Knight's body, Erreur's figure refigures the body inside as maternal and as wanting that maternity – both facets of Redcrosse Knight's body that his armor would work to deny in favor of a symbolic patriarchy. Erreur argues, in other words, that the maternal body is its own best armor and
quite capable of holding even that.

In this sense, Redcrosse Knight is every bit an everyman. Taking into account the medical treatises' descriptions of foetal development, the narrator's introjection “God helpe the man so wrapt in Errour's endlesse traine” (1.1.18.9) is a prayer for every man and every woman born of a culture that theorized the cauls as such:

The second caul with which the birth is covered compasseth the same birth from the navel downward, covering all the inferior parts of the infant. And this skin or caul is as it were full of pleats and wrinkles. And through this caul the birth is defended and kept from ill and sharp humors as urine or piss issuing from the infant, sweat, etc.

The third suiting or caul likewise containeth all the birth in it, defending also the same from humors and urine and from the boisterousness of the secundine or first caul, and this is called the armor or defence of the birth.

_The Birth of Mankind_ (279 emph. added)

While _The Birth of Mankind_ works to introduce difference into early modern theories of reproduction in service of patriarchal culture, it continues to imagine cauls as separating the nurturing fluids from the abject. The idea of difference is embodied by the maternal and enacted, _The Birth of Mankind_ asserts, in the womb. This “armor or defence of the birth” (279) allegorically links the mother's protective cauls and her holding to the knight's armor, a cultural tension Spenser captures in Redcrosse Knight's battle with Errour. If, on the outside, the armor glistens with its symbolic mission “pricking on the plaine” (1.1.1.1), on the inside it leans into a flesh that remembers the herstory that such “pricking” would forget.

Of course, Lacan also uses this word “armor” to refer to the ego's formation during the mirror
stage – as that which creates the feeling of wholeness and bodily integrity where before there was none:
“for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented body image to what I will call 'orthopedic' form of its totality – and to finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure” (78). As object relations theorists emphasize, however, before the formation of such armor, there was a holding that began in the womb and continued in swaddling and the maternal body holding the infant – what Lacan prefers to refer to as “humoral residues of the maternal organism” (78). This holding, as imagined in The Birth of Mankind, consists of layers of caul or membranes, “full of pleats and wrinkles” (279), folds, I argue, one might see playing across Errour's tail and the walls of her cave, and that continue to inform a relationality that Spenser further develops with each book.

At the moment of Redcrosse Knight's distressing capture in Errour's tail, Una stands and makes her plea: “shew what ye bee” (1.1.19.2 emph. added). Taking the medical treatises into account, this is a profoundly redundant request. Una's “shew what ye bee” (1.1.19.2) – often interpreted as a call to do over any call to be – remembers the maternal / humoral body as much as it calls Redcrosse Knight to rise and fight. This desire to keep close to maternal matter, to cloake Redcrosse in Errour's body and the caul of her tail has special consequences in a patriarchal culture that perceives the female body as soft and wounded. It places, in fact, a lot of pressure on the armor which must not only deny the body's humoral penetrability, but also bears the weight of a revisory tradition. Una, too, participates in this revision when she pronounces after Errour's defeat:

‘Faire Knight, borne under happy starre,

Who see your vanquisht foes before you lye:

Well worthy be you of that Armorie,

Wherein ye have great glory wonne this day,
And prooved your strength on a strong enimie,

Your first adventure: many such I pray,

And henceforth ever wish, that like succeed it may.’ (1.1.27.3-9 emph. added)

True to Una's wish, Red Cross Knight has yet to recognize his own status born as knight errant. He does not perceive his own wishful eagerness in Una's wish for his success or the implosion of his assigned purpose in the explosion of Errour's greedy blood drinking offspring. As Paul Suttie has argued:

to have defeated Errour might still legitimately be counted as a good thing, even if chief amongst the errors the knight needed to overcome in so doing were his own deficient motives for undertaking the battle in the first place. But what is telling is that at the end to that error of motivation is just what is not found in the course of his winning the fight and receiving praises for so doing. On the contrary, confirmed by his lady in a virtuous interpretation of his action, what he proceeds to do, as if taking to heart her wishing him 'many such' encounters, is immediately to go seeking 'new aduenture' (1.1.28) wherever he can hear of it, in the process letting his assigned quest disappear from view.

(Self- Interpretation in The Faerie Queene 68).

Suttie highlights Una's “virtuous interpretation” as part of the episode's mistakenness, for it reinforces Red Cross Knight's urge toward “increasing his own renown” with no mind of his “higher purpose” (68). Una truthfully mirrors exactly what Redcrosse Knight wishes to hear, for Redcrosse Knight would rather pursue the fight with a premature and physical urgency just as he charged Errour's “darksome hole” … “full of fire and greedy hardiment” (1.1.14). Una's “virtuous interpretation” ratifies his place within the imaginary, no matter the fresh dints across his “armor” – but that imaginary is more than spectral. Spenser's allegory materializes “psychological events or ideas” (Wofford 116) in events,
figures, even the landscape.\textsuperscript{36} Errour's body, as the first maternal body, grounds each repetition. Redcrosse Knight is made and unmade by his "choices" – Duessa over Una, Una over Duessa. When we meet him again in Book 3, he is a different kind of knight, not only for serving someone else's allegory. He is a knight capable of asking a question... and listening to the response. He thus provides Britomart her first chance at articulating her own difference – all after he leaves a fight without killing the (m)other.

Making a Mirror of Britomart

Unlike Redcrosse Knight, Britomart has a history in her two parental figures, her father and her nurse Glauce. She breaks the bounds of her allegory in part because of that history's multi-faceted nature – because she identifies with more than one parent, and thus has more relationships on which to draw. Spenser depicts, in fact, a mirror moment with each parent, one specular when Britomart happens upon Merlin's mirror in her father's closet, and one more complicatedly represented by Glauce – first contained in Glauce's use of Petrarchan language to explain Britomart's aroused passions and second in Glauce's physical massaging of Britomart's "every trembling joynt, and every vaine" (3.2.34.3).

Merlin's mirror (3.2.22-26) has received a good deal of critical commentary by literary and feminist critics alike, and I aim to join this discussion from a more relational view, taking into account

\textsuperscript{36} See 2.10. The language used to describe the making of Britain is reminiscent of Errour. As David Lee Miller notes, "Spenser traces Britain's path to glory from 'antique time,' which he describes entirely in terms of what the land was not" (193). While Errour's episode in Book 1 entails the making and unmaking of her body, in 2.10, Spenser undoes history to return to its originary moment – a moment he has already problematized in Book 1. The land is a "saluage wildermesse, / Vnpeopled, vmmanur, vnprou'd, vnpraysd, / Ne was it Island then, / ne was it sought / Of marchants farre, for profits therein praysd, / But was all desolate" (2.10.5.3-8). Spenser imagines the not-island at Britain's primordial beginnings as a desolate and savage wilderness overrun by flesh eating Giants. As Miller emphasizes, "it remains unclear whether the fault [of the dubious origins of the monster race] lies with the 'vaine illusion' that led Dioecetian's daughters to couple with devils, or the 'monstrous error' that leads modern historians to repeat such superstitious fables (lines 7, 3)" (194). This ambiguity "hardly matters," according to Miller, but for my purposes this ambiguity is exactly the point. Spenser awakens the material imaginarness of Britain's historical inception by accenting its birth with the cultural doubt surrounding pregnancy and childbirth.
Britomart's identifications with each parent figure. The stanzas directly following, depicting Glaucue's response to Britomart's inexplicable heartache, have historically received less emphasis (see 3.2.30-34 and 38-40) as an aspect of what psychoanalytic theory means by “the mirror stage.” As relational theorists have come to understand, before the mirror, the mother's face, arms, breast, holding mimic and shape the infant. My purpose is not to negate the Lacanian criticism, much of which I find quite convincing, but to enrich our reading of Britomart by developing an analysis from a more relational view.

Campana's *The Pain of Reformation* provides an important first step toward a more inclusive scholarship and a notable refiguration of Britomart's mirror stage; in his chapter “Vulnerable Subjects,” he counters Lacanian readings of Britomart by claiming that “before applying Lacan to Britomart, one should ask how Britomart, as a figure of female masculinity, applies to Lacan, whose theory of how subjects are fashioned depends upon a mute, disordered materiality out of which the masculine 'agency of the ego emerges'” (189, see also *Ecrits: A Selection* 2). When providing his support for this “mute disordered materiality” and “innate organic disorder” (189), Campana relies on passages from “The Mirror Stage” to which I have already referred in my analysis of Errour. For example, Campana observes that “Lacan locates in humans 'a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primal Discord betrayed by signs of uneasiness and motor uncoordination of the neo-natal months'” (189, see also *Ecrits: A Selection* 3). Campana argues that Britomart's experience of chaos begins with Merlin's mirror, not before, and then situates Lacan's quote in the context of Lacan's “biological” and hence “reductive” evidence and source material:

While human subjectivity may rest uneasily on an organic, bodily chaos, the mirror stage itself appears to be grounded reductively in biology. Lacan notes casually, for

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example, that the human infant may be able to recognize an image in a mirror but still will be 'outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence.' Furthermore, the mirror stage itself is based in 'homeomorphic identification' of which 'the maturation of the gonad of the female pigeon' and the habits of 'the migratory locust' are exemplary. Lacan posits an innate bodily disorder that necessitates the mirror stage with its organizing armor of identity. Lacan then associates this masculine assumption of subjectivity with the adaptation of the species, as indicated by the biological reality of locusts and pigeons. As a result, Lacan naturalizes the longing of that organic matter to acquire organizing form and the appropriation by that organizing form. Masculine ego may be illusory, but it effectively encases the chaotic, feminine body.

(189-190, see also Ecrits: A Selection 1 and 3)

While Campana explicitly poses the problem of Lacan's mirror stage, especially regarding Britomart, he does not pose any responses from other psychoanalytic schools of thought, even though he shares many concerns with relational theorists. This is in part due to fact that he is making an argument on behalf of masculinity. He notes, for example, that Britomart “presents a site of cross-gender identification for men and women alike,” but argues that “the possibility of female same-sex eroticism and friendship” is facilitated by Britomart's identification with her father – in his closet. Because I perceive issues of containment as an extension of the maternal function, I tend to see even a father's closet as also maternal – in its function, if not in what it contains. I see “the possibility of female same-sex eroticism and friendship” as just as likely the result of Britomart's early and continuing relation with her nurse Glaucce as with her father's trust in and identification with her. In fact, following Jessica Benjamin, the dialectical nature of Britomart’s character explains much of the scholarly interest in her figure.
To be blunt, I take Britomart to be a bisexual figure, for well before she dons her armor as a knight she has clear alliances to both her father and her nurse Glauce. I work toward a more inclusive analysis, one that accepts “an important aspect of psychic reality: the tension between the dominance of the oedipal principle and the persistence of preoedipal overinclusiveness” (Benjamin Shadow 63). I take her also to “oscillate” between the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions, as she engages others on her quest, remembering that “[w]hile these positions develop phase-specifically, they become coexistent” (64). This relational understanding informs my reading of Britomart's armor as well as how she inhabits it, and how she experiences it in relation to others at any given moment.

Jessica Benjamin situates this bisexual cross identification within the Oedipal phase: “My suggestion … is that neither boys nor girls disidentify from the primary parent at this time. They do become separate and they do try to use a second figure – stereotypically the less primary, more coming and going parent, but often another available, attached adult or older sibling – to support individuation” (Shadow 60). When discussing identification, Benjamin defines identificatory love as “a specific formation, it is the love that wants to be recognized by the other as like. Identification is not merely a matter of incorporating the ideal, but of loving and having a relationship with the person who embodies the ideal” (Shadow 61). Arthegall, of course, is not the first (absent) male figure with whom Britomart is identified. Her father identifies with her to such a degree that “nothing he from her reserved apart” (3.2.22.4). He perceives in her both “his onely daughter and his hayre” (3.2.22.4). He finds in Britomart a daughter and a version of himself. She has, as such, free access to her father's closet, a room associated with both patriarchal privacy and maternal containment.38 In other words, because I situate

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38 See Campana's “Vulnerable Subjects” (199) for his review of the “lord's closet” in Spenser's time. As I have already noted previously, Campana associates the room more with the “realm of interiority, subjectivity, power, and male homosociality” (199). This supports his view that Britomart “as heir, is already considered privy to any number of public secrets that constitute her father as lord” (199). Absent from this analysis, however, is any account of the closet's allegorical associations with the more maternalized cave, “mirror, and wound,” figments Campana views as “signifiers of masculine subjectivity” (199).
Britomart in this theoretical context, I take her father's closet as one more figment of the combined parent, the mother capable of holding all things (see pages 71-72).

The Glaucean Way

Britomart's journey toward Arthegall consists of three episodes in which she shares her bed with other female figures: Glauce, Malecasta, and Amoret, respectively. In addition to rethinking the significance of Merlin's mirror, then, I contemplate each of these three figures in turn for what they mean for Britomart's body as a container for her contradictory identifications and her experience of sameness and difference from the others she meets. As Benjamin explains, identificatory love “is a step toward recognizing the other as subject, although its aim is to incorporate that other rather than fully accept the otherness. ... identificatory love in this form is homoerotic, whether it is the boy's or the girl's toward the father; it is used both to ratify sameness and bridge difference” (61). Glauce initiates Britomart's quest “toward recognizing the other as subject” and models the means “to ratify her sameness and bridge her differences” with these others. Reading Britomart as a figure engaged in this quest, as initiated by Glauce, means paying attention to the similarities and differences Britomart accepts and those she fights – it means asking how she uses others to ratify the self of her choice, one she might eventually share with Arthegall.

When Britomart's grief rises upon seeing Arthegall in Merlin's mirror, Glauce witnesses Britomart's struggle to contain that grief: “in dull corners doest thy selfe inclose” (3.2.31.5). Glauc unconforms to make sense of Britomart's suffering in a twofold response. On the one hand, Glauc responds in language. As if to help Britomart comprehend her changed and changeable self, Glauc describes Britomart's condition to her in grave detail:

... this wicked evill thee infest,
And rive with thousand throbs they thrilled brest;
Like an huge Aetn' of deepe engulfed griefe,
Sorrow is heaped in thy hollow chest,
Whence forth it breakes in sighes and anguish rife,

As smoke and sulphure mingled with confused strife. (3.2.32.4-9)

Glauce thus places Britomart's passions in the larger context of the suffering Petrarchan lover overcome with grief for the love object he cannot have.

On the other hand, Glauce speaks these words while holding Britomart's body, catching her in her arms, pulling her back into her bed, hopefully to tell the secret herself: “Feeling her leape out of her loathed nest, / Betwixt her feeble armes her quickly keight, / And downe againe in her warme bed her dight” (3.2.30.3-5). Her description of Britomart's suffering gives way to massage:

So having said, her twixt her armes twaine
She straightly straynd, and colled tenderly,
And every trembling joynt, and every vaine
She softly felt, and rubbed busily,
To doe the frozen cold away to fly;
And her faire deawy eies with kisses deare
She oft did bath, and oft againe did dry;
And ever her importund, not to feare
To let the secret of her hart to her appeare. (3.2.34)

Like Redcrosse Knight, Britomart finds herself in a rather intimate exchange with a maternal figure, but where Redcrosse Knight fights the body catching him, Britomart accepts Glauce's tender ministrations. In her first enacted love scene, the vulnerable Britomart finds a maternal figure who
“sympathizes,” who kisses the eyes penetrated (fractured) by the image of Arthegall, and who deflates the loneliness of Britomart's pain by appreciating its larger context: “'Daughter,' said she, 'what need ye be dismayd, / Or why make ye such Monster of your mind?’” and “No guilt in you, but in the tyranny of love” (3.2.40. 1-2 and 9). Arthegall is, in fact, just that close. Asking a question, answering it herself, Glauce models for Britomart a means to relating. She makes meaning of the passions by asking Britomart about their otherness: “Why make ye such a Monster” when really it's just the “tyranny of love” – an otherness that Britomart herself embodies once she accepts the love object.

The “Monster of [the] mind” (3.2.40.2) does not materialize for Britomart as it does for Redcrosse because of Glauce's ability to place Britomart's Petrarchan symptoms into language, and because Glauce accepts Britomart's overrunning passions tenderly into her hands, understanding what they are, “love's tyranny” (3.2.40.9). Equally important is the fact that Britomart lets her. Massaging each “trembling joynt” and warming “every vaine” (3.2.34.3), Glauce helps Britomart feel the boundedness of her skin and blood flow; she thus instills Britomart with a sense of bodily integrity even with its vulnerability. She molds her flesh to body again, even while that body holds onto Arthegall. She shows Britomart, in other words, how to realign her already conflicted identifications: one with the mother who holds her and enacts her body's vulnerable integrity, one with the father who allows her access to Merlin's mirror in the first place, and one with Arthegall for whom she will search. She enacts a very active and powerful ability to hold such conflictedness without breaking apart. This twofold response, in language and body, allows Britomart to describe “'th'only shade and semblant of a knight” (3.2.38.3) as a real object contained in body and embedded in her flesh:

\[
\text{Sithens it hath infixed faster hold} \\
\text{Within my bleeding bowels, and so sore} \\
\text{Now ranckleth in this same fraile fleshly mould,}
\]
That all mine entrailes flow with poysnous gore,
And th'ulcer groweth daily more and more;
Ne can my running sore find remedie,
Other then my hard fortune to deplore,
And languish as the leafe falne from the tree,
Till death make one end of my dayes and miserie. (3.2.39)

Britomart's internal world, that “amalgam of representations, sensations, and sub-stances… a diverse array of heterogeneous internal objects” (Kristeva MK 63-64), is painfully shifting for this new addition, and it has consequences for how she experiences the body holding them. Massaging Britomart's body, Glauce facilitates the body's holding and allows for Britomart's multiple and sometimes contradictory positions, including but not exclusive to her own. Glauce chooses to initiate Britomart's discovery of an inexplicable love that animates her body more than any language meant to define it.

In fact, Glauce – in body – reminds Britomart that no matter the internal object or its power, in the end, Britomart may choose how far it will inform her flesh or, at least, how to respond to its fleshly presence. Sharing Britomart's bed, Glauce witnesses her own displacement: the “sad sighs, and sorrows deepe / Kept watch and ward about her [Britomart] warily” (3.2.28.6-7), just as Glauce used to do. Glauce has choices as to how to respond. She might respond with the rage and frustration evident in Errour's behavior. She might leave – wounded by Britomart's transgression – and not return, as Errour attempts to do. But Glauce does not respond with hurt, rage or jealousy; she does not wrap Britomart in a crushing tail or threaten to swallow her whole. Nor is her holding such feelings at bay and refusal to engage in such acts a sign of any feminine passivity. In this sense, Glauce exemplifies what D. W. Winnicott would call “the good enough mother,” a mother who is just good enough not to react
defensively, but rather responds relationally – playing with her likeness while maintaining her
difference, holding Britomart's body while knowing all the while that body will ultimately leave her.

Glaucce's ability to recognize Britomart's heartache as a moment to introduce her to the power of
choice reveals her own security in her status as other than Britomart. She also appreciates what choice
means for Britomart's experience of her own body – that her identifications and internal love objects
mean something for the very make up of her flesh. For example, Glaucce emphasizes the difference the
armor will mean for Britomart's flesh as it brings her closer to a likeness with Arthegall:

Let us in feigned armes our selves disguize,
And our weake hands (whom need new strength shall teach)
The dreadfull speare and shield to exercize:
Ne certes daughter that same warlike wize
I weene, would you misseme; for ye bene tall,
And large of limbe, to'atchieve an hard emprize,
Ne ought ye want, but skill, which practize small

Will bring, and shortly make you a mayd Martiall. (3.3.53.2-9)

Within the context of my more relational view, the armor allows for an embodied wish fulfillment by
fleshing out the internalized Arthegall. If Britomart cannot have Arthegall in the flesh, she will both
search for him and grow more like him. Glaucce does not emphasize the armor as “disguize” though she
calls it such (3.3.53.2), nor does she emphasize its life saving rigidity. She emphasizes instead the body
inside that with “practize small” will “make you a mayd Martiall” (3.3.53.8-9). She perceives the
relationship between Britomart's body and the armor's wish fulfilling potential – as it affects
Britomart's body. She imagines for Britomart a body that will need hers less and less – as nurse or
squire. My point is that Glauce is powerful enough to provide shape to Britomart's quest, but independent enough to withdrawal as Britomart becomes aware of her body's potential to contain her own contradictions and to enact her identifications.

Glauce is teaching Britomart what her body can achieve as its own best metaphor, and frankly, Merlin's mirror functions much the same way:

It vertue had, to shew in perfect sight,

Whatever thing was in the world contaynd,

Betwixt the lowest earth and heavens hight,

So that it to the looker appertaynd;

What ever foe had wrought, or frend had Faynd,

Therein discovered was, ne ought mote pas,

Ne ought in secret rom the same remaynd;

For thy it round and hollow shaped was,

Like to the world it selfe, and seemed a world of glas. (3.2.19 emph. added)

Merlin's mirror reflects back to the viewer a world of objects held within its “round and hollow shape[d]” (3.2.19.8) – internal objects with whom the viewer is already in external relation. In other words, the mirror is not simply a reflective surface; it is part of the metaphor – as a maternal figure of

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39 The armor they wear, in other words, is not “the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark [Britomart's] entire mental development with its rigid structure” (“The Mirror Stage” Ecrits: The First Complete Edition 78). As Lauren Silberman notes, “Unlike Redcrosse or Guyon, Britomart is not assigned a quest by Gloriana. She puts on armor as a pragmatic means of achieving her desire” (“Britomart's Quest” 20). Yet, this “pragmatic” decision comes at Glauc's suggestion.

40 Lauren Silberman also contemplates the “interdependent” nature of subject and object in the Merlin's mirror, arguing that “[s]ince the categories are not entirely separable, it is impossible to accord one or the other primacy” (23). She focuses especially on Spenser's use of the phrase “so that” (line 4) as “deliberately ambiguous” and provides two possible readings: On the one hand, “the mirror could show sights in such a way that they pertain to the looker” (23). On the other hand, “[t]he phrase can also be construed as the equivalent of ‘provided that’: the mirror will reveal any sight, provided that it pertains to the looker. The double meaning,” Silberman continues, “keeps unclear to what extent the vision in the mirror is a subjective transformation of the object – that whatever appears in the mirror is distorted in such a way as to pertain to the looker – and to what extent the pertinence of the object to the subject is a necessary precondition for the magic vision – that the observer can see anything provided that it pertains to him or her” (23).
containment. In her chapter “The Phantasy as a Metaphor Incarnate,” Kristeva explains the Kleinian foundation for the relation between internal and external objects: “From the moment of birth, the drive engages in a binary expression: sensation / affect and the object coexist, and the presentation of the object clings to the sensation. The Kleinian phantasy is the mechanism for this juncture, of the drives' destiny to be both inside and outside: it is an 'object-seeking' drive” (Kristeva MK 142, see also Segal 2).

Klein perceives a world in which every object, internal and external, is an object wrapped in affect. Her reliance on the drives coincides with the felt experience of hunger and hunger satisfied – the breast both is the desire and satisfies that desire; we might contemplate Merlin's mirror not simply as presenting the image Britomart will chase, but as initiating her negotiation with the otherness of self and the parts of her self she discovers in others.

As Linda Gregerson explains it, “What we call love's consummation does not terminate or 'solve' desire, but endows it with a rhythm; love's work, like the reader's work, repeats itself” (21). Relational theory also poses an understanding of this “rhythm” of love (and hate): the goal in relational theory is not so much to overcome or organize the chaotic passions, but rather to learn the difference between the affect and the object it imbues, to recognize the aspects of self an object pulls out, or to introject those parts of the object one would keep, to learn the usefulness of particular identifications and grow a self large enough to negotiate those contradictions. The defensive splitting that marks Redcrosse Knight's journey with its demonized and idealized female figures enters a more self-conscious phase with Britomart. While Britomart does behave defensively (as when she wakes to find

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41 Linda Gregerson contends “the looking glass … supplants the breast” (Reformation 12). Obviously, “supplant” would not be a word I would choose. In object relations theory, the breast is the primary object, an object that materializes because the infant wills it so, an object that is split into good and bad, nourishing and persecutory. As the primary object, it is also the object that grounds the infant's ability to negotiate difference and to transition into relations with other objects and phenomenon as other than the self (transitional phenomena). As such, the primary object allows for a creative engagement with the arts, religion, and culture at large.

42 As a school of thought, relational theorists become even less concerned with the drive itself and more concerned with the relations between objects … and subjects – but to Melanie Klein the drives animated psychic experience and structured it.
Malecasta in her bed), she also learns to choose her responses to Arthegall's image in the mirror. If Merlin and Glaucce provide a shape or structure to her initial understanding of the mirrored image, Britomart – in her interactions with Redcrosse Knight – takes control of her navigation of that shape, changing it to suit her own preferences.

While Redcrosse Knight fails to recognize Britomart's similarities with Malecasta, even after learning her identity, Malecasta is not so dissimilar from Britomart as the “martiall Mayd” would like.43 Britomart leaps out of her bed grief stricken over Arthegall and Malecasta “whose engrieved spright / Could find no rest in such perplexed plight, / Lightly arose out of her wearie bed” (3.1.59.4-5).

Britomart trembles for Arthegall; Malecasta's “everie joynt” trembles (3.1.60.1). As with Britomart, Malecasta's “secret purpose” (3.1.60.3) is not simply consummation with her knight. As a scene of repetition, Malecasta also asks for a Glauccean compassion, for a sensitive holding that reawakens her fleshly cohesion and accepts the love she has to give. She asks Britomart to play the (m)other's part while offering her her passions back again; she asks of Britomart a conscious giving over to her vulnerable state. “It is hard,” argues Campana, “not to see the 'auenging blade,' the 'flaming sword' of the lady knight as an odd combination of arousal and aggression” (187, see 3.2.63.8 and 3.2.66.2), but when taking Malecasta's visit to Britomart's bed as an episode of repetition, Britomart's defensiveness also begs the questions: What reorganization would accepting Malecasta require? Which internal love objects would Malecasta displace, challenge, or complement? Who does Britomart defend in the flesh? On the one hand, I accept that Britomart's response to Malecasta is “disproportionately defensive” (Campana 187), but on the other hand, I also argue that it is very much in proportion to what Britomart might feel she has to lose.

Malecasta finds Britomart in a rather vulnerable position, asleep, but Britomart is not a person

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43 Campana: “Indeed, she [Malecasta] comes rather sympathetically as one who suffers from the wound of love and even resembles Britomart's pain” (188).
acustomed to choosing her vulnerability. She did not choose to share it with Glauce; Glauce caught her in its midst and showed her its usefulness: vulnerability is an opportunity to reorganize her internal love objects based on a new identification. Malecasta poses as a choice, and if one wants to argue Britomart chooses, then her body does it for her – a body whose likeness tends more towards Arthegall at this point than Glauce. She responds immediately and without regret; she enacts her knighthood by honoring her knight. But even this figure is layered with various identifications: she embodies Angela, the leader “of a Martiall / And mighty people, dreaded more then all / The other Saxons” (3.3.56.4-6), who “so deepe into the mynd / Of the young Damzell sunke” inspired Britomart to “Advent'rous knighthood on her selfe to don” (3.3.57.1-2 and 6). And her body mirrors Arthegall, a figure she continues to hone: “A thousand thoughts she fashioned in her mind, / And in her feigning fancie did pourtray / Him such, as fittest she for love could find, / Wise, warlike, personable, curteous, and kind” (3.4.5.6-9). Just as Glauce foresaw the transformation of Britomart's body with “small exercize,” Britomart grows with each internal object – objects she feels as real and living, objects that inform her developing personhood, and through whom she asserts her self, even if she has not yet learned to accept their or her own otherness.

No, Britomart responds better to questions, just as Glauce modeled for her: “Why make ye such Monster of your mind?” (3.2.40.2). Witnessing the results of Britomart's multifaceted series of identifications, Redcrosse Knight proves his own processual nature; he asks Britomart “[W]hat uncouth wind, / Brought her into those parts, and what inquest / Made her dissemble her disguised kind?” (3.2.4.5-7) and receives in response a Britomart of her own making. His asking for Britomart's story permits Britomart the freedom she did not have with Malecasta, the freedom to choose how much vulnerability to share:

Faire Sir, I let you weete, that from the howre
I taken fromm nourses tender pap,
I have beene trained up in warlike stowre,
To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap
The warlike ryder to his most mishap,
Sithence I loathed have my life to lead,
As ladies wont, in pleasures wanton lap,
To finger the fine needle and nyce thread. (3.2.6.1-8)

Very little, it at first appears: Britomart denies any significant relation to a mother, reducing her to needle and thread. Yet, Redcrosse asking the question invites Britomart's exploration of what Arthegall is and is not, continuing a process of his and her own making and unmaking, a process I have already explicated as an aspect of Errour's episode. If Redcrosse Knight invites Britomart's revisory story, Britomart invites Redcrosse Knight to co-create her Arthegall through a series of negations. In this reversal of splitting, they flesh out his figure, a process Spenser's poem likens to pregnancy: “The loving mother, that nine monethes did beare, / In the deare closet of her painefull side, / Her tender babe, it seeing safe appeare, / Doth not so much rejoysce, as she rejoysed theare” (3.2.11.6-9). The problem, of course, is that despite “the deare closet of her painfull side,” Arthegall does not physically appear. He remains, as before, a figure who asserts his difference by not appearing, a figure she will have to accept as other than herself before she will recognize him. She remains vulnerable, in other words, to an Arthegall who would refuse her, no matter how trained for war she is or how invulnerable in her counter-tale.

In my view, Britomart comes to contain this process of becoming and unbecoming in her own

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44 In contrast, Gregerson emphasizes the reproductive aspects of this process: “Britomart uses dispraise as a seeding device” (18). I would add Britomart also nurtures Arthegall's image, helping it to change and grow, just as her own body is doing inside the armor – the "small pratize" that Glauce noted when describing female warriors and the armored body. Britomart practices the same mechanism as Errour, made and unmade, but does so in response to a question – in dialogue with another knight. She is beginning to conceive of the object as external and in relation.
ambivalent stance over Busyrane as he unmakes Amoret's curse. Wielding her sword over his head, he *rises* when “next stroke him should have *slaine*” (3.12.34.2 *emph. added*):

> And rising up, gan streight to overlooke  
> Those cursed leaves, his charmes backe to reverse;  
> Full dreadfull things out of that balefull booke  
> He red, and measured many a sad verse,  
> That horror gan the virgins hart to perse,  
> And her faire locks up stared stiffe on end,  
> Hearing him those same bloudy lines reherse;  
> And all the while he red, she did extend  
> Her sword high over him, if ought, he did offend. (3.12.36)

At Amoret's request, Britomart “abstaine[s]” (3.12.34.4), and thus her body, sword overhead, guards a space not incomparable to Errour's cave – one in which “dreadfull things out of that balefull booke” (3.12.36.3) infect the body, and in which open wounds are made and unmade: “And the wyde wound, which lately did dispart / Her bleeding brest, and riven bowels gored, / Was closed up, as it had not bene bored, / And every part to safety full sound, / As she were never hurt” (3.12.38.3-7). Amoret, in other words, asks for a Britomart who inhabits her body *differently*, who wields her sword in order to un-do a wound. Meeting Amoret's request, Britomart might witness in the body's healing and feel in her own enforcing stance the possibility of a body whole with ambivalence. Might Britomart not also feel the folds of Errour's tail alive in the grip of her sword? For Amoret, Britomart is the protector in her own right, a knightly knight, but she is also now the figure who, seeing a wound, enforces its closure. True to form, Britomart responds to such a realignment by countering it with what Campana would call “aggression.” She purposefully intimidates Amoret after saving her: In order “to hide her fained sex the
better, / And maske her wounded mind” (4.1.7.3-4), she “purpos made / Of loue, and otherwhiles of lustfulnesse” (4.1.7.7-8). At the same time, Britomart defends Amoret's right to that wound and a flesh that remembers her knight: Vexed by a knight's “prowd / And boastfull chalenge,” Britomart “shrowd[s]” (4.1.10.7) that anger (this time of here own accord) and wins the joust on behalf of a conflicted body.

I began this study of Spenser's The Faerie Queene remarking that “Redcrosse Knight's fight with Errour is less a victory or defeat, than a fraught study of the inextricability of lightness and darkness, difference and likeness, self in other and the otherness of self” (68). Removing “her glistring helmet” (4.1.13.1), Britomart proposes a likeness with Amoret a little less reliant on the “shade” (see 1.1.14). Britomart's “golden lockes” fall to her heels “like a silken veile in compasse round” her armored body, in yet one more depiction of the mirror, but while the “Knights and Ladies all about” (4.1.14.1) stand in “amazement” (4.1.14.2), Amoret simply feels a “More franke affection” and “safe assurance” (4.1.15.7, 9) in Britomart's presence. Drawn to bed, Amoret and Britomart “of their loues did treat, / And hard aduentures twixt themselues alone, / That each the other gan with passion great, / And grieufull pittie priuately bemone” (4.1.16.1-4). Their trembling bodies, Britomart's and Amoret's, pose the intimate relation between the ever searching Petrarchan lover and the vulnerable body of female flesh. In Amoret, Britomart recognizes a person whose passions she accepts and with whom she is willing to share her own. Glauce has made this scene possible, not only as an allegorical repetition, but because she facilitated a journey that does not foreclose the “psychic reality [of] the tension between the dominance of the oedipal principle and the persistence of preoedipal overinclusiveness” (Benjamin Shadow 63). She allows for a Britomart who, removing her armor, might feel the body as its own best expression of a multi-dimensional, albeit conflicted self.
Remembering Gertrude

Queen: Have you forgot me? (Hamlet 3.4.14)

Drawing on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*, Melanie Klein observes “there is a close connection between the testing of reality in normal mourning and early processes of the mind” (“Mourning” 344). Klein believed that through the process of weaning the baby incorporates its parents and “feels them to be live people in his body in the concrete way in which deep unconscious phantasies are experienced – they are, in his mind, 'internal' or 'inner' objects” (“Mourning” 345). This early experience of mourning “is revived whenever grief is experienced later in life” (“Mourning” 344). Theoretically, the ghost’s return in *Hamlet* reignites Hamlet’s felt sense of loss and grief while also recalling the mother as an internal object that, in the case of this play, animates the abject nature of the flesh. The corpse *shows* what the mother is theorized to contain.

Early modern beliefs as to pregnancy and infancy underline an early modern selfhood made of the maternal abject. A becoming and unbecoming marks the earliest days of development, and the body's decomposition in illness and in death animates the mother's body living and dying in one’s own. An infant is not born with the ability to differentiate between inside or outside or into an experience of bodily wholeness. The corpse redeploy this threat of felt fragmentation. Further, accepting object relations also means accepting that this body sense does not simply dissolve into adulthood. As I will show, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* might be more celebrated for keeping the mother alive, imaginatively in the ghost’s return, in Ophelia’s corpse, and in Hamlet himself. Ultimately, the focus of this chapter remains fixated on Gertrude and Ophelia as maternal figures. As objects of Hamlet's and the fathers'
projected fantasies, their flesh is relegated to the maternal abject, ultimately making a corpse of each.

But also I contemplate how Gertrude and Ophelia relate to each other – beyond their abject status – in hopes of articulating an alternative reading to the play.

I utilize Melanie Klein's work because it conceives of the body's materiality and the experience of bodily functions, rhythms, and sounds as having consequences for the experience of selfhood. Kristeva herself summarizes Klein's work, praising it for the “heterogeneity that characterizes Klein's notions of the internal object and of fantasy” (MK 64) before contrasting it with Lacan's more spectral imaginary:

… however, much the internal object reflects the imaginary and attests to the presence of the fantasy in the early ego, it is also made up of substantive and sensorial elements: good or bad 'bits' of the breast are situated within the ego or expelled from it into the mother's breast. Nourishing substances such as the mother's milk or excremental substances such as urine and feces are projected and introjected. Klein's internal object is an amalgam of representations, sensations, and substances – in a word, it is a diverse array of heterogeneous internal objects. (MK 63-64)

Such a theoretical mindset helps explain the ghost’s fantastical materiality and its own obsessiveness over the body in the first act. When the ghost first speaks to Hamlet, he claims to be “forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison-house” (1.5.13-14), and then very promptly describes the utter transformation of Hamlet’s body at the telling:

I could tell a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list! (1.5.15-22)

The ghost shifts, in other words, from one form of containment – “my prison-house” (1.5.14) – to another in Prince Hamlet. Indeed, Hamlet listens and as the ghost predicted, his body proves infected. Hamlet proceeds to spread the “poison” through ears and blood, unthinking acts of violence. Like the ghost, he associates spiritual and bodily deterioration or decomposition with the maternal. While the ghost simply analogizes the “leprous distillment” poured into his ear that “posset and curd” in his blood to “eager droppings into milk” (1.5.64 and 68-69), Hamlet enacts revisions of these details in 3.4 and 5.2. Gertrude physically absorbs the associations: “I will speak daggers to her, but use none” (3.2.366), Hamlet claims, as if he is not evidence enough that words spread affect. Against these daggers, Gertrude protests, “O, speak to me no more! / These words like daggers enter in mine ears” (3.4.84-85). When she aligns herself with her son in 3.4, it is only a matter of time before she drinks from a poisoned cup and the poison of his words is compounded.

Scene 3.4 especially is interpreted for its Oedipal content, for Hamlet’s desire for his mother, while instructing her on which father is the proper so that he might murder him and stand in his stead. Certain adaptations emphasize this content with allusions to the mother's sexual body: Olivier's hooded bed falls to the more literal minded Zeffirelli. Zeffirelli's bedroom scene, with Glenn Close and Mel Gibson as mother and son, depicts Hamlet atop his mother pumping her, subsuming the father into the son in a mad search for potency. How are we to deal with such interpretations in which concern for Gertrude's body, person, and maternity are overwhelmed by the son's supposed quest for Symbolic position? How exactly in such moments do we keep a sense of Hamlet as the tragic hero rather than the
tyrannical murderer he proves in this scene to be? Or rather, why would we? Why should his vision of two fathers, so obviously split between goodness aligned with god and badness aligned with the serpent, also be Gertrude's or even that of the play? Why should his vision of his two mothers, the complicit unfeeling whore or the redeemed unsullied angel, be the only models for her character?

These film adaptations all continue the theories developed by Freud and Jones, especially. Both psychoanalysts posited that Hamlet felt guilt because he, like his uncle, experienced desire for his mother and wanted to kill his father. Freud, for example, questions Hamlet’s “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all” … How better could he justify himself than by the torment he suffers from the obscure memory that he himself had meditated the same deed [as King Claudius] against his father from passion for his mother?” (“Letter to Fleiss Oct. 15, 1897” 116). Jones spent decades developing his Oedipal analysis of Hamlet, publishing *Hamlet and Oedipus* in 1949.

Yet, Hamlet’s needs in 3.4 and the play’s very structure participate in Melanie Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position, a preOedipal position in which the infant projects its bad objects into the environment and introjects the good objects identifying them with the self. Hamlet and the play split the good father (King Hamlet) from the bad father (King Claudius), and the bad mother (whore Gertrude) from the good mother (redeemed Gertrude who abstains from sex). In 3.4, Hamlet’s rage and aggressivity rise from an infant-like belief in his own omniscience, a thing Gertrude challenges by marrying Claudius. Cast outward, rage threatens to turn back and annihilate the infant, but charges forth and kills Polonius in another of Hamlet’s misdirects. Adding further stress is the fact that every projection destabilizes the self by cutting across any clear boundary between the internal and external, a phenomenon Kristeva calls “parcellary splitting.” Like Hamlet in 3.4, the infant has no experience of wholeness. The two worlds war with each other – Hamlet casting out his violence ensures death’s return – at Laertes’s hand.
Contrary to what is frequently depicted, Hamlet does not enter his mother's closet simply to instruct her as to her proper alignment in the symbolic order – with King Hamlet. King Hamlet is dead, and Hamlet's grief means, as Klein understood it, that his “early mourning is revived” now that he experiences grief “later in life” (“Mourning” 344). As Janet Adelman wisely proposes, Hamlet searches for the mother’s return in his 3.4 return to the mother. The scene depicts a cultural male narcissism which is not made explicit until one contemplates the infant's felt omniscience, an omniscience that explicitly demands the mother mirror the son: “Come, come, and sit you down, you shall not budge; / You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the [inmost] part of you” (3.4.18-20). Hamlet presumes, like many omniscient a child, to know his mother's “[inmost] part,” a part he feels she has forgotten and that only he can witness, the part that would engender him as he should be. From this son's view, Gertrude's “[inmost] part” is of his own vision, his own sense of the primal scene, a primal scene rising from a need to discover in her an image of a purified kingship. Killing Polonius, he also has her and her closet contain his spastic violence and drive to kill. He would have her mirror him as mothers do in the first months after childbirth: the infant makes a demand, invents the mother's breast at the thought, taking in all the goodness while casting out all the badness.

Famously, Hamlet holds before her the images of two fathers, one good, one evil. His focus turns to her vision, thus far, different from his own: “Have you eyes? / Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, / And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?” (3.4.65-67), Hamlet repeats, frustrated that his mother's vision does not match his own. In her seeming ignorance of his view, she challenges his omnipotence. She dares to prove herself other; she sees differently, even referring to King Claudius as Hamlet’s father: “Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended” (3.4.9). Klein would hear this as a great disturbance to a Hamlet who has clearly not established the “internal 'good' objects [necessary] to feel secure in [his] inner world” (Klein “Mourning” 369, qtd. Kristeva MK 81). Unable to rely on any
internal world, Hamlet needs his mother to contain the good objects for him, to reflect it back to him in order to establish them as his. If he desires her in the flesh, then that flesh had best embody the King Hamlet he would be. He needs her to love the “right” father before his Oedipal complex can begin, and then she needs to die before it can resolve.

Implicitly, Gertrude recognizes these needs when she associates King Hamlet's murder with her son's language: “O, speak no more! / These words like daggers enter my ears” (3.4.94-95). Gertrude accuses her son of her own death, emphasizing what Kristeva would recognize as the matricide required before language can take hold: King Hamlet dead, Hamlet appears to search for his father in her flesh. The displacement also indicates Hamlet's drive to kill his father, a drive Hamlet would cast off and have his mother contain as her own: “A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king, and marry with his brother” (3.4.28-29 emph. added). This ambiguous line indicates the dangerous position Gertrude holds in her son’s mind. Moving quickly from Polonius’s murder to his “bad, good mother” (3.4.28) to King Hamlet’s murder and her marriage to King Claudius, Gertrude is clearly a figure of some torsion in Hamlet’s imaginary. In his mind, she is both good and bad, and he proves absolutely incapable of holding that ambivalence for himself.

Eventually, Hamlet's vision overwhelms Gertrude's own: “O Hamlet, speak no more! / Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and [grained] spots / And will [not] leave their tint” (3.4.88-91). Forced to view his primal scene, she becomes his object, but this is not a vision of her making: Hamlet indicates the two images before her; Hamlet sees one father with “grace … seated on [his] brow / Hyperion's curl, the front of Jove himself / an eye like Mars” (3.4.55-57). Hamlet sees the other father in contrast to this god, as “a mildewed ear, / Blasting his wholesome brother” (3.4.64-65). His vision, as does his speech, overwhelms the scene and in the face of it Gertrude issues a question: “What shall I do?” (3.4.180) –
Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,

Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,

And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,

Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,

Make you ravel all this matter out. (3.4.181-186).

Hamlet dares her to make him hate her more than he already does by explicitly bidding her to do exactly what he would not – “Not this, by no means” (3.4.181) – have her do. And do not “unravel all this matter out” (3.4.186): What matter is this, exactly?

Clearly, Hamlet has issues recognizing others as other and with his own bodily integrity.

Hamlet's speech in 3.4 proves him a person sensitive to the body as a jumble of mislaid and misinformed body parts:

   Sense sure you have,

   Else could you not have motion, but sure that sense

   Is apoplex'd...

   […]

   What devil was't

   That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?

   Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,

   Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,

   Or but a sickly part of one true sense

   Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush? (3.4.71-81)
Hamlet depicts his mother's senses and body parts as awkwardly out of sync. She is disjointed, a collection of eyes, ears, and hands that do not sense his world. He blames the devil and alludes to witchcraft, all of this for Gertrude's supposed lack of vision. Yet, Hamlet's description lends itself to an infant's felt experience, the spastic gestures, the lack of vision, a rupture of wholeness, and the “sickly part” (3.4.80) that once again brings forth the corpse. As Kristeva reminds those working with Klein’s concept of the imaginary, “It is not only the drive that is projected and introjected (as love or hatred, desire or destruction), but bits of the baby as well (his organs – the mouth, the anus, and so forth – as well as his bodily products)” (MK 63) – his body sense, a body projected outward in the fantastical material of act one’s ghost:

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list! (1.5.15-22)

In her 2005 The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre, Susan Zimmerman focuses on the ghost as an armored corpse because the corpse “shows – the phenomenon of becoming / unbecoming which symbolic categories are designed to exclude. […] As such, the threat of the corpse,” Zimmerman claims, “can be exorcised only by means of a surrogate, such as woman, whose surrogate function derives… from her originary role as archaic mother” (7). Rightly, Zimmerman posits Kristeva’s theory of the abject as a concept “pointing toward ‘the boundary between semiotic authority and symbolic
law,’ a boundary shadowed by a powerful maternal presence that disturbs the subject’s identity in the symbolic order” (Powers 73, qtd. Zimmerman 5). However, Zimmerman cages “Kristeva’s project [as] grounded in Lacanian psychoanalysis” (Zimmerman 4), when Kristeva herself acknowledges her concepts of the abject and the semiotic are born of Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position – as it disrupts the symbolic (or, in an object relational view, the depressive position).45 Melanie Klein’s observations of the paranoid-schizoid position, particularly regarding splitting, inform Kristeva’s theories of abjection and the semiotic. It would be more accurate to say that Kristeva, while influenced by Lacan’s Symbolic, is more invested in the maternal and preOedipal than his theories allow. While Zimmerman acknowledges “a powerful maternal presence” (5) and this “phenomenon of becoming / unbecoming” (7), she analyzes the importance of maternity to none of these things, choosing to focus on the corpse as a disruption of the Symbolic order without conceding that Kristeva's semiotic and abject are derivations of Melanie Klein's analysis of the preOedipal phase or the paranoid-schizoid defensive act of splitting.

Indeed, Zimmerman is not alone in the dismissal of Klein's influence on Kristeva. Much of the psychoanalytic work regarding Shakespeare's Hamlet, from Freud through Lacan, focuses on Hamlet’s Oedipal complex.46 However, if Kristeva's abject is contemplated within her appreciation of the maternal body, its relevance to early modern medical conceptions of pregnancy and infancy becomes apparent: the early modern foetus floats in its own waste contained by the womb. A number of the medical treatises require a drop of the mother's blood in addition to the parental seeds if a foetus is to coagulate a form and be something more than a discharged mole. Either way, the birth is abject. In “How a Mother Must Govern Herself the Nine Months She Goeth with Child,” Guillimeau warns

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women against “the too great quantity of blood that is turned into milk (which may be curdled and to
suuprate and putrefy)” (296). Culpeper and Rueff also followed the common belief that the foetus was
nourished by menstrual blood that, after birth, traveled to the breasts via two veins and became milk
(Eccles 49). The power of the mother's body to “become / unbecome,” the primacy of the maternal
breast and its capacity for transmutation, and the infant's capacity for murder prove the relevance of
Melanie Klein's work.

In her biography *Melanie Klein* (2001), Kristeva acknowledges that the notion of the abject
derives from her appreciation of the splitting that occurs in Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position,
a preOedipal position in which the infant projects its bad objects into the environment and introjects the
good objects identifying them with the self. These objects are either all good or all bad (there is no such
thing as ambivalence), and those bad, projected outward, color the environment and turn on the infant
who panics in the face of his possible annihilation. Gertrude’s closet, like the ghost's armor, functions
to contain these otherwise annihilating fears, tensions, and grief. Further, the mother’s holding instills a
sense of corporeal wholeness. My purpose, then, is to uncover this Gertrude, a Gertrude largely absent
in critical readings of Shakespeare's play, and to emphasize that this maternity has relevance to the play
as a whole.

If contained within the ghost's armor is a corpse, Zimmerman is right in that the corpse is
Hamlet's own. The armor does for Hamlet what in 3.4 he wills his mother to do: to contain the drive
toward death. The ghost might disappear as Gertrude comes to identify with her son, for only she can
issue him toward the Symbolic, but as Kristeva describes it, it must be at her death. In her absence,
language forms, mourning making way for substitutions. In that, the corpse is also Gertrude's: “Be thou
assur'd, if words be made of breath, / And breath of life, / I have no life to breathe / What thou hast said
to me” (3.4.197-199). So linked is Gertrude to her son that she will die his death, drinking the poison
from his cup, which, of course, replicates her own anatomy. In her death, Hamlet's story might be told, but if Hamlet's death is any indication, he never learns to leave his mother or to recognize her difference. The ghost takes Gertrude's lines of 1.2. - “Thou know'st is common – all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity” (1.2.72-73) – and reminds Hamlet that all creatures pass through her; all creatures mourn her; all creatures return to her. This mother does not terminate.

Some pages ago I asked “How are we to deal with such interpretations in which concern for Gertrude's body, person, and maternity are overwhelmed by a focus on the son's quest for Symbolic position?” and “Why should Hamlet's vision of his two mothers, the complicit unfeeling whore or the redeemed unsullied angel, be the only models for her character?” I think the answer must be a return to psychoanalytic theory that theorizes the mother as important to the development of the subject, especially in a play so heavily theorized for its Oedipal content. Melanie Klein's work highlights the body and corporeal experience as fundamental to psychic structures and content, as fundamental to the self, and consequently to the successful resolution of the Oedipal complex and the subject. As Kristeva appreciates, Klein thus offers an alternative reading to the Lacanian imaginary, one in which the imaginary is a hybrid make up of bodily senses and functions, sounds and rhythms, in addition to introjected objects such as the mother, father, nurse, and the part objects penis and breast. Because her reading of infant experience incorporates the body and bodily functions literally, her theories provide a means to understanding the early modern emphasis on the body as coextensive with the environment and universe, something Gail Kern Paster emphasizes in her own work with humoral theory. While Hamlet might be dismayed that his mother take a position outside the one he imagines for her, I believe as scholars we can do better than him.

Mirrored Wishes: Gertrude and Ophelia
“seeing unseen” (3.1.35) : hearing unsaid

Gertrude and Ophelia share a brief moment in 3.1 before Polonius hands his daughter the book of devotions and then hides with the King, “lawful espials, / ... [their] seeing unseen” (3.1.34-35). Gertrude, ordered to leave, answers King Claudius “I shall obey you” (3.1.39). Gertrude's response replicates Ophelia's own “I shall obey, my lord” (1.3.136). Denied access to Hamlet, they both obey the call's command. Gertrude, however, does not simply do what she is told. Before leaving, she turns to Ophelia. In so doing, she opens a space between them that the two patriarchs, the king and Polonius, might witness, but in which they do not participate. To Ophelia, Gertrude offers a parting wish: “And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish / That your good beauties be the happy cause / Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues / Will bring him to his wonted way again, / To both your honours” (3.1.40-44). Ophelia's response, though short, mirrors Gertrude's language: “Madam, I wish it may” (3.1.44). The lines indicate a certain meekness, a complicity under the eyes of the king and father listening to them speak. Yet, the fact that the two are wishing also hints at a consciousness beyond the text of the scene, one born of an imaginary only they share.

Apparently, Gertrude and Ophelia do not share in Polonius’s certainty or his capacity for omnipotent thought. Their exchange is not based on a controlling voyeurism or manipulation, though they are both caught in its web to varying degrees. Gertrude does not order Ophelia to “sit you down. You shall not budge” (3.4.18), as Hamlet orders Gertrude in 3.4.47 She does not demand Ophelia “walk you here” (3.1.45), as Polonius demands before handing Ophelia the prayer book. While Gertrude and Ophelia are objects to such language, it is not accessible to them as subjects. Gertrude can wish for a “happy cause” (3.1.38) that rises in Ophelia rather than from her self or her “o'er-hasty marriage” (2.2.57). Ophelia might wish for Hamlet's return, but not for its unfolding under the lens of her father

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47 Hamlet, himself, of course, is under the King's orders to visit the Queen in her closet, an order made at Polonius's suggestion, so that he might test his theory of Hamlet's lovesickness just one more time.
and King Claudius, and certainly not for the Hamlet who denies his gifts to her when she attempts their return: “No, not I, / I never gave you aught” (3.1.94-95) and who then assaults her honesty “Ha, ha! are you honest?” (3.1.102). I expect Gertrude and Ophelia share an ambivalence toward Hamlet contained in silence and the unsaid; he certainly gives them each cause, Ophelia in 3.1 and Gertrude in 3.4. Both Ophelia and Gertrude must struggle against being relegated to the status of mere symptom of his complex; worse, they must defend against absorbing the whole of it. Their wistfulness suggests a mutual understanding that Ophelia, much as they might like her to be the cause, is likely not.

Their wishing also confesses the loss of Hamlet, as well as the parts of self that language simply cannot signify. I am proposing that they reconcile through a kind of dreamscape. If mirroring is their mode of communicating, as their speech indicates, then their faces also communicate a mutual if unspoken pathos. As Winnicott understood, mirroring begins as a maternal function. Well before any reflective surface greets the infant's gaze, the mother mirrors the infant. By mimicking the infant's vocalizations, by holding the infant into a felt form, by connecting the infant to her breast (in and out), and by imitating the infant's facial expressions, the mother embodies the mirror as an environmental function. I imagine an Ophelia and Gertrude who look to each other for such mirroring, the environment evolving between them but limited by patriarchal voyeurism. For example, while Gertrude hopes Ophelia will find a place in her family and in court, Polonius continually bungles any chance of its happening.

In his very first scene, Polonius charges Ophelia to reject Hamlet's advances. His interference in her friendship with Hamlet has severe consequences for Ophelia and, ultimately, for the court: by forbidding his “green girl” from giving “words or talk with the Lord Hamlet” (1.3.101, 134), he arguably creates her condition as a “greensick” girl, a condition which Ophelia appears not to have suffered previously. As Helen King describes it, green sickness rises in the sixteenth century due to the
rediscovery of the Hippocratic *On the Diseases of Virgins* and the publication of Johannes Lange's *Medicinalium epistolarum micellanea* (1554), as well as William Bullein's *A New Boke of Physicke called the Gouernment of Health* (1558) which finally identifies the disease with young women.\(^{48}\)

Robert Burton, while discussing female melancholia, associates the disease especially with a leisurely class of young women who have no way of working off the extra humors (King *Hippocrates* 194-195). Lange asserts that the young virgin's menstrual blood has no means to escape due to the womb's “narrow mouths” and the blood's increasing thickness (Paster *Humoring* 92). In *Humoring the Body*, Paster describes the young virgin body as a “body clogged with the viscous fluids of its own reproductive maturity, weighed down by its own new ripeness. The heart trembles with the effort of moving and refining the cold, thick blood; the temples beat when the blood, moving up into the head, threatens delerium” (92). Ophelia's “greensickness” then is simply a fact of life, yet Polonius remains completely uninterested in his daughter’s condition, while continuing to assert she is the cause for Hamlet's madness.

Ophelia is only interesting to Polonius as long as she keeps alive his fantasy of Hamlet's interest in her: “– How now, Ophelia? / You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said; / We heard it all” (3.1.177-179). Polonius is only interested in words, words he need only hear once to prove what he had already decided they mean, that Hamlet is mad for love. Polonius's plot to catch Hamlet at his love object creates Ophelia's grief. Her hurt at Hamlet's “To a nunnery, go” (3.1.148) simply does not signify. What Polonius fails to appreciate is Hamlet's want for a maternal love, a love that contains and holds together what in grief threatened to come apart. Instead, he arguably creates the like need in his daughter. As Steven Mullaney also understands,\(^{49}\) this felt need for the maternal and her consummation

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49 Steven Mullaney, “Mourning and Misogyny: Hamlet, The Revengers Tragedy, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I,
of his suffering make for Hamlet's misogynistic turn on Ophelia and Gertrude, his giving way to hate.

Polonius continues his ignorant charade until his murder: He orders Ophelia to read the prayer book and bait Hamlet in 3.1, and when that effort fails, he suggests the King have Hamlet visit the Queen in her closet while he hides behind the arras. In both cases, he asserts his daughter is the cause for Hamlet's madness. In both cases, he provides Hamlet with a cause for rage. It is no irony that Polonius's voyeuristic obsessiveness gets him killed.

In fact, Polonius's concern with his own reputation in the court outweighs his concern for his daughter's health: “Tender yourself more dearly, / Or … / ... you'll tender me a fool” (1.3.107-109). The pun on the second “fool” – that Ophelia will “make [him] look foolish; seem [herself] a fool; [and] show [Polonius] a baby” (1.3 note 2) – indicates the complexity of any parent-child relationship, one in which the parent remembers his own infancy, seeing it mirrored back to him in the daughter to be mother. But it, also, has much to do with the dealings in the court, dealings in which Ophelia is tragically wrapped, as a potential mother of Hamlet's child. Traditionally, symbolically, and medically, Polonius's job here is to arrange his daughter's marriage before greensickness claims her; instead he invites its entry – not only by blocking her access to Hamlet as a suitor, as the medical treatises would have it, but by ignoring or not recognizing the strength of the passions in the absence of language or voice.50

The relational mirroring Gertrude and Ophelia shared in their mutual wishing achieves an environmental function as Gertrude reimagines Ophelia’s overrunning passions in her pastoral depiction of Ophelia’s drowning. Interestingly, Gertrude describes the drowning with the detail of a witness, but fails to mention any details of what she herself was doing, disembodied herself to such a degree that the whole passage feels somewhat ungrounded and the teller mysteriously absent. How

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50 See Paster, Humoring the Body 98, for a description of marriage as “an activity that qualifies and diverts the thick humors bred of idleness and lack of purpose” (98).
Gertrude responds remains a question for the duration of the play. Winnicott emphasizes the importance of a person's ability to respond because, as he sees it, that responsiveness (or lack thereof) characterizes an infant’s sense of the surrounding environment:

What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words, the mother is looking at the baby and what she looks like is related to what she sees there. All this is too easily taken for granted. I am asking that this which is naturally done well by mothers who are caring for their babies shall not be taken for granted. I can make my point by going straight over to the case of the baby whose mother reflects her own mood or, worse still, the rigidity of her own defenses. In such a case what does the baby see?

(PR 112 authorial emphasis)

I want to set aside the debate over what a mother does “naturally” to contemplate the natural environment as continuing the maternal mirroring Winnicott describes here. To my view, this is exactly where early modern medical treatises, especially those regarding the capacity of female flesh to absorb and interact with its environment, strengthen and further Winnicott's argument. Taking these beliefs into account mean that maternal mirroring is not limited to the sense of sight, but functions within and through a natural landscape incorporative of all five senses. Following Winnicott, mirroring enables “the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two way process in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovery of meaning in the world of seen things” (113). Yet, in cases where the mother's defenses make for a rigid and / or fixed expression, “perception takes the place of apperception” (113). The “perception” to which Winnicott refers is a symptom of the omniscience I have been citing throughout this chapter – Polonius's inability to see his daughter's suffering, Hamlet's inability to see any justice in his mother's marriage to Claudius. These characters prove incapable of
apperception, of experiencing a “significant exchange with the world [as] a two way process” (113), especially where women are concerned. Yet, what does it mean for Gertrude and Ophelia, whom I want to argue, share a potential for a relationship that falls outside the realm of Hamlet’s play?

Remembering Ophelia: Carol Chillington Rutter's Ophelia

“I will not speak with her.” (Gertrude 4.5.1)

“Drowned, drowned.” (Gertrude 4.7.156)

Early modern beliefs surrounding conception, pregnancy, and childbirth mean that the foetus and infant (*infans*) share the mother's capacity for absorption. One common notion held that “the child sucked blood from the placenta for nourishment” (Eccles 49). Further, the navel vein “carried a drop of maternal blood to the seed, and from this blood, the liver, vena cava and venous system developed. After that, the great artery formed, then the heart, and then the brain” (Eccles 43). In this case, the infant is born of more than the paternal and/or maternal seeds. The child develops out of and feeds on maternal material, her blood, which travels to the breast where it becomes milk. In the context of early modern medical treatises, Klein's twentieth-century claim that the infant introjects the mother's breast physically occurs in utero. Some, such as Klein's student Hanna Segal, have associated Klein's work with the notion of original sin, especially when Klein finds evidence of the death drive in the infant's projection of hate and envy toward the nurturing good object. The early modern belief that the foetus is nourished by the mother’s menstrual blood literalizes this otherwise theoretical association.

As Chris Laoutaris argues in *Shakespearean Maternities* (2008), the (dissected) maternal body, “sacrificed on the altar of learning, becomes the locus of an authentic and redemptive truth” (39). The mother's dissection, she hypothesizes, “offered … nothing less than a dissection of original sin itself, or rather the originary mother who gave birth to Death” (52). Laoutaris makes explicit the connection
between this early modern conception of the mother's “matter” and the original sin that all men carry by her. When analyzing Old Hamlet's curdled milk-blood and “lazar-like” flesh (1.5.69, 72) and young Hamlet's attack on his mother in 3.4, Laoutaris makes an observation similar to my own when I emphasize Hamlet's practice of the splitting indicative of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position:

Hamlet's own attempts to expose and stem his mother's 'compulsive ardour' (III, iv, 78) reproduce the salvific trajectory of the Wittenberg anatomical lecture. By inculcating in her the need to eviscerate her own corrupted heart and 'throw away the worser part of it' (3.4.157) she will come to incorporate the traits of the proper maternal conduct which are the certain signs of divine grace. (76)

Laoutaris’s claim that Hamlet “inculcate[es] in her the need to eviscerate her own corrupted heart” interests me here for its double emphasis on “in” (76 emph. added). In my view, Gertrude’s corruption is an open question; her heart is corrupt because Hamlet perceives it as such (as in 3.4), not necessarily because she is corrupt. As I proposed in my analysis of 3.4, “her own corrupted heart” is his own corrupted heart which she has been made to introject. Further, he needs her to “throw away the worser part” (3.4.157), or eject it, so that he might be purified through her. Gertrude is asked to absorb Hamlet’s own psychic processes, in either case: her flesh will enact his corruption or his “divine grace” (Laoutaris 76).

The regulation of a woman's body and imagination, most obsessive during pregnancy, rises out of a felt need to regulate this introjected material (food and environment) “for the child's safety.” If the mother is the primary container, and to an object relational view that is exactly what she is, then enclosure remembers the mother, even when containing her destruction as in Hamlet's 3.4. In the face of that threat, Gertrude repeatedly chooses the Symbolic, where she must navigate the contradictory roles her son and her husband(s) would have her play. When faced with Ophelia's invitation to share in
an affective bond, Gertrude refuses her: “I will not speak with her” (4.5.1). Instead, she uses language as a defense against Ophelia's affective appeals, even recounting Ophelia's death in idyllic terms.

Key to this portion of my analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the concept of an affective environment as embodied and enacted by the two women in the play. When Kristeva incorporates Klein's work into her own, she does so with the view that the mother must die, for matricide creates the empty space in which symbolization takes hold. She identifies her semiotic with the prelinguistic dyad, mother-child, and in her view this register does not go away. However, in *Hamlet*, access to the semiotic falls along gender lines, and appears to be one more of the play's many splits. As Carol Thomas Neely indicates, Hamlet's “discourse, although witty, savage, and characterized by non sequiturs and bizarre references, almost never has the 'quoted,' fragmentary, ritualized quality of Ophelia's” language (325). With her descent into madness, Ophelia, in contrast to Hamlet, turns to poetry and song, fragments she pieces together in an affectively flooded tapestry indicative of Kristeva's semiotic.

Of course, this is a language Gertrude at first refuses: “I will not speak with her” (4.5.1). Meeting the King after the closet scene, she describes her son as “Mad as the sea and wind when both contend / Which is the mightier” (4.1.7-8). In Gertrude's depiction of Hamlet's madness, he is both sea and wind, humoral passions and breath, a person always in conversation with himself. He is passion incarnate always cycling through inside and out. Gertrude resists such language: “O Hamlet, speak no more!” (3.4.89). She wills it to end and would remove herself from his storm. Her approach to Ophelia is somewhat different. She has not heard Ophelia speak a word, and yet she feels a threat. She has witnessed Polonius's murder. She finds herself once again complicit in the murder of a father. One more child comes to her in grief, “importunate, indeed distract” (4.5.2). However, she resists her own speech: “I will not speak with her.” She will not or cannot make sense for Ophelia any more than
Ophelia can make for herself, and attempts to avoid the affect that is inevitably there. In this case, affect floods the space where language fails.

Whereas for Hamlet, Polonius is one more object he cannot mourn and his corpse a mere fantastical result of his own omniscient rage, for Ophelia the corpse is her father “dead and gone, lady, / He is dead and gone, / At his head a grass-green turf, / At his heals a stone” (4.5.29-32). While Gertrude describes Hamlet “as the sea and wind,” vibrantly living forces in contention, Ophelia “cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i’ th’ cold / ground” (4.5.68-70). How do the dead father’s utter lack of being and the “grass-green turf” and “stone” (4.5.31-32) of his burial site resonate with Ophelia? – While Hamlet would drag away that corpse to bury, Ophelia will bring it back. She makes a son of her father, and fleshes him out again.

Paster emphasizes in the opening chapter to *Humoring the Body* the corporeal nature of the early modern analogous relationship between the body and the world:

In this analogical structure, ordinary microcosmic man's flesh is earth and his passions are the seas, because the body itself … is a vessel of liquids. [...] the passions, thanks to their close functional relation to the four bodily humors of blood, choler, black bile, and phlegm – had a more than analogical relation to the liquid states and forces of nature. In an important sense, the passions actually were liquid forces of nature, because, in this cosmology, the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body were composed of the same elemental materials. (4)

The fabric of the body is more than coextensive with the world; bodies, objects and natural phenomena engage, interact, and influence each other in what Paster calls a “premodern ecology of the emotions” (9). The world enacts emotion, and the body absorbs those feelings into its own microcosmic anatomy. Flesh is an organ, not a barrier. It is not inert. As in Merleu-Ponty's conception of the flesh, it feels
intimately the inside and outside of itself. Ophelia has not only lost a father whose words she repeated and whose direction she followed; she experiences loss on an identificatory and cellular level. She has lost an affective contact whose felt presence (along with his words) she once absorbed. Her flesh contains an absence where once she felt a presence, and she proves especially susceptible to Polonius's absence both in language and affect. Whereas Hamlet's “sea and wind” (4.1.7) is analogous to the battle between his passions and his reason – air and breath carry speech – as a woman, Ophelia receives no such Wittenberg instruction. Her speech expresses the reason of others, her father's and her brother's. In their absence, she comes to represent the early modern woman at her most material. Ophelia’s vulnerable materiality has particular relevance for all early modern women, whose flesh, early moderns believed, proved more absorptive than men's.

The familiar early modern belief that women were wetter than men “results from the flesh throughout the bodies being of softer and more spongy texture, absorbing more fluid from their diet” (King Midwifery 12). According to Galen's Glands 16 “women's bodies retain more moisture because they are loose-textured (araios), spongy (chaunos) and like wool (eirion)” (12, see Glands 16 124). In Helen King's description, female flesh's fundamental difference is evidenced in the menstrual function:

Women's fluid collects in the body and eventually comes out as menstrual blood; the menstrual function is the evidence for, as well as the direct result of, the different texture of flesh throughout the female body. Hippocratic gynaecology, performed by men whose practice also included diseases of men, therefore covered far more that the organs of generation, because every inch of female flesh was thought to be different from male flesh. This is not the same flesh with different levels of moisture: it is 'different' flesh, which is why it responds to moisture in a different way. (Midwifery 12)

The beliefs surrounding female flesh, also, meant a woman was more vulnerable to her environment.
Pregnant women especially had to concern themselves with their fluid intake and their environments. Even the sight of a startled hare might mark a child (Eccles 64). This vulnerability has consequences for how early modern women experienced their environment, their flesh, body, and self - as exemplified in Ophelia.

Ophelia's descent to madness, her return to a language of song and poetry affectively strung together, result from a longing for contact she cannot have. As Freud explains in “Mourning and Melancholia” and Jessica Benjamin echoes in the title of her 1998 book,51 the libido freed from the lost love object “was withdrawn into the ego … [where it] served to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego” (Freud “Mourning” 248).

In an early modern world informed by humoral theory, Ophelia's flesh absorbs that shadow. To take Laoutaris's description of the sacrificial and redemptive mother to a new end, that shadow calls forth the introjected mother who rises to Ophelia's flesh just as Polonius's shadow falls. As Kristeva emphasizes, any loss reawakens the original loss of the mother, the loss that absorbs all others, but I would add that Ophelia's flesh also activates the primal scene and original sin.

Notably, Ophelia calls on the only mother in the play for help. Gertrude's “I will not speak with her” functions, then, on several levels: not only would Gertrude deny Polonius's death, she would deny the mother's, as well, and her own guilt. Communicating with Ophelia would require a like language, an openness to her own suffering. By closing the door on her own grief for her mother, for King Hamlet, for Ophelia, and for her son, she leaves Ophelia absolutely bereft of the mother, too. Gertrude swallows her knowledge and the language Ophelia needs to articulate how and why her father died. By withholding the truth of the matter, Gertrude ensures that an already absent Hamlet is further removed conceptually. Ophelia's reality cannot be reason- or language- based because the facts are lost to her.

She has only the matter of a corpse. Her grief is further compounded by Gertrude’s silence and absence, for now the loss of her mother returns – absolute bereavement.

Without reason, without the cause for her father's missing verb, the only breath Ophelia breathes combines with scraps of sound. She creates a world from fragments not because she is fragmented, but because her world has missing pieces: missing love objects and missing information. She absorbs and sings that fragmentation and loss. In that prelinguistic world, she makes a semiotic of sense. Her songs, as Carol Thomas Neely observes, “enact [her father's] funeral” (324). Neely emphasizes that into Polonius's death “Ophelia's other losses or imagined losses – of lover, of virginity, of 'fair judgement' – are absorbed” (324). “Her distribution of flowers to court,” Neely continues, “is an extension of her quoted discourse, an enacted ritual of dispersal, symbolizing lost love, deflowering, and death” (324-325). J.D. Wilson's suggestion that Ophelia offers Gertrude the rue, a flower “[s]ymbolic of sorrow and repentance” (122 note 179), provides an interpretation more aligned with my own Kristevan reading: the loss of the mother rises to absorb all loss, including that of Polonius. Offering Gertrude the rue, Ophelia asks Gertrude to repent Polonius's death, to say it out loud. She invites Gertrude's mutual enactment of the mother's loss, while asking for a mother's return.

When Ophelia first enters 4.5, Shakespeare provides only Horatio and Gertrude as her onstage audience. While Prince Hamlet may be “the beauteous majesty of Denmark” to whom Ophelia first refers, her words play before his mother: “How should I your true-love know / From another one? / By his cockle hat and staff, / And his sandal shoon” (4.5.23-26). The pilgrim leaves to arrive, a destroyed object that yet survives. These lines might easily be associated with Gertrude's two husbands whom she treats too similarly, the second of whom she married too hastily. However, when contemplating the lines as expressing Ophelia's experience of loss, they gather another inflection. Following Kristeva, it would be hard for Ophelia to remember the difference between her lost love objects, losses
compounded and absorbed into the first. If we take Kristeva at her word, that all losses animate the
original experience of mourning the mother, then each of Ophelia's losses – from her brother's absence
to Hamlet's rejection to her father's death – are absorbed into an overwhelming loss of a mother who
never even enters the play. Gertrude's mother never enters either. Reaching out to Gertrude with the
rue, she reaches out both to a sister in loss and the mother she might have had. She invites Gertrude to
remember her own mother lost, to acknowledge the difficulty of finding voice in a Symbolic that has
little language left them but ventriloquy. To this reminder, Gertrude declares “I will not speak with her”
(4.5.1). At this point, Gertrude fails at what D.W. Winnicott emphasizes as the mother's responsiveness.
Gertrude does not offer Ophelia the mirror that would ground her feelings, for she would deny her own
part.

Yet, Gertrude, perhaps more than anyone else in the play, might understand the weight of
Ophelia's suffering. She might also believe she is the most vulnerable to that threat. As Angus Gowland
notes, “At issue generally in learned discussions [over melancholy] were the capabilities of the
imagination not only to cause pathological or therapeutic physical changes within the body that housed
it, but also – as a faculty frequently conceived to act as a bridge between material objects and the
immaterial soul through the transmission of subtle 'spirit' – to affect the bodies of others in a similar
fashion through occult means” (90). When Gertrude reports Ophelia's death, she enacts the play's
method of splitting its subjects. She returns to the pastoral and recreates the myth of virginal
motherhood, notably erasing any threat of infection by emphasizing Ophelia's innocence:

- There is a willow grows askaunt the brook,
- That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream,
- Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
- Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cull-cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendant boughs her crownet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chaunted snatches of old lauds,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (4.7.166-183)

Ophelia's clothes float about her in the water as if she belonged “unto that element” (4.7.180). Absorbing the water through her clothes and to her flesh, she merges with an earthly re-enactment of her suffering and the burial of both parents: the “long purples” or orchids give way to “dead men's fingers” (4.7.169, 171); the “glassy stream” reflecting the white willow leaves saddens into a “weeping brook” (4.7.167, 175). As Gertrude describes it, the landscape mirrors and responds to Ophelia's suffering, absorbing her as a “creature native and indued” (4.7.179). Her mention of the “dead men's fingers” reaching for and from the brook indicate her continued apprehension of the dead father's return, her own guilt haunting her. Yet, the abject is otherwise absent in Gertrude's portrait of Ophelia's drowning; in the end, Ophelia sinks with an affective and elemental mother, her songs merging with the
burbling brook. If the paternal abject reaches with its “dead men's fingers,” the maternal abject absorbs them in a “muddy death” (4.7.183). Gertrude paints a redeeming death, perhaps because she has absorbed the message that as woman and mother she, too, requires redemption, but her wish fulfillment only carries her so far before the dead fingers and mud assert the real matter of her experience. Her flesh, like Ophelia's, is caught within the bind of a father's “dead fingers” and the mother's “muddy death” (4.7.171, 183).

Carol Chillington Rutter calls for a performance that emphasizes this patriarchal bind in Gertrude's complicity and that counters Gertrude's poetry and cleansed description: “Her [Gertrude's] agitated speech, its catalogues rehearsed obsessively at speed, is not elegiac but urgent; and it speaks a Gertrude who might be protesting too much (and therefore colluding in a cover-up) or might be tottering on the verge of madness. The speech is not poetic...; rather it is locked into the messy political business it has to do in the court” (“Snatched” 313). Rutter's Gertrude has a role to play. Indeed, Gertrude's refusal to acknowledge the maternal abject in Ophelia's drowning supports Rutter's view. Yet, I would add that in her retelling Gertrude returns to the wistfulness she shares with Ophelia in 3.4. In her retelling, Gertrude wishes for a daughter who redeems the mother; she wishes for a way to cleanse her own soul of the “bad” mother that the play so emphasizes, for a death that relieves the weight of abject maternity.

Rutter will not let Gertrude have that wish – “to ravel all this matter out” (3.4.186) – and offers a stunning vision of how Ophelia's corpse might play: “The skin mottled blue, like a fresh bruise, and has the look of wax. The jaw has been pulled shut with a band. The eyes cannot be closed. The shroud does not conceal the abdominal distension that comes with death by drowning. Ophelia looks pregnant” (“Snatched” 314). When Laertes leaps into Ophelia's grave, her body “stiff with rigor mortis, is finally heaved upright” and the audience is forced to meet this pregnant corpse's gaze (“Snatched” 314). In
Rutter's play, no one escapes the discomforning fact of matricide, here embodied in Ophelia, the maternalized daughter. As I emphasized in my analysis of 3.4, such a focus on the abject corpse has traditionally come at the expense of a consideration of the mother, maternity, and the daughter, but Rutter's description of Ophelia's corpse as the maternalized daughter provides one means to contemplating both. Ophelia's body is pregnant because it is drowned, because an absence of sense made her vulnerable and in that vulnerability she absorbed too much. Such deathly fruitfulness also threatens Gertrude. Having survived childbirth but not her son's Oedipal complex, she is asked to absorb 3.4 on behalf of both the father and the son. Her option is either to contain her first husband's murder or her second husband's murder. In either case, she must absorb a death, introject her son's material. Hamlet makes this threat explicit when he murders Polonius in her closet.

Her closet-body is the same body that, according to early modern theories of pregnancy and childbirth, nourishes an infant on menstrual blood. Settled in the mother's bodily fluids and his own waste, the foetus is born of the abject – an abject composed of “the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body,” a foetal coagulation of “the same elemental materials” (Paster Humoring 4). From a Kleinian point of view, the mother is perceived as murderous, in part, because the child would murder her, but Hamlet proves repeatedly incapable of perceiving this fact, caught within a culture that portrays the mother’s body as that which invests the foetal body with the abject and original sin.

For example, Eccles cites Pare when giving the following description of the foetal growth: “after the formation of the blood vessels, the blood and vital spirit flowing to the congealed seed cause it to boil and ferment, and three bubbles formed – the liver from gross blood, the heart from spirituous blood and the brain from seed” (44). Rueff asserted the “outer layer of the brain-speck was baked and hardened by the heat of the womb into the skull” (43). The “blood and vital spirits” boil and ferment the seed into form, fueling an abject growth that also mirrors the tempestuousness of a “sea” with no
wind (see 4.1.7). Thomas Wright's following description of the passions best captures the contrast I emphasize between Gertrude's pastoral description of Ophelia’s drowning and the “agitated” delivery called for in Rutter’s portrait of the scene (“Snatched” 313):

wee may compare the Soule without passions, to a calme sea, with sweet, pleasant, and crispling streames: but the passionate, to the raging gulfe, swelling with waues, surging by tempests, minacing the stony rockes, and endeauouring to ouerthrown Mountaines: euen so, Passions make the Soule to swell with pride and pleasure; they threaten woundes, death and destruction, by audacious blodness and ire: they vndermine the mountaines of Vertue and hope and feare; and in summe, neuer let the soule be in quietnes, but euer, eyther flowing with pleasure, or ebbing with paine.

(59 The Passions of the Minde in Generall, qtd. Paster Humoring 103)

Such descriptions of the “raging,” “swelling,” and “surging” passions (Wright 59, qtd. Humoring 103), or the “blood and vital spirit” that boil and ferment into a coagulated foetus (Eccles 44), might be better analogies for the “brook” in which Ophelia drowns. They are certainly better analogies for the two sons, a brother and a lover, who fight in the grave for possession of Ophelia's “chaste treasure” (1.3.31), her corpse's gaze upon them.

Wright's portrayal of the violent passions finds its heartbeat in Shakespeare's play, from the ghost's description of King Hamlet's murder, to Hamlet's mocking account of Polonius's corpse, to Horatio's warning that Hamlet not follow his father's ghost:

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
And draw you into madness? Think of it.

The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath. (1.4.50-55 and 55.1-55.4 Q2)

Hamlet's look “so many fathoms to the sea” and his hearing “it roar beneath” bear out into action: “My fate cries out, And makes each petty artere in this body / As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve” (1.4.58-60) – it creates in him, at least temporarily, a drive toward action. However, these humors do not saturate Hamlet's flesh to the degree they do for Ophelia or to the degree they threaten his mother. Unlike Gertrude and Ophelia, Hamlet receives air time; his madness results from a struggle between “the sea and wind when both contend / which is mightier” (4.1.7-8). He fights for a reason to kill his uncle-father through much of the play, while Gertrude's flesh carries the precondition of her guilt. Without the name of the cause for her father's death, Ophelia's transformation absorbs life in death. Whereas Hamlet names his father and then works to heed his call, Ophelia's losses compound each other to the point of a song filled semiotic that merges into speechlessness. As James Bono observes, “Nature can mimic... it is inherently active, transformative”; its “transformations and mirroring” (184, qtd. Paster Humoring 33) enact the humoral conditions of its subjects. By absenting the more violent features of the passions, Gertrude denies this fact. She, thus, denies the threat affect poses to her in a court and play that would deny her the breath to carry voice.

Gertrude's willfully cleansed description shows her stamina against such a fate. Ophelia's corpse makes material “the Thing.”52 As Lacan suggests “the whole of Kleinian theory ... depends on its having situated the mythic body of the mother at the central place of das Ding. To begin with, it is in

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relation to that mythic body that aggressive, transgressive, and most primordial of instincts manifested, the primal aggressions and inverted aggressions” (*The Ethics* 106). Rutter emphasizes these maternal “primal aggressions and inverted aggressions” by describing Ophelia’s corpse and refusing its burial (106). Thus, she counters Ophelia’s objectification by highlighting her abject status and making every character, every viewer subject to the corpse’s gaze: “the camera stares at the [corpse's] open eyes that stare back at it” (“Snatched” 314). When the corpse falls back into the grave after Hamlet and Laertes are hauled out of it, the camera lens remains focused on “Ophelia … however she falls” (“Snatched” 314). Her “eyes gaze upward at the camera looking down, while noises off rush the scene to its conclusion. The strident 'I lov'd Ophelia...' is too late. Dirt from the gravedigger's unseen spade is falling on Ophelia's face” (“Snatched” 314). If Gertrude would deny the tempestuousness of the passions and the early modern female body, they rage back at her in Ophelia's corpse. This mother will not be repressed; even in her burial she stares forth. As Rutter reminds her readers, “In Shakespeare's playtext, Ophelia never does get buried” (“Snatched” 311). For Ophelia and for Gertrude, Denmark's politics are personal. Their very flesh is imbued with a “natural” world with a mind of its own, one always processing love and hate, life and death, one that accuses Gertrude's and Ophelia's accusers.

Gertrude and Ophelia do contend with the sea and wind differently. According to Gertrude, Ophelia finds cohesion in the “weeping brook” (4.7.175), its waters closing around her flesh and swallowing. Ophelia breathes in the waters as “a creature native and endued” (4.7.150), as if her weighty sadness carries her into belonging again. In her work on depression and melancholia, Kristeva observes that “[t]he negation of this fundamental loss [of the mother] opens up the realm of signs for us, but the mourning is often incomplete. It drives out negation and revives the memory of signs by drawing them out of their signifying neutrality. It loads them with affects, and this results in making them ambiguous, repetitive or simply alliterative, musical or sometimes nonsensical” (Kristeva *BS* 42).
Gertrude and Ophelia portray different facets of Kristeva's description. Ophelia mourns, her signs “load[ed]... with affects.” One interpretation of Ophelia's drowning is that a felt cohesion comes with the fruition of her sadness: “Indeed, sadness reconstitutes an affective cohesion of the self, which restores its unity within the framework of affect. The depressive mood constitutes itself as a narcissistic support, negative to be sure, but nevertheless presenting itself with integrity, nonverbal though it might be” (Kristeva BS 19). Carrying loss in her skin, Ophelia's drowning in the “glassy stream” (4.7.167) and her bloated corpse present a portrait of the early modern maternal turned in on itself: “Depression is the hidden face of Narcissus, the face that is to bear him away into death” (Kristeva BS 5). She has no external objects left to draw her into living, and embraces the internal objects, the mother and father consuming her flesh in all their primacy.

In contrast, Gertrude negates loss, as when she marries too quickly or refuses Ophelia's entry. She aims, instead, to navigate “the realm of signs” (Kristeva BS 19), and speaks over the more grotesque elements of death and drowning. Thus, witnessing Ophelia's death would hold special significance for Gertrude. Her imagination replays the drowning, despite her denial. Losing Ophelia means she too is bereft, living in a court where no face mirrors her own. She, like Ophelia before her, is increasingly alone. Claudius's turning on her by planning the death of her son is just one example of the growing distance between herself and her external objects. For all her able denial of King Hamlet's death, the loss of Ophelia stays with Gertrude. She remembers it, mistakenly in her own reimagining, but finally and really if Rutter's burial scene holds any argumentative sway. The corpse's open glare forces Gertrude's reflection even as she calls her son's name.

Thus far, my argument has been founded on an appreciation of Gertrude's motherhood and the psychic repercussions of the mother's loss, as described in Melanie Klein's and Julia Kristeva's work. In an effort to resuscitate Gertrude's relevance to Hamlet's melancholic atmosphere, I have limned the
mother's loss in the Ghost's return. The ghost which interests me, however, belongs to Ophelia. Gertrude and Ophelia offer an alternative mode of relating in the play, a mode not of speech, but one of affect and potentially reciprocated feeling. The loss of the mother, I believe, does have relevance to how Gertrude might experience Ophelia's drowning, for she loses both a potential daughter and the potential mother of her grandchildren: “Sweets to the sweet. Farewell. / I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife” (5.1.227-28). Ophelia's death also introduces Gertrude to a mother's cruelty, and not only symbolically. Gertrude stands accused by her own retelling. Gertrude watches or imagines as Ophelia sinks “[t]o [her] muddy death” in the culturally potent symbol of the womb's deadly waters. Regardless of how prettily she describes the brook, its waters kill Ophelia in the telling. Gertrude creates and watches the scene. As the mother who would kill her daughter but maintain her (own) innocence, Gertrude unwittingly deploys a story of death by maternal mirror, a death they ultimately share and indicative of her own guilty conscience.

Recognizing self in other and the other in self becomes a dangerous enterprise for Gertrude once Ophelia's passions overwhelm her figure. It's not for a lack of wishing that Gertrude stands on the brook's banks. In fact, as I have shown, Gertrude's wishing it were otherwise extends all through her description of the drowning. She wishes Ophelia a return to the environmental mother who mimics her singing, holds her into a felt form, contains her passions, and offers her sustenance as it molds to her face in a portrait of suffocating nourishment. Just as her son in 3.4, Gertrude would split, project blame and then keep it at bay. Gertrude's defenses are quite evident in her “I will not speak with her.” My point, though, is that she wants to – if only she could have her wish. Gertrude's wishing is also a wish for herself, for a return to a semiotic of sense that might have sustained her relationship with Ophelia. The play splits these two women, one who sinks into pathos while the other reengages the symbolic, but I do not believe either ever stop wanting or needing the other. Gertrude's wishing helps mask her
part in Ophelia's death and her lack of responsiveness, but it also reveals her need for the mother (and her destruction) in the first place. As Kristeva theorized, matricide provides the means to symbolization, but as Winnicott emphasized any destruction must also include her survival for omniscience to give way to a relationality.

In the feminist critic Elizabeth Grosz's words, the final images of Ophelia, both her drowning and her corpse, materialize a “metaphorics of fluids, emblematic of femininity” (Grosz 279). They tie that femininity to death even as they celebrate “the amniotic element that houses the child in the mother's body and continues to be a 'watermark' etched on the child's body” (Grosz 279). Zimmerman's corpse is maternal, after all. As early moderns understood, this amniotic etching proves abject, a combination of foetal waste and the mother's excess fluids and blood. Ophelia's corpse serves as a reminder that no matter the willow tree, the dead fingers reach for the living inside and out. Ophelia's corpse provides Hamlet's only burial scene. She is the corpse the play wishes to hide, but that, as Rutter would have it, is never actually buried. Her pregnant corpse fleshes through again in Gertrude's and her husband's, then Laertes' and Hamlet's bodies, making an abject of the court that would deny her relevance.

The only addition I would make to Rutter's description of Ophelia's upright and bloated corpse is her open eyes staring over Laertes' shoulder and into Gertrude's pale and shaken face. While the rest of the characters struggle over who loved an Ophelia they never learned to recognize, Gertrude finds mirrored back to her the deadly mother she would deny. She sees herself in that face, feels her own castle bound suffocation. While her lines refer to the men fighting in the grave, her eyes never leave Ophelia's gaze. Recently married herself, she recalls Ophelia's “wedding day,” strewing flowers upon the corpse: “Sweets to the sweet: farewell: / I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife; / I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid, / And not have strew'd thy grave” (5.1.227-230).
Gertrude's opposing images of Ophelia, “sweet maid” and the corpse in the “grave,” reflect the cultural torsion Hamlet espouses in 3.4 and in which Gertrude finds herself. It is death to marry; it death not to marry. Gertrude's defensive rigidity, her “I will not speak with her,” for example, redeployrs in Ophelia's now rigid body. Standing upright in the grave, the corpse forces Gertrude's confrontation with the rigidity of her own stance. Her imaginative retelling of the drowning collapses under the weight of a dead pregnancy in an inversion of the virginal suicide.

The flowers Gertrude casts on Ophelia's bloated corpse repeat Ophelia's mad gesture with the rue and attach the two women in what Winnicott called a “psychosomatic interrelating” (P&R 112). What Gertrude receives (Ophelia's repentance and sorrow), she feels, and what she feels, she returns. What she does not or cannot say stares back at her. Winnicott's claims that the mother's defenses create her rigidity begs the question of Ophelia's corpse – whose defenses does Ophelia's corpse embody – aside from the Queen's own? Ophelia in her grave repeats her drowning without Gertrude's denial. She figures as a condensation of the feminine grotesque. She also stands erect while her brother and Hamlet continue their squabbles in her grave.53 She enacts the frightening gaze that makes all other players seem small, even as their grotesque hatred continues after her matricide. Gertrude is faced with the reality she would deny: the mother swells and dies while the sons fight for ownership of her power – a “no thing” that means they might learn to speak. If Ophelia's drowning body was consumed by her own suffering, she turns it upon the court as a sign of their hate and drive toward death. She makes the poison of matricide an affront on the symbolic: the court of Denmark stands accused of its denial and neglect. The battle of the sons is perhaps one more repetition for the Gertrude who made two husbands of two brothers.

Ophelia's corpse substantiates the paranoid-schizoid position by absorbing all the projected

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53 Ophelia's grave is just one more symptom of the relationship between the natural environment and female procreative power.
badness and bringing it forth again. Erect in the grave, she enacts the primal scene, but she also accuses
Hamlet, Laertes, Gertrude, Claudius, and the priest who refuses to bless her of their complicity. Her
sacrifice proves their guilt; her glare challenges their attempts to control the feminine. Her
decomposition substantiates their hatefulness. Perhaps part of the reason Ophelia's corpse is either
romanticized or dropped from the angle of vision is because we would still deny the hatefulness of
human nature and the death drive. Ophelia is mewed even at her most provocative, just as Hamlet is
made a hero.

Wanting Gertrude: The Final Scene

In the end, we do not know whether or not Gertrude herself has been morally
reclaimed; it is the mark of the play's investment in Hamlet's fantasies that ... we are not allowed
to see her as a separate person. Janet Adelman, Suffocating Mothers. 34.

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Gertrude, let's face it, barely rises to the level of collateral damage.

Anonymous colleague

It is hard to contemplate the death of the mother for a number of reasons. Considering her
environmental function and the scope of her influence the void is simply incredible. It defies any
speech attempting to signify her relevance. Her relevance, after all, is spatial, enacted through a world.
It is, also, difficult to contemplate her death as essential to the state, as that which makes room for
symbolization, especially when that symbolization is patriarchal in nature and makes a law of her
destruction. On the one hand, Kristeva makes the mother's death more painful than any other for she
comes alive again in every loss. On the other hand, Kristeva sees the mother's death as essential, even
foundational, to the beginning and resolution of the Oedipal complex. She writes toward Klein's
depressive position in which mourning finally takes place.

Steven Mullaney has also noted a relationship between mourning and misogyny in his article bearing the same title. He focuses on “mourning under the sign of patriarchy” (140), particularly on the revenge tragedy as a means to study affective responses to Queen Elizabeth's aging: “Indeed, the possibility I wish to entertain is that, for the Renaissance, (male) mourning is sometimes difficult to dissociate from misogyny: that misogyny may in fact be an integral part of the mourning process when the lost object or ideal being processed is a woman, especially but not exclusively when that woman is a queen of England, too” (140). Picking up on Hamlet's emphasis on corporeality, Mullaney argues that “the various bodies of the queen [Elizabeth I] go a progress, if not through the guts of a beggar then through the visceral responses of those slightly better off, who could afford the price of admission to experience, in the popular theater, the very age and body of her time” (145). His remark indicates the power of affect over a public audience that participates, even relishes in the queen's dying body. His remark, also, alludes to the corporeality of the Kleinian introjected object, in this case a lost queen, who transubstantiates the body politic on the visceral level of “guts” (4.3.30, Mullaney 145). Hamlet's remark, also, indicates his preOedipal tendency to project his fear of destruction, as I noted in this chapter's opening section, whether toward his mother and Ophelia, or Claudius and Polonius.

To contemplate this scenario from a more relational perspective, D. W. Winnicott acknowledges the existence of a paradox: the child destroys the object (Winnicott thinks in terms of destruction, not death or matricide) and the object survives. The good mother is good because she survives such destruction and enacts her difference. The child learns that she exists outside his omnipotent control. Such a realization must occur before a child can learn to relate to others as other and experience a celebration of a relational sort. While such a moment has not crystallized for Hamlet, while his Oedipal

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complex remains unresolved and objects to him are only objects and not others, his personhood is assumed. That assumption does not always extend toward his fellow characters. Famously, Lacan begins his “Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet” with “that piece of bait named Ophelia” (11). He writes from the understanding that “[t]he play is the drama of an individual subjectivity” (12), but more recent efforts have been made to contemplate Hamlet's culpability and the difference between the title character and the title of the play.55 I do not disagree that Hamlet's consciousness is the main study, but I do argue that a critical understanding of the role of the mother must not be limited by Hamlet's obviously problematic consciousness. My reading tends to differ from Lacan's in that where he sees Hamlet's objects as “the phallus, exteriorized and rejected by the subject as a symbol signifying life” (23), I see that \textit{and} the Mother who contains both life and death. I see Ophelia rising in her grave not as the phallus, but, with Rutter's help, as the pregnant Mother who absorbs it, dies of it, and charges a culture with that death.

I want to contemplate the consequences of Ophelia's corpse to the play's final scenes, most especially as a means to imagining an alternative Gertrude, one as conscious of the ambivalence she carries as the ambivalence others experience toward her. Gertrude's lines after Hamlet leaps into Ophelia's grave directly address Hamlet: “Hamlet! Hamlet!” (5.1.250), “O my son, what theme?” (5.1.254), before making him an object: “For love of God, forbear him” (5.1.259). I want a funeral scene in which Gertrude's eyes never leave the corpse, meeting Hamlet only when he blocks her view of Ophelia. She commands he stand aside. She asks him “what theme” because his behavior is so shockingly contradictory: he claims to have loved the woman whose body he now desecrates before her. She exclaims “forbear him” not to ask for patience, but to call on someone to “bear up against,

55 Linda Charnes comes to mind as just one example.
control” (*OED* “forbear”) him.\(^{56}\) He is, clearly, in the throes of the passions he would previously have projected her way, and tellingly, Ophelia's.

Janet Adelman's reading of 3.4 is, in part, informed by D.W. Winnicott's work. She notes that while Hamlet begins 3.4 “wishing that Gertrude were not his mother (‘would it were not so, you are my mother’ [3.4.15]),” by the end “he is able to imagine her as the mother from whom he would beg – and receive – a blessing”:

> Once more, good night,
>
> And when you are desirous to be blest,
>
> I'll blessing beg of you. \(^{(3.4.170-72)}\)

However, Adelman continues, “[t]his mother can bless Hamlet only insofar as she herself asks to be blessed by him, signaling her conversion from husband to son and inverting the relation of parent to child; Hamlet is very much in charge even as he imagines asking for maternal blessing” (Adelman 33). Adelman emphasizes the importance of Hamlet's “moving” remark for his words express a “desire for the maternal presence that can restore the sense of the world and the self as blessed. And the blessedness they image is specifically in the relation of world and self: as mother and son mirror each other, each blessing each, Shakespeare images the reopening of the zone of trust that had been foreclosed by the annihilating mother” (33). To Adelman's view, Hamlet calls on the good mother who facilitates, as Winnicott describes, relationality. Adelman reads the closing of 3.4 more positively than do I, I'm afraid, because the rest of the play, as I see it, undercuts any such possible resolution. As Adelman herself notes, Hamlet imagines Gertrude's difference only as long as he governs it. I argue he would destroy her all over again, if he did not feel his control.

> I want Gertrude's call “For love of God, forbear him” (5.1.259) to come from her appreciation

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\(^{56}\) The full definition in the *OED*: “To bear up against, control (emotion or desire). Also *refl.* to control one's feelings. *Obs.*”
of Ophelia's fate: when one cannot contain the passions, death results. Gertrude is different from
Ophelia. Clearly, she is more skilled in the modes of survival in a body politic, and more skilled than
her son, as well, who raves in Ophelia's grave. Once again Gertrude romanticizes silence to endure it
and imagines Hamlet's return to a redeeming mother: “This is mere madness, / And [thus] a while the
fit will work on him; / Anon, as patient as the female dove, / When that her golden couplets are
disclosed, / His silence will sit drooping” (5.1.270-274). Such wistfulness, however, as Ophelia's
overseeing corpse proves, is no match for the patriarchal politics of Denmark. As my Gertrude fears,
Hamlet will quiet himself like no feminized dove, but like a corpse. Moved by Ophelia's corpse,
Gertrude’s face shows she appreciates this reality. She recognizes in Hamlet the potential for the meek
silence he requested of her in 3.4 and that she played at containing: “What shall I do?” (3.4.180), “I
have no life to breathe / What thou has said to me” (3.4.198-199).

The funeral scene might also help Gertrude feel her difference from Hamlet, as she rises to the
occasion in imitation of the corpse. She knows she is caught for her complicity in Ophelia's death and
revises her behavior rather than her memory of an event. I long for a Gertrude who would discover the
good mother, not good in that she is split off, idealized as an innocent dove, but good in that she learns
to recognize and assert her difference from the love objects her son and husbands would have her play.
Notably, she behaves differently in the play's final scene. For the first time, she explicitly defies an
order from King Claudius: “Gertrude, do not drink” (5.2.272), “I will, my lord, I pray you pardon me”
(5.2.273). She disentangles herself from the patriarchal designs on her son's life. Perhaps
unconsciously, she dissociates herself from Ophelia's drowning by shifting her alliance from husband
and to the one child she has left. She invites Hamlet, “Come, let me wipe thy face,” as if searching for
her daughter in his face (5.2.276).

Yet, Hamlet fails to recognize anyone but the redemptively submissive mother he demanded of
Gertrude in 3.4. Turning back upon Laertes, he accuses him, “I am sure you make a wanton of me” (5.2.281). Following so quickly upon Gertrude's wiping his sweaty brow, the testy remark resounds with the “spoiled child['s]” (150 note 281) displaced resentment toward an overly protective or fawning mother. Soon thereafter, Gertrude falls, poisoned by the drink meant for her son. Their mirroring, Gertrude in Hamlet and Hamlet in Gertrude remains unresolved, one that requires her death and then, of course, his. Lacan follows Hamlet, arguing that Hamlet finds his double in Laertes. Indeed, Hamlet shares the blessing with Laertes that Adelman would have him share with Gertrude: “Heaven make thee free of it [his murder at Laertes's hand]! I follow thee” (5.2.314). Hamlet's revenge on Gertrude and Claudius continues even after they are dead, while his own innocence he continues to maintain. And he does follow Gertrude, in a fashion. She is the first corpse of the final scene. As Shakespeare writes the play, they all follow Gertrude: “Wretched Queen, adieu!” (5.2.315).

This word “wretched,” as Hamlet would have it, describes the father-Polonius cowering behind the arras in 3.4 (“Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! [3.4.31]) as much as his mother drowning on poisoned drink. The word helps him assert his own paternal role over the parents. Claudius, too, plays the wretched child when he repents his crime to Hamlet's voyeuristic eye:

My fault is past, but, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murther”?
That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murther:
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain th' offense?

[...]

Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engag'd! Help, angels! Make assay,
Bow stubborn knees, and heart, with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well. (3.3.51-56, 65-72)

Claudius's “state” deploys the body politic as it relates to his own crime and to his association with Gertrude. He imaginatively splits his “limed soul, … struggling to be free” of her, by reimagining his body, his knees and heart, as “soft as the sinews of the new-born babe” (3.3.71). Similarly, however affectionate one imagines Hamlet's last words regarding Gertrude, they continue to portray his mother as object of this abject “state.” Notably, Hamlet would have Claudius die her death with a vengeance: “Is thy union here? Follow my mother!” (5.2.308-309). While I imagine a play in which Gertrude wipes Hamlet's brow in search of Ophelia's likeness or in search of Hamlet's difference, the fact remains that Gertrude dies on Hamlet's drink and absorbs her husband's poison. In her absence, I am left with a Hamlet who still insists his mother a whore, himself a “wanton,” and Claudius guilty of incest. In her absence, Hamlet models himself on Laertes, the other orphan son, and rediscovers blessing the only way he can: in his own image.
Chapter Five. The Mother in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*

Unlike Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* makes explicit use of early modern medical rhetoric, much of it focused on the inside of Duchess's body. In “‘Physicians are like Kings’: Medical Politics and *The Duchess of Malfi,*” William Kerwin observes that “the ineffectual physicians in the play mirror and help produce the command structure of the evil nobility. The Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola all assume the language of the doctor, especially in their treatment of the Duchess. Webster places the medical performance in the context of corrupt autocracy, and makes the two mutually dependent” (109). Remembering the imaginariness of early modern medical knowledge helps highlight the gendered nature of what Kerwin calls “theatricality.” The medical ideas that the Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola espouse obsess over the Duchess's body (a body they view in need of purging) in order to serve their corrupt purposes. Maurizio Calbi relies on Judith Butler's work to make a similar point regarding this play's fixation over the Duchess's body when he emphasizes “that the construction of the body is in fact a reiterated process of regulatory production” (xviii). In *Approximate Bodies*, Calbi “reconsider[s] Laquer's one-sex/flesh model to stress how the womb figures as a constitutive outside as the site of de-formation of phallomorphic regulatory production of bodies as mirror images of another, unceasingly posing threats to its coherence” (xviii).

But as Kerwin argues, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* also shows their regulatory knowledge to be false, erroneous in its conclusions. The doctor treating Ferdinand, for example, fairs no better than the mad doctor in Ferdinand's masque; both prove mistaken. Webster writes “a protest play,” argues Kerwin, “condemning the ways the professional doctor, like the nobleman, combines theatricality and authority” (116), subjecting the Duchess to a system of signification she does not willfully choose. By
analyzing their attacks on the Duchess as exhibiting aspects of the paranoid-schizoid mode of relating, I aim to highlight their mistakenness from another angle. I perceive in these characters not only the regulatory production that results in the Duchess’s corpse, but I also recognize the characters’ apparent need for her to contain their all-too-cultural anxieties and fears over their own flesh and maternity. My argument focuses more fully on the level to which Ferdinand and Bosola work in tandem to displace the midwife and to consume her knowledge in their effort to claim authority over the Duchess's insides.

In my view, Webster’s play more than protests “the ways the professional doctor, like the nobleman, combines theatricality with authority” (Kerwin 116). If the goal of the play is to enact the “anxiety” over professional medicine's “assumed independence and regulatory authority” (116), it does so at the midwife's, Cariola's, and the Duchess's expense. The play portrays a tragic cost for eradicating or coopting the tradition of midwifery in a rather obsessive “anxiety” over the pregnant body. As Celia Daileader observes, “this is a frightening play for a woman to watch” not only due to the Duchess’s prolonged torture (91), but because the character threatens to become more a figment of her twin's phantasy than a character in her own right. That phantasy explains much about the culture of patriarchy. How one imagines the Duchess to negotiate her position is consequently of some import, for the Duchess is not the curative or the whore they imagine her to be. In the end, Antonio, the Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola die of their own unleashed projections. Their deaths show that the inability to see beyond phantasy or “theatricality” (Kerwin 116), even your own, is not without consequence, no matter the level of control they attain over the Duchess’s “body.”

Dressing in the Mother

Let all sweet ladies break their flatt'ring glasses
And dress themselves in her.                  Antonio 1.1.199-200

131
The wolf shall find her grave and scrape it up,  
Not to devour the corpse but to discover  
The horrid murder.  Ferdinand 4.2.299-301

Her eye opes,  
And heaven in it seems to ope, that late was shut,  
To take me up to mercy.  Bosola 4.2.337-339

*  
If you will know where breathes a complete man –  
I speak it without flattery – turn your eyes  
And progress through yourself.  The Duchess 1.1.427-429

I want to begin simply by examining some early examples of the role the Duchess's body plays in male phantasy – even before her marriage, pregnancy, or imprisonment. Antonio's idealizing remark that all “sweet ladies” might “dress themselves” in the Duchess (1.1.199-200) proves the dramatic crux whirling about the Duchess's body throughout the play. The lines deploy an imaginary that destroys the reflected image in favor of a maternal body, a body that is made more than a “dress” and more than a “syrup” (4.2.195). Indeed, the Duchess becomes a condensation of all these things: a maternal body that fleshes out the phantasies of her husband and steward Antonio, her horse provisor Bosola, and her twin brother Ferdinand. In turn idealized and demonized, the Duchess's body is imagined either to redeem or damn.

Antonio participates in the phantastic splitting that the Duchess undergoes in the play, idealizing her to such a degree that his friend Delio notes “Fie, Antonio, / You play the wire-drawer with her

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58 I am referencing Wendy Wall’s “Just a Spoonful of Sugar” in which she analyzes the association of the Duchess to healing syrups and sweets. *Modern Philology* 104.2 (Nov. 2006): 149-172.
commendations” (1.1.200-201). In fact, Antonio imagines the Duchess as both healing and redemptive: “Whilst she speaks, / She throws upon a man so sweet a look, / That it were able raise one to a galliard / That lay in a dead palsy” (1.1.189-192). Notably, it is not the Duchess's speech that would raise the dead, but her “so sweet a look” (190). She becomes, via her face's sweetness, the body that one might wear to find wholeness. Like Ferdinand, this imaginary Duchess has consequences for how Antonio experiences time: “She stains the time past, lights the time to come” (1.1.204). Standing in her stead means feeling sheltered in her flesh. Ferdinand, for example, would uncover her corpse to discover his own damning hate (4.2.299-301); Bosola would enter heaven's mercy through her eye (4.2.337-339). Each character would “dress” himself in her in hopes of a self discovery damning and/or redemptive.

This splitting of the Duchess's body – damning and redemptive – is infused into the play by the Duchess's first scenes, first with her brothers and second with her soon to be husband Antonio. Her brother the Cardinal and her twin Ferdinand take it upon themselves to warn her against her perceived sinfulness:

Ferdinand – You are a widow:
You know already what man is, and therefore
Let not youth, high promotion, eloquence –

Cardinal – No, nor any thing without the addition, honour,
Sway your blood.

Ferdinand – Marry? They are most luxurious
Will wed twice.

Cardinal – O fie!

Ferdinand – Their livers are more spotted
Than Laban's sheep. (1.1.286-292)

Interestingly, the fact of the Duchess's first marriage does not sanctify her knowledge. The sin is more than sexual knowledge, then; she “knows … what man is” (1.1.287) and man is an object of that knowledge, a thing Ferdinand imagines spotting her liver (1.1.291). Knowing man – worse, knowing too many – would “sway” her blood, mutate her insides, when Ferdinand, especially, would imagine her body as purely object of his phantasy. He fixates especially on her blood as the carrier of his sin. For example, Ferdinand claims “The witchcraft lies in her rank blood” (3.2.78) while committing acts rank with associations of witchcraft (as when he offers the Duchess the dead hand).

Ferdinand's hate for the Duchess rises on several fronts. She serves as a condensed symbolic displacement of his mother, the maternalized aspects of the self, as well as a reminder of the impotence of his infancy: “'Tis not your whore's milk that shall quench my wild-fire, / But your whore's blood” (2.5.47-48). Taken at surface value this blood remark is one more sexualized death threat and an expression of his felt omnipotence. Remembering the maternal associations with milk and blood, the threat also calls on the Duchess to re-member the most fundamental aspects of their twin-ship. Though each twin rested, according to Culpeper, in “their several Coats,” they shared “but one Placenta, or part that receives the navel-vessels of both” (“Of the Generation of Twins, and many Children” 143). As Culpeper describes it, their bodies mingled in a tangle of navel vessels wrapped in the Placenta, a humoral common area. As with a single foetus, twins required “[t]he Mother's blood … to enlarge the child to perfection” (“Of Conception, and forming of the Child” 142), and so they shared, too, a common food source. Further, Culpeper notes “If these [conditions] be wanting, there are Twins are more” (142), so the fact that they exist at all is a product of some deficiency. Aristotle's Book of Problems supports the belief that “twins” are but “half men, and not so strong as others” because “[t]he seed that should have been for one, is divided into two and therefore they are weakly and seldom live
long” (“Of the Seed of Man and Beasts” 199).

While the medical treatises hardly reached a consensus regarding twins, twins were close to monstrous in their associations, and midwives asked to feel inside the uterus to ensure the twins were not conjoined as a two headed beast. In the best case scenario, one twin simply proved weaker than the other: one fed well, one fed less, Ferdinand has “lived / Her time” (4.2.258-259). Greedy for a better suck, the only man the Duchess must “know” – as far as Ferdinand is concerned – is himself, especially since he knew her first, and especially as her husband, with whom he shares the title of Duke, is now dead. Her pregnancy cathects these anxieties to the point that he would purge her blood to cleanse his own, but also to make him the stronger for the feed. The functions of this position materialize in depictions of Duchess's interactive body. Ultimately forced to engage in this play of the maternal, her body is overwhelmed by the number of adult children calling upon her and the passionate largesse of their phantasies. However, when the Duchess is taken as interactive, as one participating in the psychic structuring of the body (not only her own) – whether through strategic complicity or through resistance59 – she might be understood, in part, to be inspired by but not to follow Gertrude's model.

In fact, the Duchess offers a response in the face of the splitting her body is asked to enact, and it is, as I take it, a rather conscious and prescient rejoinder: “If you will know where breathes a complete man – / I speak it without flattery – turn your eyes / And progress through yourself” (1.1.427-429). Taking her at her word, that she speaks not to flatter, any of the male protagonists in the play might take her up on this early offer. She would break the pattern of imaginariness, not only where her own body is concerned, but in how they might experience their own as whole. In her rejection of her brothers’ circle, she seems to expect Ferdinand and Cardinal to continue as they have without her... to progress through themselves as if they have not the need to progress through the (m)other to learn how.

To concentrate just on Antonio for the moment, she calls upon him to stand forth in his own right, as his own person, other from her, so that he might recognize her as

…flesh and blood, sir,

'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man,
I do here put off all vain ceremony
And only do appear to you a young widow
That claims you for her husband. (1.1.445-450)

This is a request Antonio, like the other male protagonists, will struggle to meet: while the Duchess calls upon Antonio to see her body as a body and her as “a young widow” not a duchess (1.1.449), Antonio calls upon “Truth speak for me” (1.1.451 emph. added) and notes he will “remain the constant sanctuary / Of your good name” (1.1.452-453 emph. added). Although Antonio poses as a sanctuary, a safe holding space I would identify with the maternal function, he remains caught in the rhetoric of his rank even as the Duchess makes an all encompassing “circumference” of her embrace (1.1.461). So doing, the Duchess once again returns him to material of her body and engages in the play at the maternal – in herself and in Antonio. She would have an Antonio who would guard her “good name” (1.1.453), or, as she says, “speak in me” (1.1.485), but she would also have an Antonio who would “let me shroud my blushes in your bosom / Since ’tis the treasury of all my secrets” (1.1.490-491). She perceives the mother in the man, and she is able to do so without the conflicted anxieties the male characters exhibit over the same. On the one hand, the secrecy surrounding her marriage and pregnancy exacerbates their anxiety over what they cannot see or know. On the other hand, it seems to raise anxiety over what they want to experience as their own: the inherently maternal nature of the flesh.

If Antonio, Ferdinand, and Bosola would recreate an originary moment through the Duchess's
body, Webster makes sure to emphasize, through the metaphorical displacement in the birth scene of 2.3, that we are not seeing or hearing it. Bosola enters “Sure I did hear a woman shriek,” but is just as quickly not sure: “… list, ha? / And the sound came, if I received it right, / From the Duchess’s lodgings” (2.3.1-3). Antonio enters in a similar state of disorientation: “I heard some noise: who’s there? What art thou?” (2.3.10). Their power struggle centers on who can best place the noises echoing from “the Duchess’ lodging” (2.3.15):

Antonio – … heard you not
A noise even now?
Bosola – From whence?
Antonio – From the Duchess’ lodging.
Bosola – Not I. Did you?
Antonio – I did, or else I dreamed. (2.3.14-16)

With each question, Bosola gives Antonio the space to implicate himself. He also assigns Antonio a role to play, as if looking for more of the Duchess in Antonio’s bodily responses: “Methinks ‘tis very cold, and yet you sweat. / You look wildly” (2.3.19-20). As if on Bosola’s cue, Antonio’s nose bleeds.

This content, of course, is as much Antonio’s as Bosola’s. When Antonio describes the Duchess as “exposed / Unto the worst of torture, pain, and fear” (2.2.65), he describes his own “torture, pain, and fear” at the thought of discovery; his nose bleed is a hysterical symptom. The birth scene feels displaced even in time, for Cariola announces the son’s birth before any of the Duchess’s supposed “shriek[s]” or “scream[s]” (2.3.1 and 9). Both Bosola and Antonio wander into their own mistaken story: to Bosola, Antonio is the Duchess’s “bawd” (2.3.68), while to Antonio (and his bleeding nose) he is fully “exposed” (2.2.65).

Yet, as the Duchess herself notes, “dressing” in the mother does not suffice: you must “turn
your eyes / And progress through yourself” (1.1.428-429), rather than succumb to such phantasy.

Before her death, the Duchess proclaims “I have so much obedience in my blood / I wish it in their veins, to do them good” (4.2.159-160), but as she also notes this is not an obedience she willfully chose – “I account this world a tedious theatre, / for I do play a part in't 'gainst my will” (4.1.81-82). What “good” does she imagine her obedience to their phantasy doing returned to her brothers’ veins? Or in their silence as they “feed in quiet”? (4.2.227 emph. added). So close to her deathbed, the notion that obedience is killing her is hardly implicit. I imagine an ironic inflection in this vengeful remark. I would like to propose a Duchess able to retain her own counsel, a counsel she remembers as supported by a network of “working husbands, servants of different ranks, wet nurses, and apprentices” who “bustle” throughout her home (Wall 162). If the Duchess is isolated in her strangulation, I want that “bustle” omnipresent as it unfolds. I want a Duchess who hears that bustle as a form of self counsel. While the Duchess no longer has the authority to change her context, she can still be contemplated as a character who progresses through herself – choosing the din of a familial internal “bustle” and hearing it inform what part she plays. Her obedience she would return to them – their phantasy, their progress, their murder.

Bosola: Scooping out the Mother

You shall sweare, First, that you shall be diligent and faithfull, and readie to helpe every Woman labouring of Childe, as well as the poore as the riche […]
2. Item, Yee shall neither cause nor suffer any woman to name, or put any other Father to the childe, but onely him which is the very true Father thereof indeed.

*Book of Oaths* 1649. (qtd. Evenden 206)

*In the very first months of the baby's existence it has sadistic impulses directed, not only against the mother's breast, but also against the inside of her body:*
scooping it out, devouring the contents, destroying it by every means which sadism can suggest.


The Old Woman midwife provides a glaring dramatic condensation of demonized common knowledge in an otherwise courtly, albeit incestual psycho-drama. Paired with Julia's cuckold Castruchio in her first of two scenes (2.1 and 2.2), the two aged figures stand together in a graphic depiction of the barren years. Turning to torment the Old Woman, Bosola describes the abject body: “…These in thy face, here, were deep ruts and foul sloughs the last progress. There was a lady in France that, having had the smallpox, flayed the skin off her face to make it more level; and whereas before she looked like a nutmeg grater, after she resembled an abortive hedgehog” (2.1.24-29).

Bosola’s abuse of the Old Woman proves his fascination with the “paint[ed]” over or disguised grotesque (2.1.21, 30), as well as his envy of the power he imagines her wielding in the birth room. Her face appears to him as the gouged city streets, diseased, “flayed” skin (2.1.27), like an “abortive hedgehog” (2.1.29) or the “skull beneath the skin,” as Forker emphasizes in his title of Webster’s biography. The Old Woman’s power to abort what Bosola can only suspect exists materializes in her deathly face. She becomes a mutation of the foetus he would discover and the abortion he would commit.

“It seems” the Old Woman responds, “you are well acquainted with my closet?” (2.1.34). Her ironic reply invites Bosola into the closet he appears to know so well. By questioning his knowledge of her closet, she undercuts his authority at the same time she permits him imaginary license. She recognizes what he does not: her closet (like the maternal body) is for him only imagined space, one Bosola eagerly enters. Bosola’s depiction gives over to witchcraft: “a shop… to find in it the fat of serpents, spawn of snakes, Jews’ spittle, and their young children’s ordures, and all these for the face: I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one sick with the plague, than kiss
one of you fasting” (2.1.35-39). As the Old Woman herself notes, his knowledge “seems” (2.1.34). Echoing *Malleus Maleficarum*’s conflation of the witch and the midwife, Bosola’s reaction to the Old Woman’s presence echoes of the hunt, an effort to grasp the knowledge and dark power he perceives etched on her face and imagines in her closet.

I would argue also that by attacking the Old Woman, Bosola means to establish a difference between her role as midwife and his role as “intelligencer” (1.1.254 and 3.2.323), to dispel any “anxiety of influence,” as it were. Laura Gowing emphasizes that the female powers perceived within the birth room and the lying-in called for constant “regulation, intervention, and surveillance” (5). Interestingly, this is Bosola’s very role. Bosola refers to himself twice as an “intelligencer” (1.1.254 and 3.2.323), a role explicitly defined in the midwife’s oath by the seventeenth century (Gowing 159). By the seventeenth century, certified midwives, who had taken the oath to treat all women the same, were yet bound to refuse aid until a single woman in labour identified the child’s father truthfully (Gowing 159). According to Gowing, “midwives across England testified to [their] readiness to refuse their help until they heard the truth” (160).

Notably, neither Ferdinand nor the Cardinal conceive of asking for the midwife’s help, which seems to indicate that she has not taken the oath or that they do not trust her to follow it. They choose between two men for the role of “intelligencer” (1.1.254). The Cardinal rejects Antonio as “too honest” (1.1.233), and the two brothers settle on Bosola. While the Old Woman’s secret knowledge does not play on stage, Bosola’s determined effort to possess it indicates an awareness that his own knowledge, however religiously or politically sanctioned by the Duchess’s two brothers, is imagined and corrupt. Of course, he will see the midwife as abject, even more than the Duchess whom he hopes to redeem. Ironically for Bosola, but perhaps of no surprise to the Old Woman, Bosola’s misogynistic prose shifts

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60 I mean to refer both to her general knowledge of midwifery, specifically childbirth, and her more particular knowledge of the Duchess’s pregnancy.
into a poetic meditation, a confessional moment underlining his felt appreciation of his own twisted purpose and monstrosity:

… We account it ominous
If nature do produce a colt, or lamb,
A fawn, or goat, in any limb resembling
A man; and fly from’t as a prodigy.
Man stands amazed to see his deformity
In any other creature but himself;
But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
Which have their true names only ta’en from beasts –
As the most ulcerous wolf, and swinish measle –
Though we are eaten up of lice, and worms,
And though continually we bear about us
A rotten dead body, we delight
To hide it in rich tissue; all our fear –
Nay all our terror – is, lest our physician
Should put us in the ground, to be made sweet. (2.1.47-61)

Gowing observes that “In the literature of monstrous births, women become the conduit by which bestial features or body parts – in some cases whole animals – found their way into human reproduction” (131). Such stories provided much of the oral culture surrounding a single woman’s apparent pregnancy or a child’s deformity. In fact, Maubray “thought it unwise for pregnant women to play with pet animals for fear of marking the child” (Eccles 65). The child was all the more vulnerable due to a woman’s believed susceptibility to her surroundings (Gowing 128). “Conduct literature and
spiritual reflections” portrayed childbirth as the “pinnacle of feminine achievement” (131), but it was underpinned by a nightmare of monstrosity. Married couples were advised to “make their intercourse companionable and friendly, to avoid sinking into animal lusts” lest the foetus materialize the bestial behavior (131).

Yet, this is not exactly the sort of monstrosity that Bosola describes. Rather, he imagines a “colt, or lamb, / A fawn, or goat” (2.1.47-48) made bestial by its human parts. He imagines an (m)othering that takes place not because the human is deformed, but because the human is… human. He is a figure sensitized to the deformation of decomposition, a process he recognizes as constant with human experience and foetal development. What in my Introduction I called a sort of foetal development in reverse is for Bosola not a reversal at all: the death-bearing menstrual blood is the substance of life.

Moving out of the closet and to the Old Woman herself, Bosola immediately associates her with the “plague” (2.1.39), and yet it is his own abject state, the (m)other in him, that is so concerning. On the one hand, Bosola deems the Old Woman's knowledge beastly and deathly. He castigates the midwife to the point that she is frequently perceived to be the witch he describes. On the other hand, the hand that Bosola would chop off, he desires that knowledge for its very maternality, for what he sees as its transmutive power, and for its power to contain the ambivalence he clearly feels.

Bosola's attack on the midwife's closet is twofold. When considering early modern views of menstruation and the womb, Helen King offers Giambattista's du Monte argument “that the womb was a privileged locus of the body, where the heart, the brain, the liver, the nerves and the belly were brought into sympathy each with the other, and where animal, natural, and vital faculties were all affected. He listed as the functions of the womb the power to concoct, to make blood, to distribute it, return it and expel it” (Midwifery 53 emphasis added). Bosola's attack is a search for this kind of procreative “blood” power, and consequently, an envious attack on the midwife and the womb, itself.
But his attack, I suspect, rises also from the need for a space that might sympathize, that might contain and survive said attack. He searches, in other words, for the mother's survival. Bosola's return to the womb, if a search for this kind of procreative “blood” power, also requires an appreciation of environmental interrelatedness – but Bosola's only means to imagining himself in relation to an other is by casting himself or the other as abject, by splitting in the Kleinian / Kristevan sense. He equates anything else with monstrosity.

His focus on his abject state should come as no surprise for one who feels so discontinuous with his own achievement. “I am your creature” (1.1.280), he professes to Ferdinand, certainly not “I am your person,” or even “your servant” – “I am your creature” (1.1.280). Bosola views all humans through his lens of creaturely-ness, othered by their human birth, humanity a condition that rests on a stale performativity hearkening always to roles that do not suit. It makes sense that, Antonio identified and “dead,” Bosola's role of midwife would switch from torturer to confessor. Antonio’s body bore the “taint” and now Bosola might finally have hope of a mother’s survival in the Duchess’s purified state. It is perhaps the first role he plays of his own accord, informing Ferdinand after the torturous tableau in 4.1 that he will appear to the Duchess “Never in mine own shape” and “When you send me next / The business shall be comfort” (4.1.130, 132-133). But the “shape” of his costume is, of course, more a “comfort” to him than the Duchess (4.1.133).

Much like Hamlet’s request that Queen Gertrude “throw away the worser part of it [her heart], / And live the purer with the other half” (3.4.157-158), Bosola asks the Duchess to forget Antonio, “this base low fellow” (3.5.114), and to repent to him as her confessor. Bosola’s description of the suffering, mournful, penitent Duchess indicates his felt need for such a mother-type:

She’s sad, as one long used to’t, and she seems
Rather to welcome the end of misery
Than shun it: a behaviour so noble
As gives a majesty to adversity:
You may discern the shape of loveliness
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles;
She will muse for hours together, and her silence,
Methinks, expresseth more than if she spake.  

His disguise as the old man (a possible reference to Castruchio) and would be confessor is in part calling on her to perform the mother read about in advice pamphlets for the recently married: be quiet, be penitent, be pure (be impotent). By imaginary recreation of the cultural virgin mother in the redeemed Duchess, Bosola seeks his own uncorrupted personhood. He would hide his face in her “dress” of penitence. The description also indicates the sort of midwife he imagines himself to be: the midwife as the torturer withholding help until the father's identity is discovered transforms into the midwife as the priest prepared to perform the sacrament of last rights over the dying. He seeks in her redemption an embodied mirror of goodness that counteracts his own deformity, but he finds no release from his own phantasy here.

Once again, the Duchess proves uninterested in playing to such phantasy. For insisting she forget Antonio, “this base low fellow” (3.5.114), a line Bosola might just as easily said of himself, the Duchess responds “Were I a man / I'd beat that counterfeit face into thy other” (3.5.114-115). Bosola's emphatic “One of no birth” (3.5.116) characterizes more than Antonio's or his own class. Bosola remains unborn in the sense that he is not born of his phantasy, but remains problematically tied to the others' wills he performs. He is “lured to” Ferdinand who “creates” him “One of [his] familiars” (1.1.224 and 251-252). His inclination toward melancholy becomes just one more facet of Ferdinand's play:
Be yourself:

Keep your old garb of melancholy, 'twill express
You envy those that stand above your reach,
Yet strive not to come near 'em. This will gain
Access to private lodgings, where yourself

May, like a politic dormouse – (1.1.270-275)

And he translates his role as provisor of the horse into the assertion that his “corruption / Grew out of horse dung” (1.1.279-280). As Bosola would have it, his corruption is not his own but grows from the environmental conditions of his assignment, and there is some truth to this, actually, if one takes the power of Ferdinand's psychic projections into account. Thomas Ogden relies on the work of Bion and Winnicott to describe the experience of projective identification in the paranoid-schizoid mode:

The recipient of the projective identification can sometimes retrospectively become aware that he is 'playing a part … in somebody else's phantasy' (Bion, 1959a, p. 149). Projective identification is a 'direct communication' (Winnicott, 1971c, p. 54) in that it is unmediated by interpreting subjects; instead, it is predominantly a communication between the unconscious of one person and that of another. For this reason, it is often experienced by the recipient as coercive.

(25-26)

While Bosola, unlike the Duchess, does not require coercion to play his part in her death, he has no power to save Antonio when he changes his allegiance. As the Duchess suggests, all of Bosola's faces are counterfeit, identified with some other that Bosola plays; beating one into the other would do nothing to rip out the phantasies he himself casts over his world or to rend the script from Ferdinand's unconscious. “Were [she] a man” (3.5.114) would make no difference either (just ask Hamlet caught up
in his father's ghost).

Even after changing loyalties, Ferdinand to Duchess, Bosola’s sense of past, present, and future resides in “A rotten dead body” (2.1.58) and the deformed “mole” Antonio sees him as (2.3.14), until the Duchess’s grave makes it “sweet” (2.1.61). Wall's emphasis on the Duchess as the embodiment of such restoratives plays differently in Bosola's imaginary, for he does not imagine her raising him from “a dead palsy” (1.1.192). Rather, her sweetness resides in the fact of the corpse (see line 61 below):

    Man stands amazed to see his deformity
    In any other creature but himself;
    But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
    Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts –
    As the most ulcerous wolf, and swinish measle –
    Though we are eaten up by lice, and worms,
    And though continually we bear about us
    A rotten dead body, we delight
    To hide it in rich tissue; all our fear –
    Nay all our terror – is, lest our physician
    Should put us in the ground, to be made sweet. (2.1.51-61 emph. added) –

His switch to first person plural in line 53 of 2.1 includes himself, and indicates a birth experience he would ultimately have the Duchess share. For all his vitriol toward Castruchio and the Old Woman in this scene, the two are, in a sense, his parental mirrors. On the one hand, Castruchio captures the truth of his impotence, payment always escaping him, power always belonging to someone else. On the other hand, the Old Woman, even as she undermines his knowledge, marks his initiation in the role of midwife – for in the very next scene, Bosola produces the apricot on which the Duchess gorges. Given
any sooner, he would have wielded the abortive power he recognized in the face of his predecessor. As it is, he initializes her labor and the birth of her son, a birth he wishes for himself and finally comes to search for as her redemptive confessor.

By his own description, Bosola “bear[s] about” himself the “dead body” he associates with the plague ridden midwife. As he explains to the Duchess in 4.2, “Thou art a box of worm seed, at best, but a salvatory of green mummy. What's this flesh? A little cruded milk, fantastical puff paste” (4.2.118-120): “Fantastical” stuff, indeed, the Duchess as a “salvatory” for his own body sense. In 2.1 Bosola simply offers the Duchess its “fantastical” antithesis in the vulnerable soft skin, the lush moisture of the apricots. He offers her a home remedy, and she, with what he takes to be a lustful eating, exposes the humoral richness of her as yet imagined pregnant body. As Bosola describes it, the Duchess “[G]reedily” (2.1.151) breaks the skin with her teeth, and unleashes what he wants to find: "I should have discovered apparently / The young springal cutting a caper in her belly” (2.1.154-55). The early modern belief that women were more moist than men has obvious relevance here, but I would push the analogy further still. Women's fluid was believed to collect in the body to such a degree that it necessitated menstruation. The practice of bleeding is just one example of the medical attempts made to expunge excess humors. Although theorists such as Adrian Wilson depict the lying-in as empowering, it could be quite uncomfortable and unhealthy, especially for women of the leisurely class, who were wrapped in heavy blankets and forced to sweat out fluids that were not relieved naturally.61 As I emphasized in my Introduction, in humoral theory, women's skin is “softer and more spongy [in] texture, absorbing more fluid from their diet” than men's skin (King Midwifery 12). Pregnant women were advised to eat toast, for example, presumably to help absorb excess fluids. Bosola's apricot is counterintuitive in this sense. It does not balance the humors; no, the apricots elevate the humors just

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enough to cause her childbirth.

Accepting Bosola's (or any male protagonists') description of the Old Woman midwife or the Duchess as a matter of fact is a mistake, when he is so clearly unreliable where she is concerned. It is hard to believe that the Duchess would eat the apricots "greedily" (2.1.151) when she seems so reticent, asserting they might "taste of musk" and hearing Bosola's claim that they "[d]id ripen in horse dung" (2.1.139 and 143). The bestial overtones belong to Bosola as he himself made clear less than 100 lines before in his description of man's deformity. The Duchess, whether she likes it or not, is made to play a part in his perception, perhaps as Ogden describes it, even coerced (Ogden 26). Her choice is to dismiss the implications as a joke: "Oh you jest" (2.1.143). But it is no joke; it is, in fact, Bosola's second reference to a thing growing out of "horse dung," the first being a reference to himself (see 1.1.279-280 and 2.1.142-143). Bosola greedily wishes for the humoral body's exposure so that he might "ripen" himself in her (2.1.143). As Ogden observes of projective identification, "This psychological-interpersonal process … is based on the omnipotent phantasy that an aspect of self (which is either endangered or endangering) can be placed in another person in such a way that 'the recipient' is controlled from within" (25). The apricot provides Bosola the means to the Duchess's insides, where the maternal flesh, both endangered and endangering, might be kept "safe" both for and from him.

Situated in the context of late Renaissance Roman still life, the apricot, like "other fruits … suggest[s] sexual tumescence and receptiveness to penetration" (Varriano 11). Notably, Bosola is not only emphasizing the Duchess's swollen state; he also has her penetrate the circumference. Neither Bosola or Antonio are willing to test the apricot for the Duchess. Thus refused, she mobilizes the sexual act or primal scene and performs their wish for her luscious penetrability, at the same time replicating the vagina dentata in the apricot's consumption. The apricot recreates Bosola's suspicion, which becomes doubly accusatory when she must eat of it herself. The son's birth is hardly necessary proof of
the phantasy (what goes in must come out). With a voyeuristic twist, Bosola imitates the midwife, “discover[ing]” (2.1.154) the pregnancy in its onset. Through the Duchess's body, he also participates in the “unquenchable sexual appetite,” the “inherently contagious,” the “morally dangerous,” the “voraciousness” that he imagines the humoral body to contain (Rousseau 105). The death he wears about himself and the role Ferdinand would have him play unfurl with the apricot's fleshy skin, revealing a potential for rich life that he never fully learns to contain.

Ferdinand: Fleshing out Phantasy

For base is the man that hateth his own flesh! And truly a wife, if rightly considered, as Adam well observed … ought to be esteemed of every honest man as “Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,” etc.

_Aristotle's Masterpiece._ Chapter VI. “Of the happy state of matrimony.”

The whole of 2.5 confirms that Ferdinand feels the news of his twin's sexual activity and her resultant childbirth as a physical and emotional affront, “buffeted by thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as if they were external forces or physical objects occupying or bombarding oneself” (Ogden 21-22). Ferdinand calls “for rhubarb / To purge this choler!” but just as quickly casts it over in his humoral confusion of symptom and curative, and reaches for his sister's heart:

… Here's the cursed day

To prompt my memory, and here it shall stick

Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge

To wipe it out. (2.5.13-16)

How should her “bleeding heart,” exactly, “wipe out” his memory of her heart bleeding for another? Every verb choice is one of violence focused on her body, as if by enacting this tempestual violence he
might purge his body of hers, and yet her body also provides the parts necessary for the purging – even to the level of the body politic:

Would I could be one [So wild a tempest],
That I might toss her palace 'bout her ears,
Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads,
And lay her general territory as waste

As she hath done her honours. (2.5.17-21)

He would “hew[ed] her to pieces” (2.5.31) then offer his tear stained handkerchief to “her bastard” as “soft lint for his mother's wounds” (2.5.30), his salt to her wound. He fears his “imagination will carry [him] / To see her in the shameful act of sin” (2.5.40-41) – his salt to her wound – then imagines her with a series of inferiors, finally professing:

… I would have their bodies

Burnt in a coal pit with the ventage stopped,

That their cursed smoke might not ascend to heaven;

Or dip the sheets they lie in, in pitch or sulphur,

Wrap them in't and then light them like a match;

Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis

And giv't his lecherous father to renew

The sin of his back. (2.5.66-73)

What is interesting in Ferdinand's misogynistic response is the level of his confusion over the Duchess's body and his own, as if by accepting another she has tainted his. While the Cardinal recognizes the distinction between “The royal blood of Aragon and Castille / … thus attainted” (2.5.22-23) and his own body, Ferdinand proves incapable of appreciating the conceptual difference between
the bloodline and his body — more frightening — the difference between his humoral body and his
twin sister's. He suffers from a kind of "boundary confusion" (Daileader 6) that he finally puts to sleep
by pulling the passions back inside: "In, in, I'll go sleep. / Till I know who leaps my sister, I'll not stir"
(2.5.76-77). As Daileader also observes, "Patrilineage does not seem to be an issue here. Rather, the
child is a threat only insofar as it represents, literally embodies, the forbidden act by which it has been
engendered" (85). He can sleep with not knowing, or, in other words, Ferdinand can keep "the
forbidden act" (85) anonymously alive "In, in" himself (2.5.76). Thus, Ferdinand plays at a
containment of their primal scene until the Duchess's primal scene slips to Antonio. As
Daileader succinctly puts it, "The Duke wants to get inside his sister" (85), but taking the preOedipal stage into
account (and Ferdinand is yet one more extreme depiction of an early modern man with a far from
resolved Oedipal complex), as well as the early modern medical treatises understandings of foetal
development, he already is in the Duchess and she in him. Ferdinand himself confesses as much.

Their sexual ambiguity is something of which Ferdinand seems at least pre-consciously aware:
“I could kill her now / In you, or in myself, for I do think / It is some sin in us heaven doth revenge / By
her” (2.5.63-66 emph added). Knowing Antonio’s name places a good deal of pressure on this
internalized triangulation of siblings. His assertion that he “will only study to seem the thing I am not”
(2.5.62-63 emph. added), of course, refers to the deference of his action (the Duchess's murder), but it
also indicates the imaginariness of his consequent position. In between the wish to kill and the wish's
fulfillment, in between not knowing and knowing Antonio’s name, he will retain access to his “living”
body as an imaginary construct. He has permission to feel the maternal aspects of his own flesh as long
as he has this imaginary license to hers. His not knowing is therefore an important fact of his access to
her.

For he imagines himself as inside her, as well. When the Duchess mentions the “scandalous
report … / Touching [her] honor” (3.1.47-48), Ferdinand responds:

… Let me be ever deaf to't:

One of Pasquil's paper bullets, court calumny,

A pestilent air which princes' palaces

Are seldom purged of. Yet, say that it were true:

I pour it in your bosom, my fixed love

Would strongly excuse, extenuate, nay deny

Faults, were they apparent in you. Go be safe

In your own innocency. (3.1.48-55)

Of course, Ferdinand has imagined the rumor as “true” even before its confirmation (3.1.51), and he confesses this much when he acknowledges “I pour it in your bosom” (3.1.52). The line in its entirety is a bit deceptive, as if Ferdinand pours his “fixed love” (3.1.52) into the Duchess, and on some count I imagine a Ferdinand who actually believes that. Observing that a “palace” cannot be “purged” of such a “pestilent air” (3.1.51, 50), he imagines that “fixed love / Would strongly excuse, extenuate, nay deny / Faults in” her. For him, there is no curative or purgative that will work other than their body merger.

But the ambiguity over what is being poured – his “fixed love” or the imagined truth of her sullied body – means she will only “be safe / In [her] innocency” if she allows for his imaginary access to her, for the “Fault” is his after all (3.1.54). And this is the precariousness of her position: While the Duchess's secrecy and “ostensible compliance mark[s] a move into will and desire, giving her significant leverage to do as she pleases” (Bartels 421), it also leaves Ferdinand's phantasies relatively unchallenged and unchecked. The increasing transparency surrounding her “secret” makes for a fitful sleep on Ferdinand's part (pun very much intended). As Antonio notes to Delio, Ferdinand “is so quiet
that he seems to sleep / The tempest out as dormice do in winter. / Those houses that are haunted are
most still / Till the devil be up” (3.1.21-24). Up, indeed.

Perhaps the minute the Duchess has on her brother means more than previously thought (see
4.2.257-259). She was apparently the first infant to break the membranes and battle her way out of the
womb and into the light, a thing with which her character is associated throughout the play. The
Duchess's torture begins in the dark (4.1.21-30). Unwilling to be seen by the Duchess, Ferdinand orders
the torches removed from her room. By removing the lights, Ferdinand recreates his most unchallenged
moment of access and revises their history: the fact that she has a pattern of leaving him all the way
from their mother's womb, no more. Ferdinand, however, still needs the Duchess to enact his will:
“Where are you?” (4.1.30). His disorientation echoes of Bosola and Antonio's confusion outside the
Duchess's birth room. It is the Duchess's disembodied voice that leads him to her, her taking the cold
hand that “seal[s his] peace” (4.1.42). She remains a kind of light.

I imagine for Ferdinand the Duchess rematerializes with the act of peace making. When she
takes the severed arm and kisses the hand, Ferdinand encourages her: “Pray do, and bury the print of it
in your heart” (4.1.45) … “you shall have the heart too” (4.1.48). He makes his Duchess an organic
tomb imprinted with its corpse; the hand and heart, the Duchess is ultimately left to conclude, belong to
Antonio. This implicit threat comes to light as the servants’ torches provide the Duchess her first
glimpse of the tableau of her murdered family. As I noted in my introduction to the paranoid-schizoid
position, Ferdinand experiences the Duchess as if he is “unmasking the truth” of her person (Ogden
19). He “rewrite[s] history such that [his] present experience of the [Duchess] is projected backward
and forward in time” (Ogden 19): Here is what your pregnant body has contained and look at what your
body has done. In this case, it is a real challenge not to think that Ferdinand succeeds also in revising
her birth moment as much as his own, for the light now signifies very differently for the Duchess, the
“truth” it reveals more Ferdinand's making than her own.

Ferdinand wraps the Duchess in the winding sheet of his own phantasy, even suffocates her in its lead envelope: the deathly fertile that he turns back on the mother and the twin who broke through first and refused to re-member him to his liking. Like the frustrated infant, his “sadistic impulses” are “directed … against the inside of her body: scooping it out, devouring its contents, destroying it by every means which sadism can suggest” (Klein “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States” 262), and the Duchess's body is arguably transformed. Like Bosola at the midwife's closet, those sadistic impulses invade the Duchess and make of her the materialization of his wish to be re-membered – from inside (as when she is disembodied by her room's darkness) and from outside (as when she first sees the tableau and is surrounded by the madmen).

If Ferdinand had any doubts about the Duchess carrying his sin in her, the waves of torture ensure its absorption. His revenge upon her is not only the loss of her family, but also the forced displacement of his guilt, her guilt where it should be his. As Elaine Scarry emphasizes, the confession is designed to displace guilt squarely on the tortured. In the realm of humoral theory, however, the Duchess's body not only contains that guilt; she absorbs it. As the Duchess requests: “If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk / And let me freeze to death” (4.1.66-67). To take the tableau at its silent best: The moment captures a present absence, “contracts” (Scarry 35) the Duchess's world to the cold hand and the “lifeless trunk” that she would become (4.1.66). By enclosing the family unit within the confines of the tableau, his “theatricality” emphasizes their maternal containment and accuses her of the family’s (and his) weakness and abortion.

On trial here, as William Kerwin would emphasize, is the theatricality of the medical curatives Ferdinand directs toward the Duchess: The cold hand is not the hand she thinks it is (it is not Antonio's), but it is – for her – very much the hand she imagines and feels it to be. As Celia Daileader
posits, a “crucial and … problematic distinction in this tragedy is that between animate and inanimate flesh, between bodies capable of motion and bodies permanently at rest” (82). This is, as Daileader points out, “a tricky question in the darkness of Malfi” (82). This trickiness is compounded further still by the fact that the “lifeless trunk” is not even flesh, but wax. Ferdinand admits, after all, his “wish” that the Duchess is “plagued in art” (4.2.108). He casts within her the net of “not knowing.”

If we imagine Ferdinand’s torture as a “reiterative” representation of the “production, regulation, exclusion, and abjection” (Calbi xviii) of the Duchess’s body, then what does it mean that her body is so made by theatrical representations of Ferdinand’s phantasy? By extension, what does it mean when Bosola tells her the truth, that Antonio “is living” and the “dead bodies you saw were but feigned statues,” but lies that “[Antonio's] reconciled to your brothers”? (4.2.340-342). Is her last thought of “Mercy” one of gratitude? Or an angry demand for mercy, as one frustrated at the level of empty theatricality she has been made to embody? It is not that one cannot imagine the Duchess as having a rich internal life. She loves Antonio and her children; she loves Cariola even more, I would argue, for their contrariness. But Ferdinand has found a way to make himself her primary object. Even if she remembers this last image of her family, it is not her family she remembers. Without her realizing, he has emptied her flesh into wax, supplanted those she loves with nothing but a replica of their maternalized murder, a prediction that, notably, proves false in Act 5.

By Ferdinand's design, any feeling of boundedness returns the Duchess to the cold flesh she held and mistook for Antonio, a foreign flesh that arguably “coils” back upon her (Merleau-Ponty Visible and Invisible 146) and materializes in the Duchess's newly refined wish: “If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk / And let me freeze to death” (4.1.66-67). As Ferdinand wills it, the Duchess would suck in on herself, a cold female body. The hungry sensuality Ferdinand suspected of her is mewed up

62 See Celia Daileader’s Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage 90-91 for her explication of the “wax effigies” of the Duchess’s children and husband. She reads the scene more in the context of witchcraft than I do here, but she also connects the wax figures to issues of knowing and not knowing.
in a wax corpse, and Ferdinand displaces the Antonio and the children (nothings that they are) as the “saucy and ambitious devil / … dancing in [her] circle” (1.1.404-405). When Bosola argues for making a penitent Duchess – “Send her a penitential garment to put on / Next to her delicate skin” (4.1.115-116) – Ferdinand returns yet again to the “purity” inherent in the blood they once shared: “Damn her, that body of hers, / While that my blood ran pure in't, was more worth / Than that which thou wouldst comfort, called a soul” (4.1.117-119). He makes sure that in his time she cannot leave him, first or second.

Yet, while the Duchess echoes Gertrude's “These words like daggers enter in mine ears” (3.4.95) in her “I am full of daggers” (4.1.87), the Duchess's remark comes across more as a statement of fact than a comment overwrought by her bombardment with Ferdinand's sexual “thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as if they were external forces or physical objects” (Ogden 21). She continues to prove a rather intractable subject, even caught in the magical nature of her situation: “Puff – let me blow these vipers from me” (4.1.88). The Duchess appears aware of the difference between her torture and her body's response, between herself and Ferdinand. Not surprisingly, this facet of her persona comes across most strongly in her dialogues with Cariola, a character steadfastly tied to her family life.

_I will die with her._

Wendy Wall's “Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England” focuses on the medical knowledge that falls outside the authority of the College of Physicians, such as that of the Duchess, Cariola, and the midwife. Wall essentially offers a corrective to the romantic notion that the Duchess creates a private domestic space in keeping her marriage and family a secret. She depicts instead a vibrant household that “bustled with working husbands, servants of different ranks, wet nurses, and apprentices – many of whom undertook activities we now classify as 'public’”
(162). Most important to her argument, with its focus on the recurrence of “syrup” and “sweet” throughout the play, is the Duchess's place in a social network of female healers, one the Duchess encourages Cariola to rely on when she asks her to care for her children in her dying wish.

After holding the cold arm and witnessing the tableau, Cariola is the one character, it seems, able to wake the Duchess out of her reverie over nothings:

Cariola – Pray dry your eyes.

What think you of, madam?

Duchess – Of nothing:

When I muse thus, I sleep.

Cariola –

Like a madman, with your eyes open?

Duchess –

Dost thou think we shall know one another

In th'other world? (4.2.14-19)

Cariola's questions, like Glauce's to Britomart, return the Duchess to a form of relating that does not rely on projective identification or omnipotent phantasy. Cariola instead invites the Duchess to remember a material reality that counters the severed arm and the “lifeless trunk” (4.1.66), for Cariola has enjoyed the access to the Duchess and her family: she participates in all of the Duchess's scenes with Antonio, playfully noting at one point that “she's the sprawling'st bedfellow” (3.2.13). Cariola's teasing remark reveals an affection for the Duchess's character as a person. I imagine the Duchess's marriage to Antonio and the birth of her children are not the only secrets the Duchess shares with Cariola. The room they share would have also served as the birth room, and so it's interesting that, in addition to revealing a love for the Duchess, Cariola reminds Antonio that she is more intimate with the
Duchess than he is. She knows what he does not… and yet, she announces the Duchess's first birth to Antonio: “Sir, you are the happy father of a son. / Your wife commends him to you” (2.2.81-82), and pledges to guard the Duchess's “secret from the world” (1.1.344), even understanding its “poison” (1.1.345 and 346). She contains her own ambivalence toward these figures, and for that reason she is the Duchess’s most reliable friend. She recognizes the dangerous ambiguity of the Duchess's position as a duchess while a secret wife and mother.

Also, Cariola is the first to acknowledge, if only to herself, that the Duchess's marriage is also an act of denial based in illusion. For example, when Antonio asks “But what of your two brothers?” (1.1.460), the Duchess quickly denies the question's importance: “Do not think of them. / All discord, without this circumference, / Is only to be pitied and not feared” (1.1.460-462). Alone after the Duchess and Antonio exit, Cariola closes the scene: “Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman / Reign most in her, I know not, but it shows / A fearful madness. I owe her much of pity” (1.1.492-494). Whether greatness or woman reigns most is less a point than Cariola's astute observation that the Duchess is both. Cariola recognizes this fact even when the Duchess would split her life in two. She cannot make her brothers disappear simply by not thinking of them. The Duchess’s dismissal of Cariola as “a superstitious fool” (3.2.314) for disliking Bosola’s “jesting with religion” with an escape by “feigned pilgrimage” (3.2.313-314) is a tragic error in judgment on the Duchess’s part – and ironic for her trust in the illusory Bosola.

By calling into question the Duchess's madness, this time to her face – “Like a madman, with your eyes open?” (4.2.17) – Cariola calls on the Duchess to negotiate her own ambivalent position, to open her eyes but to see through any phantasy – whether it be her own or Ferdinand's. She returns the Duchess to the certitude of their friendship from one wish to another: Her “… you shall live / To shake this durance off” (4.2.11-12) gives way to the imagined concreteness of the “next world”:
Duchess – Do thou think we shall know one another 

In the next world?

Cariola – Yes, out of the question. (4.2.18-19) –

“[O]ut of the question” (4.2.19) for the proven continuity of their friendship and the familial network of relations surrounding it. Twice the Duchess contemplates that “I am not mad yet” and “yet I am not mad” (4.2.24 and 26). Taken within the context of Cariola's view of the Duchess – as one waking up from a mad faith in a secret's “circumference” (1.1.460) – the Duchess’s remarks carry the weight of one bewildered by the scope and number of phantastic projections in which she has played, but surprised at her capacity for sanity. The reference to the “next world” accepts that the play itself no longer has room for any alternatives to the Duchess death (4.2.19), but the material of her family life, as embodied in Cariola, keeps her sane. This changes the way the Duchess thinks about her body: “Who do I look like now?” (4.2.30). She asks as one coming to appreciate her number and changeability as object to her brother's, her steward's, and even her husband's phantasies of her. This means she knows she is not a “lifeless trunk” – yet (4.1.66).

When Bosola enters disguised as “an old man” (4.2.108 s.d. 2), the Duchess continues this line of questioning:

Duchess – … dost know me? 

Bosola – Yes. 

Duchess – Who am I? (4.2.115-117)

Rather than absorb one more of Bosola's tyrannical descriptions of the grotesque body, she enacts the body politic: “Am not I thy Duchess?” (4.2.127), “I am Duchess of Malfi still” (4.2.134). Her “I am Duchess still” is as much a profound, defiant, or even defensive assertion that she will play no (m)other role for her captors and torturers, as a resignation to the fact that she has not managed to play the
mother on stage for her children… That the title “Duchess” objectifies her as much as her brother would do, and that the one role she has left to play with any great passion is the death that will embody her children's both political and personal integrity by remembering them and their health. Cariola provides her the means to do so.

Holding the Duchess

You are deceived, sir,
I am not prepared for't! I will not die!

Cariola 4.2.233-234

In addition to exposing the problem of theatricality in relation to medical and political authority, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* presents a rather particular set of consequences: the old woman midwife enters to Bosola's abuse, facilitates the first son's birth, and then permanently exits the stage as Ferdinand and Bosola usurp her position and close in on the Duchess's secret life. The Duchess dies; Cariola dies; the children but one die. Ferdinand and Bosola's medical knowledge, as Kerwin argues, proves as false as their political intentions are corrupt. They die. The Cardinal, removed from his brother's psycho-drama and ensconced in Church politics, dies. Antonio, who notes his wife is “exposed / Unto the worst of torture, pain, and fear” by her childbirth (2.2.64-65), dies. Everyone who attempts to own the childbirth, including the Duchess herself, dies. The first born son is the only living family member at the play's end. Ferdinand and Bosola's extended torture of the Duchess – from the cold severed hand to the murderous tableau to the masque of madmen – arguably completes from outside what they imagine happening within. The pregnant body breaks open by the will of a piece of flesh; a first born son dead or alive no matter, it is the active agent in the mother’s passivity.

While the “shriek[s]” and “scream[s]” that Bosola and Antonio hear in 2.3 redeploy in the
voices of madmen, the Duchess, stalwart that she is, is not made mad by any of it. Instead, the Duchess
remains rather grounded in the material of the moment and rejects the terror Bosola assumes she will
feel at the sight of her noose. When Cariola would die with her, the Duchess requests she “giv'st my
little boy / Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl / Say her prayers ere she sleep” (4.2.194-196), a
concrete set of actions that return Cariola to the context of the bustling household Wendy Wall
describes. To Bosola's “This cord should terrify you?” (4.2.205), she responds:

… Not a whit.

What would it me to have my throat cut

With diamonds, or to be smothered

With cassia, or to be shot to death with pearls? (4.2.205-208).

The cord about her neck, she states “Pull, and pull strongly” (4.2.220). Her final request that the
executioner “Dispose my breath how please you, but my body / Bestow upon my women: will you?”
(4.2.218-219) is quite the opposite of Hamlet's request of Horatio:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Absent thee from felicity a while,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

To tell my story. (5.2.328-331)

I suspect the Duchess has had quite enough of story telling. Her last fleeting moments reveal a Duchess
remembering a set of relations outside the realm of omnipotent projection. It is the material of her death
that she appreciates, not the horror of Ferdinand’s “fantastical” projections (4.2.119-120).

This is not to say she is not still subject to the “fantastical” (4.2.119-120), even when “her eye
opes” (4.2.337). She is simply different from them. In contrast to the Duchess's focus on the material of
her death, Bosola, Ferdinand, and Antonio continue to perceive that same material through the lens of
their imaginary. For example, to Bosola's view, the Duchess's stirs to help enact his redemption: “What were I to do, were this to do again? / I would not change my peace of conscience / For all the wealth of Europe – ” (4.2.329-331) – with this question and declaration the Duchess stirs, and Bosola exclaims in the moment: “She stirs! Here's life! / Return fair soul from darkness, and lead mine / Out of this sensible hell!” (4.2.331-333). The life he celebrates is the chance at his own: reading in her “resurrection” the chance to redeem himself, he decides to “deliver / Thy body to the reverend dispose / Of some good women” (4.2.360-362) as she requested and then travels to Milan “Where somewhat I will speedily enact / Worth my dejection” (4.2.364-365). Bosola's question of “What were I to do were this to do again?” (4.2.329) allows for the possibility of a different Duchess, a different play, at the very least a different ending. Her body’s return to “some good women” (4.2.362) is not a moment included in the text, and so her last note plays more to Bosola’s continued wish to rise above his dejected station than to the material of her expressed wish for her body’s disposal.

The redemptive imaginariness of Bosola's waking Duchess is especially problematic with regards to the body, as evidenced in Bosola's remark as to his own sorrow and tears –

This is manly sorrow:

These tears, I am very certain, never grew

In my mother's milk. (4.2.351-353)

These are the same tears Bosola hoped to find mirrored in Ferdinand: “Do you not weep?” (4.2.250), but it is unclear what exactly makes them “manly” (4.2.351), especially when they rise with the Duchess who enacts the nourishing mother’s return. To review the words regarding milk particular to *A Private Looking-Glass for the Female Sex* inside *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, “the milk is nothing but the menstruous blood made white in the breast. Secondly, … it is the superfluity of the last aliment of the fleshy parts” ("Treating of the several Maladies incident to the womb, with proper remedies for each")
Bosola's wish for redemption returns him to what Klein posited as the primary object – idealized in the Duchess, but as Daileader observes, the Duchess “resembles more and more closely the marble woman defied in act 1” as she “approaches her death” (91). In other words, she is redemptive exactly because she has been emptied out of her “fleshy parts” and their “superfluity” (1.2.1.5). Her increasing proximity to deadness brings forth the sweetness Bosola associates with the corpse: “a little cruded milk, fantastical puff paste” (4.2.119-120). Bosola’s attempt to save Antonio is thus doomed from the start. The tragedy of Antonio's accidental murder is that Bosola never suspected the inevitability of his hand in it. In contrast to the Duchess who finds “this world a tedious theater, / For I do play a part in'gainst my will” (4.1.80-81), Bosola claims he mistook Antonio “In a mist: I know not how,” emphasizing the universal nature of “a mistake as I have often seen / In a play” (5.5.93-95) over anyone’s will or his own fault.

After the Duchess's death, Bosola attempts to shame Ferdinand into repentance, just as he did the Duchess: “here begin your pity” (4.2.247), Bosola says as he pulls back the traverse to reveal the murdered children, and “Fix your eye here” (4.2.250) as he turns Ferdinand's attention to the Duchess. Promptly, Ferdinand orders Bosola to “[c]over her face. Mine eyes dazzle. She died young”(4.2.254). With her death, the imaginary is sprung, ungrounded, questions issue forth. Ferdinand's desire for a “mass of treasure” seems a minor plot point in comparison to the psychic drama in which he lives. Losing his twin has repercussions for his perception of all objects, especially those cast in position of the similar: “Let me see her face again – / Why didst not thou pity her?” (4.2.274-75). From an object relations view this is all fairly predictable. Ferdinand refuses his commonality with Bosola, and even claims “I hate thee for it” (4.2.280), splitting himself off from the “bad” Bosola in attempt to maintain his own innocence. By refusing Bosola's “reward” and offering a “pardon” instead (4.2.284-286), Ferdinand projects his own feeling of empty reward as if to make his own innocence.
vision of both the Duchess and Bosola is frustratingly changed, but in each case he continues to search for his mirror, his twin, if a revised sort. Having destroyed the “bad” Duchess, he resides on the other side of the split. It costs him the good Bosola, who finds himself once again scorned as abject. Ferdinand looks for the difference he feels, not for the difference the Duchess is. He wants a complementary other.

As Jessica Benjamin makes clear:

Conceptually, this notion of recognition as activity indicates the basis for transcending the split complementarity in which the (traditionally female) other was, if not helplessly subjected to the subject's power, still relegated to the position of passivity in order to mirror his activity, contain his unmanageable tension. Providing mirroring and containment would, in effect, compromise her own subjectivity and disrupt her capacity for thinking.  

This would, in fact, be a passivity Ferdinand expects of all objects: “He that can compass me, and know my drifts, / May say he hath put a girdle 'bout the world / And sounded all her quicksands” (3.2.84-86). For Ferdinand, the Duchess calcifies as the destroyed object, as cold and absent as the ring he returned to her. She does not survive him. At this point, Ferdinand's condition can only deteriorate. The Duchess's corpse presents Ferdinand with the results of the powerful pull toward omniscience, but it does not satisfy it. With no safe space offering containment, no metaphorical maternal body, his destructive impulses finally must turn on his own – causing a transformation that signifies in the play not only psychically, but physically:

“The wolf shall find her grave, and scrape it up” (4.2.311) – Ferdinand searches for a closeness with the dead maternal, and thus does not have room to mourn. Rather, he desires the trauma, the still hungry, shocked speechlessness that precedes grief. He would digest her absence quite literally, in
effort to undo their split: death by mirror. However, the Duchess's destruction also negates Ferdinand's
capacity to imagine her his. The Duchess's corpse mirrors her utter absence and Ferdinand's toxic guilt:
“Not to devour the corpse, but to discover / The horrid murder” (4.2.312-13). With his own guilt,
Ferdinand uncovers a need for further splitting, but has no one left to imagine as his twin.

Killing the Duchess, the Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola have lost access to any containment at
all but the theater walls. When Daileader situates early modern drama within the context of “early
modern... boundary confusion” and the resultant “disorientation,” she notes that:

    The drama of the age opens a window into this boundary confusion, and does so –
    perhaps not accidentally – by way of an architectural structure more or less
    defined by its circular frame, by its boundaries. … It's as if the walls themselves
    provided a sense of security necessary for the culture to confront its demons. (6)
As Daileader describes the theater's circular frame, those walls serve the maternal function of
containment; they provide security because they hold the demons. After any confrontation, all one has
to do is leave the theater, Daileader implies.

But in *The Duchess of Malfi* those very walls become imbued with Bosola's sense of the
universe, one that bleeds with the Duchess's insides, each death the result of a fundamental blow, and
every body she has “known” a bloodied corpse by the end. In the play of the protagonists, the shrieks
and screams do not end with the Duchess’s first childbirth, the madmen’s exit, the Duchess’s or
Cariola’s death:

    Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out.
    The element of water moistens the earth,
    But blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens. (4.2.251-253)
Although the Duchess's devastated body is removed in Act 4, we are left in Act 5 with a group of male
characters finally forced to deal with her absence, all the energy obsessively fixated on her body suddenly without object. What happens when the thing most loved and hated no longer exists? When all the effort to control or own destroys the very object it would keep? If Act 5 takes Acts 1-4 as its model, *everything* remains *of* the Duchess. If the Duchess is perceived as the male protagonists have depicted her – as a character capable of containing their anxiety, fear, rage, and violence, the death drive itself – if they would still “dress themselves in her” (1.1.200), then with her death her "water" and "blood" (4.2.252, 253) pour across the stage in the graphic depiction of each and every one of their inevitable deaths. “[L]aid out” in such a fashion, the Duchess feeds the male protagonists into the “quiet” (4.2.226-227). Their need for her body leaves nothing in its wake but a vulnerable child who *might* come into the Duchy – if the play retains some of the Duchess’s household “bustle” (Wall 162). Only then.
Coda. The Mother in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* are more than tragedies. For women, they are horror stories. True to Jessica Benjamin’s note on the patriarchal tendency toward splitting of male activity from female passivity, the maternal figures in these plays are, “if not helplessly subjected to the subject's power, still relegated to the position of passivity in order to mirror his activity, contain his unmanageable tension. Providing mirroring and containment would, in effect, compromise her own subjectivity” (*Shadow* 29). Gertrude, Ophelia, and the Duchess threaten to become fleshy containers for the anxieties, fears, and hate that threaten the male characters of these plays. Once a female character embodies and enacts these projections, she loses access to the body as a metaphor in her own right.

In this coda, I want to contemplate how the maternal might transcend the body that no longer serves, and instead comes to animate the surrounding environment with her own passions and to suit her own purposes. I contemplate Robert Greene’s Bellaria (*Pandosto: the Triumph of Time*) before transitioning to Shakespeare’s Hermione (*The Winter’s Tale*) who perhaps unsurprisingly is the one mother able and willing to reappear in a final act – in body. Greene’s story is darker than Shakespeare’s play, the romance between Fawnia and Dorastus caged within the tragedy of Bellaria and Pandosto: Bellaria dies after being separated from her children, and when Pandosto reunites with his daughter Fawnia and his old friend Egestus at the end, he is overcome with melancholy and slays himself. In contrast, Shakespeare’s Hermione lives to speak one last passage in the play’s final scene. Couples form as in the tradition of comedy, Hermione and Leontes one of them. But Hermione does not speak to Leontes. Even with all his professed sorrow and guilt, she has no words for him. She has words for her daughter.
Robert Greene’s Bellaria and a Maternal Sea

“Alas, sweet unfortunate babe, scarce born before envied by Fortune, would the day of thy birth had been the term of thy life … Thy faults cannot pay thy mother’s debts, and her guilt yet deserve such hateful revenge, thy days are too short for so sharp a doom, but thy untimely death must pay thy mother’s debts, and her guiltless crime must be thy ghastly curse” (Pandosto 11). This would be Robert Greene’s portrait of the grieving, recently riven, Bellaria in his prose fiction Pandosto. The Triumph of Time, Shakespeare’s source for The Winter’s Tale. In Greene’s Pandosto, the recently imprisoned Bellaria finds “herself quick with child, which as soon as she felt stir in her body, she burst forth into bitter tears” (9). She senses immediately how her pregnancy only amplifies her guilt, expressing her ambivalence about the pregnancy: “Alas, Bellaria, how unfortunate art thou because fortunate!” (9), and ultimately wishes for her daughter’s death (11).

Carol Chillington Rutter describes the pregnant body as “gravid,” a “double body, one lodged inside the other,” fertile and “actively sexual” (Rutter 120). In Greene’s text, the gravid body represents a passionate heightening of Belallaria’s already assumed guilt, for Pandosto finds her guilty of relations with Egistus even before she appears pregnant. She is doubly guilty in pregnancy; his rage and envy are heightened to the point that he “determine[s] that both Bellaria and the young infant should be burnt with fire” (10). The pregnancy also raises Bellaria’s own ambivalence toward her daughter – who “proves” her infidelity and embodies her sin: “Would the day of thy birth had been the term of thy life … thy untimely death must pay thy mother’s debts” (11). In Pandosto, this period of heightened identification between mother and infant experienced in the final stages of pregnancy and the first months of an infant’s life proves already infected by Pandosto’s perception. This level of identification between mother and infant also provides the context for my analysis of Shakespeare’s Bear – a figure I want to contemplate as also maternal. As I will show, in Greene’s Pandosto and Shakespeare’s The
Winter’s Tale, this level of intimate identification – ambivalence included – need not cease simply due to physical distance.

Appreciating the level of Pandosto’s envy, the pregnant Bellaria would also kill herself: “Die then, Bellaria! Bellaria, die, for if the gods should say thou art guiltless, yet envy would hear the gods but never believe the gods” (10). The closeness between Bellaria and her child extends from Bellaria’s womb and holding into Bellaria’s projected imaginings of her daughter’s fate in a paternal sea.

Pandosto finally banishes the infant: “he caused a little cock-boat to be provided wherein he meant to put the babe and then send it to the mercy of the seas and the Destinies” (11). Broken by the inevitable separation, Bellaria perceives the father’s punishment enacted in the sea and appears to quest for a water that cares for her daughter in her place: “Shall the seas be thy harbor, and the hard boat thy cradle? Shall thy tender mouth instead of sweet kisses be nipped with bitter storms? Shalt thou have the whistling winds for thy lullaby, and the salt sea foam instead of sweet milk? … What father would be so cruel?” (11).

Bellaria’s questions enact the maternally transitive. She questions her own re-imagining of her daughter’s fate, as if to question Pandosto’s fantasies and her own wish for her daughter. For the sea might just as easily have been imagined maternal: the cock-boat, a womb-boat and the “sea foam” amniotic; the ocean a rhythmic bundle of “passionate… raging… swelling… waves” (Wright The Passions of the Minde in Generall 59, qtd. Humoring 103). In Bellaria’s imagining, the all consuming sea threatens her child with its potential violence and rage; her ability to see through Pandosto’s envy helps her to create a different ocean for her daughter. As D. W. Winnicott understood, this holding stage bears on a child’s capacity to trust in her environment. Her trust in her surroundings, as an extension of this maternal holding, secures her eventual separation from the mother. Bellaria’s sorrow rises within this context: her newborn’s separation comes much too soon. That sorrow provides Bellaria the means
to remake an ocean. Even if imagined a container or source for the ocean’s storm, Bellaria would still secure her daughter through the drives that threaten to destroy them both.

Bellaria makes concrete efforts to counter the “bitter storms” and “salt sea foam” (11), first in her response to her own questions: “Shall thy tender mouth instead of sweet kisses be nipped by bitter storms?” (11), and her response: “Let me kiss thy lips, sweet infant, and wet they tender cheeks with my tears, and put this chain about thy little neck, that if Fortune save thee it may help to succour thee. Thus, since thou must go to surge in the gastful seas, with a sorrowful kiss I bid thee farewell” (11). Bellaria’s question and answer enacts the responsive environment she wishes for her daughter, one in which a need is identified and the need is met. She uses her body to meet that need; her kiss forms an affective bond between them. The chain keeps her infant linked to her past while also ensuring a more comfortable future. Bellaria finds the means, in other words, to provide a continuity that she hopes will extend beyond her absence and the storm to come.

With her kisses and falling tears, she also provides an interpretive schema of the “bitter storms” at her child’s “tender mouth” (11). She creates one last body memory that she hopes will unfold in her daughter’s experiences of the coming storm – not a father’s rage or rejection, but a mother’s acceptance and sorrowful love. In addition to securing her daughter’s future, the chain carries the message that she can no longer embody: we are always bound, we are always two in one, we remain double. Notably, the waters remain calm, but once the shipmen cut the cord tying her daughter’s boat to their ship, “there arose a mighty tempest which tossed the little boat so vehemently in the waves that the shipmen thought it could not continue long” (11). In contrast, Shakespeare’s tempest does not begin until Hermione’s daughter is safely on shore. As Leontes’ faithful servant Antigonus “exits pursued by Bear” (3.3.57), the tempest rises, swallowing the ship and the men that sailed him to Bohemia: one swift attack by sea, by land, and by sky.
Hermione and Topsell’s She-Bear

To the early modern viewer, the Bear, as evidenced in Topsell’s *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, is always both an object of a natural environment, sleeping through the winter, violently defending her young in the spring, and a figment of early modern re-imaginings, understandings, and subjective experiences of the same. As Michael D. Bristol points out, the Bear marks the in-between of two experiences of time and place. I argue that the Bear also marks a space in between the theatrically self referential and a particularly invented Bohemian ecology (as much as a geography). This view of the Bear as theatrically “in-between” would not be a foreign concept to Winnicott, who reached the conclusion in his later work that cultural experience, such as in religion or the arts, “is located in the potential space between the individual and the environment (originally the object)” (*P&R* 100). In a 1949 article, Winnicott had this to say about the infant’s environment:

> The perfect environment [for the infant] is one which *actively adapts* to the needs of the newly formed psyche-soma… A bad environment is bad because by failure to adapt [to the infant] it becomes an impingement to which the psyche-soma (i.e. the infant) must *react*. This reacting disturbs the continuity of the going-on-being of a new individual. In its beginnings the good (psychological) environment is a physical one, with the child in the womb or being held and generally tendered; only in the course of time does the environment develop a new characteristic which necessitates a new descriptive term, such as emotional, psychological or social. Out of this emerges the ordinary good mother with her ability to make active adaptation to her infant’s needs. (*“Mind”* 245)

Out of the calm ocean emerges a tempest. Out of the unfamiliar Bohemian landscape emerges a Bear. And this Bear, as Carol Chillington Rutter has also pointed out, allows for Perdita’s continuity as a
living person. It revenges itself upon those who have stolen her and taken her from her home. It ensures that she recognizes herself in a new face that sees itself in her. A new mother emerges as a shepherd searching for his lost sheep, once the first mother’s rage is spent and her daughter’s need for safe landing is secured.

If Topsell’s “Bear” in The History of Four-footed Beasts is considered as part of the cultural context from which Shakespeare’s Bear springs forth, then it has much to say about the ambiguity surrounding the Bear’s constitution as male or female, and ultimately paints a rather detailed portrait of the she-bear’s ferocity once a child is “lost.” For example, Topsell cites an eye witness who describes the newly born cub as such: “only it is littered blind without eyes, naked without hair, and the hinder legs not perfect, the fore-feet folded up like a fist, and other members deformed by reason of the immoderate humor or moistness in them” (30). Topsell thus describes a humanoid cub whose overly moist and deformed “other members” (30) allude to a sexual ambiguity leaning toward the feminine type that has some relevance to Topsell’s “Bear” as a whole. Topsell identifies a bear’s body constitution with the “phlegmatique” and notes that the adult bear “is much subject to blindness of the eyes” (31), qualities associated with the female body and the castrated male, respectively. In Topsell’s portrayal of the bear, the bear remains sexually ambiguous through adulthood. Within a number of paragraphs, the subjects of Topsell’s sentences alternate between the “bear” and “she-bear” as he is describing what appears to be the same bear. He thus emphasizes the bear’s sexual ambiguity while highlighting the she-bear’s femaleness.

In one such paragraph, Topsell claims that “A Bear will not willingly fight with a man, but being hurt by a man, he gnasheth his teeth, and licketh his fore-feet” (31 emphasis added). This fierce and tender bear, one that both gnasheth his teeth and nurses his wound, is not the same bear as the “armed, filthy, deformed, cruel, dreadful, fierce, [and…] greedy […] blody, head-long, ravening,
rigid, and terrible” bear that Topsell depicts in his opening and that is most associated with Leontes (Topsell 28). Topsell also makes the startling conclusion that “a she-bear is more courageous than a male” (34). While he begins “Great is the fierceness of the Bear,” he supports his closing claim that a mother bear has more courage with two bible verses: “I will meet them as a Bear robbed of her Whelps (faith in the Lord) and will tear in pieces their froward heart” (Hof. 13, qtd. 34) and “Thou knowest that thy Father and the men that be with him be most violent and fierce, like a she-Bear robbed of her Whelps” (2 Sam 17, qtd. 34). In his own portrait of the mother-bear, she drives her hunted cubs before her, and then “climbeth upon a tree, carrying one of young in her mouth, and the other on her back” (31).

Topsell observes, mother bears “remain all the time their young with them, more fierce and cruel than at other times” (30). Shakespeare’s bear, as the imprisoned (Bellaria) Hermione wishes she could, guards her daughter. Greedily mauling Antigonus, the bear quite literally “tear[s] in pieces [his] froward heart” (Hof. 13, qtd. Topsell 34). In so doing, the bear not only defends Perdita, but guards her space, insists that the child’s realm remains maternally invested, and that her environment is, as Winnicott would say, “adaptive to [her] needs” and safe enough for the “continuity of [her] going on being” (“Mind” 245). If the ocean in Pandosto and The Winter’s Tale is a classic displacement of a mother’s sorrow and a father’s rage, Shakespeare’s bear is a bizarre and seemingly absurd case of condensation, in comparison. From an object relational view, this parental dreamscape animates a physical environment that the infant experiences as an extension of herself. Of those parents, the mother is, in reality, the “much offended” (Hamlet 3.4.9, 10). Hermione is wronged well beyond Leontes’ fantastical accusation, her imprisonment, and her public trial. She is offended also by the cutting of the ship’s cord to her daughter’s abandonment on the Bohemian shore, the threat of the child’s annihilation building with each act of separation. This dyad is not static; each act is met with a
passionate response.

The fathers in *The Winter's Tale* do not treat their daughters well. Antigonus, for example, is quick to turn on his three daughters when Leontes argues Hermione has betrayed him. Assuming that someone in the court has slandered Hermione and convinced Leontes of her guilt, Antigonus threatens “Would I knew the villain – / I would land-damn him” (2.1.144-45). Unknowingly, he commits treason. In the villain’s apparent absence, Antigonus joins Leontes in projecting the guilt onto a Hermione who has already been made to absorb it. He then casts his self loathing onto his daughters before returning to himself:

… Be [Hermione] honour-flawed –
I have three daughters: the eldest is eleven;
The second and the third nine and some five;
If this prove true, they’ll pay for’t. By mine honour,
I’ll geld ‘em all. Fourteen they shall not see,
To bring false generations. They are co-heirs,
And I had rather glib myself than they
Should not produce fair issue. (2.1.145-152)

Antigonus’ imagination has received its first dose of Leontes’ poison. Said aloud, the wish to cut out his daughters’ wombs cannot be suppressed. Unable to distinguish between their wombs and his generation, he follows their “geld[ing]” (2.1.149) with his own castration: “I had rather glib myself” (2.1.151). In a realm of experience in which the object world and phantasy cannot be differentiated, these are powerful words. For Leontes, Hermione “proves” to be “honour-flawed” simply by his imagining she is so (2.1.145, 148). For Antigonus, his daughters prove false, and he is castrated (2.1.150-151). He obeys Leontes’s order to take Perdita to Bohemia, despite his earlier misgivings.
Hermione realizes that, as guilty, she exists only in this level of imagination and dream. During her trial, she confesses to Leontes “Sir, / You speak a language that I understand not. / My life stands in the level of your dreams” (3.2.77-79). Understanding this, she calls for the Oracle to combat one dream with another. Physically, Leontes has abused her condition in every sense: she has no contact with her children, no play with Mamillius and no holding with her daughter. She describes Perdita as torn from her “breast, / the innocent milk in it[s] innocent mouth” (3.2.97-98). Not only this enforced separation, but her trial interrupts what is hers by right: “a period of bedrest and seclusion” (2910 note 1). Greene’s Pandosto listens to the Oracle, too late. Shakespeare’s Leontes, in contrast, rages against the Oracle itself, unwilling to supplant his “dreams” by a likewise otherworldly, if sacred text (3.2.79). Perhaps, then, the best place for the mother’s battle is in dream itself. With her “death,” Hermione enters dreamscape, or, for Perdita, a landscape that becomes reinvested with the maternal.

Like Leontes, Antigonus fails to contemplate the significance of what he takes to be a dream or “spirits o’th’ dead” (15). He believes Hermione dead and guilty, despite her “creature”-ly return in a dream (3.2.18) that includes this direct address:

… Good Antigonus,
Since fate, against thy better disposition,
Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
Of my poor babe according to thine oath,
Places remote enough are in Bohemia.
There weep, and leave it crying; and for the babe
Is counted lost for ever, Perdita
I prithee call’t. For this ungentle business
Put on thee by my lord, thou ne’er shalt see
Thy wife Paulina more. (3.2.26-35)

This Hermione appears “In pure white robes / Like very sanctity” (3.2.21-22). She “thrice bowed before” Antigonus (3.2.23), and “Her eyes / Became two spouts” (3.2.24-25). She “gasp[ed] to begin some speech” which “br[oke] from her” (3.2.24 and 26). She appears as she was, and as she is more easily remembered: grieving profoundly the loss of her child. In the moment, however, Perdita is found and defended. As Hermione emphasizes in Perdita’s naming, Perdita “is counted lost for ever” (3.2.32). That does not mean Perdita is herself lost any more than Hermione is dead. It depends on who is dreaming and who is counting. For example, neither her garb, behavior, nor the content of her speech – all content of Antigonus’s dream – give any indication of Hermione’s guilt. Antigonus focuses on one particular detail. He takes Hermione’s request that he and Leontes “lose” Perdita to Bohemia as further confirmation of Polixnes’ paternity (see 3.2.40-45) and ignores the substance of Hermione’s visit.

Antigonus has not learned, like an acute reader, to hear Hermione’s command that he “weep” (3.2.31), mourn with Hermione over such a loss, mirror her so that he might find Perdita worth saving. He does not know to associate her mournful tears with the sky’s growing “fury” (3.2.25). He has not learned to listen for Hermione’s curse: “thou ne’er shalt see / Thy wife Paulina more” (3.2.34-35). He confesses he cannot “weep” but his heart, as if prescient of the bear’s violent attack, “bleeds” (3.2.50-51). He fails to appreciate his own words as Hermione’s mothering falls from the sky: Her “shrieks” (3.2.35), “gasp[s]” (3.2.24), spouting eyes (3.2.24-25), and “fury” (3.2.25) reappear as “[t]he storm begins” (3.2.48). The passions fill “the heavens so dim by day” (3.2.54-55). “A savage clamour!” (3.2.55) reaches its highest pitch in the tempest and vengeful Bear. Antigonus’s final line “I am gone for ever!” hearkens back to Perdita’s naming, “counted lost for ever,” with one significant difference. While Perdita is “counted lost,” Antigonus is simply “gone.”
As Winnicott has pointed out “the word infant implies ‘not talking’ (infans)” – it alludes to a phase “prior to word presentation and the use of word symbols” (MP 40), to a phase when warmth, sounds, and rhythms instill security. The mother is not understanding, says Winnicott, but empathetic to her child’s state (40). The breast appears because the child needs it, wants it, sometimes desperately. Topsell seems to refer to this phase himself when he describes the she-bear who “daily keepeth [her cub] close to her breast, for warming them with the heat of her body and the breath of her mouth” (30). A “good environment” instills this warmth and security, palpably.

In Shakespeare and Child’s Play, Carol Chillington Rutter describes several productions of The Winter’s Tale that experiment with doubling the bear; depending on the double, the production either portrays this kind of “good” environmental nurturing or the consequences of its lack. In one set of examples, Rutter contemplates a number of productions in which the Bear is the returned Mamillius who “remember[s] grown-up savagery or [is] metamorphosed into child-killer” when mauling Antigonus (149). So named, Mamillius does more than remember the lost son. He bears about himself a mother’s gravid body, and confirms the return of the destroyed and/or the threatening breast – the primary object on which Winnicott’s sense of the environment is based. He becomes, in other words, the nurturing and annihilating breast – one that, in defense of his sister, ejects all the vitriol that Hermione has been made to absorb on Antigonus’ head. In contrast, Noble’s 1992 production based the Bear on Hermione: the Bear lumbers toward Perdita, breathes over her, nuzzles her face, and kisses her, before attacking Antigonus.

If Perdita’s need is not answered by a nuzzling, compassionate bear, it is thanks to the shepherd, who discovers the “pretty bairn” (3.3.67) in what is his "natural" environment. Like Antigonus, the shepherd suspects some “sexual affair” (note 8, 2915), but unlike Antigonus he will not abandon the
infant because of it. He reveals instead a special sensitivity to Perdita, noting “They were warmer that [be] got this than the poor thing is here,” and “take[ing] it up for pity” (3.3.72-74). The shepherd’s face, mirroring compassion and warmth through the parted “bearing-cloth” (3.3.105-06), signifies the adaptability of Perdita’s environment and her status as found. These “found” years may be lost to Sicilia, but they are not lost to her or the newfound maternalized shepherd in Bohemia. Here, the Clown describes an environment in which boundaries are blurred: “I have seen … such sights, by sea and by land! But I am not to say it is the sea, for it is now the sky. Betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin’s point” (3.3.79-81). He describes an environment of merger made possible by its passionate maternal investment in Perdita.

Upon her return in act 5, Hermione’s first and only words come after Paulina asks her to “Turn, good lady, / Our Perdita is found” (5.3.121-122). Turning toward her found daughter, Hermione speaks:

… You gods, look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter’s head. – Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserved? Where lived? 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 preserved
Myself to see the issue.  (5.3.122-129)

Hermione has blank pages, not only because she has been “dead” and relegated to offstage space for the previous act, but because she does not know the particulars of her daughter’s life during that time. She has questions rising from her own hiatus, and those questions provide the means to contemplate

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63 This inability to tell the difference between sky and sea or to “thrust a bodkin’s point” (3.3.81) between them finds its echo in Jane Sharp’s description of the womb: “The womb is always shut but in time of generation, and then the bottom draws in the seed, and it presently shuts so close that no needle, as I saith, can find entrance” (Sharp qtd. Otten 205).
her absence as a potential space rather than her destruction.

In this state of not knowing her daughter’s narrative, her first instinct is to call down the gods to “pour your graces / Upon my daughter’s head” (5.3.123-124) – as if Perdita remains in some way endangered. Her request to the gods echoes of an earlier scene when fate poured down in a tempest and sank Leontes’ ship. Hermione’s connection to the oracle also remembers earlier facets of the play: first, Hermione’s faith that the oracle would speak truly and clear her name during her trial, and second, in Hermione’s visit to Antigonus’ dreams – her charge that he “There weep, and leave it crying” and her threat: “For this ungentle business / Put on thee by my lord, thou ne’er shalt see / Thy wife Paulina more” (3.3.31, 33-35). “With shrieks” Hermione “melted into air” as if a figment of nature herself (3.3.35-36), but Perdita remembers what Hermione has not: “Dear Queen, that ended when I but began, / Give me that hand of yours to kiss” (5.3.45-46). She remembers her mother’s gravid body, its ending and her beginning. She kneels to kiss the hand that held her. She “implore[s] her blessing” (5.3.44 emph. added). She asks her to be a mother again. Mirroring Hermione, Perdita is no statue. In this way, Perdita participates in her mother’s re-materialization, for while Paulina directs Hermione’s awakening, Perdita’s status as “found” moves Hermione to speech and – again – into motherhood (5.3.122).
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