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# Apple and The Tree: Shakespeare's Use of Father-child Relationships in Character Construction

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The Apple and The Tree: Shakespeare's Use of  
Father-Child Relationships in  
Character Construction

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**Honors Thesis**  
**2007**

Before he stood the test of time, William Shakespeare had to survive the fire of the early modern marketplace. The surviving records indicate that Shakespeare was quite successful, not only artistically but also financially. In his home of Stratford-upon-Avon, he owned an impressive house, New Place, as well as significant amounts of arable land (Greenblatt 330). Meanwhile, he also became a part-owner in the Globe and Blackfriars theaters (Greenblatt 368). To accumulate such funds, Shakespeare had to write plays that would sell tickets; plays that would intrigue audiences and keep them coming back for more. Thus, he must have had an impressive understanding of how to entertain the public of early modern England; he must have been acutely aware of the social codes of his time and his audience's desires both to see social norms represented and to see them challenged. My readings of Shakespeare's early histories, comedies, and tragedies up to and through the midpoint of his career, *Hamlet*, suggest Shakespeare was particularly attuned to his society's assumptions about, and tensions surrounding, father-daughter and father-son relationships and was profoundly skillful in representing these. With increasing daring and subtlety, he traces a fine, wavering line between conventional, reassuring representations of gender and familial relations of the time and provocative, unconventional ones.

One of the many societal preconceptions of Shakespeare's audience was ideas about gender. People of the time valued certain characteristics in women and a completely different set in men. Early modern England was a highly patriarchal society built on structured hierarchy, both in the greater society, with limited mobility between the classes, as well as within family units. Women especially experienced suppression and were expected to be obedient. Shakespeare's society was actually highly invested in

the domination of women. As Barbara Lewalski explains: “a women’s subjections, first to her father and then to her husband, supposedly imaged the subjection of all English people to their monarch, and of all Christians of God” (2). Obedience in women was not only desirable, it was considered necessary. For the male-dominated society to function, women had to submit to the rules of men.

A major component of obedience in women was that they were expected to be seen and not heard. Silence was synonymous with chastity while expression was considered a sign of promiscuity (Jones 1). A woman who possessed any modesty or self-respect would hold her tongue in all settings so as not to offend or put her reputation at risk. Conduct books of the time, written to direct proper behavior in women, insisted on female silence. For example, Juan Luis Vives’s *The Education of a Christian Woman* argues that “modest and restrained speech will become her, not loud or arrogant or typical of a man’s spirit” (134), and even goes as far as to claim, “I do not wish that a young woman be talkative, not even among her girl companions” (130). The conduct books may have been written for the upper classes, but they reflected ideals held by all people of the time. Even the lower classes, where women had to enter the public sphere to work, expected women to submit to the will of men. Thus, the audience – and, indeed it was an audience of all classes – for which Shakespeare was writing valued meek, obedient, and silent women; anything else threatened their conceptions of proper female behavior. Even if individual members of the audience differed on how much they actually appreciated submissive daughters, as, for example, many women probably were not as positive about the structure of society as men were, they would still have recognized when a daughter character was breaking the norms of society.

While men were not nearly as controlled as women, there were still strong ideological expectations influencing their behavior. Early modern England was a highly patriarchal and male dominated society, where the father controlled his wife and children, inheritance went through the male line, and men, in general, held a disproportionate amount of power. However, along with this freedom and supremacy came very strict ideas about masculinity. To be considered a real man in Shakespeare's England, a male had to act in a specific manner. Just as chastity was a definitive element of the female persona, honor was essential to the identity of a good man (Breitenberg 97). He had to demonstrate both physical and moral strength, as well as a sense of duty. Unlike women, whose acceptable behavior was defined by modest inaction, men had to constantly display their integrity on the public stage. An inheritance system based on primogeniture placed an extra burden on the eldest son of the family. Along with inheriting the family fortune, he also became the protector of the family name; the family's reputation and the honor of his fathers before him became intertwined with the state of his own public reputation. Based on these societal codes, Shakespeare's audience entered the theater with a definite conception of manhood and the preferred behavior of young men; sons needed to both strong and loyal to their fathers.

Shakespeare was able to use the expectations and social codes present in his society to manipulate character construction and audience perceptions. On the one hand, by confirming the audience's assumptions about personality types, he used the signals within the social code to create a certain type of character the audience would easily recognize and accept as logical. For example, Edgar in *King Lear* meets the expectations of an upright man because he remains steadfastly good and avenges his father, thus

defending the family honor. On the other hand, Shakespeare created characters who broke the rules of anticipated and acceptable behavior, thus challenging the societal norms. In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt discusses the subversion present in many of Shakespeare's play, especially *Lear* and the histories. Often, Greenblatt argues, Shakespeare pushed the acceptable bounds to the breaking point, but then pulled back. The audience can accept the threats in the play only because they do not exist at the ending (65). Shakespeare used a similar strategy with gender issues. Through characters such as Silvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, he challenged his audience's assumptions about tolerable female behavior by having a disobedient and vocal woman who is neither disagreeable to the audience nor promiscuous, but he did eventually pull back by containing her in the sphere of more generally accepted behavior of submission and silence. Shakespeare's knowledge of the mindset of his audience was a vital tool in the way in which he constructed his characters.

The relationship between a father and his child was highly wrapped up in this gender ideology of early modern England. A woman's life of submission began with obeying her father, and a man's greatest commitment of loyalty lay with his bloodline. The goal of this paper is to explore the way in which Shakespeare used the dynamics of the father-child relationship to manipulate the character construction of the child. Given Shakespeare's awareness of his audience, it is essential to take into account the early modern ideas of gender and assume that Shakespeare did as well. Thus, in this paper, allusions to audience and audience expectations or perceptions refer to an early modern audience. Utilizing the societal assumptions about the two sexes, Shakespeare took two separate approaches to developing the characterization of daughters and sons. While

Shakespeare used very different tools in the father-son relationships than he did in the father-daughter relationships, the relationships within each gender category show many similarities. Despite a range of storylines in comedies, tragedies, and histories, there are fundamental elements that pervade all the child character constructions.

The quality of the relationship between a father and son is central to the character development of the son. The way in which he treats his father would have demonstrated to an audience his overall character; an audience typically saw a son who abuses his father as a villainous character, while they would have viewed a son who is dutiful to his father as a good character. Moreover, the “good” son is often in some way his father’s protector, either saving his father’s honor by avenging his wrongful death or literally saving his father from an imminent threat. Early modern ideologies about masculinity made a son’s behavior toward his father an important signal for the type of a man he was. Each father-son dynamic examined in this paper offers a unique manipulation of this character-construction tool, thus displaying Shakespeare’s ability to not only utilize contemporary principles but also to bend them to his exact purpose. He embraced the signifiers within the social code to control audience perceptions of his son characters. Using Edgar and Edmund in *King Lear*, Hamlet and Laertes in *Hamlet*, and Hal in *Henry VI, Part I* and *Henry VI, Part 2* as examples, we are able to see both how they share the device of the father-son relationship as a microcosm of their greater personalities, as well as how each example provides a slightly new approach to how Shakespeare used to the device. Edgar and Edmund, as the good son and the wicked son, are static polar opposites; Hamlet and Laertes highlight both the use of revenge as motivation and also how a specific approach to revenge demonstrates the general behavior pattern and

personality type of a character; Hal, with two father figures, presents a complicated negotiation of two personas within one character, each colored by the relationship with either King Henry IV or Falstaff.

While the father-son relationships demonstrate Shakespeare's affirmation of societal assumptions, the father-daughter relationships more often present a challenge to the audience. That is not to say that the daughters that Shakespeare created do not fit into the preconceived categorizations of the audiences. The daughters who are obedient of their fathers typically have all the traits desired in a woman: she is meek, submissive, and strikingly silent. On the flip side, the disobedient or rebellious daughters demonstrate the ever shocking – to an early modern audience – characteristics of independence and eloquence. The type of character a daughter is – for example, the shy virgin versus the curst shrew – is heavily tied up in the dynamics of the relationship with her father. When Shakespeare presented a daughter who bends to her father's commands, she has very little lines and rarely offers an interesting personality, but his rebellious daughters typically demonstrate great amounts of stage presence and also rival the male characters in intelligent dialogue. Obedience is consistently characterized by silence and rebellion is likewise accompanied by high levels of expression. I wish to emphasize that the connection between obedience and silence, rebellion and voice is not causal; one does not necessarily create the other. Rather, the elements are part and parcel. In fact, it is the necessary coexistence of obedience with silence – or conversely, rebellion with voice – that would have made the father-daughter relationship such an attractive tool for Shakespeare to use. That a rebellious daughter would also be vocal practically goes



without saying, and Shakespeare utilized this dynamic to create the type of character he desired a daughter to be.

If Shakespeare's daughter characters do not mix attributes in a way a contrary to early modern assumptions about women, such as a loquacious but submissive daughter, how is it that the daughter character constructions challenge audience ideas about gender? To answer this we must consider audience expectations as an entertainment-seeking body as well as the pattern of development Shakespeare continually used in his story-lines of daughters. First, the audience of a play, whatever their ideas about the politics of gender, wished to be entertained. Thus, solely on the grounds that she would be more entertaining to watch, an audience could appreciate a vocal and witty female more than a virtual mute. Likewise, play-goers are typically expected to value certain theatrical ideals, such as good vs. evil or love triumphant. It follows, then, that an audience would value true love and could, as spectators, support a daughter's decision to marry her love even against her father's wishes. By taking advantage of the desires of the audience as entertainment-seekers, Shakespeare created a loophole, and his audience found itself enjoying insubordinate women rather than scorning them.

Second, the daughters read in this paper highlight that Shakespeare often used a pattern in writing his daughters that is similar to what Greenblatt observes in the histories, which further suggests Shakespeare's awareness of what his audience would tolerate and just how far he could push them. In several instances, Shakespeare starts with a rebellious and vocal daughter whom he alters into an obedient and silent one by the end of the play. Just as with the subversions in the histories, Shakespeare realized he was challenging a fundamental societal belief and must reconcile his character with the

audience. By restraining her previously insubordinate behavior and voice, Shakespeare provides the audience a loophole for the acceptance of a strong woman. Throughout the paper, I will refer to this pattern of silencing, where Shakespeare began with a rebellious daughter and stripped her of her independence and voice by the end of the play.

Using Silvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Kate and Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew*, Jessica in *Merchant of Venice*, Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Gonoril, Regan, and Cordelia in *King Lear*, we see the ways in which intensity of submission to a father is intrinsically linked with intensity of voice in the daughter. Time and again, they not only illuminate the coexistence of rebellion and voice, but also how Shakespeare uses the father-daughter relationship to manipulate audience perceptions. For example, juxtaposing the daughter with an unreasonable father increases audience empathy for the daughter resisting the father's control. Like the sons, the daughters demonstrate that Shakespeare used a consistent framework – based on the non-causal connection between insubordination and voice as well as a need to reconcile the rebellious daughter character with the ideology of the audience – but varied it in each instance for a slightly different outcome. For instance, daughters in comedies are silenced simply through a lack of lines or a controlling marriage, but the rebellious daughters of tragedies are contained through the more tragic element of death. From the simplified silencing of Silvia to the extreme rebellion of Gonoril and Regan, Shakespeare created a wide spectrum of daughters trying to negotiate the strict rules present in their society.

In the comedies, Shakespeare takes a fairly straightforward approach to both developing a rebellious daughter as well as silencing her, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, one of his earliest plays, arguably has his crudest and most basic attempt at manipulating

the dynamics of the father-daughter relationship. The one father-daughter pair follows a linear course of conflict to resolution – in fact, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* establishes a progression in the father-daughter interaction, seen multiple times in late plays, of rebellion to runaway to subordination and silence – and the major conflict is the traditional dispute over suitors. The rebellious Silvia, though demonstrating socially undesirable qualities, is far from being an unlikable character. Nevertheless, Shakespeare, even in his early work, takes several precautions to remain in the conventional boundaries of early modern societal codes. Despite the play's unrefined nature, we can see that the inexperienced playwright utilizes many of the methods of reconciling the audience's conceptions about female behavior discussed in the introduction and seen in the later plays. First, the audience is able to empathize with Silvia's disobedience because the Duke continually demonstrates bad judgment as well as takes the unpopular position against true love. Second, Shakespeare counteracts Silvia's original characterization of disobedient and vocal, and reduces her importance by the end of play. By the close, Silvia's desires match the Duke's, and, more importantly, this sudden compatibility of ideas coincides with Silvia's abrupt silence. The sheer oddity of Silvia's silence emphasizes how strongly obedience and silence are entwined. Thus, the stylistically basic relationship between the Duke and Silvia provides an excellent foundation for this paper to explore the dynamics of father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare that become more complicated in his later plays.

From the first time the audience meets Silvia, she seems to be a strong, clever character. She cunningly has Valentine write a love letter to himself, a trick that Speed, but not Valentine, notices: "O excellent device! Was there ever heard a better? -- / That

my master, being scribe, to himself should write the letter” (2.1.125-126). While Valentine believes Silvia is upset with his composition, Speed has a better understanding of the situation. Silvia, with her shrewd love-letter ploy, is not a conventional subservient female. She is coyly flirting with a man, and, furthermore, exceeding him on an intellectual level. Already, she, by ignoring convention of modest behavior, is establishing herself as a vocal and entertaining presence on the stage.

Not only is Silvia breaking the rules early modern society would have laid out for a young woman, but her exchange with Valentine also resists the desires of her father. Again, Speed calls attention to the cleverness of Silvia’s stunt: “fearing else some messenger that might her mind discover,/Herself hath taught her love himself to write unto her lover” (2.1.149-150). She must be secretive in her love for Valentine because her father wants her to marry Thurio. She avoids discovery because knows she is disobeying her father, yet that knowledge is not enough to completely stop her from doing what she wants. Despite the fact that the interaction between Silvia and Valentine is an act of rebellion, it is still a clever and enjoyable scene. Her disobedience actually makes her an interesting character whom the audience will want back on stage.

Granted, Silvia’s first instance of insubordination in the play is rather innocent, and not a head-on confrontation with her father. In fact, the Duke notices the blossoming love between Silvia and Valentine, as he explains to Proteus in Act 3, scene 1, without much anger or anxiety. However, things quickly take a turn for the worse and the relationship between the Duke and Silvia becomes much more tumultuous. The intensity of Silvia’s disobedience rises from favoring a non-paternally approved Valentine to actually planning to run away with him. Sadly, the plan is exposed by Proteus, yet

Silvia's defiance continues, and arguably increases, after Valentine's banishment. In the beginning of the play, Silvia is at least civil toward the Duke's wishes. For example, she allows Thurio to be in her company and is polite to him. However, as the Duke admits, after Valentine's banishment "she opposes her against my will" (3.2.26). She quite openly sets herself against the Duke's commands rather than, as earlier, secretly acting against his desires. In Silvia, Shakespeare presented rebellion as progressive and intensifying rather static or spontaneous.

Along with the growing tension between Silvia and her father, the audience witnessed her become an even stronger vocal presence on stage, especially toward Proteus. She denies his advances forcefully, caustically, and eloquently. Indeed, her vocal prowess is at its height when reproaching Proteus:

You have your wish; my will is even this:  
That presently you hie you home to bed.  
Thou subtle, perjured, false, disloyal man!  
Think'st thou I am so shallow, so conceitless,  
To be seduced by thy flattery,  
That hast deceived so many with thy vows?

(4.2.87-92)

Simultaneously, she demonstrates her intelligence to see through Proteus, her loyalty to Valentine, and her command of language. Naturally, being rebellious increases her presence on stage. Silvia grows from a clever flirt to an articulate, strong woman.

Not only did Shakespeare use the relationship between Silvia and her father to shape her characterization, but he also used the Duke as a tool to tip-toe around the

audience's resistance to viewing rebellious women in a positive way. When presenting a strong female to an early modern audience, Shakespeare walked a very fine line and, thus, needed to juxtapose her with a disagreeable father who would allow the audience to sympathize with her. While the Duke is by no means a "bad" character, he does have certain shortcomings, especially in his judgment, that help to justify Silvia's actions. The Duke demonstrates a lack of good judgment in two major ways. First is his choice of Thurio as a suitor. He is the stereotypical undesirable suitor, though the Duke is unaware of it. Thurio is stuffy, boring, and unromantic, and his inadequacy is heightened in comparison to Valentine. An audience, as entertainment-seekers, would have been invested in the ideals of love and romance, and, thus, would have empathized with Silvia's decision to love Valentine and not Thurio. In fact, the audience would certainly have been highly disappointed and even angry if she obediently went along with her father's wishes and turned her back on love.

The second way the Duke shows poor judgment is in his dealings with Proteus, who completely deceives him. The Duke is never suspicious of Proteus, even though Proteus quite willingly betrays his best friend. The audience knows that Proteus' true motivations are to win Silvia for himself. In soliloquy, he explains:

Now presently I'll give her father notice  
Of their disguising and pretended flight,  
Who, all enraged, will banish Valentine;  
For Thurio he intends shall wed his daughter.  
But Valentine being gone, I'll quickly cross  
By some sly trick blunt Thurio's dull proceeding.

(2.6.36-41)

With this knowledge, the audience would have been completely frustrated when the Duke ambivalently grants Proteus access to Silvia. If the Duke were more reasonable and perceptive, the audience could perceive Silvia's rebellion in a negative context. However, the Duke's incompetence surely affected the audience's perception of Silvia's character in such a way that female disobedience became somewhat acceptable. On her own, Silvia may have seemed unnecessarily strong-willed and dangerously independent, but the Duke acts a lens through which the audience could view Silvia in a different way.

By the final act of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare has balanced the values of the audience to create a strong-willed and rebellious daughter, who is still a likeable character. However, despite juxtaposing Silvia with a dislikable father, Shakespeare was still breaking social gender codes, still walking on the thin ice of audience acceptance. To reconcile any uneasiness in the audience, Shakespeare had to recreate Silvia to fit conventional ideas of females. In a final scene that ties everything together with awkward swiftness, the independent, vocal version of Silvia inexplicably disappears. Specifically, the signals of rebellion and character strength, voice and agency, completely vanish. Even though she is present in the final scene until the close of the play, she is completely silent for the last 112 lines. She does not say anything when Valentine comes to her rescue or when he bizarrely forgives Proteus, who just tried to ravage her! The woman who once held her own verbally on stage among the male characters is suddenly a mute. If the audience waited for her to chime in, their expectations were never met.

It is important to note that the end of Silvia's voice coincides with the end of her disobedience. Directly after Silvia stops speaking, the Duke comes on stage and almost immediately bestows his blessings on Valentine: "Sir Valentine,/Thou art a gentleman, and well derived./Take thou thy Silvia, for thou has deserved her" (5.4.142-144). The Duke's acceptance of Valentine as a suitor takes away the point of conflict with his daughter; his blessing strips Silvia of her rebellion. A truly obedient daughter is a silent daughter, so it is not surprising that Silvia's sudden silence and sudden return to obedience seem to occur simultaneously. However, the awkwardness and lack of agency in the way Shakespeare silenced her highlights both the necessity for him to return to early modern ideals of female behavior and how heavily obedience and silence are bound together in those ideals. Shakespeare did not mask Silvia's change to silence in a plot construction, such as death or a controlling husband. It seems as if Shakespeare-the-novice took for granted that she needed to be silent at the end of the play. He needed to write a happy ending, a marriage for the characters with a marriage and a stepping back from the challenges to societal conventions for the audience. However, he did not consider a need for agency; the once-strong Silvia vanishes into the background through no one's actions and without a clear reason. As this paper continues to the more complicated plays, it is important to keep in mind this oversimplified version of Silvia's transformation to obedience. Her primitive silencing demonstrates the sheer need for female silence and obedience, and lays an analytical foundation for the more complicated plays when Shakespeare better masked the silencing.

*Taming of the Shrew* builds upon this foundation set up by *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Shakespeare used the same basic elements of the father-daughter relationship,



but manipulated them in several ways. Once again, he constructed the strength and stage presence of the character through the disobedience of the daughter, and attempted to appease the audience by silencing the outspoken daughter by the end of the play. Also, Shakespeare used the dynamics of the father-daughter relationship in the opposite direction through Bianca, a daughter who starts obedient and gradually becomes stronger. Though she does not follow the same process of change as Silvia and Kate, the connected progression of Bianca's disobedience and increased stage voice still supports the idea that Shakespeare manipulated the audience's expectations about gender to construct character types.

Similar to Silvia's first appearance, Kate's first scene in front of the audience immediately establishes her as a rebellious, outspoken character. However, Kate is much more radical than Silvia. She is not merely witty, she is also curt and hostile. Arguably, her primary characteristic is that she is exceedingly rebellious; she will not be controlled by society or by her father. One of her very first lines demonstrates her distaste for marriage and her predisposition to exerting her strength:

I' faith, sir, you shall never need to fear.  
I wis it is not half-way to her heart,  
But if it were, doubt not her care should be  
To comb your noddle with a three-legged stool,  
And paint your face, and use you like a fool.

(1.1.61-65)

Kate violently breaks all the traditional boundaries of an early modern woman. She has no interest in suitors, consistently speaks her mind, and acts just as she wishes, no matter

what her father, Baptista, may want. Not only does she take an active role in the conversation among the men in the first scene, but she also is blatantly disrespectful to her father. Lashing out over Baptista's preference for Bianca, Kate tells him: "Talk not to me. I will go sit and weep/till I can find occasion of revenge" (2.1.35-36). Further ignoring the expectations for her sex, she carries several furiously witty exchanges with Petruccio:

KATHERINE Moved? In good time. Let him that moved you hither

Remove you hence. I knew you at the first

You were a movable.

PETRUCCIO Why, what's a movable?

KATHERINE A joint-stool.

PETRUCCIO Thou hast hit it. Come, sit on me.

KATHERINE Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCCIO Women are made to bear, and so are you.

KATHERINE No such jade as you, if me you mean.

(2.1.193-199)

Where Silvia merely flirts with the lines of acceptable behavior, Kate's rebellion is much more extreme. She refuses to be constrained by codes of conduct for young females.

Furthermore, Shakespeare used the vocalness of rebellion to establish Kate as a strong and eloquent character, and there seems to be a direct relationship between the intensity of rebellion of Kate as a daughter and the strength of the voice in Kate as a constructed character. Just as Kate is more unruly than Silvia, she also expresses herself more as a character through her insubordination. When she is present on stage, she is

constantly speaking, and, as the lines above show, she feels free to speak her mind. She is not only abusive in speech, but also in action, such as when she binds and drags Bianca onto the stage. Kate goes much further beyond acceptable boundaries of behavior for early modern daughters than Silvia, and, thus, Shakespeare was able to make her a much more colorful character with a wider spectrum of activity and dialogue.

Once again, Shakespeare had created a dangerously strong and disobedient, though not horrible or unlikable, female character. To compensate for Kate's unconventional behavior, he used similar devices to those used in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He justifies some of Kate's behavior by juxtaposing her with not only a disagreeable father, but also a shockingly bad husband. Baptista is a cold father who is willing to sell his daughters to the highest bidder: "he of both/That can assure my daughter greatest dower/Shall have my Bianca's love" (2.1.334-336). He is not a kind man for whom the audience feels any compassion. Thus, just as with Silvia and the Duke, the audience's dislike for Baptista allows them to empathize with Kate.

Baptista's construction permits some of Kate's behavior, but she is so outlandish that she requires additional justification; Kate needs a foil that is even more outrageous than she is. Petruccio is just such a man because he undoubtedly rivals Kate's offensive behavior. Petruccio demonstrates witty exchanges, violent tendencies, and erratic conduct, such as in the wedding scene described to the audience where he does everything from show up wearing rags to hit the priest. To top it all off, he brutally and systematically tortures Kate into submission: "She are no meat today, nor none shall eat./Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not./...This is a way to kill a wife with kindness" (4.1.179-189). Even the other characters, who at the beginning of the play

abhor Kate, believe that Petruccio makes her seem like an angel: “Tut, she’s a lamb, a dove, a fool to him” (3.3.30). Shakespeare shocked the audience so greatly with Petruccio’s behavior that they would have been less likely to be appalled by Kate’s improper conduct.

The juxtaposition with Baptista and Petruccio, however, is not enough to save Kate from the final silencing Shakespeare forced on the rebellious daughter. He may have been able to exploit audience expectations about father-daughter relationships to construct Kate’s subversive character, but he must bow to the dominant early modern ideologies by the end of the play and dismantle Kate’s original construction. Rather than bizarre, unexplained muteness, like in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the audience saw Petruccio systematically break Kate of her disobedience. Naturally, her loss of rebellion includes a loss of character strength, and she becomes, quite literally, his puppet, forced to speak with his voice. In Act 4, scene 6, he compels her to say that the sun is the moon and to call an old man a young maid. Moreover, in the closing scene, Petruccio has Kate give a speech to other women, a speech that goes against everything that used to characterize Kate:

Even such a woman oweth to her husband,  
And when she is forward, peevish, sullen, sour,  
And not obedient to her to his honest will,  
What is she but a foul contending rebel,  
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?

(5.2.160-164)

Through Petruccio, Shakespeare was able to strip Kate of her own voice, and she now speaks in accordance with the ideals of early modern society rather than against them.

Given their similar progression of character transformation, Kate and Silvia seem to be a “type” of character, but Shakespeare was also able to use audience expectations to construct daughter characters beyond Silvia and Kate, such as Kate’s sister, Bianca.

Throughout the play, Bianca is the exact opposite of Kate, seemingly perfect and docile in the beginning and insubordinate at the end. Though her transition from obedience to defiance reverses the trend followed by Kate and Silvia, Bianca still demonstrates a consistent connection between rebellion and voice. At the beginning of the play, when she is the desirable sister with many suitors, she is also markedly mute. Lucentio, one of her suitors, notes that in her “silence do I see/Maid’s mild behavior and sobriety” (1.1.70-71). Accompanying her silence is great obedience, as Baptista controls her motions on the stage. In several of the early scenes, he commands her to exit and she does so without a single word. Once more, the obedient daughter is the silent daughter.

However, Bianca remains neither obedient nor silent for very long. When she is with her suitors-in-disguise, and not under the watchful eye of her father, she begins to show signs of independence and wit. Reminiscent of Silvia, she cleverly flirts with her favorite suitor, stepping a toe over the line of acceptable behavior while remaining wary of being caught. For example, she and Lucentio convey their mutual interest through the guise of a Latin lesson.

LUCENTIO: 'Hic ibat,' as I told you before, 'Simois,' I am

Lucentio, 'hic est,' son unto Vincentio of Pisa,

'Sigeia tellus,' disguised thus to get your love;

'Hic steterat,' and that Lucentio that comes  
a-wooing, 'Priami,' is my man Tranio, 'regia,'  
bearing my port, 'celsa senis,' that we might  
beguile the old pantaloon.....

BIANCA: Now let me see if I can construe it: 'Hic ibat  
Simois,' I know you not, 'hic est Sigeia tellus,' I  
trust you not; 'Hic steterat Priami,' take heed  
he hear us not, 'regia,' presume not, 'celsa senis,'  
despair not.

(3.1.31-43)

A central part of Bianca's growing disobedience is her finding character strength. Though Baptista controls her at the beginning of the play, she becomes much more vocal and even manipulates her suitors against each other. At the end of the play, Bianca performs the conventional act of daughter disobedience by eloping with the suitor of her choice behind her father's back. In the final scene, she even disobeys her new husband, Lucentio. She does not come when Lucentio bids her, as he wagered she would, and he confronts her on the issue:

LUCENTIO: I would your duty were as foolish, too.

The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,

Hath cost me a hundred crowns since supper time.

BIANCA: The more fool you for laying on my duty.

(5.2.130-134)

By making her rebellious, Shakespeare transformed her into the opposite of the character she was at the beginning of the play; she is now strong, independent, and outspoken.

Bianca's character development, in its striking contrast to Siliva and Kate's, demonstrates the flexibility of the father-daughter relationship. Shakespeare was able to manipulate the dynamics of the relationship to construct a variety of types of daughters that experience different character progressions.

In Jessica of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare used father-daughter dynamics in yet another way to create yet another type of daughter. He especially utilized the juxtaposition with a disagreeable father. Jessica is one of the only daughter character that Shakespeare constructed both positively and rebelliously for the entire duration of a play, certainly the only one looked at in this paper. Like the other rebellious daughters, she runs away with her beloved, has several witty conversations with male characters, and other characters reinforce her presence even when she is not on stage. At no point, however, did Shakespeare scale back her disobedience and silence her. Because Shakespeare represented Jessica's father, Shylock, as so despicable, Jessica's sustained rebellion would have been justifiable to his audience.

From the very first time she is on the stage, Jessica exhibits not merely noncompliance with her father's wishes but a very strong disdain for Shylock and hints at her desire to escape him. In an aside near the beginning of the play, Jessica laments:

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me  
To be ashamed to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood,  
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,

If thou keep promise I shall end this strife,  
Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

(2.3.15-20)

Her rebellion is extreme because she wishes to wholly renounce her father, even his religion. She also wants to runaway and elope, a major signal to the audience of female insubordination. Interestingly, she brings up marriage in the context of becoming free, and, thus, her motivation seems to be a need to escape Shylock as much as a love for Lorenzo. Jessica's disdain for her father creates a desire for complete physical freedom.

Jessica successfully runs away from Shylock and spends the majority of the play free from his presence. Shakespeare used her independence, including an independent voice, to construct a highly eloquent female character. Throughout the course of the play, Jessica demonstrates intelligent discourse that is on the same level of the male characters. Her voice is not even overpowered by her husband's, as demonstrated by a teasing dialogue in Act 5, scene 1:

JESSICA: In such a night

Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew  
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself  
And ran dismay'd away.

LORENZO: In such a night

Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
Upon the wild sea banks and waft her love  
To come again to Carthage.



JESSICA: In such a night

Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs

That did renew old Aeson.

(5.1.6-14)

Jessica is not only vocal, but she also displays scholarly knowledge that rivals her husband's. Jessica's complete rejection of her father and her great character strength are mutually empowering, and she is thus a continually strong presence on the stage. Not only does Jessica contribute meaningfully to all the dialogue when she is on stage, but she is also a presence even when she is not physically on stage through the dialogue of other characters. Descriptions of Jessica inserted the image of her into the minds of the audience; even when they did not see her, they would still be thinking about her. After she has runaway, Shylock receives information on her whereabouts:

TUBAL: Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, in one  
night fourscore ducats.

SHYLOCK: Thou stickest a dagger in me: I shall never see my  
gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting!  
fourscore ducats!....

TUBAL: One of them showed me a ring that he had of your  
daughter for a monkey.

SHYLOCK: Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my  
turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor:  
I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

(3.1.90-103)

Jessica selling the ring never actually occurs on stage, yet this scene contributes greatly to the play; Jessica is still an influential character even when offstage.

Thus far, Jessica is very much like the other daughters of Shakespeare's comedies. She runs away with her beloved and challenges early modern social codes by being rebellious and eloquent. However, Jessica never comes home, never becomes submissive and silent. Shakespeare constructed Jessica's rebellious character in such a way that the audience could accept her behavior and, thus, he would not have to drastically transform her character to conform to audience ideologies. That is not to say that Shakespeare completely ignored early modern social codes. He made concessions using tools other than completely silencing Jessica at the end of the play. First, Jessica's more talkative and intelligent scenes are one-on-one conversations with either her husband Lorenzo or the servant Lancelot, never in a big group setting. Even though she is talking more than an ideal early modern should, Shakespeare still confined her strength to a very personal realm. She is not making speeches in the street, compromising her honor and reputation. Second, Shakespeare played to the audience's sympathy by juxtaposing Jessica with a father they would have found completely offensive.

Shylock, in his manners, his business of money lending, and his religion, would have been highly repellent to early modern audiences. Shakespeare's audience would have come to the playhouse fully believing a number of negative and inaccurate Jewish stereotypes. As Greenblatt explains in *Will in the World*:

The English brooded on these traces – stories circulated, reiterated, and elaborated – continually and obsessively. There were Jewish fables and Jewish jokes and Jewish nightmares...[the believed] Jews were immensely

wealthy – even when they looked like paupers – and covertly pulled the strings of an enormous international network of capital and goods. Jews poisoned wells and were responsible for spreading the bubonic plague...Even though no one had laid eyes on one for generations, the Jews, like wolves in modern children’s stories, played a powerful symbolic role in the country’s imaginative economy. (258-259)

When constructing Shylock, Shakespeare was heavily influenced by these stereotypes. Specifically, Shylock embodies the idea of a Jew who is cold-hearted, villainous, and obsessed with money. In a bloodthirsty rage, where he verbally fights every other character on stage, he insists that he receive a pound of Antonio’s flesh. He is determined to exact some revenge on the Christian community; a motivation that could only anger Shakespeare’s audience. He may show human frailty in this scene when he is sentenced, begging “Nay, take me life and all, pardon not that./You take my house when you do take the prop that/Doth sustain my house” (4.1.369-371), but while a modern audience may feel sympathy for the way the other characters treat Shylock, Shakespeare’s audience would have easily accepted the antagonism toward Shylock as the norm. Beyond this vulnerability, which an early modern audience most likely did not even recognize, Shylock does not demonstrate any redeemable qualities. Driven by his hatred for Antonio and the other Christians, he is consistently antagonistic and plotting, and, because of his religion, alien to both the community on stage and in the seats.

Even before his final scene, Shylock demonstrates money-grubbing coldness that would have turned off an audience. Solanio tells Salerio, and the audience, for example, that when Shylock found out about Jessica running away, he was in the streets yelling:

My daughter! O, my ducats! O, my daughter!  
Fled with a Christian! O, my Christian ducats!  
Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!  
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,  
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!  
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,  
Stol'n by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!  
She hath the two stones upon her, and the ducats!

(2.8.15-22)

At a moment when the audience would have expected Shylock to be grieving over the loss of his daughter, he seems to be more focused on the loss of his money. If the audience was ever to sympathize with Shylock and disagree with Jessica's actions, this would be the part of the play in which he could win their favor. However, his response continues the antagonistic, early modern Jewish stereotype.

Given the deep aversion the audience has for Shylock, if they are to like Jessica, she must set herself against her father. Not only does she verbalize a hatred for her father and physically separate herself from him, her overall nature is the opposite of Shylock's, as described by other characters. She is the goodness juxtaposed to his wickedness. When Lorenzo is describing Jessica, he explains:

If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven  
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake;  
And never dare misfortune cross her foot  
Unless she do it under this excuse:

That she is the issue to a faithless Jew.

(2.4.33-37)

Any badness she may have, although it appears she has none, would come directly from Shylock. Otherwise, her character is completely innocent of the evils of her father. She demonstrates a capacity for love in her relationship and she even embraces Christianity. The audience likely viewed Shylock as a despicable stranger and Jessica as one of “them,” so they would have been able to support her rebellion against him. Shakespeare coupled Jewish stereotypes with dynamics of the father-daughter relationship to manipulate the audience’s perceptions of Jessica. Traditionally, they would not have accepted a rebellious daughter who is not reconciled with her father, but since they did not like or trust Shylock, they would not have wanted Jessica to return to his good graces. The values of entertainment are only a temporary escape from the confining ideologies of gender, but anti-Semitic stereotypes enabled Shakespeare to construct a daughter character that rebels against her father for an entire play.

If Jessica is the consistently insubordinate daughter, then Ophelia is her perpetually obedient counterpart. She is dominated by Polonius, predominately speaking his voice rather than her own, and her character is so dependent upon her father’s that she loses her mind when he dies. By looking at Ophelia, we see how Shakespeare used the anticipated behavior of an obedient daughter to create a character who acts more like a prop than a person. Ophelia’s character demonstrates that Shakespeare was able to use audience expectations about father-daughter relationships not only to produce strong women but also submissive women.

Ophelia completely kowtows to Polonius's commands, an obedience marked by an extreme lack of voice. Anytime they are on stage together, he dominates the dialogue, and her general response is always along the lines of "I shall obey, my lord" (1.3.136). Not only is she relatively mute in her scenes, but it seems that majority of the time that she is speaking, she is not actually articulating her own feelings. Rather, she is a puppet speaking Polonius's voice, saying exactly what he wants her to. This is especially true in Act 3, scene 1 when Polonius and Claudius use Ophelia to test the reason for Hamlet's madness. At her father's command, she returns Hamlet's love letters, thus further rebuking Hamlet, and knowingly takes part in the scheme to spy on her one-time beloved. Even the relatively obedient Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew* prioritizes love over submission to her father, but Ophelia chooses to comply with her father's direction regarding Hamlet. Though she had previously entertained Hamlet's attentions, she changes her behavior according to Polonius's wishes. She tells her father: "as you did command/I did repel his letters and denied/His access to me" (2.1.109-111). During the course of the play, while Polonius is alive, Ophelia does nothing to cross him; she is the early modern image of the ideally dutiful daughter.

Indeed, Ophelia's identity is so tied up in Polonius, so dependent on his direction, that she becomes a shell of a human being after his death. Without Polonius, she goes completely insane, and is reduced to gibberish and childhood rhymes. Free from her father's control, she is able to express herself – such as her feelings for Hamlet or by giving symbolic flowers to the other characters – but she lacks a coherent voice the other characters can understand. By making her wholly obedient as a daughter, Shakespeare also had to make her devoid of independent strength as a character.

Finally, Ophelia, like the other daughters of tragedy, experiences the ultimate silencing of death. To further separate comedies from tragedies, Shakespeare created a more dramatic and gut-wrenching silence for the tragic obedient daughters. Ophelia, with her obedient behavior, is already a voiceless character, but Shakespeare even silenced her incoherent voice. Further, the extreme silencing of death heightens the tragic elements because the audience was left without the smallest possibility of a happy ending. The audience would have lost all hope that Ophelia might return to sanity or perhaps rekindle her love with Hamlet; Shakespeare put an end to those hopes when he extinguished her life.

Given her consistent submission to Polonius, the audience may never anticipate a happy end for Ophelia. Juliet, on the other hand, glimmers, until the end of the play, with the possibility of love triumphing over all. She even has a plan to fool her family and run away with Romeo, and it almost works. Initially complying with the conventional concept of a daughter rebelling in the name of love, *Romeo and Juliet* interweaves elements of comedy and tragedy so deftly that Juliet is a unique rebellious daughter involved in distinctive examples of silencing, including a feigned silencing.

It can be argued that *Romeo and Juliet* is very much like a comedy until the tragic turn of Mercutio's death. There are lewd jokes, banter, and complicated love that still has a chance of surviving. Further, Juliet seems very much like a daughter from a comedy. Like Silvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Juliet's major avenue of rebellion is to go against her father's choice of suitors to pursue the man she actually loves. Rather than entertain Paris's affection, as her parents want, Juliet goes behind their backs and elopes with Romeo. The audience would surely have been sympathetic toward and supportive of

Juliet's love-motivated rebellion, just as they were toward Silvia's disobedience. Lord Capulet is fighting against true love and, thus, the audience would have sided with Juliet even though she is breaking the societal expectations of a daughter's obedience.

Also like Silvia, the rebellious Juliet demonstrates a high level of stage presence and linguistic strength. Throughout the play, her stage presence rivals Romeo's. Not only does she speak as much as Romeo, but their language is so equal and entwined that they create a sonnet in their first meeting:

ROMEO: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too?

JULIET: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO: O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:

They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO: Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

(1.5.98-103)

Time and again, Juliet is able match Romeo in use of language. Her love for him, a forbidden love, seems to give her voice. Though she is a dominant presence on stage, she rarely speaks of anything but Romeo and her love for him. Without her hidden affair, it is hard to imagine what exactly she would have been vocal about.

However, like the other daughters, Juliet does not enjoy eternal independence, and she also must face the tragic silencing of death. As part of Friar Laurence's plan, Juliet must pretend to be submitting to Capulet's will. She appears to have a change of heart and agrees to marry Paris. She then takes the Friar's potion, which makes her appear dead. Her feigned obedience is paired with feigned death! Even when creating a



counterfeit obedience, Shakespeare muted the daughter; submission is incomplete without silence. However, neither her submission nor her death is real, and Juliet “returns” to life, rebellion, and speech. Sadly, Juliet does suffer actual death and silence when Romeo dies. Without her forbidden love, she loses her source of rebellion, and enters the realm of silent daughter, no longer threatening to the ideologies of the audience.

Of all of Shakespeare’s daughters, Lear’s two infamous offspring, Gonoril and Regan, are arguably the most threatening to an early modern audience’s conceptions about the proper female behavior. Gonoril and Regan’s behavior pushes past the comfortable threshold of the audience within which Shakespeare had previously worked. They move past rebelling against their father’s wishes for their own happiness, and into active hostility toward their father. Unlike his construction of other daughters, Shakespeare’s silencing of Gonoril and Regan would not have been able to reconcile their characters with the audience. Even though Gonoril and Regan are extreme examples of daughters, we still see how Shakespeare used their relationship with their father to construct character strength and manipulate audience perceptions.

The audience became quickly aware that Gonoril and Regan’s one docile scene is in reality a façade for calculating, selfish desires. In order to get a portion of the kingdom, they must profess their love to Lear. They perform, and Lear rewards them accordingly. It is important to note that their sole subservient scene still demonstrates the early modern values of female behavior. They are completely submissive to Lear; they speak when, and only when, he commands and they tell him exactly what he wants to hear. For that one scene, they are ideal daughters.

However, Gonoril and Regan are only obedient and loving when it serves them, and the role of ideal daughter it is not in their true nature. After they win their father's land by proclaiming their love for him, Cordelia alerts the audience that her sisters are not as perfect as they seem when she says to her sisters: "I know you what you are,/And like a sister am most loath to call/Your faults as they are named" (Scene 1.256-258)<sup>1</sup>.

Cordelia, who knows her sisters better than the audience would, realizes that they are completely two-faced, that they do not love Lear and will use him for their own selfish purposes. Gonoril and Regan's behavior in the rest of the play completely confirms Cordelia's negative characterization.

By the time Gonoril is on stage again, she is no longer a dutiful daughter. She has had enough with the thoughtless behavior of Lear and his company, and she instructs her steward to treat him with disrespect: "put on what weary negligence you please,/You and your fellow servants. I'd have it come in question./If he dislike it, let him to our sister" (Scene 3.12-14). Gonoril is now in a position of power and has completely abandoned any semblance of submissiveness. Rather than merely embracing her new independence and strength, she goes even further and attempts to strip Lear of any independence or dignity he has left.

Nor does the abuse end with instructing her household to neglect her father. Indeed, it gets progressively worse. Gonoril allies herself with her sister and they further strip Lear of his royal party, the last remaining facet of his power and prestige:

LEAR: I gave you all.

REGAN: And in good time you gave it.

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<sup>1</sup> There are several King Lear texts. For the this paper, I will be referring to *The History of King Lear* in *The Norton Shakespeare* collection. I feel this text has the most illuminating content to look at for this paper. Also, it does not have acts, only scenes, which is why I use the slightly different citation.



dominating. They command both their father and their husbands, often with very harsh language. For example, Gonoril is both insulting and insistent when trying to convince Albany to turn his back on Lear and join the war against France:

Milk-livered man,  
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punished  
Ere they have done their mischief: Where's thy drum?  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy flaxen biggin threats,  
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries  
'Alack, why does he so?'

(Scene 16.49-58)

This is not witty banter, as with Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*, but an antagonistic challenging of the status quo. Gonoril, though a woman, is questioning the manhood of her husband and urging him to go to war. Gonoril and Regan's abuse of Lear would have appalled an audience, and their liberated and violent voices would have only furthered the audience's distaste.

Not only did Shakespeare create a wholly negative and appalling disobedience in Lear's two eldest daughters, but he also excluded any of the escapes of justifiability or avenues of audience empathy that he created for his other daughter characters. For example, Gonoril and Regan do not represent true love, nor did Shakespeare provide

antagonistic characters whose juxtaposition would benefit the two daughters. In fact, juxtaposing Gonoril and Regan to the other characters would have only increased audience distaste for the daughters and their behavior. They are not suffering under an overpowering or romantically-ignorant father. Indeed, when Gonoril and Regan are juxtaposed with the old king lost in the storm, slowly going mad, the audience could not help but feel empathy for Lear and revulsion for his wicked daughters. Likewise, Shakespeare's construction of their husbands would not make the audience side with Gonoril and Regan. The contrast between Gonoril and Albany, who never falters in his goodness and his loyalty to Lear, is especially damning for the actions of his wife. Even Cornwall would not have seemed as bad as Regan to the audience. When Cornwall wants to punish the disguised Kent, Regan does him one better in cruelty:

CORNWALL: Fetch forth the stocks! –

As I have life and honour, there shall he sit till noon.

REGAN: Till noon? – Till night, my lord, and all night too.

(Scene 7.123-125)

Further, they are partners in the brutal blinding of Gloucester, with Regan actually encouraging Cornwall to pluck out the second eye: “one side will mock another, t’other, too” (scene 14.67). She is not a victim of Cornwall’s cruelty, but a co-conspirator in wickedness. Arguably, she is worse because she is malicious to her own flesh and blood while Cornwall is technically an outsider.

The only character who may be as horrible as Gonoril and Regan is the also the one to which they most closely ally themselves, the bastard Edmund. He, like them, is a malicious father-abuser with who the audience is disgusted. Gonoril and Regan not only

join forces with him politically, but they also compete to be linked with him sexually. It is as if they are intrinsically attracted to evil. With Gonoril and Regan set in opposition to the righteous or pitiable characters and allied to the vile ones, the audience could not logically find an iota of sympathy or understanding for them.

By the end of the play, Gonoril and Regan's violent disobedience has pushed past anything with which the audience could be comfortable, and they are too far lost for Shakespeare to bring them back into an acceptable sphere of behavior. Rather, he brutally silenced, in fact extinguished, the daughters without first reconciling them with the audience; just as their feigned love for Lear is rewarded, their evil is punished. Gonoril poisons her own sister and later takes her own life.

Gonoril and Regan's deaths break away from the pattern of character progression set up Silvia and Kate, but they still demonstrate how Shakespeare used father-daughter relationships and audience mindsets to construct voice in female characters. The previous examples of daughters highlight that Shakespeare typically used a direct relationship between rebellion and voice; the more obedient they are as daughters, the less influential they are as characters, and the more rebellious they are as daughters, the stronger and more vocal they are as characters. In all these previous examples, Shakespeare needed to make them obedient daughters at the same time that he took away their voice. However, the fate of Gonoril and Regan introduces a new variation. By passing the threshold into active hostility against their father with no outlets of redeemability, Gonoril and Regan become a threat to the world on stage. Rather than coexisting with obedience, their silence signifies a point of no return; a height of rebellion so extreme that the audience would not be able to accept it – or forget it if Gonoril and Regan were to somehow

become obedient – and demands a violent end for the culprits. Furthermore, the nature of their relationship with Lear would have affected the audience’s perception of their death. Whereas the audience pitied the deaths of Juliet and Ophelia, they would have felt no remorse at the loss of the wickedly abusive Gonoril and Regan.

This is not to say that Shakespeare always constructed daughters in tragedies differently than the daughters in comedies. In fact, in Lear’s other daughter, Cordelia, Shakespeare created a daughter plot-line similar to the pattern established in the comedies. Cordelia’s first act in the play is one of disobedience: she refuses to profess her love to her father and is immediately punished by him and stripped of her dowry. Unlike her sisters, Cordelia provides a disobedience the audience would have both tolerated and understood. As Cordelia says to Lear: “It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,/No unclean action or dishonoured step/That hath deprived me of your grace and favour” (Scene 1.216-218). Her crime is lacking “that glib and oily art/To speak and purpose not” (Scene 1.213-214) that her sisters possess. The audience certainly would have accepted Cordelia’s disobedience of Lear because of her rationality; because her love is sincere and she actually is trying to be loyal to Lear, her rebellion actually could fit within the gender of ideologies of early modern England. Furthermore, Lear’s overreaction is highlighted by both the reactions of Kent, and Gonoril and Regan. Kent advises Lear:

Reverse thy doom

And in thy best consideration check

This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement,

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound

Reverbs no hollowness.

(Scene 1.138-143)

In private, Gonoril and Regan comment on Lear's odd behavior: "He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too gross" (Scene 1.275). Shakespeare made sure his audience would recognize Lear's irrationality in his anger at Cordelia, and, thus, find it impossible to also be angry with her. To side with the father, in this instance, would be to side with a fool.

Shakespeare constructs Cordelia's filial rebellion as part and parcel of character independence and strong stage presence, thus remaining consistent with his other daughter characters. Immediately after Lear disowns her, Cordelia gains an impressive position of power, Queen of France. Even though she is not on stage to be vocal, she, like Jessica, is still a presence through the discussion of the other characters. Lear and the Fool bring her to the audience's attention when discussing Lear's mistake in sending her away. Kent especially speaks of Cordelia, keeping her in the forefront of the audience's mind, such as when he receives a letter from her:

I know tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath now fortunately been informed  
Of my obscured course, and shall find time  
For this enormous state, seeking to give  
Losses their remedies.

(Scene 7.156-160)

The audience is not only informed of what Cordelia is doing while she is off stage, but she is also painted as a saving force of goodness. Still the antithesis to her sisters, she will



return and make everything right. One can only imagine how different her role would be had she bent to her father's will and been docile. Even though it went against the values of early modern society, Shakespeare constructed Cordelia as a woman strong enough to resist the demands of her father as well as rule a country.

By the time Cordelia returns to England, and the stage, in Scene 18, she has maintained a strong stage presence and then continues to dominate the scenes in which she appears. That is, until she is reunited and reconciled with Lear. Immediately after their reunion, Lear and Cordelia are captured. Cordelia is quickly transformed from Queen of France to prisoner. Once again, we see the role of obedient daughter coinciding with submission and silence. Rebellious Cordelia was a woman in command, but the Cordelia back in Lear's good graces is a relatively helpless girl. Furthermore, after her one line as she is taken away, the audience never hears from her again. The next time she is on stage is as a corpse in Lear's arms. Just as with his construction of Ophelia and Juliet, Shakespeare culminated his construction of Cordelia, and his challenge to audience ideas about gender, with the tragic silence of death.

In addition to Lear and his three offspring, *King Lear* also presents two father-son relationships. Gloucester and his sons, Edmund and Edgar, demonstrate two distinct points on the spectrum of male valuation in early modern England. That is, the way a son-character treats his father would have been highly demonstrative to the audience of the type of man he is. A character that is abusive to his father is also generally evil, a character that protects his father is probably the hero, a character that tries to avenge his father is in some way good and righteous, and so on. By looking at Edmund and Edgar's

relationships with Gloucester, we can see how the treatment of the father figure affected audience perceptions of goodness in the son.

The audience would have easily recognized Edmund, Gloucester's bastard son, as one of the villains of the play. He is deceitful and malicious, not caring who he hurts in his quests for power. Not surprisingly, one of his greatest victims is his father. He turns Gloucester against Edgar so that he may become the heir to all of Gloucester's lands, and eventually turns on Gloucester as well. It is an incredible blow to Gloucester when he realizes he has been betrayed, like pouring salt into his horrible wounds:

GLOUCESTER: All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,  
To quit this horrid act.

REGAN: Out, villain!

Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he  
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;  
Who is too good to pity thee.

GLOUCESTER: O my follies! then Edgar was abused.

Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

(Scene 14. 82-89)

Edgar tricks his father for his own benefit, and when he has gotten what he wants, he hands Gloucester over to those who mean him harm. Edmund does not seem to have an isolated grudge against his father. Rather, Edmund's abuse of Gloucester is a small dark piece to the overall sinister puzzle of his character; his specific behavior toward his father is a microcosm of his general behavior throughout the play. Just as he deceives his father,

he also dupes the other characters into thinking he is good and selfishly uses them. He knows how to manipulate people's feelings for him and how to juggle competing allies. At the beginning of the play, both Edgar and Gloucester believe that Edmund is helping him behind the other's back. Later on, Edmund uses comparable tactics with Gonoril and Regan:

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,  
Each jealous of the other as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take? -  
Both? – one? – or neither? Neither can be enjoyed  
If both remain alive. To take the widow  
Exasperates, makes mad, her sister Gonoril,  
And hardly shall I carry out my side,  
Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use  
His countenance for the battle, which being done,  
Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off.

(Scene 22.59-69)

He is entertaining the attentions of both women until he can decide which union will serve him best. Just as Edmund used Gloucester as much as possible and then cast him off, he plans to dismiss one of the sisters when she is no longer the most useful to him. Certainly the audience would have seen Edgar's overall character as conniving and completely self-serving, and his actions as a son were a powerful way for Shakespeare to highlight Edgar's wickedness.

Edmund's strategy actually acknowledges the importance that love and loyalty to a father play in constructing one's overall character. The crime he fabricates for Edgar revolves around betraying their father. He knows that not only will this anger Gloucester, but that it will also be particularly damaging to Edgar's reputation. Moreover, he raises himself in the opinion of others by appearing to be the good son. He wounds himself to appear as if he fought Edgar on his father's behalf, and Cornwall, and the others, completely believe this signal of goodness: "For you, Edmund/Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant/So much commend itself, you shall be ours" (Scene 6.112-114). The royal court immediately translates his apparent devotion to his father into an overall integrity in character. He continues the charade later on when, though he has every intention of turning on his father, he feigns being painfully torn between allegiances:

EDMUND [*aside*] If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff  
his suspicion more fully. [*To CORNWALL*] I will persevere in my  
course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and  
my blood.

(Scene 12. 17-20)

Even though he is no longer acting the part of a loyal son, he retains the façade so the other characters still believe him to be a good man. He understands his own character construction very well and is able to manipulate it.

Balancing Edmund's evil presence, the good Edgar is the complete opposite of his brother. Even though Gloucester believes Edgar betrayed him, he is in fact always faithful to his father. After Gloucester is blinded and thrown out, Edgar is the one who, in

a completely forgiving and compassionate manner, takes care of him. Further, Edgar returns to court to avenge his father and kill Edmund. Overwhelming, Edgar's role is the protector and avenger of his father. In fact, a drive to avenge one's father was a tool Shakespeare used for the construction of "good" son characters, as we shall further see in Hamlet and Laertes. None of the other characters see this role until the end of the play and, thus, cannot voice their opinions of his character as they do for Edmund. However, the audience did witness it, and would have recognized Edgar both as a good son and a good man.

Just as they saw Edgar as Gloucester's savior, the audience surely identified him as one of the play's major heroes. His good will toward his father exists in his greater character construction. When he is in the forest with Lear as the mad man, Poor Tom, mostly speaking gibberish, there is still evidence to believe that he is also being compassionate and trying to look over the old king, such as the aside: "My tears begin to take his part so much/They'll mar my counterfeiting" (Scene 13.52-53). The compassion he demonstrates in taking care of his father surfaces in his interaction with Lear. Likewise, he comes to Albany's aid by serving as the champion to defeat Edmund. Edgar's role as rescuer is not limited to his relationship with Gloucester, but, rather, encompasses much of his persona.

Edmund and Edgar demonstrate how central the father-son relationship was in Shakespeare's approach to character construction. Their actions affect the perceptions of the other characters; they automatically trust the seemingly dutiful son. Similarly, the audience would have used the son's loyalty to his bloodline as a signal of his general behavior.

The two sons in *King Lear* are set in opposition as the evil son and the good son, but both sons in *Hamlet* are able to be good sons while also demonstrating different qualities from each other through their quests to avenge their respective fathers. Hamlet is handicapped by words and inner debate, while Laertes establishes himself as a man of action. Despite their different approaches, the audience would have perceived both sons as good characters because of their devotion to their fathers. Indeed, the importance of father-son relationships is highlighted by how it trumps typically negative perceptions of murder. Furthermore, Laertes's situation of defending the irritating Polonius demonstrates that whatever the perception of the father may be, early modern societal codes still would expect a "good" son to show devotion.

In avenging their fathers' deaths, Hamlet and Laertes seek to right a wrong, thus taking on the role of hero, if only for their family. The murders of their respective fathers justifies seeking the death of another man. In fact, the audience would likely have viewed anything less as weakness in the son. At the beginning of the play, the audience, along with Hamlet, learns that Old Hamlet was killed by his own brother, thus spurring Hamlet's campaign to eventually kill the now-king Claudius. Despite wanting to kill his uncle and the ruling monarch, the audience would not have viewed Hamlet as an evil character. Rather, murdering Claudius would have seemed like the right thing to do in this situation. The devotion of a son to his father is so intrinsically important to an audience that it likely turned a blind eye to an act it would otherwise have found shocking. Similarly, when Laertes returns to Elsinore to avenge Polonius's murder, his wrath is directed toward Hamlet, yet he is not considered evil. Laertes's commitment to

his father allows an audience to view an attack on the play's protagonist without disdain for the attacker. Even Hamlet forgives Laertes for killing him.

LAERTES: Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me.

LAERTES *dies*

HAMLET: Heaven make thee free of it!

(5.2.271-274)

Their shared devotion to their respective fathers allows Hamlet to recognize Laertes as virtuous, despite the attack on his life.

Beyond signaling to the audience that they are "good" characters, Hamlet and Laertes's efforts to avenge their fathers also affects an audience's perception of their personal traits. How each son approaches this daunting and important task speaks volumes to the audience of what type of person they are. Hamlet takes the entire length of the play to debate, plot, and question before he finally kills Claudius. At the end of several scenes, Hamlet seems poised to finally fulfill his commitment, only to return on stage subdued and philosophizing. For example, at the end of Act 2, scene 2, Hamlet is quite worked up after the player's speech about Hecuba, ashamed at his own delay in avenging his father, and devises the plan to test Claudius with a play. However, he then enters in the next scene with the "to be or not to be" soliloquy, completely in an intellectual daze, once again questioning his purpose. Hamlet's constant inability to fulfill his duty to his father and kill Claudius affects the audience's overall perception of him.

The audience perceives Laertes, on the other hand, more as a man of action. He bursts into the court and immediately confronts Claudius about Polonius's death:

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.  
To hell, allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil!  
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,  
That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes. Only I'll be revenged  
Most thoroughly for my father.

(4.5.126-132)

He is ready to kill whomever he must, including Claudius. When he discovers the true object of his revenge, Hamlet, he quickly conspires with Claudius and actually follows through on his plan. The closest he comes to wavering is an aside in the middle of the duel: "And yet tis almost 'gainst my conscience" (5.2.240). His swiftness to action sets him apart from Hamlet. Though they are both successful in the same goal, their particular character construction is quite different. Shakespeare used their devotion to their fathers to establish them as good characters, and their specific methods to develop the nuances of their character.

Further, the other characters in the play value the dynamic of a son's duty to his father as much as the actual early modern society. There are several instances that directly recognize the importance of father-son relationships. For example, though other characters, such as Marcellus and Horatio, can see the ghost of Old Hamlet and try to communicate with him, he will only speak to Hamlet. The bond between father and son seems to even have an other-worldly importance.



Many of the other instances reflect how the father-son relationship affects the way the son is judged both by themselves and by the other characters. Once again looking at the example at the end of Act 2, scene 2, Hamlet is disgusted with himself for not being able to match the player's fake emotion even while possessing his real motivation:

What would he do  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,  
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,  
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
And can say nothing – no, not for a king,  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?

(2.2.537-548)

Since Hamlet feels he is not showing adequate devotion to his father, he completely devalues himself. If he cannot demonstrate grief for his father and follow through with his vow, then he must be inadequate as a man. Laertes also seems to worry about showing insufficient fidelity to Polonius, and, thus, is easily swayed when Claudius questions his love for Polonius:

Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
A face without a heart?

(4.7.89-91)

The integrity of Laertes's character depends upon his loyalty to his deceased father, and Claudius is able to play upon this societal expectation of filial duty to successfully manipulate Laertes.

Furthermore, Laertes's situation demonstrates the weight an early modern audience puts on a son's devotion, no matter how it perceives his father. Polonius is not an overly agreeable character. He is often long-winded and annoying. Even Queen Gertrude becomes frustrated with him, demanding "more matter with less art" (2.2.96). He completely controls Ophelia, denying her relationship with Hamlet and using her as a tool in his warped plans for spying on the prince. Further, he does not even trust his own son, hiring Reynaldo to spy on Laertes in France. Thus, audiences would have likely considered him sneaky and back-handed. Nevertheless, Laertes returns to avenge him, an act which the other characters feel is justified, and an audience certainly would have approved. Even though Polonius is not well-liked, if Laertes were apathetic about his death, he would sink in the opinions of the other characters and the audience. To be judged a good man in early modern ideologies, a son had to be loyal to his father and fulfill his duty to avenge his father's murder.

Despite the difference between Hamlet and Laertes, the audience would certainly have perceived them as decidedly good, but Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Part I* and *Henry IV, Part II* is a uniquely dynamic son character because he possesses two opposing personas; both the good and bad son exist in one man. Shakespeare was able to create

both sides in Hal by providing two father figures toward which he can act in two distinct manners. The two relationships, and corresponding personas, are in complete contrast, and Hal must eventually banish one to fully embody the other. First, Hal has a “good son” relationship with his actual father, King Henry IV. Though he has flaws, Hal is motivated throughout the course of the plays to prove his loyalty to his father, just as Hamlet and Laertes are driven to fulfill their duty to their fathers. Second, Hal has more of a “bad son” relationship with the insatiable Sir John Falstaff, centered on verbal abuse and practical jokes, and ending with betrayal and abandonment. The two characterizations exist in relative isolation within the play – Hal never has to interact with King Henry and Falstaff simultaneously – and, thus, the audience would have seen two different men in Hal. However, Hal’s two worlds do interfere with each other. For example, Hal’s duties as a prince take him away from the seedy tavern world, and his gallivanting with Falstaff greatly hinders his attempts at a positive relationship with his father. In either case, Shakespeare was able to use the dynamics of both relationships to manipulate audience perceptions, using such expectations as respect of elders and fulfilling responsibilities. The audience would have recognized the two contrasting personas of dutiful future ruler and wayward prince, they would have been intrigued and entertained by Hal’s balancing act, and they would have waited to see which persona Hal finally chooses.

Though he certainly has two personas, Hal only actively tries to demonstrate his qualities as a good son. However, he begins at a severe disadvantage, because *Henry IV, Part I* introduces the audience to Hal’s negative characterization. Henry discusses Hal’s dishonorable behavior and when the audience sees Hal in the next scene, his actions seem

to reinforce his father's description: he is carousing with Falstaff and his hooligans.

Because of Hal's reckless gallivanting in *Henry IV, Part I*, Henry questions the worth of his own son, especially compared to Hotspur:

Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,  
See riot and dishonour stain the brow  
Of my young Harry. O that it could be proved  
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged  
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,  
And called mine Percy, his Plantagenet!

(1.1.84-88)

Given this poor characterization at the beginning of the play, Hal has to spend much of his energy trying to battle his wayward prince identity and demonstrate to others the gleaming leader he believes himself to be. As he explains to the audience in soliloquy in *Henry IV, Part I*:

Yet herein will I imitate the sun,  
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds  
To smother up his beauty from the world,  
That when he please again to be himself,  
Being wanted he may be more wondered at  
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists  
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

(1.2.175-181)

He recognizes that he is two sons in one, and that his identities are not compatible; the negative characterization blocks the positive one from view.

To overcome his wayward prince persona and establish himself as a good son and future leader to the public, Hal's primary goal is to prove himself to his father. In gaining Henry's personal trust, he would also win the audience's positive valuation of his character. When he finally returns to court, he immediately tries to reassure his father of his devotion, pledging his assistance against the rebellion:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head  
And in the closing of some glorious day  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;  
When I will wear a garment all of blood  
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,  
Which, washed away, shall scour my shame with it

(3.2.132-137)

By performing the duties of a good son, Hal expects to prove to the world that he will be a good and respectable king. His loyalty to Henry would also have been the primary yardstick the audience used to determine Hal's goodness and trustworthiness.

However, perhaps given the complexities of Hal's character, it is not easy to prove himself to his father, the public, and the audience. Despite their lengthy conversation in Act 3, scene 2 of *Henry IV, Part I*, King Henry does not believe Hal is completely dutiful until Hal saves him from the Douglas in Act 5, scene 4: "Thou hast redeemed thy lost opinion,/ And showed thou makest some tender of my life,/ In this fair rescue thou hast brought to me" (5.4.47-49). It is not the promise of allegiance, but the

act of rescue that convinces the king. Still, Hal's characterization is so fragile – he is never seen as completely righteous or completely degenerate – that every action greatly affects the perceptions of the other characters. In *Henry IV, Part II*, King Henry finally speaks well of Hal, telling his other son, Thomas Duke of Clarence, that Hal “hath a tear for pity and a hand/Open as day for melting charity” (4.3.31-32). However, his opinion of Hal changes after Hal, thinking Henry is dead, takes the crown. Even after he tries to explain his mistake, Henry scorns him:

Thou hast stol'n that which after some few hours  
Were thine without offense, and at my death  
Thou hast sealed up my expectation.  
Thy life did manifest thou loved'st me not,  
And thou wilt have me die assured of it.  
Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts,  
Which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart  
To stab at half an hour of my life.

(4.3.229-236)

One mistake completely reverses Henry's previous perception of Hal, and, by connection, Henry's dismay would likely have caused the audience to look down on Hal and his impulsiveness. The influence of the father-son relationship is so strong that such instances would have an immediate effect on the overall characterization of the son. However, Hal, by professing his love for Henry and his sorrow at thinking he was dead, reconciles with his father before his death and is thus able to reestablish his momentarily

lost positive character. His dedication to gain his father's trust reassures Henry, as well as the audience, that he is in fact a good son and will prove to be a good leader.

Using Hal's relationship with Falstaff, Shakespeare constructed the other half of Hal's character at the other end of the spectrum of filial behavior. Based on caustic word-play and practical jokes, their relationship accentuates Hal's less attractive side. Falstaff, as an older male who takes Hal under his wing, is arguably a father figure, and, according to traditional ideas of the treatment of elders, the audience may have expected that Hal would show the old knight at least some respect, even if Falstaff is a comic character, disreputably living a life of excess. Just as Polonius's character does not exempt Laertes from his duty to his father, Hal's abuse of Falstaff, no matter Falstaff's own faults, reflects poorly on him.

Hal and Falstaff continually exchange witticism and insults – sometimes affectionate, sometimes scathing, sometimes a blending of both – such as in *Part I* when Falstaff teases Hal's honor:

FALSTAFF: I prithee, sweet wag, when thou art king, as, God  
save thy grace,--majesty I should say, for grace  
thou wilt have none,--

PRINCE HARRY: What, none?

FALSTAFF: No, by my troth, not so much as will serve to  
prologue to an egg and butter.

Falstaff may mock Hal, but the young royal matches the old knight's verbal abuse, including this jab at Falstaff's girth: "Here comes lean Jack, here comes bare-bone./How now, my sweet creature of bombast!/How long is't ago, Jack, since thou sawest thine own

knee?" (2.5.299-301). In addition to the verbal disrespect, Hal also abuses Falstaff through hoaxes in both *Part I* and *Part II*. The antics of Hal and Poins include disguising themselves and ambushing Falstaff, picking his pockets, and eavesdropping on his conversation with Doll Tearsheet; all the pranks allow Falstaff to make a fool and a liar of himself before they end. Though witty and entertaining, this Hal is a far cry from the respectful and reserved son he shows to King Henry. Yet the audience would have seen both sides, and they would have viewed Hal negatively during the scenes with Falstaff.

At face value, Hal's misuse of Falstaff seems more or less harmless. At the very least, it is part of the comedy of the plays and certainly was entertaining for the audience. However, it is this very behavior, humorous or not, that causes the other characters and the audience to view Hal as an irresponsible vagabond prince. He is not cold-heartedly malicious, and thus the audience would not have viewed him as a villain, such as Edmund in *King Lear*, but just as the audience viewed Edmund's heinous hostility toward his father as a signal of overall evilness, the audience most likely saw Hal's treatment of Falstaff as a negative reflection of Hal, even if only temporary.

Hal's final act in *Henry IV, Part II* is undoubtedly his greatest abuse toward Falstaff, and there is nothing harmless or comical about it. Newly becoming king, Hal banishes Falstaff from his company, completely denying his old friend:

Presume not that I am the thing I was;  
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,  
That I have turn'd away my former self;  
So will I those that kept me company.  
When thou dost hear I am as I have been,



Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,  
The tutor and the feeder of my riots:  
Till then, I banish thee, on pain of death,  
As I have done the rest of my misleaders,  
Not to come near our person by ten mile

(5.5.54-63)

Hal's betrayal hurts Falstaff so much that he dies off-stage at the beginning of *Henry V*. Falstaff's heartbreak is similar to Gloucester's shock at Edmund's treachery; his world crumbles when the boy his trusted deserts him. While Hal needs to banish Falstaff to fully embrace his responsible leader role, the act itself creates a negative reaction in the audience. The banishment shows that Hal is completely devoid of the highly valued loyalty to Falstaff as his father figure. It is sadly ironic that to demonstrate to the audience that he is a good son to his real father, he must destroy his relationship with the other; fulfilling the audience's expectations of a bad son by betraying Falstaff actually cements their perception of Hal as a good son and future king.

The expectations of early modern audiences provided Shakespeare with several different ways to use father-child relationship for his character constructions. The universality of father-child experiences meant he could constantly use father-child relationships to construct character and manipulate audiences, but he never seemed to use the dynamics exactly the same way twice. Often, he created characters that affirmatively fulfilled audience assumptions. Knowing his audience and their mindset, Shakespeare was able to successfully manipulate their perceptions by matching the models they already possessed in their minds. For example, Shakespeare presented Bianca, when she

is submissive and silent, as an ideal bride with many suitors. Other times, Shakespeare constructed characters by challenging the societal codes. The rebellious daughters he created never fulfilled the belief that loquaciousness led to promiscuity, and, in fact, he went to great lengths to create empathy in the audience for these challenging female characters. By making the daughters entertaining and juxtaposing them with less-appealing fathers, among other things, Shakespeare created loopholes in the societal codes that allowed the audience to actually like a rebellious daughter. Even though he consistently reconciled his challenges to the audience's ideologies, Shakespeare more often challenged the social code than played within it.

In fact, as his career progressed, Shakespeare seemed to increase his challenge to the societal rules concerning father-child relationships. In his earlier plays, the silenced daughter at least had a happy ending; Silvia, though a sudden mute, gets to marry the man she loves. However, Shakespeare seems to punish the daughters in the later plays as he confines them to obedience; they lose their loves as well as their lives. Increasingly, obedience seems to be a kind of trap into which daughters sadly fall. While Shakespeare theoretically "needed" to silence his vocal daughter creations, the audience could not have actively desired the likes of Juliet or Cordelia to die. Even if it meant embracing disobedient behavior, surely they would have preferred Juliet to run away with Romeo or Cordelia and Lear to happily reunite and defeat Gonoril and Regan. Given that the rebellious daughters are the interesting and entertaining characters while obedient daughters are tragic figures, suffering under the burdens of conformity, I would argue that Shakespeare valued strength and independence in women and recognized, to some extent, the sad repressive nature of the gender codes of his society. Perhaps this had to do

with a desire for his own two daughters, to whom he actually left the majority of his estate (Greenblatt 385), to be able to prosper. Perhaps he merely valued the flexibility that verbal female characters provided him as a playwright; a quiet daughter who never breaks any rules does not make an exciting heroine. In any case, Shakespeare was not wholly invested in early modern ideals of female behavior when constructing his characters.

By the time Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, the latest play explored in this paper, he was challenging the very signals of character that he had been using, thus highlighting how unstable and untrustworthy the assumptions of society were. Lear rewards Gonoril and Regan because they follow his command. However, obedience here is merely a façade, and the wicked daughters completely subvert the expectations of Lear and the audience. The societal rules dictated that a model daughter should submit to what her father commands, but an obedient woman is not always as ideal as she may appear. Similarly, Gloucester and the other characters trust Edmund because he plays the part of the loyal son; they use the same value-system as the audience used when judging the goodness of, say, Hamlet. However, this signal is also misleading, as Edgar is manipulating the social code for his own evil uses. Shakespeare did not only disagree with the expectations of the audience, but he also seemed to have deconstructed the foundation of premises they brought to the playhouse.

As we look to his even later plays, specifically the romances, we can speculate about further challenges to the basic assumptions of the audiences, assumptions Shakespeare often embraced in his earlier plays. In *The Tempest*, Prospero has to use magic to control Miranda. This relationship seems to suggest that the domination of the

daughter by her father is not a given, as an early modern audience might expect, and is even unnatural. *Cymbeline* and *Winter's Tale* call into question the importance of the father-child relationship; Shakespeare practically offered a nature vs. nurture argument. In both plays, he separated the children, both sons and daughter, from their respective fathers at an early age, yet continually the other characters comment on the nobleness or goodness of their character. Interaction with their fathers seems unnecessary to their character development. The dynamics of father-child relationships were a useful tool for Shakespeare, but, as he matured as a playwright, he outgrew conventions and increasingly challenged the common expectations of his audience.

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