

Representations of Race, Rape, and Consent in Early Modern English Drama

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For my parents, Liz and Ed, who showed me what it means
to hope and to dedicate yourself fully to achieve your dreams

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INTRODUCTION

Representations of Race, Rape, and Consent in Early Modern English Drama conceptualizes the renaissance theater as a space that actively participated in the construction of modern paradigms of race through discourses of gender and sexuality. As a notion of Englishness began to emerge in relation to a global community, consent became the threshold for determining who can claim to be a political subject and a member of the commonwealth. In the early modern period, the legal definition of rape transitioned from the abduction of a man's property to the carnal knowledge of a woman against her will, meaning that a woman's decision to withhold consent—rather than her father's or husband's—became the factor that defined rape. At the same time that rape was being reconceptualized at home, England was expanding its empire abroad with campaigns in Ireland, transatlantic voyages, and its initial attempts to enter the slave trade. While English statutes concerning the ravishment of women theoretically enhanced the political import of women's volition, this period inaugurated England's involvement in the slave trade, the systematic rapine and denial of consent to a slave who by definition could not own property in his or her person. My dissertation examines the relation between these disparate yet contemporaneous and mutually formative approaches to consent on the eve of modernity.

The prominence of the theater—its ingenuity and appeal to all strata of society—reached its heights in the early seventeenth century at a point when England was poised toward expansion and developing a national consciousness. As a central element of early modern popular culture, drama provides a particularly productive locus to analyze the shifting contours and relations of female agency and bodies of alterity in the construction of an English identity predicated on whiteness. Throughout this dissertation, I focus on

moments of staged resistance—the choice to withhold consent—and demonstrative acts of volitional submission. But, a study that interrogates issues of consent as it intersects with the political and the erotic inevitably navigates the terrain of the visible as well as the invisible and the gaps between performance and interiority. In fact, what I have found most fascinating in this work have not been these overt demonstrations of will but the conspicuous silences and convoluted responses that come from female characters in highly fraught and important situations.

Known for their provocative portrayals of protagonists' complicated and tormented inner lives, English renaissance playwrights could have given audiences access to the intensity of their female characters' private ruminations.¹ Rather than interpret scenes marked by women's reticence or vague replies as indicative of a mere lack of character development, I approach these instances as invitations that open possibilities for interpretation and challenge audiences to consider what is at stake when women's sexual volition and early modern race formations collide and transition together. Over the course of four chapters on canonical and lesser known dramatists, including William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and John Marston, I trace the public performances of changing and competing conceptualizations of consent and race as they intersect with issues of self-possession, political personhood, and sexuality in a global early modernity.

¹ Katharine Eisaman Maus states that the “English Renaissance stage seems deliberately to foster theatergoers’ capacity to use partial and limited presentations as a basis for conjecture about what is undisplayed or undisplayable” (32). Building on her claims, I suggest that when playwrights choose to obscure women’s volition, they nonetheless invite audiences to consider their fraught subjectivities and the possibilities of what remains unsaid. See Katharine Eisaman Maus’s *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For more on interiority and subjectivity on early modern stages see Cynthia Marshall’s *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) and Alan L. Ackerman’s article “Visualizing Hamlet’s Ghost: The Spirit of Modern Subjectivity” in *Theatre Journal* 53.1. (2001): 119-144.

An Inevitable Consent: Rape Laws and Lived Experiences

Beginning with the first statutes of Westminster issued early in the reign of Edward I, English law conflated two crimes: ‘stealing’ women and forcing women to submit to sexual relations. When rape transitioned from being perceived as a crime against a woman’s father and husband to a crime against the woman herself, the onus was placed on the victim to prove that she had neither consented before, during, or after the assault. While the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the theoretical magnification of women’s consent in determining whether or not rape had occurred, the adjudication of rape cases were highly influenced by the medieval perception of women as one of men’s moveable goods. Anthony Fitzherbert’s *The newe boke of Justices of Peas*, first printed around 1506, underwent thirty-six editions and was last printed in 1580. Quoted from the 1538 edition, Fitzherbert insists on the importance of a woman’s lack of consent for rape to have occurred but includes abduction when he states: “Also ye that enquire of rape, Rape is where a man rauysheth or taketh a mans wife, wydowe, or mayde against her wyll, and hathe to do with her against her wyll albeit that she assent afterward, yet it is felonye” (9). Similarly, Michael Dalton’s *The Countrey Justice* (1618), first discusses rape under burglary or theft and seeks to clarify the confusion and doubt that existed at his contemporary moment concerning whether or not rape “be no Felony by the Common Law, but onely a Trespasse” (226). He then contends that rape was Felony “by the ancient Common Law” and that King Edward “made the offence of Rape to be felony againe” (226). It is worth noting that both Dalton and Fitzherbert begin by addressing the definition of rape as a subject of inquiry, talk, and

uncertainty despite the century between the first printing of *The boke of Justices of Peas* and *The Countrey Justice*.²

The Elizabethan period heightened the severity of rape, defined as a crime against a woman's person, "the unlawfull and carnall knowledge and abuse of any woman above the age of ten years against her will."³ Ravishers were indicted with a felony and, if convicted, faced capital punishment without benefit of clergy.⁴ While this period witnessed the strictest stance against rape, the statutes on ravishment also served as a warning to all women.⁵ According to Elizabethan rape law, women as young as ten years of age were held responsible for protecting their sexual purity. This legal separation of abduction from rape not only heightened the importance of consent. The consent of a woman or female child became the determining factor for whether or not a rape had occurred. Between 1558 and 1603, Middlesex records contain fourteen rape cases, ten of which involve girls between three to twelve years of age. As these statistics suggest, allegations of rape were more likely to be brought forth and given due process when the victim was younger than the age of consent.

² For a more detailed description of rape as the ravishment of a woman against her will, which includes a description of the actions that a credible rape survivor ought to take, see *The Countrey Justice* page 248. See, also, Greenstadt's article " 'Read it in Me': The Authors Will in Lucrece" for a note on various legal manuals that discuss rape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

³ Quoted in "I'll want my will else" (Burks, 764).

⁴ The denial of benefit of clergy in 1576 added to the rhetorical denouncement of rape, but, as Lee A. Ritscher notes, the removal of benefit of clergy had adverse effects for rape victims since only "the most heinous of rape cases would be brought to trial, leaving the vast majority of rape victims suffering in silence or seeking vengeance through private measures" (Ritscher, 9).

⁵ According to Thomas Edgar, ravishment suggests that a woman facilitated or was complicit in her taking by providing the opportunity for her attacker. For ravishment to have taken place, a woman would presumably have been ravished where she should not have been in the first place—outside her home and beyond the protection of her father or husband. The almost synonymous usage of ravishment and rape in the period reveals women's culpability for all her sexual activity whether consensual or not.

The difficulty of proving non-consent no doubt contributed to the scarcity of rape cases in the period. In *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights*, Thomas Edgar asks, “But to what purpose is it for women to make vowes, when men haue so many millions of ways to make them break them? And when sweet words, faire promises, tempting, flattering, swearing, lying will not serve to beguile the poore soule: then with rough handling, violence, and plaine strength of armes, they are, or haue been heretofore, rather made prisoners to lusts theeves, then wiues and companions to faithfull honest lovers.”⁶ Linguistic seduction and physical coercion lead to the same result—a woman’s broken vow. The crux of the issue, therefore, lies not in determining whether or not a woman had sustained the assault of “brutish concupiscence” against her will but that a woman was perceived as incapable of withholding consent from her ravisher. It is her promise that is undone, her broken vow of chastity that renders her a prisoner of lust rather than a lawful wife. Ultimately, the ravished is held responsible for rape.

Historians who work with rape cases in sixteenth and seventeenth century England have written extensively about the difficulty of analyzing victim depositions. Not only must one keep in mind that oral testimonies were recorded by men who could have influenced a rape victim’s narrative but, also, that the language of consensual sex available to women in the early modern period often expunged women of agency, which problematically cast the victim as complicit in the act of violence that she endured. Whether sex was consensual or not, women “submitted” to men’s “enticements” and “pleasure.” They “suffered” men who

⁶ *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights*, 377.

“occupied” and “carnally knew” their bodies.⁷ Indeed, it seems that women were expected to “suffer” and negotiate male sexual aggression in silence until situations became untenable.⁸

This expected secrecy also applied to young girls below the age of consent.⁹ Unless penetration had occurred or had been simulated upon the body of the girl, the child and her parents seemed hesitant to charge her assailant after the first altercation, particularly if the attacker occupied a position of authority. An eleven or twelve-year old Mary Golston was under the tutelage of curate John Gast, who called her apart from her fellow scholars, “tooke up hir clothes... tooke out his privities and put it to her belly, And willed this examinant to hold abroad hir legges” until her friend Joan Lying interrupted this sexual assault. Mary then complained to her “mother for feare the said Gast should offer the like to hir againe.”¹⁰ Mary was nonetheless sent again to the Church house, in which Gast, as before, endeavored to separate her from the other students.

In many of the bastardy cases I came across, which are generally presumed to have resulted from consensual intercourse, women oftentimes omitted whether they had lain with

⁷ See, Garthine Walker. “Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England.” *Gender & history*. 10.1 (1998): 1-25.

⁸ For example, see my description of the deposition from one Isabell May on the rape of Agnes Roe contained in Chapter 3. Isabell states that sexual assault is not something that women were to disclose in public. The historical context that I provide in my dissertation project relies heavily on several depositions and records that I had gathered during my time perusing the Somerset Archives during the summer of 2017, which was funded by the Vanderbilt Graduate Student Summer Research Award.

⁹ Q/SR/9/7 (1610) Take, for example, Susan Nowell, age between nine or ten years, who had been sexually assaulted by William Sharcke a Butcher. The depositor had written that Susan was “intyced ... to go with him within the aforesaid close to gather Stickses.” The language of rape is founded upon a rhetoric of seduction, as evidenced here when a girl younger than the age of consent is described as being “intyced.”

¹⁰ Q/SR/2/17 (1607)

a man willingly or not, which poses a prevalent dilemma when analyzing cases in which the man held significant authority and power over the livelihood of the woman. For example, Anthonie Pearman of Wiltshire confessed that while she was alone with her master in his second home in Burnham, “she was no sooner gon to bed but that/ her master came to bed to her and had that night the knowledge of her body.”¹¹ In this case, Pearman’s last willful act was her decision to go to sleep. One Joan Rabbettes had been doing chores for her father outdoors when one “Edwarde Michell foreableie tooke her in the mill house and had carnall copulation with her but only him.”¹² The insistence on force combined with the customary passivity of women in depositions concerning illicit sexual activity makes it most difficult to determine with certainty whether Rabbettes or Pearman had consented to sex.

Most bastardy examinations that I perused had recorded women’s accounts of the development of their relations with the alleged fathers of their “base” children. For example, they would list when and where sexual intercourse was first had and how frequently since then. Several confessions began with an emphasis on women’s resistance to male seduction, but, when their narratives turned to sexual intercourse, the wills of these women were conspicuously lacking. For example, Mary Light of Windford, a widow, had been repeatedly visited by her father-in-law, William Deacon, who “would haue layen with her, but *she refused* him [and] he departed without hauing his purpose,” but upon a later visit “*he had* the use and carnall knowledge of her body.” Since this was a confession concerning

¹¹ Q/SR/33/77 (1607)

¹² Q/SR/11/43 (1610)

bastardy and the maintenance of the child, it is implied that Mary Light had consented to the act.¹³

The legal sphere resolved the limitations of verbal consent through holding women to specific expectations. This included that they raise a “hue and cry” immediately after the attack, that the victims show signs of struggle on their persons and clothes, and that the women appropriately perform their refusal to grant consent to purported assailants before, during, and after rape. For example, Thomas Edgar recounts the case of an alleged rape victim who had escaped from her ravisher after bearing him a child and living seven years with him. In response to her suit, Parliament “demanded how she could now say that she neuer assented, hauing conceiued.”¹⁴ Parliament interprets her continued cohabitation with her aggressor as an indication of tacit consent. Furthermore, according to Galenic reproductive theories, conception required that both the man and the woman ejaculate, indicating female orgasm. This debilitating myth transforms pregnancy into a visible sign of feminine pleasure and pleasure as consent. Although women can “fake it,” conception proves that she was not. According to the causal logic of male fantasy, evidence of the female body could belie the accuser’s claim. In some cases, resistance did not prove rape if, according to Parliament comprised of men, the rape survivor had shown dubious signs of pleasure before, during, or after her ravishment.

¹³ Although bastardy is generally presumed to have arisen from consensual intercourse, that need not to have been the case. As stated before, the social consequences of admitting that one had been raped may have pressured women not to pursue their rapists in court. Some women may have found it easier to remain silent and to hope that pregnancy would not result than to seek the intervention of a legal system suspicious of women. If this was the case, then by the time Mary Light realized she was pregnant, it was too late for her to seek retribution from her rapist. Q/SR/62/64 (1630).

¹⁴ *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights*, 400.

When rape exceeds its temporal specificity, the legal sphere provides rapists with the means to claim that physical aggression serves as anticipated foreplay in response to female coyness. More crucially, this temporal flexibility makes a woman's consent dependent on whether or not the outcome of her rape fits a recognizable norm—a heterosocial arrangement favoring male control. Edgar's definition is most telling of this narrative bias when he describes the most "hideous" and "hateful kind" of ravishment:

[W]hen a woman is enforced violently to sustain the fury of brutish concupiscence, but she is left where she is found, as in her own house or bed, as Lucrece was (and not hurried away, as Helen by Paris, or as the Sabine women were by the Romans)...It seemeth the first kind of "rape" deserved always death by God's laws, unless the woman ravished were unbetrothed, so that the ravisher might marry her.

As this definition reveals, early modern rape laws arise from a history of reconciling sexual violation so long as the excess of aggression is contained and rendered non-threatening for the community. For whom does marriage benefit a victim of rape? Rape depositions from the seventeenth century reveal that women did sometimes appear before courts demanding marriage to their ravisher, who forcibly had gained carnal knowledge of their bodies.¹⁵

Although rape reconciled through marriage could be understood as an attempt to redeem the status of the woman, it is important to note that the concept for marriage contains social implications for those beyond the individuals taking their vows. Linda Boose explains that the marriage ceremony is a ritual for the community that resolves the implied dilemma that

¹⁵ In *Common Bodies*, Laura Gowing recounts the 1644 case of Margaret Davies, who petitioned the Westminster sessions to compel her ravisher from whom she had conceived a child to either support or to marry her. The association between male sexuality and aggression facilitated the perception that women must find a means to negotiate male violence, a negotiation which apparently did not occlude marriage to a rapist (Gowing, 100).

arises in the transaction of property between men.¹⁶ That community, for which women must chastise their erotic life and their wills, depended on the socially prescribed access of men to women's bodies. In the case of the alleged victim who had cohabited with her ravisher for seven years and had borne him a child, her narrative was not only aberrant; it undermined the social ideologies at the core of the marriage ritual. She was transitioned from her father's house to his. She was maintained, fed, clothed, "loved" by him. She was the bearer of his child. Based on these ostensible markers, she was not a victim of rape but a bride and wife. Her suit in Parliament certainly contested prevailing perceptions of consent, but it also radically challenged the concept of marriage and the role of women in a patrilineal society, a prospect that was more than likely far from appealing to those who presided over her case.

The prevalent mistrust of women's ability to withhold consent from their ravishers, as exemplified in the case of the woman who bore her rapist a child, intimates that women may somehow be held culpable for an act committed against their persons. In another assault petition from 1607, William Pecoche harbored a violent obsession with Alice, wife of George Kearle. He "would contynuallie watche her comminge and going from tyme to tyme... and with great force and violence assaulte the said Alice" when her husband was not at home. He even threatened that "with her good will or with her ill will he must haue the carnall knowledge of her bodye." In each of these instances, Pecoche's acts of aggression were met with Alice's resistance. She successfully protected her chastity by warning him

¹⁶ Lynda E. Boose explains the importance of the marriage ritual as a pattern of and for the community, which simultaneously dissolves and reasserts the bonds between father and daughter. For more on the implied dilemma of the marriage transaction, see Lynda Boose's, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare."

that she would “raise vpe her neighboures ... [or] by telling him her husband would come by and by.” Then, when he did have sex with Alice, descriptions of her decision either to acquiesce or to withhold her consent is absent. Instead, the account casts Pecocke as the sole agent: he “did helpe of her cloathes and at that tyme had the carnall knowledge of her bodye and at the tyme took 12 shillings in money being the goodes of her husbände.”¹⁷

While it is possible that Pecocke had taken money from George Kearle, this could also be a device to underscore that Pecocke had stolen the body of a woman—a possession—who lawfully belonged to another.¹⁸

In the legal examinations I had transcribed that explicitly stated rape or attempted rape, the female victims had either been under the age of twelve—below the age of consent—or were married.¹⁹ But, when women were unmarried, acts of male aggression and sexual violence oftentimes culminated with the assurance that the women’s chastity remained unharmed.²⁰ In some of the most heinous cases committed upon unmarried women, all but penetration would be described in graphic detail.²¹ Although by the seventeenth century rape laws had long transitioned from a crime of abduction of a man’s

¹⁷ Q/SR/3/99-100 (1607) The account ended by stating that through these means, Pecocke had attempted to overthrow Kearle and Kearle’s children. This refers to Pecocke’s rape or seduction of Alice Kearle, since his children with her would be maintained by Kearle and may even stand to inherit goods that would should have gone to Kearle’s legitimate children.

¹⁸ See, also, Miranda Chaytor, “Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century.” *Gender & History*, 7 (1995): 378-407.

¹⁹ Such as, Q/SR/33/119 (1618/9) concerning Elizabeth Whit the wife of John Whit whose master had tried to rape her multiple times. In Q/SR/62/55-56 (1630), Agnes Roe, the pregnant wife of Thomas Roe, had been violently handled by William Hort who had told Agnes that should she lie with him, there would be no sign since she was already pregnant.

²⁰ Such as, Q/SR/9/5 (1610) concerning Alice Lambert a maidservant who stated that Bagge Burrow had threatened her with a knife and “*offered* to deflower her.”

²¹ In Q/SR/8/26-7 (1609) five men held one Edith for several hours as they each took turns abusing her “privities” but no mention is given to penile penetration.

goods to the sexual violation of a woman against her will, my research suggests that medieval notions of rape as a crime concerning stolen property and damaged goods still influenced the way that sexual violence was socially understood and represented in the legal sphere. Sexual violence is not something openly discussed unless damage had been sustained. And, even if rape had occurred—suggested through omissions and odd breaks in deposition narratives—unmarried women likely felt pressure not to indict their assailants of rape, which risked further social injury to them.

Perhaps one of the most revealing cases I came across involved the sexual assaults and rape by three men of two sisters-in-law, Mary and Mellior Cosens, in front of their young children and husbands, Thomas and John Cosens. Two versions of their petitions exist: Q/SR/19/33-34 and Q/SR/19/74-75. The first version is rather difficult to follow since it mistakenly refers to one sister or husband when referring to the other. The second is much easier to comprehend. Rather early in Q/SR/19/33-34, the account states that Thomas Cosens chastised John Knight for throwing Mary onto a chest and sexually assaulting her in front of the family, stating “that is more then neede of.” In Q/SR/19/74, the narrative builds. First, emphasis is given to the family’s disrupted work and the crying of the children. Then, the account transitions to the sexual assaults and rapes sustained by Mary and Mellior Cosens. The sexual assault upon the “chest” does not include Thomas Cosens’s reproach, and, in fact, no mention is given regarding the husbands until the very end of the petition, which concludes by emphasizing the husbands’ feelings of powerlessness. John Cosens and Thomas Cosens heard what was happening to their wives but “would not For fear of their liues come forth.”²²

²² Q/SR/19/74-5 (1614)

It is possible that knowing their male audience, the depositors made a distinct choice to end this account with the description of the emasculation endured by John and Thomas Cosens, who were forced to listen to the cries of their wives. These unique and differing versions of the same horrific abuses suggest that in the early modern period, legal narratives were understood as stories in which truth and persuasion go hand-in-hand. And, apparently in 1614, the horrors of rape is rooted in a husband's pain and damaged ego rather than the trauma sustained by the victim of sexual violence.

Rape, Race, and Sexuality

Despite a pervasive distrust of feminine sexuality and moral frailty, English society recognized—perhaps begrudgingly—that a woman's will played a crucial role in the maintenance of heterosocial systems. Unlike other goods and chattel, the transfer of property in matrimony from one man to another, from father to husband, required more than simply the exchange of a woman's (reproductive) materiality. A woman must be willing to uphold the bond to which she had entered, and this willingness arises from an affective dimension that accompanies bodily subjection, a devotion that an authoritarian command cannot reliably procure. The consent of a woman, therefore, represents that she desires and wills the submission of her body, mind, and spirit. In light of the harsher Elizabethan penalties against sexual assault and rhetoric condemning rape, the scarcity of rape prosecutions and the even lower number of convictions reveal the deep-seated social investments in maintaining the ambiguities surrounding issues of women's consent to sexual

activity.²³ As England's global presence continued to expand, women's erotic lives, which were already utilized to benefit and secure patriarchal interests, were further politicized to maintain heterosocial arrangements, favoring a more specified male control: the right of fair men to the reproductive capacities of women.

Critics have often noted the ways in which early modern texts exploit the traditional opposition of black and white dichotomies to delineate lawful from unlawful sexual acts—such as rape, adultery and fornication—and to amplify the moral purity and untouchability of fair women. These crucial insights into the strategic deployment of early modern symbols of alterity have helped to elucidate the discursive construction of English superiority along the lines of aesthetic, moral, racial, and gendered differences. For example, the theatrical convention of the bedtrick usually substituted a fair virgin with her bawdy maidservant, described as sexually dark and, oftentimes, physically and racially other. This siphoned masculine sexual aggression from its improper target to an acceptable and already tainted body.²⁴ Beauty and bodily purity heightened the value and status of fair women and, according to Kim Hall, protected a white woman's secondary position in a male dominated society.²⁵ This protected status, however, exists precisely because of women's purported

²³ Evidence of physical assault was not enough to prove rape. Women were expected to have shouted, run for help, have torn and bloody clothes, and so forth. For more on the difficulties of proving rape, see Miranda Chaytor's article "Husband(ry)" and Barbara Baines's *Representing Rape*.

²⁴ Virginia Mason Vaughan reminds us that although Blackamoore maidservants represented the correct bodies upon which men could satiate their excessive lusts, difference is not at the core of the bedtrick. The bedtrick only works because the bawdy maidservant and her chaste mistress are interchangeable (Vaughan, 75). In her study *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, critic Dorothy Robert poignantly illustrates the negative consequences of governmental policies that systematically diminish the ability for black women to exercise reproductive rights. From her study, it is apparent that black females in particular have suffered the disastrous consequences of having a sexuality demonized by society. These negative stereotypes continue from the history of slavery that read black bodies only in terms of their physicality, their labor potential and reproductive ability to produce more slaves.

propensity toward an unruly and dark sexuality. Through codifying whiteness as “other” to base instincts, a fair woman’s body can be given economic, reproductive, and ideological values that distinguish her from the bodies of Moors and slaves; in turn, these variations in worth determine proper from improper touch along the lines of gender and racial difference.

The bodies of black or morally darkened women—such as Zanche from *The White Devil* and Tamora from Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*—serve as the proper sites for men to exercise their frustrated and excessive desires. In early modern theatrical performances, however, the Moorish maid Zanche would have appeared strikingly dissimilar from the equally sexually accessible Tamora, Queen of Goths. How, then, is sexual aggression directed at these women made to signify differently from the illicit or improper touch upon a chaste woman? And, what happens to the constellation of sexist and imperialist practices when that touch is displaced onto black or blackened bodies? A white man’s imaginable, anticipated, and potentially justifiable touch upon a woman’s body forced legal distinctions to be made between various types of women and the children produced from sexual activity. The Virginia Slave Law of 1662 set to clarify “some doubts [that had] arisen [on] whether children got by any Englishman upon a Negro woman should be slave or free.” The Virginia colony legislated that children will follow the condition of the mother, an act that effaced and even incentivized a white man’s rape of his black female slave. These laws sought to make perfectly clear the insurmountable difference between white and black women, a difference that they defined as truth that could only be doubted or perverted but not disproved. These English slave laws result from decades of constructing racial difference

²⁵ For more on how fair aristocratic women appropriated and negotiated patriarchal and imperialist discourse to create their own protected subjectivity, see Kim Hall’s *Things of Darkness* (179).

through the wills, sexualities, and reproductive bodies of women. By the mid-seventeenth century, a white woman's ability to exercise consent—to accept the sexual advances of proper mates, to resist improper unions, and to have her pleasure matter—became a sign of racial difference. The early modern theater did not simply reflect a changing racial landscape; it helped to create the condition by which the right to consent became the prerogative of those whose skin color would somehow come to signify the fiction of a pure lineage.

Looking Ahead

Early modern drama and literature often recapitulated rape discourses that maintained white masculine possession of a feminine or feminized body. It was commonplace for a woman's resistance to be figured as a performance of feigned dissent that paradoxically demonstrated her desire for force.²⁶ Although the prevalence of the no-means-yes topos was reflected in legal cases, the stage, and the page, it is also evident that writers and dramatists of the period were just as ready to question, critique, and experiment with these concepts as they were to exploit them, especially as they entwine with discourses of race. The texts that I analyze do not demonstrate one single approach to the intersections of race, gender, and sexual violence. They all do, however, dramatize the contradictions implicit to an imperialist agenda built upon the bodies of women to justify the social and political disenfranchisement of black and blackened bodies.

²⁶ Cynthia E. Garrett's work draws our attention to a line in *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Right* that blames sexual violence on Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. She states that this attests to the prevalence of the Ovidian precept—“force is pleasing to girls”—which is depicted in many lyric poems that she analyzes and justifies sexual violence through placing culpability on victims.

As a play that depicts the brutality of conquest that throws the phenomenon of consent into unrelieved crisis, Christopher Marlowe's two-part *Tamburlaine* begins this project. Acts of rape, genocide, and ethnocide serve as analogues for the tyranny of empire, in which resistance to an imperial will leads to slavery or death and a fraught openness to seduction secures a potential for survival. The titular character not only vanquishes his enemies but also proclaims a ruthless power to erase the contingencies that choice and futurity allow. Generally, characters—such as Olympia, her son, Agydas, Bajazeth, and Zabina—who choose suicide over rape, captivity, murder, and enslavement receive sympathy for their victimization and are praised for their courage that resists incorporation within the teleology of conquest. Zenocrate, in contrast, has received unforgiving critical attention. Some critics have viewed her as a mere prize, a token of Tamburlaine's empery. Others view her as a deluded victim without choice and still a few have maligned her as a politic woman who chooses self-preservation over honor. Despite the ostensible divide between those who resist Tamburlaine and those who lie in his camp (and in his bed), this first chapter argues that Marlowe counterintuitively aligns Tamburlaine's enslavement of his enemies and acts of genocide with those who "resist" him and choose chastity and suicide. In this inverted world, polar opposites demonstrate a similar dogged adherence to a futurity without change and a present without complexity.

In my second chapter on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, I point to the ways that this play on the one hand, highlights how consent is the means by which bonds between people are formed, the rights of intimacy acquired, and communities forged. On the other, this play also reveals the capacity for consent to demarcate who is a member of one's kind, who deserves to be treated with kindness, and who is worthy of forgiveness. Consent not only

brings people together in solidarity but serves as a means of exclusion. In a play set on the periphery of Europe, I show how *The Tempest* consistently undercuts Prospero's narrative of the island, which includes the attempted violation of Miranda's honor. This chapter considers that violent encounter as a pedagogical moment in which Miranda and Caliban both come to realize the repercussions of their desires and wills. In this event that forever alters the relationships of the islanders, the threat of rape fuses with the possibility of miscegenation and inducts Caliban and Miranda to a racialized hierarchy based on a recognition of kinship and of kind.

The final two chapters on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and John Marston's *The Wonder of Women* more explicitly pursue the role of a white woman's body and consent in relation to bodies of alterity in imperial processes of global expansion. Both plays depict the male competition of access to the sexual bodies of women while also indicating that white women, too, have desires of their own. Whereas Marston's *The Wonder of women* dignifies the erotic desires of its titular heroine, Shakespeare makes Lavinia the paradigm of Roman virtue and constructs her as a woman without lusts and whose will is repeatedly discarded to the extent that she suffers the most atrocious acts of violence. In other words, Shakespeare in this play equates feminine virtue with an asexuality that never has the option of exercising volition. Thus, the Queen of Goths, whose will and pleasure is accentuated throughout the drama, shows how misogynist perceptions of illicit sexual desire constitute women's consent. Through the birth of Tamora's black baby, the play engages with the relationship between interracial desire and kinship ties. According to the racial logic of this play, an allegiance to whiteness dominates shared bloodlines. Titus's responses to Lavinia's rape and mutilation continue the tragedy's engagement with changing perceptions of race;

through the usage of miscegenation to amplify the horrors of rape performed by Tamora's Gothic sons on the body of the Roman Lavinia, the play models the complex ways that the theater was thinking through race as lineage and as something visibly printed on the body.

In Marston's *The Wonder of Women* or *The Tragedy of Sophonisba*, the titular heroine is trafficked between men, threatened with gang rape and the rape of her corpse, and commits suicide to escape Roman enslavement. Although men attempt to strip her of a voice, the fair Sophonisba confronts them with an unshakeable insistence on the importance of her will. She boldly challenges the commodification of her person and maneuvers to determine to whom she submits and to what extent. This final chapter argues that Marston's drama engages with early modern debates concerning a woman's property in her person by presenting a compelling portrayal of a white woman as a political subject. Although the play safeguards the primacy of the fair Carthaginian's consent, it does so at the expense of black bodies, who are forced to sustain violent reductions to their materiality and are denied pleasure and the efficacy of consent for Sophonisba to have hers.

CHAPTER 1

CHASTE DEMANDS: THE PROBLEM OF THE SIMULTANEOUS, OR RACIALIZING HISTORY IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *TAMBURLAINE* PARTS I & II

Christopher Marlowe's theatrical sensation *Tamburlaine* (first performed c.a. 1587-8), captured the imagination of early modern audiences to the point that even six years after its debut, the Rose Playhouse in London would put on an extravagant thirteen performances of this drama, six of which were Parts I and II likely performed on consecutive days. The play's immense popularity was due to its ruthless titular hero, who begins as a paltry Scythian shepherd, a mere commoner who declares that he "will and shall" conquer Persia and terrorize the world over. Through his prophetic speech, audiences behold him transform to the commander of invincible legions and the manifest Scourge of God who brings puissant kings and infidels to their knees. In a play characterized by incessant movement, Marlowe's "rogue of Volga" roams the stage driven by nothing less than a desire for worldwide domination as he calls for a map to "see how much/ Is left for me to conquer all the world" (2:5.3.123-4). The discourse of mastery which *Tamburlaine* espouses, Richard Wilson suggests, likely thrilled an early modern English audience who could identify with this upstart of humble origins belittled by arrogant emperors.¹ Through the increased militarization of England and its successes in commercial ventures abroad, Marlowe's London playgoers must have realized the resonances between *Tamburlaine* and themselves

¹ Richard Wilson's "Visible Bullets: *Tamburlaine* the Great and Ivan the Terrible," *ELH* 62.1(1995):54.

as an emerging empire that strove to augment their global presence in mercantile endeavors and colonial expansion, usurping the waning-dominance of reigning superpowers.²

Critics like Stephen Greenblatt and Richard Wilson align Tamburlaine with the “acquisitive energy of merchants and adventurers,” the unrelenting tenacity necessary for English privateers and agents to thrust themselves in foreign commerce and trade.³ The controversial phenomenon of Tamburlaine, who couples discourses of mastery with the extreme and gory inversion of political and social hierarchy, could have elicited not only admiration from playgoers but also the defensiveness of “the middling sort” and aristocrats who—as Thomas Cartelli describes—may have felt threatened by “the competing ambitions of new aspirants.”⁴ Other critics tap into the potential for this play to bring forth divergent responses of fear and wonder, terror and enthusiasm from Marlowe’s English audiences when they turn to the ways that the early modern theater participated in the construction of an English identity through its representations of otherness, barbarism, and civility. For Lisa Hopkins, although this play offers a critical perspective on a colonial enterprise, she emphasizes that in Tamburlaine audiences found “an endorsement, indeed an embodiment, of English xenophobia.”⁵ While *Tamburlaine’s* anti-immigration resonances—the fear of an

² See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 193-221.

³ Richard Wilson further ties Tamburlaine’s exploits and routes with the voyages of England’s first joint-stock enterprise, the Muscovy Company. For Wilson, Tamburlaine “embodies the ambiguity of the freebooter for a culture in which raiding and trading were modes of the same enterprise” (57).

⁴ Thomas Cartelli, 80. For more on the phenomenon of *Tamburlaine* to “stir the emotions” of an English audience who enjoyed mastery vicariously through the titular hero as well as the ways that Marlowe’s creation also caused anxiety and tension, see Thomas Cartelli’s *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) 67-93.

⁵ Emily C. Bartels argues that Marlowe uses Tamburlaine to show the inconsistencies and contradictory impulses of orientalist discourse that are deployed for the service of empire (60). While Edward Said, for example, marks that Marlowe—among other playwrights and authors—monopolized on the exotic and

encroaching external threat—paralleled English animosity toward Catholics, the Anglo-Spanish hostilities, the Dutch Church Libel, and the fear of an Irish invasion, as Mary Floyd-Wilson and Kimberley Anne Coles have illuminated, the Scythian identity of this brutal titular hero was generally understood to be a common origin of the English themselves.⁶ In the sixteenth century, English genealogies by William Camden and Edmund Spenser, for example, endeavored to distance and even purge English history of its ethnic and barbaric ancestry. For Coles, *Tamburlaine* “reminds an English audience of the barbarism upon which their civilization is founded, and that the “degeneration” of the English in Ireland might well be a return to first principles.”⁷ Marlowe’s striking play, therefore, not only poses a threat from without but from within the borders of the commonwealth, residing in English blood.

This Scythian barbarian authors innumerable atrocities, the humiliation of kings, and acts of genocide through his “working words” that collapse referent to being. Within this

imaginary Orient for his theatrical productions, which in turn further solidified the East as the Christian West’s “other” (63), Lisa Hopkins, Emily Bartels, and Mary Floyd-Wilson acknowledge both its imperial and othering impulses as well as its ability to “illuminate the stranger within [the English]” (Hopkins). Mark Thornton Burnett highlights the ways that *Tamburlaine* could serve to undergird English fears about foreigners and strangers through turning the Egyptian Soldan into a metaphorical “exemplar of Englishness set in opposition to a Scythian who incorporates the worse traits of Italian and Irish Catholicism... linking [Tamburlaine] with idolatrous and dissenting forces closer to home” (47). See Mark Thornton Burnett *Constructing ‘Monsters’ in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Emily C. Bartels *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Mary Floyd-Wilson *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Lisa Hopkins “‘And shall I die, and this unconquered?’: Marlowe’s Inverted Colonialism,” *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 2.2 (1996): 1-23. See Edward Said *Orientalism* (New York and Toronto: Random House Inc., 1978).

⁶ For more on England’s Scythian heritage and its implications for audience reception and investments in *Tamburlaine*, see Mary Floyd-Wilson’s *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* pages 89-110 and Kimberly Anne Coles’s article “West of England: The Irish Specter in *Tamburlaine*” in *A Companion to Tudor Literature* edited by Kent Cartwright (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 459-474.

⁷ Coles, “West of England,” 468.

system of discursive mastery, David Thurn states that Tamburlaine “banish[es] the uncertain gap between present and future... binding the relation of signifier to signified.”⁸ Kathryn Schwarz underscores the repercussions that result from the deprivation of contingency and the disallow of alternative futures: “The fugitive ‘what if’ has been lost to a predicative ‘if...then’, in which ‘if’ has the force of ‘when’ and ‘then’ folds the future into the past. ... There is something eerie about this compressed purpose, which destroys not only human enemies but imaginative possibilities.”⁹ In Tamburlaine’s world without possibilities and unpredictable futurities, I insist, both his victims and his faithful subjects undergo a radical de-personation that strips them of their present individual complexity and denies the contingencies of the future. By erasing the idiosyncrasies of subjectivity and the possibility for change, Tamburlaine categorizes others and separates them into homogenous identifiable and immutable groups: those who support him and those who resist.

In Marlowe’s play, a totalizing and uncritical submission to Tamburlaine and, conversely, an outright resistance to his regime are two parts fulfilling the same ultimatum that the law of war delineates as the only outcome. Within this stifling homogeneity, I propose that Zenocrate’s consensual submission to Tamburlaine is not a conversion narrative. She does not relinquish her former ties, and, through her simultaneous possession of a multiplicity of bonds, Zenocrate undermines the dominant mode of this two-part play

⁸ See David H Thurn “Sights of Power in Tamburlaine” in *English Literary Renaissance* 19.1(1989): 9; For Susan Richards, Tamburlaine’s reiterative usage of images make them “equated, almost identified, with their referent... the referent itself becomes the image” (379). See Susan Richards ‘Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine II*: A Drama of Death,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 26.3(1965): 375-387 and Clare Harraway’s Re; For the material power of language and the early modern period, see Leah S. Marcus “Marlowe’s Magic Books: The Material Text,” in *Christopher Marlowe in Context* edited by Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15-26.

⁹ Kathryn Schwarz “Marlowe and the question of will” in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, 192-201.

that segregates populations and validates slavery and genocide as precepts of war. In “ Of Agency, Change, and Slavery” below, I interrogate the spectacles of submission that manifest Tamburlaine’s ruthless domination. As a class marked by a state of dispossession, slaves in this play do far more than simply make plain the Scythian’s brutality. The former emperors-turned-slaves inhabit a state of being deprived of hope and of the possibility for change. As slaves and not subjects, an interplay of power does not exist between themselves and their master, and every attempt to assert themselves and get their wills serve as Tamburlaine’s means to reinforce his physical and psychological mastery.

The following section “ ‘My poore pleasures are devided thus’: Multivalence in Consent” challenges the dominant reading of Zenocrate as a character entirely subsumed under Tamburlaine. Instead, I argue that Zenocrate’s promiscuous change in affiliation does not abide by Tamburlaine’s homogenizing worldview that reduces individuals to unambiguous allegiances and identities.¹⁰ In this way, Marlowe paradoxically aligns those who resist outright—such as Olympia, her son, Agydas, Bajazeth, and Zabina—with Tamburlaine’s merciless cause. Through the play’s compelling depictions of the similarities undergirding genocide with forms of resistance like suicide and Olympia’s refusal to get in bed with her conqueror, I argue that *Tamburlaine* depicts a logic of race grounded in a disavowal of the complexity of individuals that romanticizes a static condition and yokes the present to the future.

¹⁰ My chapter, which argues for the simultaneous polyvalence of Zenocrate’s promiscuous affiliations, is largely indebted to the ideas and discussion that arose from Melissa Sanchez’s talk “The Color of Monogamy in Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” which she gave in March 2017 at the Vanderbilt Robert Penn Warren Center for the Pre-Modern Cultural Studies Group.

Of Agency, Change, and Slavery

Unlike the present perception of slavery as a system of labor constituted by racist ideologies that target, maintain, and justify the systematically forced dispossession of black populations, Michael Guasco argues that in sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, slavery was often not considered permanent but as a temporary state meant to (re)integrate people to a community through inculcating obedience by way of subjugation.¹¹ As a play that grossly undermines the permanence and significations of status and identity, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, in some respects, reflects this perception of slaves as culturally constructed category, a form of servitude and bondage that does not follow the model of hereditary enslavement established in colonial America. There are no "natural" slaves in

¹¹ An English early modern audience may have perceived enslavement as a temporary state that could be useful and morally edifying with benefits to a commonwealth since it humbles and makes tractable wayward individuals. In addition, members of free society recognize their liberty through exposure to slavery while also maintaining a sense of equity among freemen, since bondmen perform vile services and drudgery that are necessary but not fit for freemen. "There could be no real liberty without real slavery, even if it only served as a visible reminder of what was at stake in society" (34). See Michael Guasco *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 11-40. However, in *Tamburlaine*, slavery fails to instill a love for liberty and a recognition of its value in the hearts of Tamburlaine's followers. Instead, it bridles the aspirations of his "free subjects," rendering them pliable and obedient to the extent of self-effacement. From promising Theridamas the shared position of joint consuls of the globe, Tamburlaine then reduces his offer to monarch of Eastern empires. Then, Tamburlaine finally names Theridamas, Techelles, and Casane kings of Argier, Fez, and Morocco, respectively, ancient exotic cities associated with wealth. It is worth noting that as Tamburlaine enjoys the entire Persian empire, his contributory kings by comparison share Northern Africa and reign over smaller territories. Despite his reiteration that each of his friends shall reign alongside him in majesty, by Act 4 Scene 1 of Part 1, the scenes of grotesque submission to which he subjects Bajazeth curb his men's desire for sovereignty, a state of power that may rival Tamburlaine's authority. When asked if they "desire to finger" a course of crowns brought before them, Theridamas responds: "none save kings must feede with these," with Techelles chiming, "Tis enough for us to see them, and for *Tamburlaine* onely to enjoy them" (4.4.109-12). These brave generals turned obsequious "flunkies" are part of a performance aimed at humiliating Bajazeth. Tamburlaine's reduction of Bajazeth to a spectacle makes his men shrink with humility and offer to lose their own self-possession as proof of their loyalty. For example, Theridamas professes: "If we deserve them [kingships] not with higher meeds... Take them away againe and make us slaves" (1:4.4.131,133). All they have belongs to Tamburlaine, who judges for himself not just their right to political sovereignty but even whether or not they should be dispossessed of all and made his slaves. Exposure to slavery, therefore, chastises the will of all who witness the mortifications of the Turkish royals. See Fred B. Tromly *Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 73.

Tamburlaine. In this section, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which Marlowe's theatrical sensation provides a conceptual bridge from a transitory to a permanent status of slave. More crucially, I argue that the pejorative function of slave plays an integral role in *Tamburlaine's* rapidly changing political landscape, a transformation that strikingly paralleled England's globalizing worldview.

When characters in this play hurl curses at one another, damning each other as slaves, they rely on the inferior significations attached to the term. As Mary Nyquist has succinctly stated, the term "slave" in an early modern context was used primarily to insult, to convey that the object of the slur is beneath contempt and to enlarge differences in social status.¹² To be a slave is not to possess a stable category of identification in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. The titular hero creates slaves out of kings; Tamburlaine, often called a slave, must be demeaned not because he originated from a state of enforced subjugation and wholesale dispossession but oddly because of the destructive liberties and excessive freedoms he enjoys. This term performs the work of demanding the action of a community to assert—or to (re)establish—hierarchy. In Part I, numerous characters rail against Tamburlaine for his audacious and irreverent presumption, for this "greedy-minded" "thief" has "usurp[ed] the glorious name of war" (1:4.1.67). Had he remained a mere shepherd, this Scythian would not have incurred the wrath of kings and emperors, who unite in a futile attempt to bring him to his knees. Called a slave, he is first someone to be subdued not only

¹² From Mary Nyquist's talk "Pejorative 'Slave,' Political 'Slavery'" at the Annual Shakespeare Association of America Meeting in Los Angeles, 2018. In addition, Emily C. Bartels explains that Bajazeth's derogation of Tamburlaine as a "base-born" "Scythian slave" frames the usurper as someone who is capable of being conquered. Thus, when Tamburlaine leaves the battlefield as the victor, Bajazeth "envisions him as one who sword is influenced by "such a star.../As rules the skies and countermands the gods" (*Spectacles of Strangeness*, 69).

because he threatens established kingdoms but because he is an outsider who refuses to abide in his place that is at once a social, cultural, and geographic circumscription.

In a futile attempt to negotiate their release, Zenocrate and her Medean lords call attention to the various powerful diplomatic networks to which “so meane a man” ought to submit:

...Traveiling with these Medean Lords
To *Memphis*, from my uncles country of *Medea*,
Where all my youth I have bene governed,
Have past the armie of the mightie Turke:
Bearing his privie signet and his hand:
To safe conduct us thorow *Affrica*. (1.2.11-6)

The Islamic world that Marlowe has constructed for Tamburlaine to plunder is hierarchized, affluent, plagued with internal skirmishes but is also one that is knit through political alliances and kinship. Zenocrate’s safe passage has not only been guaranteed by her father, uncle, and the lords who accompany her, but even the Turkish emperor has given them his privy signet—a symbol of his actual presence and authority despite his physical absence. Magnetes also presents Tamburlaine with gifts from the “puissant Cham” and “his highnesse[’s] letters to command aide and assistance” should they be in need (1.2.18-20). Tamburlaine thrusts himself in this established system, when he declares himself to be the “greater man” who, countermanding their royal prerogative, facetiously explains that “through [his] provinces [they] must expect/Letters of conduct from [his] mightinesse,/ If [they] intend to keep [their] treasure safe” (1.1.23-5). For this Scythian shepherd to impose his authority, he does not simply claim parity among other rulers but asserts his superiority.

Significantly, the ability to possess serves as Tamburlaine’s rhetorical means to convey the dominance he constructs. His sardonic reply frames social hierarchy through property and borders. In spite of their regal statuses, Zenocrate and her Medean lords *can be*

and *are* divested of their treasures because the authority they believe that they possess over their belongings depends on Tamburlaine's recognition and validation of their right to property. The emphasis Tamburlaine places on *his* provinces work in a threefold manner. First, it reveals to audiences the disruptive force that he represents, in which boundaries are completely redefined and maps redrawn to make room for the Scythian. Second, the right to property is not something to which a stranger is entitled. When a person is not considered a political subject or "guest" of the territory he or she inhabits or passes through, material belongings risk expropriation no matter the status of the owner. A princess is only as powerful as the social apparatus that dignifies her state. And, finally, the tight political network invoked by Tamburlaine's captives is ineffective, in part, because Tamburlaine is not figured within *their* system. Chaos and confusion, disorder and disruption accompany Tamburlaine and his forces.

When Tamburlaine uses the term "slave," he signifies himself within an established political system and social hierarchy centered on the possession of self and property. A master possesses a slave, who does not and by definition cannot own property in his person. For this reason, Tamburlaine speaks the language of possession—a linguistic economy of social order through ownership—to make his purposes clear. Unlike a political subject bound in a reciprocal submission to his lord, the relation between a master and a slave does not include an interplay of power but is static. When Tamburlaine and his enemies curse each other with the term "slave," categorically the lowliest and most abject of social statuses, they attempt to eradicate the contingencies of power relations between them in an effort to tame the disorder that Tamburlaine brings forth. Both Tamburlaine and his

enemies, then, are committed to a rigid and immutable social order that makes their foe their diametrical opposite.

Likewise, when Zenocrate and Zabina continue the war of words began by Tamburlaine and Bajazeth, they boast their superiority not through descriptions of their majesty, but specifically through possession and an emphasis on the base position that their enemies will inhabit:

Zenocrate. Hear'st thou, Anippe, how thy drudge doth talk?
And how my slave, her mistress, menaceth?
Both for their sauciness shall be employ'd
To dress the common soldiers' meat and drink;
For we will scorn they should come near ourselves...

Zabina. Thou art deceiv'd. I hear the trumpets sound
As when my emperor overthrew the Greeks,
And led them captive into Africa.
Straight will I use thee as thy pride deserves;
Prepare thyself to live and die my slave. (1:3.3.182-6, 203-7)

Both Zenocrate and Zabina envision slavery as a form of castigation for the “sauciness” and “pride” exhibited by the other. It will humble the vanquished so that they with their own eyes will view the other as empress, so that they will feel and know their place. The reiteration of “my slave” asserts a hierarchy of ownership—Zenocrate will control Zabina, and Anippe will command Ebea. This suggests that the ability to possess another is the primary relation of authority that is recognized and understood in this violent clash between upstarts and established rulers. When Tamburlaine is advised to devise a better means to check Zabina’s tongue, he instructs Zenocrate to handle her “slave.” In turn, Zenocrate denies responsibility for Zabina and states “[s]he is my handmaid’s slave... Chide her, Anippe” (1:4.2.69-71). Within this performative deflection of possession that makes the Turkish empress the property of Zenocrate’s servant, their fun at the expense of the

degraded but once mighty Ottomans calcify the new social order, in which a serving girl treats Zabina as her domestic drudge and cruelly warns to have her “whipt stark nak’d” (1:4.2.74). Anippe’s authority over Zabina underscores the gulf in power that exists between the Ottoman empress and the so-called Tartarian thief and his concubine. It both shows what a servant girl can do to a former empress and also demonstrates the new royals’ untouchability. In comparison to Tamburlaine’s invincibility, the threat to command that the empress be stripped and her flesh severed is itself an imagined spectacle through which Zabina’s body—which is denied the accoutrements of identity, the preservers of dignity, decency, and of defense—is left to signify its complete vulnerability.

But, Zabina is never whipped and, in spite of their intimidations, she is nonetheless given full leave to harangue her oppressors and conceptually navigate bondage in such a way that momentarily creates a space for agency. Within slavery, Tamburlaine makes choice paradoxically possible, but it is precisely through allowing his slaves avenues to maneuver within captivity that Tamburlaine succeeds in their complete humiliation and destroys their perception that the future could be any different from their present. When Tamburlaine orders Bajazeth to bend to the disdainful earth and become the footstool that he will use to ascend his newly won throne, Bajazeth indignantly responds that he would first have his bowels ripped from his body rather than “yield to such a slavery” (1:4.2.16-8). Their following exchange eventually leads to Bajazeth’s prostration:

Tamburlaine. Base villain, vassal, slave to Tamburlaine,
Unworthy to embrace or touch the ground
That bears the honour of my royal weight.
Stoop, villain, stoop! Stoop; for so he bids
That may command thee piecemeal to be torn,
Or scatter’d like the lofty cedar-trees
Struck with the voice of thundering Jupiter.

Bajazeth. Then, as I look down to the damned fiends,
Fiends, look on me! And thou, dread god of hell,
With ebon scepter strike this hateful earth,
And make it swallow both of us at once! (1:4.2.19-29)

“For so he bids” punctuates Tamburlaine’s abusive ultimatum and formulates his demand as a proposition or request that makes allowance for Bajazath’s willful submission. Of course, audiences have seen this construction of coercion and force as viable tactics of persuasion before in Tamburlaine’s rape-turned-seduction of Zenocrate. What I wish to emphasize here is that, like Zenocrate, Bajazeth *yields*. Despite his previous retort that he would rather die than bring his face to the ground in prostration, Bajazeth eventually narrates his physical submission, in which he prays for the earth to swallow him and Tamburlaine at once. Bajazeth lives to be subjected to slavery.¹³ Within ten lines of this fast-paced play, Bajazeth goes from resisting his oppressor to providing Tamburlaine, his men, and audiences with a spectacle of submission. Tamburlaine’s domination is literally manifested when he tops Bajazeth, the submissive who bears the weight of his oppressor and who exists for the pleasure of his conqueror. According to Karen Cunningham, Marlowe’s characters such as Tamburlaine “are fascinated not only with what can be done *by* a willful ruler but also with what can be done *to* another’s body.”¹⁴ However, what

¹³ While it is possible that Bajazeth stoops because Tamburlaine pushes him to the ground, I want to leave open the potential that the Turkish emperor bows without Tamburlaine’s physical force. Like the Babylonian governor who at first offers to die rather than submit to his conqueror but, when faced with a grisly death, recants and begs for his life (Part II, 5.1.100-25), Bajazeth’s eventual prostration—the submission of his body—could also be perceived as the malleability of his will, suggesting that Bajazeth’s humiliation arises from his choice to submit.

¹⁴ Karen Cunningham’s “Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death” in *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe* edited by Emily C. Bartels (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1997) 155. Mark Thornton Burnett highlights the ways that Zenocrate’s enclosed and etherealized body differs from the treatment of his prisoners, whose bodies are reduced and rendered grotesque in even their normal physiological needs and functions. Tamburlaine makes Bajazeth and the captive kings “reveal their buttocks, to display their lower bodily strata in scenes of humiliation and belittlement” (36). In effect, Tamburlaine’s form of political, social, psychological, and physical manipulation forces his captives to discover—or, perhaps,

Marlowe reveals in this scene is that what *can* be done to another's body is often indistinguishable from what *may* be done—modal auxiliaries that fundamentally differ with respect to volition. Perhaps what intrigues are the acts to which another submits, accepts, and chooses over death.

I ought to state outright that this is not a negation of the atrocious conditions of captivity; nor do I wish to paint the circumscription of Bajazeth's agency as anything less than coercive and horrific. As with early modern debates on a woman's will and consent in rape, this scene dramatizes the body's malleability to the commands of another while leaving open the possibility of Bajazeth's equivocal will, his negotiation of what remains in his capacity to control. When the former Ottoman emperor prays to the devils to destroy Tamburlaine and also himself, he reveals that his humiliation derives not simply from an external pressure but from his degraded body that yields. The physical abasement by which Bajazeth must not only stoop but serve as the object—the thing—that Tamburlaine will use to hoist himself upon his throne is enacted through the body that gives, that conforms, and that submits. Disconcertingly, Bajazeth perceives his submission as complicit with Tamburlaine's will, and for this collusion, he refuses to absolve himself of the destruction he hopes will befall his oppressor. Throughout I and II *Tamburlaine*, references are made to Christians who suffer the yoke of galley slavery at the hands of Turkish infidels, but in staged representations of excessive violence in bondage, enslavement does not arise from the need for specific labors to be performed but from the goal to humiliate Tamburlaine's enemies. Through the enslavement of Bajazeth and Zabina, audiences come to realize that

to be unable to recognize—their bodies anew. Mark Thornton Burnett "Tamburlaine and the Body" in *Criticism* 33.1(1991): 31-47.

humiliation does not simply derive from the insult of being made to perform base services, but making choices—using reason to exercise the will as a response to the violent tyranny of another. In other words, Tamburlaine lets his slaves navigate their captivity and exercise some kind of self-autonomy only to circumscribe them further and to limit more severely their temporal horizons.

Throughout their captivity, both Bajazeth and his wife Zabina maneuver the fraught interplay between will and instinctual need, reason and the limitations of the body, which conflate under the extreme duress of slavery. As Tamburlaine instructs his men and Zenocrate to eat, he holds out his sword with meat on its tip, commanding Bajazeth: “eat, sir; take it/ from my sword’s point, or I’ll thrust it to thy heart” (1:4.4.40-1). Bajazeth does, indeed, take the meat but stamps on the food. Again, Tamburlaine threatens Bajazeth with torture, stating that he will have the former Turkish emperor flay himself alive and then eat his own flesh. Neither Tamburlaine nor his men will perform the task of “slicing” Bajazeth’s arms; this grisly honor is reserved for the former emperor who will be the one to perform this deed. Tamburlaine’s pressure is imagined to lead to Bajazeth’s actions of self-harm and self-consumption even though, in this instance, Tamburlaine fails to convince Bajazeth to eat even the food that he is given. The humiliation that Tamburlaine proffers makes a grotesque turn in which Bajazeth’s body is made to sustain itself as the will to survive becomes the means to prolong suffering eventually leading to destruction. Rather than encourage her husband to eat to save himself from self-cannibalism, Zabina implores: “Eat, Bajazeth; let us live in spite of them/ looking some happy power will pity and enlarge us” (1:4.4.99-100). She, therefore, frames his willingness to eat as a choice in contempt of their oppressors. Once Bajazeth finally stomachs the food and even asks for more meat,

Tamburlaine sadistically denies him: “too much eating will make [him] surfeit” (1:4.4.104). Each attempt to recast their submission as an expression of autonomy that speaks against their captors reinforces the mastery of their enslavers.

What I hope to have shown are the ways that Bajazeth and Zabina navigate their captivity to refigure submission as something other: prostration to Tamburlaine becomes Bajazeth’s prayer to the devils and a curse on his tormentor; Zabina, who views their death as the objective of their oppressors, reframes their fulfillment of Tamburlaine’s commands to eat as a means to resist. Despite the unfathomable constraints to which they are subjected—literally visualized through Bajazeth’s caged body—the Turkish emperor and empress seek an expression of agency that depends on the hope that some chance turn of events will lead to Tamburlaine’s overthrow. And, each time they somehow manage to imagine an alternative future, Tamburlaine uses their method of resistance to calcify his hold on them, to make their subjugation to his will all the more stifling. Tamburlaine acutely recognizes that the most psychological pain can be wrought through toying with Bajazeth’s and Zabina’s autonomy, allowing them moments of alleviation to express their will only to wrest that choice from them and claim it as his to command.

Physical and psychological manipulation eventually lead Bajazeth and Zabina to a state “with shame, with hunger, and with horror” (1:5.1.236) bereaved of all hope. But, Tamburlaine’s enslavement, which humbles the mighty, does not make them lose the perception of their worth. The susceptibilities of their bodies—their weaknesses and cravings—have mortified them but have not eclipsed the memories of the “former triumphs of [their] mightiness” (1:5.1.253). They perceive their “obscure infernal servitude” (1:5.1.254) not as a new state of being but as a “dested guise” (1:5.1.235). Zabina intuits the

performative role of their enslavement, which amplifies Tamburlaine's puissance. "All the world will see and laugh" (1:5.1.252) at them not simply because they are slaves but because they were once an emperor and empress now turned footstool, caged pet, and dinner entertainment. Their purpose in Tamburlaine's camp makes it impossible for them to forget their former greatness. In fact, one must wonder if they had not committed suicide and had somehow "digested" their enslavement, whether or not Tamburlaine would still have enjoyed their presence or if he would have disposed of their bodies as he had so many others. In the moments immediately preceding their suicides, Bajazeth and Zabina no longer anticipate a future that deviates from their present state of bondage. These former rulers and enemies of Tamburlaine and now his slaves view the future in a static relation to their present state. Without the hope of rescue, slavery becomes a permanent state in the minds of the former Turkish rulers. Through his psychological manipulation, Tamburlaine has succeeded in destroying their perception of contingency.

Bajazeth and Zabina make the choice to take their lives, to end their servitude rather than perpetuate their suffering and humiliation. Marlowe underscores the extremes to which these prisoners had gone in order to get their wills. Deprived of an obvious object for harm, they brain themselves against the cage: the very tool used to keep them in captivity becomes the instrument of their release. When Anippe finds their bodies and cries to her mistress, "this their slavery hath enforc'd,/And ruthless cruelty of Tamburlaine" (1:5.1.345-6), she refuses to view suicide as an expression of agency but sees it rather as the product of the base treatment they suffered at the whims of their primary oppressor. Zenocrate similarly obscures their choice when she calls for the heavens to "Blush... that gave them honour at their birth,/ And let them die a death so barbarous" (1:5.1.350-1). Rather than attribute the

wills of Bajazeth and Zabina with self-sovereignty expressed in their deaths, these previous tormentors and now sympathizers further render the Turkish emperor and empress passive when they give Tamburlaine and heaven the power to bring forth or to prevent death. Although Zenocrate shows that she had been moved to contrition by the gory sight, her apostrophes “Behold the Turk and his great empress” (1:5.1.354, 357, 362) emphasize the spectacularity of the objectified bodies. These are not mastered beings who attempt to find some form of autonomy but sorry figures for contemplation through which one can realize the caprice of fortune and those “slippery crowns.” When at the end of Part I, Tamburlaine closes the play professing that he will entomb with honor the King of Arabia with the “great Turke and his faire Emperesse” (1:5.1.530-2), the convenience of their deaths become all too apparent. By the end of Part I, the chaos that Tamburlaine initially represents transforms and is sterilized of chance and unknowns. Slavery is no longer temporary; for with the deaths of Bajazeth and Zabina, their enslavement and Tamburlaine’s mastery become absolute. The hierarchy between them can never and shall never change. Perhaps in this it is all too fitting that Bajazeth and Zabina took their lives with the tools of their master. For even their suicides, procured by them as their desperate means to realize some form of self-determination, are exploited by Tamburlaine for his enlargement.

“My poore pleasures are devided thus”: Multivalence in Consent

Tamburlaine’s drive to conquer cities and to subdue monarchs works in tandem with his desire for the absolute submission of his followers. The devotion of his subjects, he professes, matter more than booty: “Thinke you I way this treasure more than you?” (1:1.2.84). Interestingly, the first person wooed, seduced, and won is not Zenocrate, but the

general Theridamas. Although the Persian initially confronts Tamburlaine with legions far better equipped to vanquish the Scythian and his paucity of men, in an illogical turn of events, Theridamas pledges loyalty to a thief in command of “silly country Swaines” (1:1.2.47). Theridamas describes his feelings of enticement and, before a host of witnesses, performs a pseudo-marriage ceremony with Tamburlaine:

Theridamas. Won with thy words, and conquered with thy looks,
I yield my selfe, my men and horse to thee:
To be partaker of thy good or ill,
As long as life maintaines *Theridamas*.

Tamburlaine. *Theridamas* my friend, take here my hand,
Which is as much as if I swore by heaven,
And call'd the Gods to witness of my vow,
Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine,
Untill our bodies turne to Elements:
And both our soules aspire celestiall thrones. (1:2.227-238)

Tamburlaine promises that side-by-side they will “walke upon the lofty cliffs” and “[b]oth will raigne as Consuls of the earth” with kings serving them as their Senators (1.2.193, 197-8). Should Theridamas be willing to have faith in a then obscure Tamburlaine—forsaking his current esteemed position as general of the Persian army and hazarding defeat—he will one day “sit with Tamburlaine in all his majestie” (1.2.209). In this ritualized exchange of reciprocal consent, Theridamas pledges his body and “all [his] worldly goods” to Tamburlaine “so long as they both shall live.” In a symbolic gesture of solemn union, they join hands as Tamburlaine vows that their hearts combine to one. Even when their bodies in death return to the earth, their souls will rise together. In this decisive point and genesis of Tamburlaine’s forces, the play accentuates the intense consensual submission, faith, and devotion exuded by his followers like Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane.

Zenocrate and her Medean lords, however, do not seem enticed with the Scythian's promises but instead convey their reluctance. After his successful seduction of Theridamas, Tamburlaine then turns his attention to his royal captives:

And now faire Madam, and my noble Lords,
If you will willingly remain with me,
You shall have honors, as your merits be:
Or els you shall be forc'd with slaverie. (1:1.2.253-6)

The drastically limited choice between a performed willingness that brings fair treatment or a demonstration of aversion that leads to enslavement conceals the difficult task of recognizing consent in passivity, a crux that envelops this play as well as the critical readings of Zenocrate's *raptus* turned lawful union.¹⁵ Within Tamburlaine's formulation, when Zenocrate simply accepts the "exceeding favours" that Tamburlaine offers, her actions imply consent.¹⁶ His offer translates her inner faculties to an external and somewhat more legible show. For Zenocrate and her Medean lords, their inaction implies submission, and what this master requires is their tacit consent to the enjoyment of the liberties, entertainments, and luxuries that he provides them. Unlike Theridamas and Agydas who

¹⁵ Tamburlaine demands they reside with him of their own accord, that they choose to be limited in their mobility, that they stay. The will to choose passivity seems counterintuitive in part because, as Elaine Scarry explains, we often differentiate "human wills from determined phenomenon...[through] terms of physical movement" (875). This discursive conceptualization of volition through images of physical mobility also influences the means by which we recognize consent in action. See Elaine Scarry "Consent and the Body: Injury, Departure, and Desire" in *New Literary History* 21.4 (1990). In discussing the associations of physical mobility and political agency, Katherine Rowe writes, "The classical works of English political philosophy, from John of Salisbury's influential *Policraticus* (1159) to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) conceive of political volition in terms of physical motion" (11). See also, Katherine Rowe's *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ In early modern rape depositions, petitioners, who often knew their assailants well, included details about the ways that they refused special treatment and gifts from their aggressors. This move helped to substantiate claims that their non-consent had been consistent since acceptance of "good treatment," including commodities, could be seen as indications of consent. For ways that consent was proven by more than just witnesses of the speech-act but also acts of kindness, exchanges of gifts, and even laughter, see Johanna Rickman's article "He would never consent in his heart": Child Marriages in Early Modern England" in the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 6(2): 2013.

both state that they “yield” to Tamburlaine (1.2. 229, 257), a term synonymous with submission which—as historian Garthine Walker points out—implies consent, Zenocrate instead provides an equivocal response: “I must be please perforce, wretched *Zenocrate*” (1.2.257-9). She uses the modal verb “must” to articulate an affective product of subjugation that makes captivity livable and views the enjoyment of bondage, not submission itself, as an imperative, which thereby opens the possibility that gratification can be had, that she may derive pleasure in her new state.

When Agydas eventually critiques Zenocrate for having digested the “offensive rape by Tamburlaine” and insists that although she feels as though she is treated as a queen, she is “supposed his worthlesse Concubine,” he advises her not to honor Tamburlaine with her love “but for necessity” (1:3.2.29-30). Despite having previously submitted to Tamburlaine, Agydas reveals that he has not been converted to one of Tamburlaine’s ardent followers; he remains unchanged and urges Zenocrate to endure her captivity in a similar fashion—with the hope of being restored to her father and Arabia rather than in obsequious desire for Tamburlaine’s love. In effect, he suggests that she feign feelings for her captor because her survival depends on it, and he reminds her of another political world and economy, one that neither validates Tamburlaine’s authority nor dignifies Zenocrate’s place in it. While her body would exist in Tamburlaine’s domain, Agydas imagines that her heart should only remain faithful to her father, her home, and her first love, and, above all, this form of integrity cannot co-exist with a desire for Tamburlaine. In other words, she cannot possess all allegiances at once.

Zenocrate, however, had been moved by Tamburlaine’s words and shares in his vision even before the realization of his global domination. Although Zenocrate had at first

seemed unwilling to remain with the Scythian, through continual pleasant interactions with her lord she consents to him of her own volition, a willingness that is manifested through her erotic and, according to Agydas, irrational attraction. In contrast with Theridamas, whose complete conversion happens onstage, Zenocrate's offstage seduction, which occurs sometime between Act 1 and 2, is never absolute. But, while she neither clasps hands with Tamburlaine nor does she formally pledge herself to his cause, she nonetheless becomes strategically complicit in his imperial agenda, because in this "world turned upside down" political structures remain the same—a shall-be monarch still needs a wife to legitimate and maintain his authority. Act 3 Scene 3 portrays this inversion of the dominant order and the role of women in making this transition possible. Bajazeth gives Zabina his crown to hold whilst praising her for the three sons that she has borne him, a commendation that foreshadows the three sons that Zenocrate would likewise produce for Tamburlaine in Part II. Since Zenocrate is neither a dignified queen nor is she yet a wife and producer of heirs, Tamburlaine calls her the "loveliest Maide alive" and gives yet another blazon of her features. He orders her to sit down beside Zabina with his crown "As if thou wert the Emprasse of the world" (3.3.124-5). Zenocrate must act the part, and prove herself to be a malleable student able to hurl the same rhetoric of abuse that Zabina utilizes to demean the Egyptian princess.

When the men take to the field, Zenocrate remains onstage sharing the space with a bonafide empress and each of their maidservants, who all partake in the war of words that Tamburlaine and Bajazeth had begun.¹⁷ Again, Zenocrate suffers being called a "base

¹⁷ Alison Findlay provides a fascinating reading of this scene that attends to the culture of theater companies. She reminds readers that Zenocrate and Zabina, who perform kingly power, are boy actors rehearsing the roles that they will eventually play as men. "The process of king-making is enacted between the male hero and a

concubine,” but this time from the scornful mouth of the Turkish empress. Zabina’s initial slurs focus on both Zenocrate’s and Tamburlaine’s illegitimacies—one as a mistress and kept woman, the other as a thief. A quick learner, Zenocrate ventriloquizes Tamburlaine’s rhetoric of certitude: “Cal’st thou me Concubine that am betroath’d/Unto the great and mighty *Tamburlaine?*” (3.2.169-70). And, as Tamburlaine uses Zenocrate to validate his reign, Zenocrate reveals the understanding of her dependency on the Scythian’s success. After accompanying Tamburlaine on his campaigns—whether willingly or not—raptus damages her reputation as a chaste maid and makes a return to her prior life a theoretical impossibility.

With all the praises heaped on Zenocrate for her beauty, she never receives commendations for her chastity, a virtue that surfaces in most accounts of paradigmatic women. As something both culturally imposed on women’s bodies but that nonetheless requires women’s willful election of that hallowed state, the conspicuous absence of chastity in descriptions of Zenocrate points to the problematic juncture of volition in conquest that this play presents, an intersection that catapults an individual’s particular consent in the broad teleology of empire. In fact, when Tamburlaine confirms that she is free from the “blot of foule in chastity” (1:5.1.186), his rhapsodic acclamations serve to evince *his* magnanimity and nobleness. The preservation of her honor no longer lies in Zenocrate’s hands but in Tamburlaine’s, who could have taken her virgin-lock but did not. Through emphasizing his honorable usage of Zenocrate, he legitimates his right to force kingdoms to submit to his will. She is “chaste” because he says she is. She is honorable only in so far as

woman character, and between a master actor and his boy” (249). See Alison Findlay “Marlowe and women” in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*.

his rhetoric conveys the veracity of his claims.¹⁸ In essence, Tamburlaine hijacks a woman's authority to choose chastity and defend her virtue as his means to dignify the empire that he has forged. It is no wonder, then, that scholars have often hurled scathing critiques at Tamburlaine's queen.¹⁹ For Shepard, Zenocrate "silently cooperates with [Tamburlaine's] aggression toward her and toward the world."²⁰ Harsher yet, Sarah Emsley insists that while she may not have much choice regarding her marriage with Tamburlaine, "within these constraints her conscience is free, and she is not obliged to love him, or to enjoy the riches and status he offers her... Like Meander and Cosroe, Zenocrate has an instinct for self-preservation, and her marriage to Tamburlaine, coming as it does immediately after such

¹⁸ Mary Stripling, in contrast, argues that Tamburlaine is obsessed with conveying Zenocrate's impenetrability, her coldness and frigidity. "Yet even after she has given birth to three sons, Zenocrate continues to be associated with chastity.... Marlowe's impulse to first contain Zenocrate and then remove her altogether from Tamburlaine's burgeoning empire reflects a nostalgia for women who are physically contained following their expansiveness—and who leave empire-building to men" (214). See Mary Stripling's chapter "Tamburlaine's Domestic Threat" in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, edited by Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007) pages 211-223.

¹⁹ Gina Bloom explains that while an aural openness in male characters usually accompanies demonstrations of their heroism and leadership, in female characters, Bloom states, "such openness functions as a sign of lasciviousness" (132). See Gina Bloom's book *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Sara Munson Deats describes the increasing marginalization and fetishization of Zenocrate throughout the play, who—by its end—becomes thoroughly interpellated within patriarchal ideology: "[Zenocrate's] development from a spirited, feeling woman to a passive, placid stereotype to an enthroned icon to a silent corpse marks the objectification of the female that the play foregrounds" (149). See *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark, DE: Associated University Presses, 1997) pages 126-156. Alison Findlay, who acknowledges Zenocrate's torn allegiances but who understands her crowning as a capitulation to Tamburlaine, describes Zenocrate as a reluctant victim who ultimately consigns herself to Tamburlaine's will: "having exhausted the impossibilities of resistance, she then surrenders her divided duty as a female subject in a tragic swansong for her integrity. Her commitment to live and die with Tamburlaine denies difference by subsuming herself into his ambitions" (240). In *Zenocrate*, Alan Shepard only finds an endorsement of Tamburlaine's misogyny and eroticization of murder. In comparison, he argues that Olympia exposes the brutal fantasies, nonconsensual sexuality, and self-serving ends of soldiers and military regimes. See Alan Shepard's "Endless Sacks: Soldiers' Desire in *Tamburlaine*" in *Renaissance Quarterly* 46.4 (1993): 734-53. In contrast, Lisa Hopkins includes Zenocrate in her grouping of foreign women like Dido, Olympia, and Abigail "distinguished by an apparently limitless capacity to love... Zenocrate feels not only for Tamburlaine and for all three of her sons but for her father, her neglected suitor."

²⁰ Shepard, "Endless Sacks," 746.

horrific deaths, is a pragmatic choice.”²¹ It is concerning that the one person who is “slut-shamed” by characters onstage is the person whom critics often view either as a mere adornment or as a woman perfectly interpellated within Tamburlaine’s vision.

Zenocrate’s will to love and desire Tamburlaine has not been treated as distinct from her enthusiastic and at other times reluctant participation in his genocidal agenda. As Emsley’s caustic assessment of the Egyptian princess suggests, sexual honor and political pragmatism cannot co-exist in a woman who loves the perpetrator of inhuman atrocities and who accepts the crown he offers her stained with the blood of her own people. Unlike the seduction and subsequent conversion of Theridamas, however, Zenocrate’s equally political seduction results not in an unmitigated allegiance but in an affective devotion pulled in several directions at once. This multiplicity simply does not exist to such an extent in any other character in Part I. Zenocrate herself reveals a discomfort in her unchaste and complex emotions. Not only may this be an intimation that she has internalized the labels of “concubine” and “whore” hurled at her from both her countrymen and her enemies, but it also conveys that she understands the social script requiring women to uphold a single and absolute fidelity of heart, soul, and body. Zenocrate’s sundry allegiances are entwined with her refusal of temporal fixity. Playgoers witness the onstage seduction and conversion of Theridamas, and he remains one of Tamburlaine’s most loyal generals and future tributary kings in that he never attempts to temper the wrath or sue for compassion on behalf of the kingdom from which he comes. For Tamburlaine and his devoted followers, one either is or

²¹ For more contrasts between Zenocrate and the “virtuous, long-suffering type” à la Olympia, see Sarah Emsley’s article “I cannot love, to be an empress”: Women and Honour in *Tamburlaine*” in *The Dalhousie Review*, 80.2 (2000), pages 176-7.

is not in league with the Scourge of God. People like Agydas—and, in a similar vein, Olympia, Zabina, and Bajazeth—who perform submission with ulterior motives and whose loyalties lie elsewhere conveniently choose suicide rather than suffer Tamburlaine’s wrath, and for this they are buried according to their statuses.

Through Zenocrate, Marlowe presents a character who reveals that even within the limited options provided, one can still respond in such a way that confounds the terms of the offer. The complete conversion of Theridamas to Tamburlaine is only partially found in Zenocrate:

Now shame and duty, love and feare presents
A thousand sorrowes to my martyred soule:
Whom should I wish the fatall victory,
When my poore pleasures are devided thus,
And rackt by dutie from my cursed heart:
My father and my first betrothed love,
Must fight against my life and present love:
Wherein the change I use condemns my faith,
And makes my deeds infamous through the world.
But as the Gods to end the Troyans toile,
Prevented *Turnus of Lavinia*,
And fatally enrich *Eneas* love.
So for a final Issue to my griefes,
To pacifie my Countrie and my love,
Must *Tamburlaine*... with vertue of a gentle victorie,
Conclude a league of honor to my hope.
Then as the powers devine have preordained,
With happy safty of my fathers life,
Send like defence of faire *Arabia*. (1:5.1.383-402)

Zenocrate poignantly exhibits the duress of torn allegiances, specifically the burden of “dutie” that plagues her—the moral obligation she owes to not only her father but also to Arabia. When she vocalizes the weight of her guilt, Zenocrate understands that her devotion to Tamburlaine, despite his incessant praises of her beauty, has nonetheless soiled her reputation precisely because she actively desires him and because her affections carry

political weight that enables her rise in social standing from Egyptian princess to Empress of Persia at the cost of her people's destruction. Zenocrate's statement "the change I use condemns my faith" suggests that not only do her feelings for Tamburlaine malign her honor, but, more importantly, she is hyper-aware of her utilization of this affective change. Zenocrate intimates how erotic desire and politic tact can coexist. If we take Tamburlaine's word that she remains a maid on her coronation day, then despite her embodied virginity, her fickle will that longs for Tamburlaine's love mars her constancy. In its emphasis that Tamburlaine is not "the first affecter of [her] excellence" (5.1.379), the play at once invites chastisement of Zenocrate's fluctuating but shrewd desire while exploring the impossibility of totalizing constancy.²² *Tamburlaine* gives playgoers an Egyptian princess whose choice, on the one hand is complicatedly complicit in the destruction of her city and, paradoxically on the other, whose desires include holding several devotions at once and not the relinquishment of one for the other.

Zenocrate, who compares herself to Lavinia, registers her role in the siege of Damascus as the necessary drama leading to Tamburlaine's fated imperial triumph. Rather than draw similarities between her state and that of a Sabine, whose rape by the Romans caused war between their fathers and husbands, Zenocrate understands the anguish she feels through Lavinia, a figure who must first bring "a great war on her people" for her to enjoy

²² In *Othello*, Brabantio reveals the misogynist link between alterations in affective devotion and sexual unfaithfulness when he equates his daughter's lack of duty and willingness to deceive her father as a sign of Desdemona's propensity toward marital infidelity "She has deceived her father and may thee" (1.3.290). But, as Desdemona's adept defense of her elopement with Othello suggests, all daughters are expected to play the part of the changeling and prove a traitor to their fathers by preferring their husbands. When the Duke approves of Desdemona's choice in *Othello*, Shakespeare presents Desdemona's cunning and persuasive transition from daughter to wife as an act of female will that, despite raising the specter of disobedience, maintains patriarchal structures and bonds of community. See Emily C. Bartels's "Strategies of Submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the Assertion of Desire" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36.2(1996), pages 417-433.

“glorious days to come” and for an imperial stock that “will see all earth turned Latin at their feet.”²³ I wish to underscore that Zenocrate’s soliloquy ends not on thoughts of Tamburlaine but on the safety of Arabia. Significantly, she desires for Tamburlaine’s amorous competitor to survive, and, when her first betrothed love lies dying in her arms, she tells him: “Behold her wounded in conceit for thee,/ As much as thy faire body is for me” (5.1.415-416). The sight of him dying is felt as a physical wound upon her heart.

Generously, she neither mentions that she loves Tamburlaine nor that she defines herself as the Scythian’s betrothed rather than his captive, which allows Arabia to die in peace. This exchange is the only scene in Part I fulfilling the typical romantic trope of star-crossed lovers. In its emphasis of Zenocrate’s fraught subjectivity, this play points to the ways that her body and her will are conscripted to serve as the conduit by which Tamburlaine’s vision comes into being, a conscription from which I suggest all characters—whether they resist or they consent—cannot dissociate themselves. What is lost when we focus on her conscription within the phenomenon that is Tamburlaine is Zenocrate’s particularity, her unique difference that defies incorporation within a unanimous group. Her character, as I have been arguing, resists this homogeneous singleness. The devout followers of Tamburlaine, though heterogeneous in ethnic and racial makeup, nonetheless consent to their complete incorporation within Tamburlaine’s project of conquest. Unlike his other subjects, Zenocrate remains Egyptian, her father’s loyal daughter, and a woman who cares deeply for the man she initially had intended to marry, all while harboring an intense love for the Scythian. Unlike Tamburlaine’s Theridamas, Zenocrate never relinquishes her original filial duty to her father and affective devotion to Arabia. She admits her complicity

²³ *Aeneid*, 7. 104, 103, 130.

in the terrors her beloved brings forth, but, unlike his other followers, she voices her disapproval and implies that her incorporation within Tamburlaine's society is incomplete.

Rather than conclude with a marriage, *Tamburlaine* Part I depicts a theatrical community that invests Zenocrate with the title Queen of Persia. Significantly, it is the one character with an equivocal will, whose loyalties cannot be reduced to a single allegiance, and whose identity as an Egyptian and Tamburlaine's betrothed are retained not simply as points of origins but rather as continued states of being, who becomes the very symbol of Tamburlaine's enterprise of domination and destruction. Just as Tamburlaine's military campaigns exist through the ardent devotion of his followers, he likewise reveals that his power to crown her derives from the collective consent of his newly-minted kings, Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane: "Even by this hand that shall establish them,/ Shal now, adjoining al their hands with mine,/ Invest her here my Queene of *Persea*"(5.1.492-4). The obsequious submission of Tamburlaine's contributory kings witnessed in Act 4 takes on again a heroic but ironic tone. The hands that come together in a resounding consent are not those of a bride and groom but of Tamburlaine's network of loyal male comrades. The world he forges through theft and usurpation is legitimated through a unanimous assent, significantly one that is surrounded by death and annihilation, and which a woman's voice is implied but never fully articulated. As Emily Bartels notes, Tamburlaine "strategically rewrites the soldan's defeat as familial victory... [and] through his strategic self-constructions, becomes 'a person o thy state,' of nobility and honor."²⁴

²⁴ Emily C. Bartels's "Double Vision of the East: Imperialist Self-Construction in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, Part One" in *Renaissance Drama*, 23 (1992), 13. In *Spectacles of Strangeness*, Bartels further emphasizes the ways that Tamburlaine is neither a hero nor a fiend but a strategist who essentially knows how to play his audience. He promises to treat Arabia and his deceased foes with honor, a tactful assurance that "work[s] on [Zenocrate] and her father, who embrace him as an honorable man, worthy of taking Zenocrate's hand in marriage" (63). While Tamburlaine certainly fashions himself dialectically with other characters in his play and with his

After the Souldan of Egypt yields, Tamburlaine turns to Zenocrate and states “Then doubt I not but faire Zenocrate will soone consent to satisfy us both” (5.1.498-9). Again, this mirrors his final line to Zenocrate in Act 1, when he tells her that he is “out of Doubt” (1.1.257) that she will remain with him of her own volition. Zenocrate’s ambiguous response “Els should I much forget my self, my Lord” (5.1.500) is drowned by the fervent and explicit affirmations of Tamburlaine’s three kings. In this, her final line, Zenocrate’s implied consent is determined by the duty she owes to Tamburlaine, her father, and—in some ways—to the destroyed city of Damascus to which she can never return.²⁵

Chastity: A World without Possibility

In the world of *Tamburlaine*, the Virgins of Damascus, forced to feel the iron phallus of destruction, and Olympia—the only female characters lauded for their chastity—die. Unlike Zenocrate the empress of Persia, whose aural openness to and enjoyment of seduction and wayward loyalties elicit the derogatory and slanderous term “whore,” Olympia manifests a god-like virtue, signified by her name, commending an extreme act of resistance that unquestionably opts in favor of death for the preservation of her honor.²⁶ Generally treated as the opposite of Zenocrate, Olympia is often interpreted as a character

metatheatrical audience, I argue in this chapter that Zenocrate is well-aware of the horrors perpetrated by her paramour. By attributing so much to Tamburlaine’s rhetorical devices and strategy, I worry that we lose sight of the significances of Zenocrate’s torn allegiances, which are also experienced by her father in this instance as well.

²⁵ Bartels interprets Zenocrate’s final words as indicating that Tamburlaine’s “terms and hers coalesce, leaving us with a vision of harmony and triumph” (21). In contrast, Deats finds potential for resistance and grief rather than mere acceptance “of the patriarchal feminine ideal of passivity and compliance” when she argues that Zenocrate’s “mute protest...shadow[s] the triumph of the final festivities” (147).

²⁶ See Douglas Cole who describes Olympia and her son as “wear[ing] a badge of honor and courage” (73) in *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 59-75.

who successfully resists Tamburlaine's tyrannical imposition on the world. However, I suggest that Olympia's idealized figure reifies misogynistic expectations of an aestheticized and singular fidelity—represented in the untouched and unused body of a woman—that vilifies the choice to live in captivity or, even worse, to love the enemy. I trouble the comfortable reading that a paradigm of wifely virtue is indisputably extolled in Marlowe's work by stressing the irony that both Olympia's perfect chastity and Tamburlaine's ruthless enterprise abide by the same uniform logic that starves the future of its unpredictability.

When Theridamas and his men meet the resolute Olympia, who refused to flee the fallen city, she informs them that after burning the bodies of her deceased husband and child, she plans to kill herself as she had taken the life of her son. Daft and narcissistic, Theridamas attempts to comfort a grieving widow by promising that her resolution would be revered by the author of her family's demise, an honor that will come complete with a new husband and a royal one to boot. Significantly, this points to Tamburlaine's incorporative model of empire-building. As with Theridamas and Zenocrate, foes can be wooed and eventually come to accept the loyalties and identities imposed by their conqueror. Mirroring Tamburlaine's address to Zenocrate, concluding that her "faire face and heavenly hew;/ Must grace his bed that conquers *Asia*" (1:1.2.36-7), Theridamas likewise declares that Olympia's beauty denies the death that she craves but argues, instead, that she must be loved. Her beauty proves a traitor to her will, and since she has captured the passions of Theridamas, she is given no other alternative but to go with him (2:3.4.79).

Unlike Zenocrate—who, after witnessing Tamburlaine's successful manipulation of Theridamas, already in the first act of the play can imagine pleasure existing despite coercion—Olympia's responses vacillate between a passionate desire for death and a

complete disinterest in life: “Then carie me I care not where you will” (2:3.4.80). Later, when a frustrated Theridamas loses his patience with the stoic Olympia, he exclaims: “Nothing, but stil thy husband and thy sonne?” (2:4.2.37). Through a cunning trick, Olympia manages to get the death that she desires after all. And, within fifty lines, Theridamas goes from threatening Olympia with rape, to being duped into playing her murderer, and finally to singing her praises as the “Queene of chastitie” (2:4.2.95). While there is no doubt that Olympia feels the devastating loss of her husband and child as the loss of her own life, her self-destructive impulses are informed by more than simply an uncomplicated devotion toward her deceased family. In fact, in her monologue in Act 4, she curiously neither mentions her husband nor her son. One could even entertain the possibility that she constantly reiterates her longing to be reunited with her lost spouse and child in the afterlife since her loyalty to the dead might deserve the pity of her captor. Significantly, she voices her mistreatment, which contrasts with the entertainment and good graces bestowed on Zenocrate when she was Tamburlaine’s captive-guest.

The grief-stricken Olympia, held a prisoner in a tent devoid even of light, sensibly mistrusts Theridamas and his purposes, stating that she will devise a means to kill herself “[r]ather than yield to his detested suit,/ Whose drift is onely to dishonor thee” (2:4.2.6-7). Olympia’s speech prompts the question of whether or not honorable usage is even possible in times of war, which is further complicated when we consider Zenocrate’s affirming experience. I wish to suggest that it is unclear what nuanced valences of dishonor are signified in her monologue. On the one hand, Olympia may not believe Theridamas’s promise to make her his queen. Thus, should she grant him access to her body, she would be reduced from a noble wife to a king’s battlefield concubine. On the other, she may view

remarriage as sexual infidelity to her deceased spouse, a perspective that may lead her to seek death as the only dignified and honorable act for a widow. Through remarriage with Theridamas, she proves a traitor to her first husband with the man who caused his death; she betrays her former identity as a captain's wife and the mother of his child. Olympia's sacrificial suicide arises from her affective devotion to her family and unwavering political allegiance, a fidelity that cannot entertain the possibility of a future that deviates from her past and present identity. As the wife of a vanquished captain, she is and forever will be Theridamas's enemy—not his willing subject.²⁷ Olympia and Zenocrate differ in their openness to possibilities. While one seeks to bind the future to her past and present identity, the other takes pleasure in a promiscuous change that never becomes fixed but remains loose and unchaste, wavering in a liminal space—the intersections of her manifold allegiances and affections.

In my interpretation of Olympia, I suggest that Marlowe presents this idealized version of chastity as a state of being that—like Tamburlaine's unilineal and homogenizing world view—opposes multiplicity and alternatives, a refusal that denies the temporal flexibility and unknown of the present and of the future. This interpretation counterintuitively aligns Olympia with the world that Tamburlaine creates devoid of possibility, similarities that produce tension when we consider that both the titular hero and Olympia take the lives of their children, though one through murder and the other with

²⁷ In addition, as intimated by her initial complaints, Olympia rebuffs Theridmas's inducement because he has not given her a reason to trust his words. His maltreatment prevents her from seeing herself as anything more than his plaything. It is interesting that the self-serving pragmatism that diminishes Zenocrate's critical reception is also similarly exhibited by Olympia.

consent. Olympia's young son verbally consents to death with the stoic resilience of his mother and begs her to take his life so that he can rejoin his deceased father:

Olympia. Tell me sweet boie, art thou content to die?
These barbarous Scythians full of cruelty,
And Moores, in whom was never pitie found,
Will hew us peecemeale, put us to the wheele,
Or els invent some torture worse than that.
Therefore die by thy loving mothers hand,
Who gently now wil lance thy Ivory throat,
And quickly rid thee both of paine and life.

Sonne. Mother dispatch me, or Ile kil my selfe,
For think ye I can live and see him dead?
Give me your knife (good mother) or strike home:
The Scythians shall not tyrannise on me.
Sweet mother strike, that I may meet my father. (2:3.4.18-30)

Twice Olympia's son offers to stab himself, and thrice does he embolden his mother to do the deed. He gives her three reasons for desiring death: his inability to imagine a life without his father, his fear of Scythian tyranny, and his hope that the afterlife will reunite him with his loved one. Olympia's son shares in her extreme fidelity and dies affirming his loyalty to his father and to his present identity. In his chaste subjectivity, he has fully committed himself to a bleak vision of the future that can only be salvaged through death. After witnessing the demise of his father and fall of his city, he—like his mother—understandably cannot give himself leave to consider a possibly amicable life under the rule of conquerors. This restricted view, however, also underscores his inability to imagine alternative futurities that likens his choice to die with Tamburlaine's prophetic and compressed purpose.

Olympia's filicide, which precedes Tamburlaine's act, is usually understood as a foil that underscores Tamburlaine's tyranny. Her maternal hand guides her son to the afterlife while Tamburlaine dispatches his son and denies him a proper burial. But, just as these parallel acts of filicide contrast one another, Marlowe reveals the kinship of chastity as the

refusal for change and contingency with Tamburlaine's unforgiving prophecy. W.L. Godshalk describes Olympia and her son's desire for self-destruction as a "rational acceptance of the inevitable," and while his reading praises these captives for their bravery that finds mercy rather than fear in death, Godshalk himself has fallen for Tamburlaine's prophetic rhetoric.²⁸ What is the *inevitable* that mother and son avoided through death?

Both a consensual end that blatantly resists the cruelty of war and Calyphas's slaughter serve the same purpose. All who oppose Tamburlaine must be exterminated, whether voluntarily or by force. Alan Shepard argues that the peripheral figures of Calyphas, Agydas, Olympia, and her son defy Tamburlaine's vision and cause in an "attempt to preserve, and in some instances to expand, the autonomy of thought and movement that the soldiers aim to curb in their enemies and in themselves. For contesting a military regime both brittle and self-serving, they are fatally silenced" (736).²⁹ In this chapter, I pose a caveat against the assumption that suicide serves to counter the laws of war that dominate this particular play. While I agree that self-destruction ostensibly manifests autonomy, it is rather generous to go so far as to suggest that an act of volition that embraces death offers a novel response to Tamburlaine's argument of arms that eradicates opposition and conditions of multiplicity.³⁰

²⁸ Godshalk, *The Marlovian World Picture*, 163.

²⁹ Shepard, "Endless Sacks," 736.

³⁰ In my chapter on John Marston's *The Wonder of Women*, I continue to interrogate representations of suicide within the context of war and argue that Sophonisba's particular utilization of chastity and self-destruction at once confounds male homosocial bonds while nonetheless fulfilling the tyrannous terms of Roman occupation and empire.

Rather than confound martial ideology, the actions of Agydas, Olympia, and her son receive their enemies' utmost respect. Tamburlaine and his men praise their suicides and give them honorable burials. This is a testimony to the ways that Marlowe provocatively aligns the refusal to get in bed with the enemy, to be chaste, with Tamburlaine's ideology of conquest and destruction. In fact, suicide serves Tamburlaine's agenda quite well. His generals starve cities and cut off their water supplies when opposition stubbornly persists. Once resistance fails, wholesale destruction ensues (2:5.1.169-70). "All *Barbary is unpeopled*" in the name of Tamburlaine the Great, whose empire brings forth merciless annihilation (2. 1.3.134). It does not matter, therefore, that Olympia's son wills his death but that Tamburlaine's intractable enemy died. I wish by no means to belittle the gravity that Marlowe imbues the poignant scene in which Olympia takes life from the being whom she had brought into the world. Nor do I wish to deny the pathos with which audiences must have responded when witnessing a child choose death over life. One can admire the courage that it would have taken for Olympia and her son to refuse their potential reduction to spoil by ending their lives as they saw fit without a revolutionary timbre that romanticizes their deaths as unanticipated responses that effectively resist a military regime. And, like the misogynist expectations that a truly virtuous woman—unlike Zenocrate—would rather die than be raped or kill herself rather than survive her infamy, sexual chastity within the context of war turns suicide into the only dignified and honorable response of a conquered and colonized subject to the threat of sexual violence and enslavement.

Olympia's Race: Loss and Fictions of Purity

This chapter began with an analysis of the purpose of enslavement in the *Tamburlaine* plays. Slavery, which is tied to a rhetoric of possession, serves to impose a static hierarchy between people that eradicates contingency. Later, in my interpretation of Olympia, I suggest that Marlowe presents chastity as a state of being that—like enslavement—opposes the potential for change, a refusal that denies the obscurity of the present as well as the temporal flexibility and unknown of futurity. Both an outright resistance and an all-encompassing submission participate in the same teleology that opts in favor of a static and ascetic state that makes no allowance for mercy toward others and toward oneself. In this section, I furthermore insist that the rather unimaginative and hackneyed feminine ideal as represented by the figure of Olympia works to create the condition for Tamburlaine's genocidal agenda.

Acts of genocide and ethnocide—the erasure of a people and their culture—rely on the basic premise of an us-versus-them categorization, a binary evacuated of the specificity and uniqueness of populations and of individuals, favoring instead a normalized and homogeneous group identity.³¹ When Techelles and other soldiers drag the Virgins of Damascus offstage to their deaths, Tamburlaine affirms, “I will not spare these proud Egyptians” (1:5.1.122). Although the decision to resist Tamburlaine came entirely from the male governing figures of Damascus who ignored the entreaties of their wives and children,

³¹ Patricia Cahill reminds her readers that Tamburlaine “reserves his most spectacular pageantry for extreme violence” (170). Her emphasis on the systematized violence of Tamburlaine's martial observations leads to her thought-provoking argument: “perhaps what *Tamburlaine* most ardently represents is not so much the longings that propelled Elizabethan mercantile and colonial pursuits as the beginnings of a global politics premised on perpetual warfare and disposable populations” (179). See Patricia Cahill's chapter “Marlowe, Death-Worlds, and Warfare” in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, pages 169-180.

Tamburlaine views the governor's pride as the mark of all the city's inhabitants and not just of the powerful few. His sweeping generalization of the whole population reduces Zenocrate's people to a single collective identity, damning evidence that justifies their wholesale slaughter. During the siege of Babylon in Part 2, citizens implore their governor to surrender and send the Christians of Georgia living among them to attain Tamburlaine's pardon (2.5.1.24-62). And, again, when Tamburlaine orders his soldiers to drown every man, woman, and child he paints them all with one collective identity: Babylonian. The present state of difference and animosity between opposing groups is not allowed to alter through time, and the possibility of a future harmony is denied. More pressing is Tamburlaine's denial of the subjective multiplicity and unique personhoods of the individuals who comprise the condemned collectives destined for swift annihilation. As Tamburlaine's reduction of all citizens to their city of residence makes palpable, his merciless military regime that systematically dispenses of human life cannot operate under the premise of simultaneous multivalent affiliations and desires.

If the purpose of Tamburlaine's rhetoric is to collapse futurity into the present, then we can see how genocide is the logical conclusion since it makes permanent the perceived clear divisions between people, foreclosing the potential for uncertain or new relations to develop, making the beginning, the present now, and the ever-shall-be. In this way, Tamburlaine's extreme rigidity evinces a particular hostility to personhood, multiplicity, depth, and complexity, an antagonism that traffics in a mode of racial ideology.³² If, as I

³² Tamburlaine's inability to tolerate multiplicity may seem out of place given the racially and ethnically "mixed" composition of his armies. When his tributary kings greet him at the beginning of Part II, Theridamas boasts that "under [his] collors march ten thousand Greeks,/ And of Argier and Affriks frontier townes,/ Twise twenty thousand valient men at armes" (2:1.2.118-120). Even the female Amazonians are in league with Tamburlaine. Techelles, likewise, accounts the results of his campaigns: "From *Azamor* to *Tunys* near the sea,/Is *Barbary* unpeopled for thy sake,/And all the men in armour under me,/Which with my crowne I gladly

have been arguing, his aversion to synchronic polyvalence also coincides with an ideal of chastity, then I believe it is important to interrogate the ways that Olympia's consensual death that refuses the conversion of her body and the seduction of her loyalties also participates in a process of racialization, one that paradoxically seems to advocate for people who have been most harmed through histories of colonialism, enslavement, and subjugation.

As a conquered subject threatened with rape, whose resistance culminates in her willed death, Olympia's character proffers a fiction of cultural and embodied purity as an exemplary model that oddly morphs into a standard by which colonized peoples are judged and a "true" native determined. To put this another way, as the mythic name "Olympia" implies, her story is decidedly non-normative, aberrant, and even impossible. Unparalleled in her extreme devotion to her singular identity, Olympia's narrative feeds an imaginative history that a people could have remained untouched from processes of European globalization and expansion—a *could have* that becomes *should have*. A search for an Olympia inevitably leads to loss, disappearance, and extinction, which is more plausible and easier to "see" since it abides by a racial logic that has become the norm and matches our perceived present with one specific history of the past.

offer thee" (2.1.2. 133-5). In his account, Techelles couples "unpeopled" with the affirmation that the numerous and diverse soldiers who serve him are ultimately faithful to Tamburlaine. According to Techelles, Barbary has not been bereaved of life through the fatal qualities of the sword but through its seduction and complete conversion: "Our men of *Barbary* have marcht/ Foure hundred miles with armour on their back... Yet never did they recreate themselves" (2:1.3.174, 182). Barbary, thus, is left barren of human life through utter devastation as well as incorporation. Emily C. Bartels argues that a myriad and heterogeneous group of people, rhetorically described by Tamburlaine's kings but clearly not present on stage, is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing—or at least nothing singular" (74). It is in Part II, that Tamburlaine's rhetoric of power reaches its saturation, in which words become emptied of meaning and "one man becomes as meaningful, or as meaningless, as a thousand men" (*Spectacles of Strangeness*, 74).

In order to untangle better the knot of racist ideology that I suggest Olympia's figure enables, I turn to Jonathan Goldberg in his comparison between the English Lost Colony and the Roanoke Indians:

Commentators seem unable to resist the pathos of the so-called "Lost Colony," the next croup of English to arrive at Roanoke, only to be abandoned; but the Roanoke Indians are not described as "lost." They are, instead, "extinct," despite the fact that at least one early eighteenth-century traveler recorded the presence of Indians on Roanoke who claimed descent from the Indians Harriot encountered, and today the Lumbee tribe in North Carolina claims descent from the Roanoke Indians as well as the "Lost Colony." That the Lumbee do not speak any language other than English, that they have no native customs, that they are said to look more Black than Indian, poses a problem to those who would deny their claims; but the problem has to do with wanting natives to remain "pure" natives, untouched by history, to consign them not merely to a past but to a past that is past and absolutely irrecoverable, cut off from the present.³³

I quote Goldberg at length because I believe his critique highlights that a desire for natives to remain "pure" derives from wanting the romantic narrative of victimization that culminates with extinction. In a similar vein, when critics approach Marlowe's Olympia, their commendation of her sacrifice necessitates her status as victim, who ends her bloodline and who uncomplicatedly seals her affections and her body from being moved and touched by the conqueror. Goldberg emphasizes that the Lumbee are not correctly "raced" since they look more Black and speak only English, and, for these reasons, Lumbee claims to connections with the Roanoke Indians are often questioned and by some considered highly improbable. This reveals that the histories we construct cannot be dissociated from contemporary ideas of race. While Goldberg insists that there exists an impetus to imagine the "pure-bred Indian" as "cut off from the present," I think we could also see how a history that sees the Roanoke Indians as being severed from the contemporary moment actually

³³ Jonathan Goldberg, "The History that Will Be" in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1.4 (2007), 396.

solidifies the links between the present that we “know” and the past submerged in narratives of loss and extermination. When critics applaud Olympia’s refusal to survive as the only ethical choice and condemn Zenocrate’s decision to live and love, whose narrative of the past does this serve? And, in what ways might this preference uphold the logic of race as something that is distinguishable, palpable, visual, marked, indelible?

Coda

I end this chapter by turning again to the promiscuous Zenocrate, whose fraught erotic and politic love for Tamburlaine leads her to “get in bed” with the author of her people’s annihilation and mingles her blood with that of the Scythian. However, I make my return with a detour through her son, Calyphas. Unlike his brothers, Calyphas disdains war and consistently offers critiques of his father’s severe military regime. He refuses to fight, explaining that he and his brothers might be killed before they learn and that he cares not for blood “when wine wil quench [his] thirst” (2:4.1.30). When his father asks him what he thinks of a wound, he disrupts the sacrificial aura of the scene with his comedic and valid point: “I know not what I should think of it; methinks ‘tis a pitiful sight” (2:3.2.130-1).³⁴ While I understand why critics predominantly align Calyphas with Olympia, Zenocrate’s

³⁴ Despite his acknowledgement of Calyphas’s cowardice, W. L. Godshalk views Tamburlaine’s recalcitrant son as a figure who contrasts Tamburlaine through his moderate desires. See Godshalk’s *The Marlovian World Picture* (Netherlands: Mouton & Co. and the University of Cincinnati Press, 1974), 152. By analyzing Marlowe’s plays alongside detailed military codes of the period, rather than simply view Calyphas as a source of anxiety for Tamburlaine due to his effeminate preferences, Cahill suggests that what is most disturbing about this son who most resembles Zenocrate is his “steadfast idleness, his refusal to take his place in a martial formation” (55). See Patricia Cahill’s book *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24-70. For a more thorough overview of the many critical interpretations of Calyphas, which fluctuate between descriptions of him as a weak and pathetic character to ones that hail him as a conscientious objector, see Sara Munson Deats’s *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Marlowe* page 153.

foil, I want to emphasize a particularly odd moment in Part II, the last lines that Calyphas utters before he is murdered by his father: “I would my father would let me be put in the front of/ such a battaile once, to trie my valour./ What a coyle they keepe, I believe there will be some hurt done/ anon amongst them”(4.1.72-5).³⁵ In these lines foreshadowing his death, Calyphas wishes that he would be given the chance to prove himself in his father’s martial domain, an opportunity that will never come to fruition. This is an odd longing, particularly given Calyphas’s professed aversion to warfare. But it does speak to the potential for people to change, a future trajectory that the present cannot predict based on past events and words spoken. In these last lines, Calyphas opens the possibility that he could have fulfilled his father’s will had his father not read his present “Image of sloth, and picture of a slave” (4.1.194) as all that Calyphas is, could, and will be. Like his mother who at first showed reluctance toward her captor and eventually came to love Tamburlaine, in the moment before his death, Calyphas points to his potential to be seduced.

Tamburlaine’s desire to fuse futurity and the present leads to the first and only murder that he commits onstage with his own hand.³⁶ More crucially, in the moments directly preceding his act of filicide, Tamburlaine’s son Calyphas points not just to his potential to change, to one day come to love the will of his father, but also to his possession of a complex subjectivity much like his mother’s, a versatility and intriguing opacity that—

³⁵ Sara Munson Deats argues that Calyphas and Olympia are the closest analogues to one another since they are both casualties of war who had been offered “a share in Tamburlaine’s triumphs” and both die in a state of androgyny: of “passivity and defiance,” “strength and resolution” (*Sex, Gender, and Desire* 156-7).

³⁶ Douglas Cole uses the scene to argue for the ways that Tamburlaine turns sublimity to the grotesque when he states “This is the only instance in either part of the play where we see Tamburlaine himself kill someone directly. That the victim happens to be his own unarmed son is already a dreadful irony; that Tamburlaine should wrap that murder in the megalomaniacal vision of himself as Titan and god, turning the spheres of heaven, is an even more horrendous irony” (71).

quite frankly—I want to know more about but cannot because in this moment that is profoundly disruptive of Calyphas’s consistent narrative, Tamburlaine kills him. Tamburlaine ends his son’s life in a condition of present ambiguity that hints at a future of difference and possibilities. In this way, Calyphas is truly Zenocrate’s son in that he retroactively reinforces the problem of the simultaneous that challenges Tamburlaine’s prophetic speech, a homogenizing world order that evacuates the present of its variances and promises a pre-determined and static future.

Marlowe’s two-part *Tamburlaine* presents the terror and appeal of an all-encompassing power that categorizes the world and sterilizes it of its complexity, compressing the present and future in a static bind. By revealing the ideological similarities between Tamburlaine’s merciless purpose and Olympia’s adherence to the dictums of chastity, the play provides insights to the allure of simple classifications. An enterprise of expansion and conquest that demands a totalizing conversion from conquered subjects or meets their resistance with death by murder or suicide eerily echoes early modern principles of chastity that disdain ambiguity and multivalent affiliations.

That Zenocrate and Calyphas, the promiscuous mother-son duo closest to Tamburlaine, depict alternative modes of being that radically oppose the dominant trend of the play underscores the absurd fantasy of an uncomplicated and categorized world. Tamburlaine’s own wife does not abdicate her prior devotions and cannot be perfectly interpellated within his system. Likewise, his own son does not fit the easy distinction between friend and foe that Tamburlaine’s short-lived but furious approach to the world demands. And, while early modern playgoers were well-aware that Tamburlaine’s prophetic rhetoric would cease with his death as the empire he forged would disintegrate in the hands

of his remaining sons, Marlowe reveals that even when Tamburlaine was alive, he could not fully divide the world according to fixed affiliations, creeds, ethnicities, and races; he could not and did not eradicate the complexity of love and of being.

CHAPTER 2

“AND THEN I LOVED THEE” OF CONSENSUAL SUBMISSION AND THE LIMITS OF COMMUNITY IN SHAKESPEARE’S *THE TEMPEST*

Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, performed at Whitehall in 1611, explores the anxieties pertaining to notions of community, women’s erotic lives, and histories of consent. With its depictions of service, enslavement, and violent encounters with exotic and foreign bodies, it must not come as a surprise that this play has been a pivotal influence in the works of postcolonial writers, who speak back to empire in their adaptations of Shakespeare’s work—a playwright whose name is synonymous with the English canon itself. Historical criticism of *The Tempest* has primarily focused on the impassioned proto-colonial altercations between Caliban and his master Prospero. Some works implicitly justify Prospero’s physical subjugation and enslavement of Caliban by insisting upon the Duke’s benevolent authority that directly contrasts the hag-born whelp’s voracious carnality. Conversely, other interpretations locate and emphasize heroism in Caliban’s resistance to the political, sexual, intellectual, and social domination imposed upon him by Prospero’s forms of manipulation.¹

¹ For critics who view Prospero as the voice of reason and justice as a defense against Caliban’s sexual tyranny, see G. Wilson Knight’s *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretations of Shakespeare’s Final Plays* (London: Methuen, 1965). For compelling critiques that situate *The Tempest* in light of anti-colonialist adaptations see Paul Brown’s “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism” (*Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*. Edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. 48-71) and Thomas Cartelli’s “Prospero in Africa: *The Tempest* as Colonialist Text and Pretext” (*Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations*. London: Routledge, 2000. 97-138).

Within these interpretations, the women of *The Tempest* are relegated to pawns in the male struggle between colonist and native. For example, Miranda has often been understood to serve as a conduit that legitimizes Prospero's colonialist rhetoric and whose ultimate importance rests in her symbolic purity, which "assures the integrity of the aristocratic bloodlines" (142).² More recent criticism has countered the previous trend of reading the play's female characters as simply metaphors for land and power, which has led to discourses on the politics of submission in *The Tempest*, the absence and haunting of the subaltern Sycorax, and extended analyses on Dido and Claribel's marriage to the African King of Tunis. Such critics who argue for a more thorough analysis of Miranda's subjectivity have stated that interpretations viewing Miranda as a mouthpiece for Prospero's racist ideologies not only further flatten Miranda's character and reduce her to an object; these readings blame the victim by exonerating Caliban of the extreme violence he had attempted to commit against Miranda's person.³

The task of this chapter, then, is to continue the work of unmooring *The Tempest* from the assumptions that racist and misogynist histories have professed to be true.⁴ My

² See Kim Hall's *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³ Critic Jessica Slight contests analyses that provide marginal attention to Miranda and focus, instead, on either subaltern female characters such as Sycorax or the power relations between the colonizer Prospero and the native Caliban. Based on her interpretation of Miranda as a moral agent whose engagements with her father and husband enact a form of self-fashioning, Slight seems to view Miranda's autonomy and colonial interpellation as mutually exclusive. As I hope this chapter reveals, I agree that Miranda navigates her transition from daughter to wife and that her denouncement of Caliban's attempted assault tells audiences that she did have an active role in the community of the island. I do, however, think it is possible to recognize Miranda's autonomy while also acknowledging her involvement in the ideologies that deny Caliban the bonds of community. See "Rape and the Romanticization of Shakespeare's Miranda," *Studies in English Literature* 41.2. (2001): 357-379.

⁴ The difficulty of my project has been bracketing a tendency to interpret *The Tempest* amidst discourses of race, gender, and empire that depict the colonial trajectory of the Tudor and early Stuart periods as fixed rather than the uncertain landscapes that they were, especially when writing from a point in time, which as Jonathan

hope is that we as scholars, teachers, and critics can analyze Miranda's complex and nuanced understandings of her relation to others—specifically, her uncomfortable deployment of kinship and race—without justifying rape. When we revitalize Miranda's narrative, by exploring the effects of sexual violence on her ideas of community, kinship, and consent, we need to untether her from contemporary notions of an ideal victimhood. Through its exploration of the ambiguities that attend narratives of consent, *The Tempest* highlights the tensions that accompany sexual encounters, desires, and marriages on the periphery of empire. In this chapter, I wish to show how histories of consensual submission serve as the basis for community. More importantly, the constructed fictions of consent that unite people in a reciprocal acceptance of vulnerability and accountability in *The Tempest* create spaces for forgiveness and healing through processes of exclusion and racialization, divisions that determine who can be desired and desire, who deserves love and kinship.

Willing Vulnerability

How does Shakespeare's *The Tempest* depict the call to love and be loved and, thereby, to be bound in communion with another? Perhaps the best place for us to start is with the romance that unfolds onstage over the course of the play between Miranda and Ferdinand. When Prospero first meets the Neapolitan prince, he dissembles the youth and pretends to doubt his royal identity. This prompts Miranda to check her father's inhospitable behavior:

Why speaks my father so ungently? This
Is the third man that e'er I saw, the first
That e'er I sighed for. (1.2.445-7)

Goldberg states, "the history that will be is, inevitably, a history of the present" (388). See Jonathan Goldberg's "The History that Will Be" in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1.4. (1995): 387-403.

Miranda wishes that Prospero would treat this stranger with warmth, much like his initial coaxing of Caliban, since she understands that a kind welcome often begets affinity. Her reasons for requesting that her father alter his approach is motivated by her attraction and desire to be in communion with Ferdinand. When she asks her father to be “move[d] her way” (1.2.447), she insists that an act of kindness performed by Prospero toward Ferdinand benefits Miranda. She therefore turns his act of generosity into an affirmation of his paternal care toward her. Within this web of interrelations, Miranda’s intimate request brings this stranger into their community. Her offering of kindness is an attempt to begin a reciprocal exchange that eventually forms the foundation of their bonds.

The bond of matrimony, the relation that she hopes to establish with Ferdinand, cannot be coerced and is itself defined as a mutual exchange of consent.⁵ Both Ferdinand and Miranda voice their instantaneous mutual attraction toward one another, and just as swiftly, Prospero plays the role of the aggressive and possessive father, whose presence will force the two seemingly star-crossed lovers to prove the ardor of their devotion, one through obedience—humbled by his future father-in-law to perform base tasks formerly reserved for their slave Caliban and the other through acting contrary to the will of her lord and father. In this way, Miranda and Ferdinand demonstrate that they actively will their submission to each other as husband and wife while Prospero’s surveillance and belated gift-giving of his

⁵ Elaine Scarry clarifies that “[c]onsent is not simply an aspect of marriage or a requirement of marriage. It *is* the marriage” (884). Unlike other contracts, however, Scarry points out that marriage lacks the particularity of the terms of the agreement, which is demonstrated in the case of Claribel’s marriage with the King of Tunis. As I discuss in the last section, consent in marriage, which is so clearly constituted by affect, enables complex power networks to exercise through the contract between two subjects in such a way that at once exceeds and relies on their consensual submissions to each another. Despite the ability for consent to enable a one-dimensional power structure, specifically, women’s subjugation to their husbands, Scarry and, I argue, *The Tempest* as well, reveal consent to be an important protection of subjects against tyranny and injustice, but one that nonetheless remains dangerously malleable. For more on the body as the locus of consent, see Elaine Scarry’s “Consent and the Body: Injury, Departure, and Desire” in *New Literary History* 21.4 (1990): 884-887.

daughter to Ferdinand remind audiences of the communal purpose of matrimony.⁶

Rather than assuage tensions in Miranda's transition from daughter to wife, *The Tempest* draws upon the anxieties, fears, and hostilities that the rites of marriage are designed to alleviate. Prospero scrambles to maintain hold of the determined wills of both his daughter and the prince, which is a tension that I will explore further in the third section of this chapter. He treats Ferdinand poorly and provokes the regal youth with the threat of enslavement. In retaliation, Ferdinand draws his sword and challenges Prospero, his "enemy," to prove he "has more power" (1.2.465). Rather than attempt to mitigate Prospero's wrath with words that would move him to compassion, Ferdinand bears arms against the father of the woman whom he wishes to woo.⁷ Ultimately, Prospero wins the altercation that he begins by charming his future son-in-law to stillness and unmanning the young gallant with a taunt that glaringly evinces Ferdinand's impotence: "For I can here disarm thee with this stick/And make thy weapon drop" (1.2.473-4).

When Prospero threatens to imprison Ferdinand, Miranda intervenes between her desired lover and her father, beseeching the latter to take pity. She pledges: "I'll be his surety" (1.2.476). Although audiences are aware that Prospero designs for Miranda and Ferdinand to marry, thereby restoring him to Milan and raising Miranda from the daughter

⁶ Lynda E. Boose explains the importance of the marriage ritual as a pattern of and for the community, which simultaneously dissolves and reasserts the bonds between father and daughter. For more on the implied dilemma of the marriage transaction, see Lynda Boose's, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare" in *PMLA* 97.3 (1982): 325-347.

⁷ Based on Locke's *Second Treatise*, it is absolutely in Ferdinand's right to defend himself from Prospero, who wishes to compel him by force, and "thereby puts himself into a state of war with [Ferdinand]" (16). Although critics have primarily interpreted Prospero's initial aggression toward Ferdinand as his means of increasing the prince's desire for Miranda and of giving both Miranda and Ferdinand loves to fight for, I suggest that Ferdinand turns involuntary slavery dictated by the state of war to a voluntary acquiescence to the hierarchy of the island community. He essentially quits his freedom in the state of nature and becomes Prospero's subject and future kinsman through his ties to Miranda. See Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980).

of a deposed duke to the future Queen of Naples, it is important to note that, from Miranda's perspective, she not only hazards receiving her father's admonishment and hate but also risks both her life and Prospero's as well. The bond of Miranda's word, her pledge, cannot protect her father from Ferdinand's violence, but, despite these uncertainties, they nonetheless consent to self-endangerment and hold themselves accountable for the possible dissolution of their trust. Despite having just witnessed a man—albeit a particularly goodly formed one—arm himself against her father, she offers to be made liable for a stranger's actions. She will be Ferdinand's surety. This rhetoric of debt and bondage—I stress—does not merely convey the extent of Miranda's affections. Rather, in this play a contractual and consensual vulnerability constitutes love as reciprocal submission.

Miranda's willingness to overstep decorum—to play the part of the wooer rather than simply the passive object to be wooed—becomes more pronounced during her visit to the laboring prince and culminates when she usurps the position of her father. She alone gives herself away in a verbal exchange of marriage that possesses all but the due rite itself. Despite the scene's conventional depictions of idyllic romance, its seemingly banal adoption of courtly love motifs, this scene also intimates a particularly nuanced perspective of self-fashioning through socio-political subjugation:

Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you did
My heart fly to your service; there resides
To make me slave to it. And for your sake
Am I this patient log-man. (3.1.63-7)

I probably do not need to point out that the declaration of Ferdinand's soul is a hodgepodge of overused romantic tropes. Yet, somehow, Ferdinand manages to give her a grammatically convoluted compliment, which perhaps prompts her to ask directly: "Do you

love me?" In his rather confused statement, the prince describes how his heart, which resides in her service, makes him a slave not to Miranda but to the seat of his affections. According to this circular logic, his thralldom—at once spiritual and erotic—derives from his own heart. For Miranda's sake, Ferdinand's metaphysical bondage is materialized in his transformation from prince to manual laborer similar to Caliban, and through his devotion, an arduous and humiliating ordeal of base servility affirms his agency and will. In this way, Ferdinand refashions his enslavement to Prospero as a lover's choice that has nothing to do with the tyranny of his soon-to-be father-in-law.

After Miranda receives his confirmation: "I/ Beyond all limit of what else I'the world/ Do love, prize, honour you" (3.1.71-3) in far clearer terms, she harnesses Ferdinand's rhetoric of consensual submission as a self-elected and radical transformation:

I am your wife, if you will marry me;
If not, I'll die your maid: to be your fellow
You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,
Whether you will or no. (3.1.83-6)

Ferdinand clearly has little choice in the matter. Miranda will either be his wife and fellow or his maid and servant. Either way, she will be part of his community, bound to him of her own volition. In Miranda's assertive declaration, she entirely effaces her then current identity as her father's subject and re-makes herself through bonds of submission to Ferdinand her lord. Tellingly, when Ferdinand agrees to become Miranda's husband, he states that his heart is as willing as one would choose liberty over enslavement, a paradox made evident by the physical act of binding their hands together. In this mutual exchange of reciprocal submission, love becomes an opportunity for self-actualization by means of erotic subjugation.

The diametrical structure of her offer to become either his “wife”—sexually accessible to Ferdinand so long as they both shall live—or his “maid,” leads us to assume that she imagines her virginity—her sexual inaccessibility—to be a condition of service. However, should Ferdinand rebuff Miranda’s proposal of fellowship and equality, her earnest devotion accepts and actively seeks a social position that in this play leaves characters open to repeated domestic abuse. I suggest that her offer would have alerted early modern playgoers who not only witnessed onstage Prospero’s maltreatment of Ariel and Caliban but who were also well-aware of the lived and experienced dangers of domestic service. In many seventeenth century rape cases, maidservants proved particularly susceptible to physical aggression and the unwanted sexual advances of their masters. Alice Ashmore, for example, a maidservant charged with bastardy in 1605, stated that when she resisted her master’s assaults, he would say to her: “Thou art my servant and I may do with thee what I please.”⁸ For at least some masters, sexual access was perceived as synonymous with service. Therefore, Miranda’s offer to serve Ferdinand at least raises the specter of sexual abuse.

The love affair of Miranda and Ferdinand concludes onstage with optimism. They become husband and wife, a communion that radiates beyond them as Ferdinand’s father eventually states: “how oddly will it sound, that I must ask my child Forgiveness” (5.1.200-1). With the union of Miranda and Ferdinand, the former hostile relation between the King of Naples with the Duke of Milan is supplanted with kinship. The initial distance between these families—political, emotional, and geographic—dissolves through marriage as they together return to Italy. If the courtship of Miranda and Ferdinand offers playgoers a

⁸ See Laura Gowing’s *Common Bodies*, 61.

generally benign view of the risks one willingly accepts to be in communion with another, it is able to do so with such ease, in part, because the Italian lovers occupy recognizable relations to one another validated through European social customs, ratified through the religious rite of marriage in which the vows they take—the consent they give—confirm the explicit rights and duties to love, cherish, and—for women—to obey. *The Tempest*, however, is just as much invested in pursuing what happens when a person becomes vulnerable as an act of volitional submission—as an act of consent—without recourse to a social precedent or norm. The next part of this chapter turns to this issue through an analysis of Caliban’s moment of erotic and political thralldom.

Defining Community through Narratives of Consent

A large portion of Act 1 is devoted to Prospero, who tells, re-tells, and pedantically reminds other characters of the interconnected histories of the island dwellers. For both Caliban and Ariel, their stories are particularly opaque; at least for Ariel, there seems to be some consistency regarding the position that he occupies as Prospero’s servant—generally beloved. Caliban, however, offers a narrative that differs substantially from that of the Milanese duke and daughter. When audiences first see all three together onstage, Caliban, Prospero, and Miranda berate one another with competing narratives that attempt to make sense of their present state of enmity. The incongruence of their recollections, however, do find commonality in the remembrance of some kind of past accord. Caliban begins with a statement that declares his rightful dominion of the island through his mother Sycorax and then evocatively explains the interactions that led to his subjugation:

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me. When thou cam'st first

Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light and how the less
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle:
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax—toads, beetles, bats—light on you,
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th'island. (1.2.332-344)

His “And then I loved thee” serves as the turn in his speech from focusing on Prospero’s actions to his own. Caliban blames himself for being complicit in his enslavement. After having voluntarily revealed all of the island to Prospero, he finds himself imprisoned—his movement restricted—a spatial limitation that accentuates the difference between his gift to Prospero of sovereignty of the whole island and his loss of self-sovereignty, acutely manifested through confinement. Postcolonial adaptations of this play, such as Aimé Césaire’s *Une Tempête*, have interpreted Caliban’s story as representative of the manipulation of native populations in colonial encounters: a trusting native provides the means for an ill-equipped European colonist to survive and is later dispossessed of his land.⁹ Although Prospero admits to their once amicable dealings, he justifies Caliban’s loss of self-sovereignty, as the consequence of Caliban’s attempt to violate the honor of his child. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* arises from a long tradition of depicting rape as the final act that

⁹ While both Shakespeare’s Caliban and Césaire’s Caliban (*Une Tempête*) recall Prospero’s seduction, his “sweet talk,” Césaire’s Caliban describes a mutual give-and-take relationship. He states, “And what do you think you’d have done without me in this strange land? Ingrate! I taught you the trees, fruits, birds, the seasons, and now you don’t give a damn” (13). While Césaire’s Caliban figures his help as an exchange—possibly, even an act of charity—Shakespeare’s Caliban foregrounds his offerings as gifts that demonstrate his subjection and love for Prospero. See Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*, translated by Richard Miller (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969).

overwhelmingly manifests a ruler's abuse of power.¹⁰ A tyrant's inability to govern himself—particularly, his carnal appetites—violently demonstrates that he is unfit to rule, an incompetence justifying his political overthrow.¹¹ Criticism of this play has thus underscored how *The Tempest* aligns Caliban with foolishness and, through his attempted rape, to a depravity, a fundamental immorality that threatens the intimate community of the island.

Both the critical history of this play that explains Prospero's charge of rape as an early modern commonplace justifying Caliban's loss of power *as well as* arguments that champion Caliban's resistance to his colonizer neglect to raise these simple questions: What is the relationship between Caliban's pre-Prospero possession of land and political rule? Are we right to infer that possession is synonymous with political authority, that Caliban himself understands his inherited ownership of the island as rule and dominion over subjects? Furthermore, what place in the hierarchy of the island did Caliban occupy in respect to Prospero prior to his act of violence? Were there simultaneously two kings, one, or none at all? And, more importantly, what exactly was Caliban's relation to Prospero before his love

¹⁰ The rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius led to the overthrow of the Tarquinius monarchy. The abduction and attempted sexual assault of Virginia by Appius Claudius, enflamed the masses to force the decemvirs to resign. See Jennifer L. Airey's *The Politics of Rape: Sexual Atrocity, Propaganda Wars, and the Restoration Stage* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 2012).

¹¹ The work of critics such as Kim Hall and Ania Loomba have shown how an emphasis on Caliban's immorality, foolishness, and rapacious aggression indicate the systematic vilification of racialized others. The demonization of the blackened 'other' whose masculine virility poses a threat to feminine virtue and whiteness, which at once allots significant economic value to the bodies of fair women while also participating in the ideological construction of racial difference. See Kim Hall's *Things of Darkness* and Ania Loomba's *Gender Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989). Octave Mannoni, however, insists that Prospero shares an equally darkening incestuous desire for Miranda and interprets Prospero's enslavement of Caliban as a consequence of guilt (339). As the only men on the island, Prospero and Caliban compete for access to Miranda's body. In Mannoni's formulation, Prospero's putative measures are products of his frustration with his own incestuous desires. Mannoni's interpretation of the Caliban-Prospero dynamic is part of a critical history on *The Tempest* that gives preference to heterosocial normativity at the cost of neglecting other forms of eroticism operating in this play. See Octave Mannoni's "Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization" in *The Tempest* edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2007): 331-342.

turned to hate? Through Ferdinand and Miranda, audiences know that notions of self-sovereignty— notions of, as Caliban states, being one’s own king—can co-exist in a state of political subjection. I propose that this ambiguity concerning Caliban’s relations to Prospero and to the island derives from the fact that until Caliban purportedly attempts to rape Miranda, there are no words, no distinct categories, statuses, or labels that situate Caliban in a European social system and political hierarchy.

Oddly enough, a more recognizable description of the rank between Prospero and Caliban comes from Caliban himself. The duke shows his affections for Caliban through touch, taste, and attention, by nourishing the “freckled welp’s” body with gentle caresses and sweet juice, by coaxing him with warm words.¹² Caliban makes blatantly clear that his interactions with Prospero inhabited a carnal and visceral plane. He was seduced. In “Seduction and Service in *The Tempest*,” Melissa E. Sanchez emphasizes the centrality of *eros* that led to Caliban’s submission. She argues that the initial mutual fondness exhibited between Prospero and Caliban, followed by Caliban’s later regret for having submitted to Prospero, reveal that a consensual subordination to authority figures could prove just as

¹² The nourishment that Prospero gives to Caliban resembles the metaphors used to describe the intellectual sustenance provided to pupils by their humanist schoolmasters. Pedagogues would equate language acquisition with physical sustenance, a recurring trope illustrated by a fifteenth century vocabulary titled *Lac puerorum or Mylke for Children*. Schoolmasters would sometimes figure themselves as a nurse or mother nurturing the child through education. Humanist Juan Luis Vives would contend that the schoolmaster is the true parent of the child when he questions, “Does he indeed who gives birth to the body do more for the child than he who stirs the mind to action? In truth, in so far as the mind is more truly the essential part of the man than the body, the teacher may be said to be more truly parent” (Enders, 87). For Vives, all men are born brutes. Mothers give their children human form, but it is the schoolmaster who reveals to them their godly likeness. In *The Tempest*, Sycorax—Caliban’s absent mother—unsuccessfully labors to produce a deformed son “not honour’d with/ A human shape”(1.2.283-4). Prospero assumes the parental role as Caliban’s educator and gives his pupil language. During the schoolboy’s development into a speaking subject, his experience of linguistic communication is inextricably bound to an erotic economy of exchanges. Caliban gains knowledge of language alongside an intimate understanding of bodily desire, pleasure, and pain. For more on early modern humanist education and the erotics of language acquisition, see Lynn Enterline’s *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

dangerous as involuntary servitude.¹³ The emphasis on *eros* reorients the dynamic from one of mutual gift-giving—Prospero nurtures Caliban, and, in turn, Caliban reveals the means to sustain life on the island—to one that in the early modern period was often associated with voluntary mastery and subjection that can all too easily lead to abuse and exploitation.¹⁴

I reiterate: Caliban claims that before he loved Prospero he was his “own King” (1.2.342). Thus, from his perspective, he was mastered not as a punishment for the attempted violation of Miranda but as the consequence of his passionate devotion, which manifests his erotic thralldom in his transformation to Prospero’s political subject. His poignant line: “For I am all the subjects that you have” plainly confronts Prospero with the fact that his status and identity as master depends on having subjects to rule, but it also conveys Caliban’s perception of his necessary place in their community, a place that he had at first consensually accepted and desired. Caliban demonstrated his love for Prospero by showing him the “fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile” (1.2.338). The existence of freshwater, an obvious necessity for settlements, indicated agreeable locations for

¹³ Melissa E. Sanchez addresses Miranda’s consent as integral to the validation and perpetuation of authority. In her reading of *The Tempest*, Prospero ultimately “wins the political struggle not because he is ontologically, culturally, or morally superior to Caliban but because he finally acknowledges that legitimacy requires some form of consent.” Consensual submission to a spouse, father, master, or sovereign also indicates that one is an active participant in one’s state of subjugation. This agency, therefore, creates a fissure whereby a subject may protest and resist (as we witness Caliban do on a specifically erotic plane), which gives rulers the responsibility to please their subjects. See Melissa Sanchez’s article “Seduction and Service in *The Tempest*” in *Studies in Philology* 105.1 (2008): 50-82.

¹⁴ The poetic charge of Caliban’s language resonates with the anguish of a lover made captive by his own will, whose form of alleviation is to complain or to curse the former object of his affections or the fickle god who has made him love. For example, Lady Mary Wroth in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (“I ame thy subject, conquer’d bound to stand,/Never thy foe, butt did thy claime assist) similarly attributes responsibility to herself for her present subjection. She refuses to war with Cupid, but will, instead, choose to love Ampilanthus. See Naomi Miller’s *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

habitation and the establishment of colonies.¹⁵ Brine pits yield salt, a prized mineral that denoted status in the Tudor and Stuart periods. Salt was often kept in an expensive vessel during meals and, according to *The Boke of Keruynge* (1513), was placed closest to the master of the house and specifically, “on the ryght syde where [the] souerayne shall sytte”(4).¹⁶ Moreover, Caliban actively aids Prospero’s domestication of the island, an act that is steeped in early modern discourses of divinely sanctioned sovereignty used to justify English acquisition of the New World.

In *A Map of Virginia and Proceedings of the English Colony* published in 1612, a year after *The Tempest* was first performed, John Smith describes the abundant fertility of Virginia left undeveloped by native populations, who “let the [c]ountrey [become] overgrown with trees, whose droppings continually turneth their grasse to weedes... which would soon be amended by good husbandry”(90).¹⁷ Smith’s description of the untapped potential of Virginian land beckoning English husbandry was not a new concept particular to the Stuart period. In his 1589 description of Ireland, Robert Payne praises the fertility of Irish soil, which he states will be “apte for Wheate, Rye, Barly, Peason, beans, Oates, Woade,

¹⁵ For example, in George Percy’s account, *A Discourse of the Plantation of The Southern Colony in Virginia by the English, 1606*, he states that “we could find nothing worth the speaking of, but fair meadows and goodly tall Trees, with such Fresh-waters running through the woods, as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.”Both the “barrenness” of the land and its natural resources overwhelm Percy and convey to James I that the area is well-suited for the establishment of an English colony. See *Observations gathered out of ‘A Discourse on the Plantation of the Southern Colony in Virginia by the English, 1606,’* edited by David B. Quinn (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967). Also, refer to Elizabeth A. Morgan “To ‘Fix the People on the Soyle’: An Ecological Study of Family, Land, and Settlement in Colonial Henrico County, Virginia, 1611-1675” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1995).

¹⁶ Anon. *The Boke of Keruynge* (London: Emprynted by wynkyn de worde at London in fletestrete at the sygne of the sonne, 1513).

¹⁷ John Smith *A Map of Virginia and Proceedings of the English Colony* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2003).

Mather, Rape, Hoppes, Hempe, Flaxe, and all other grains and fruites that England any wise doth yeelde”(34-5).¹⁸ As Jennifer Munroe notes, since this list contains the most popular and lucrative crops already planted in England, it further reveals how English plantations in Ireland were more focused on the “extension of the English realm,” the transplantation of Englishness, rather than the use of vegetation indigenous to Ireland.¹⁹ Similarly, Caliban does not simply show Prospero edible weeds and fruit particular to the island. He introduces his master to virgin land ready for Prospero’s cultivation, thereby providing the Milanese with the means to sow the soil with his seeds, to achieve his mastery of the island.

After Caliban claims to have been the arbiter of Prospero’s dominion, a service he performed as a response to warmth, care, and affection, Prospero admits that he once treated Caliban with “human care” and even lodged him with his family (1.2.347). Frances Dolan reveals that this previous treatment of Caliban casts them in the intimate relations of a master and servant, typical of early modern households that included the master, his wife, and his children and also fostered children from other houses as well as hired help. This intimate familiarity of servants with their master’s family, as in the case of Caliban, could prove both anxiety-inducing and dangerous for the master’s authority and his well-being. Dolan emphasizes how those who most threaten to disrupt Prospero’s plans and his patriarchal agenda “come from inside Prospero’s household, from the character introduced as “my slave” (61). While the servant’s position within the household could cause

¹⁸ Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser’s Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 34-35.

¹⁹ For more on the English plantation of Munster, see Jennifer Munroe’s *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008).

confusion, particularly on an erotic and affective dimension, it is important to note that their economic dependency and status was not a source of ambiguity. Whereas I interpret the incipient stages of Prospero's and Caliban's relationship to be undefined. By figuring the Caliban-Prospero relationship to have been from its incipient stages one of service, Dolan draws attention to the economic—or, in this case utilitarian—and affective qualities that constitute their bond. S.D. Amussen further describes the early modern master-servant relation in terms of an exchange: “The superior [master/mistress] was responsible for educational and moral direction of the inferior [child/servant], in return for honour and obedience. There was little distinction between servants and children; both were subject to the physical and moral authority of their parents/mistresses” (200). I suggest that this description bears more resemblance to Caliban's recollections of the past than Prospero's. If honor and obedience are the gifts exchanged for a master's or father's care and education, then it is subjection that a servant or child is expected to perform, which is precisely what Caliban acknowledges when he blames himself for loving Prospero.²⁰

Prospero, however, mentions nothing of Caliban's former love and isolates Caliban's submission and servitude to the aftermath of the attempted rape. From Prospero's perspective, the loss of self-sovereignty and dispossession of the island occurred as the necessary consequences of Caliban's unnatural transgression—not as the power dynamic that originally constituted their intimate relations. Unlike Caliban who articulates Prospero's physical, emotional, and erotic intimacy, Prospero refuses to acknowledge

²⁰ See Frances Dolan's *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994): 60-81. See also S.D. Amussen “Gender, Family and the Social Order” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, edited by Anthony Fletcher and John Stevens (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

anything regarding Caliban's demeanor that warranted good treatment. His story presents kindness as a form of charity, for Caliban—this “filth” and obdurate “earth”—received “human care” when his state of being, according to Prospero, called for no such grace. In fact, the duke's contemptuous rebuke: “Thou most lying slave,/ Whom stripes may move, not kindness”(1.2.347-351) completely erases Caliban's history of voluntary offerings, for Caliban states that he had—in fact—been moved with kindness to yield himself to Prospero. Yet, his master refuses to acknowledge any service or benefit that Caliban provided him before the attempted assault, which means that either Caliban had, indeed, “lied,” shown an incorrigible behavior since the very beginning, or that Prospero has suppressed or perhaps never even registered Caliban as a person with whom an intimate bond of community—of consensual reciprocal submission—could exist.

In Prospero's short retaliatory response, his prized possession is threatened with desecration, an inert mass without the capability to react to Caliban's aggressive pursuit. In Caliban's fantasy of male parthenogenesis: “would't had been done!/ Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else/ This isle with Calibans”(1.2.351-3), Miranda fares no better. In fact, his narrative demotes her existence to a mere implication. Miranda is the unmentioned body that would have served as the conduit through which Caliban breeds more Calibans. Caliban attempts, violates, and would have populated. Prospero resists, prevents, and enslaves. This heated encounter occurs in front of the very woman whose body exists as the locus of male conflict. Despite Miranda's presence at this confrontation, both Caliban and Prospero neglect to mention any details concerning her actions, desires, and will, making

rape a crime between men. In this confrontation, it is Miranda herself who alters the course of their argument.²¹

Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill; I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison. (1.2.354-365)

Since the end of the seventeenth century, beginning with Dryden and Davenent, and for the next two hundred years, editors have assigned the speech prefix for these lines to Prospero instead of Miranda, largely due to the presumption that it was not in keeping with Miranda's character for her to confront Caliban so brazenly. If we maintain the Folio's speech prefix, then a predominantly silent Miranda finally interjects her voice, but does not do so to counter Caliban's presumptive utilization of her reproductive capacities through repeated rape. Neither does she remind the men of her resistance to Caliban's sexual aggressions in the moment of the assault.

What she does do, however, is a typical narrative strategy found in early modern rape depositions. Through Miranda's pointed denouncement, attention transfers from her threatened sexual honor and potentially compromised virtue to the forfeiture of her futile endeavors. In the early modern period, victims of rape could not voice their bodies' defilement without rendering their virtue suspect since to have "yielded" means to have

²¹ For more on rape depositions and the displacement of the woman's ravished body, see Miranda Chaytor's "Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century," in *Gender & History* 7 (1995): 378-407.

submitted, and—as historian Garthine Walker has pointed out—sexual submission indicates consent.²² Instead, victims would often displace the violation of their bodies onto their interrupted chores, and Miranda likewise in great detail explains her broken labors. Her punitive denouncement strategically locates her worth in her socially productive rather than just *re*productive services. Miranda’s value, though tied to her physical body, extends beyond it. In her wooing of Ferdinand, it is clear that Miranda sees herself as more than just an object, but as a political subject who can choose to whom she submits and in what form her service and fellowship will take. Through consensual submission, both Miranda and Ferdinand exercise their agency and turn their bond into an interplay of power. Rape, however, does not allow for such reciprocation and makes static the relation between master and subject, aggressor and victim. When Miranda who had been denied the right to consent to Caliban’s violent advances tells her story, she effaces her father’s existence and makes Caliban the passive recipient of her labors. It is Miranda who “pities,” “makes sacrifices,” and “endows.” Through her discursive reconstruction of the events on the island, Miranda erases Caliban’s agency and history of consent to underscore her own.

Motivated with benevolence and condescending pity, Miranda accepted the burden of teaching Caliban her language. His crude “gabble,” which as many critics have underscored was likely his mother-tongue—evinced to Miranda his susceptibility to all forms of depravity. When she educated Caliban, she did so under the assumption that language acquisition possesses the transformative potential to alter Caliban’s trajectory, which, she insists, veered toward wickedness even before their first encounter. The belief

²² See Walker, Garthine. “Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England.” *Gender and History* 10.1(1998):1-25.

that a civilized tongue could lead to a better nature—a change of heart—finds traction in popular humanist arguments of the period that insisted in the capability for the knowledge of Latin to turn an uncouth schoolboy to an upright gentleman, a transformation that would ultimately benefit the commonwealth. Likewise, in pamphlets concerned with the political stability of English territories in Ireland, language acquisition served a crucial role in a civilizing process aimed to inculcate political obedience. In *A discoverie of the true causes why Ireland was neuer entirely subdued* also published in 1612, John Davies maintains that language education holds the most promise to make the recalcitrant Irish loyal to England. By “[sending Irish] Children to Schools, especially to learne the English language... [the English] may conceiue an hope, that the next generation will in tongue & heart, and euery way else, becom English; so as there will bee no difference or distinction, but the Irish Sea betwixt vs” (272).²³ Both Davies and Miranda share a faith in the development of a shared language as the first step toward entrance in civil society. Davies, however, differs from

²³ In *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience*, Hadfield explains that the Elizabethan campaigns in Ireland stressed the need to divide the English from the Gaelic Irish. For example, Richard Stanihurst (1577) advocates for the English to isolate themselves from the Irish both geographically and linguistically in order to supplant rudeness and “ingraffe” civility (Hadfield, 24-5). In Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), he acquaints readers with the alarming degeneration of Englishmen abiding in Ireland. Despite hailing from ancient families, the English in Ireland became “almost meare Irishe ... forget[ting] his own nature... through lycentious conversings with the Irish, or marrying, or fostering with them, or lacke of meete nurture, or other such unhappy occasions.” Irish nature, in contrast to Englishness, persists and infects through verbal exchanges and the comingling of blood. Estranged from England and from their people, the English in Ireland forget their origin and their good natures. A stubborn and relentless Irish nature refuses to be eradicated. Despite his construction of Englishmen as the antithesis to the wild Irish, Spenser's dialogue exposes the proximity between these two opposing cultures, a nearness that is exploited as the very method of Irish transmission. The Irish can communicate with the English, marry them, and their carnal dealings may even result in the production of children. Proximity to the Irish prevents the English from being able to discern civil nature from Irish nature, themselves from the other. See Edmund Spenser's *A view on the present state of Ireland* (St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1971). It seems that during the Stuart period, tracts such as *A Discoverie* by John Davies criticized the Elizabethan insular approach to colonization. See also, Kevin Kenny's *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Patricia Palmer's, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Miranda in that he makes plain the strategic self-interest of colonial endeavors. The primary benefactors of educating the Irish are, in fact, the English, since—through taming the tongue of an Irish child—an affective bond is formed between the pupil and English culture and, by extension, England itself. This, of course, resonates with Caliban’s recollections of his introduction to Prospero’s language, when he learns to name the stars, leading to love and his act of submission and obedience. Both Miranda and her father fail to give credence to Caliban’s history of consent, his willingness to be subdued to their tongue and to their authority on the island, an erotic and political subjugation from which they themselves have benefited. In Miranda’s solipsistic chastisements, however, she interprets her daily sacrifices and “pains” as gifts of self-knowledge to Caliban, that conspicuously lack any mention of shared interest or an invitation to community.

Audiences are well aware that Miranda had succeeded in sharing her language with Caliban. After all, Caliban’s speeches contain some of *The Tempest’s* most poignant lines. Nonetheless, Miranda insists on the futility of her mission. Unlike her father, who justifies Caliban’s enslavement through his attempted rape, Miranda’s vitriol that underscores her effectiveness as a teacher, goes a step further than her father and damns Caliban for an innate villainy that no amount of education could undo. She states: “But thy vile race,/ Though thou didst learn, had that in’t which good natures/ Could not abide to be with” (1.2.361-363). Miranda’s and her father’s self-described “good natures” could not condescend to tolerate Caliban’s immutable depravity in their company. What I wish to draw attention to is her employment of “race” as a term that contrasts with “nature”. The

threat of rape, of creating Calibans through Miranda's person, prompts this turn to race.²⁴ His threat of printing copies of himself imagines a futurity sprung from his loins through sexual violation, which in the early modern period was imagined as a pollution and miscegenation of the blood. For example, in Shakespeare's narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, the taint of sexual assault is visualized when Lucretia stabs herself: "Some of her blood still pure and red remained/ and some look'd black and that false Tarquin stained." Through rape, Caliban, whose mother hails from Algiers and whose father is unknown, would have created products borne of miscegenation and would have tainted Miranda's blood as well. While the term "race" hints at a temporal projection into the future, as suggested by Caliban's fantasy of reproducing future Calibans, it most certainly references a lineage. Unlike Miranda and Prospero, who are judged on their own natures—their particular dispositions and constitutions—Miranda's contempt for Caliban extends into the past toward his origin, his mother Sycorax, and into a futurity that for all audiences know can never be possible since Caliban is without a mate. When Miranda justifies his geographic and social isolation, her denouncement of Caliban's race effectively rationalizes the extinction of his line.

Despite Miranda's insistence on the ontological divide that separates Caliban from her, *The Tempest* makes a point of insisting on Caliban's human-likeness. After all, Miranda considers him one of the first three men she has ever seen; early in Act 1, Prospero recounts how the island was through the death of Sycorax, bereft of a human shape "save for the son

²⁴ Margo Hendricks explains that despite the ambiguity of the etymology of the word race and the differences that the author wanted to stress by using the term (i.e. class-based genealogy, nature, or group typology), nonetheless "race is envisioned as something fundamental, immutable, knowable and recognizable" (59). For more on the genealogy of race, see Hendricks's entry, "Race: A Renaissance Category?" in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, edited by Michael Hattaway (Blackwell Reference Online: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

that she did litter here” (1.2.284). Despite Prospero’s linguistic reduction of Sycorax and her son to beasts, Prospero still considers Caliban of the human form, and perhaps this disconcerting similarity, his very real threat to have sex with Miranda and successfully reproduce, is precisely what requires his racialization and enslavement.

Toward the end of the play, Ariel informs Prospero that his Italian enemies are so distraught and bereaved: “That if you now beheld them your affections/ Would become tender... Mine would, sir, were I human” Prospero then affirms:

And mine shall.
Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions and shall not myself
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th’quick
Yet with my nobler reason against my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance; they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. (5.1.17-32)

In this fascinating moment, wherein the foot becomes Prospero’s tutor, a servant guides his master. Ariel intimates that to be human means having the capacity to be moved and touched by the feelings of another dependent on a recognition of one’s kind. Although Prospero seems to agree with this magical spirit, admitting that there exists an underlying expectation that one will be moved to “kindness” toward one’s “kind,” his order to end the spell that enchants his enemies does not come from a stir in his emotions. Prospero ends the psychological torture he inflicts on his Italian captives through his professed “nobler reason,” a rational judgment, cleared of the erratic contingencies that passion allows. Indeed, he still feels the sting of anger when he thinks of their treason that had deposed him of his dukedom. He argues that their contrition had been his foremost aim, and thus

accomplished, he's ready to forgive and reunite with his kinsmen. *The Tempest*, however, undermines Prospero's unbiased judgment. While Alonso, the father of Ferdinand, indeed speaks words of contrition of such severity that he expresses a desire to lie dead in the ocean bed, Alonso's other confederates in the treasonous crime evince no such signs of self-reproach and abject humility. Instead, Sebastian and Antonio, like Caliban, respond with aggression. They will fight the airy apparitions, the fiends who plague them with the name of Prospero (Act 3 Scene 3).

What do we make of Prospero's impulse to consign his affective terrain to a mere inclination that is ultimately ruled by superior reason, a faculty of the mind—that as it turns out—is predisposed toward his fellow Italians? Is this merely a lapse in judgment? Or, is the divide between reason and the psychosomatic terrain of feeling and passion indistinguishable in this moment and always-already conditioned toward bias? To answer these last questions, I suggest returning to where this chapter began. When Miranda defends Ferdinand against her father's invectives, she argues: "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple/ If the ill spirit have so fair a house,/ Good things will strive to dwell with't" (1.2 461-3). This romantic platitude generally suggests that Ferdinand's goodly form manifests an inner virtue. But, Miranda is also careful to intimate that an attractive body may harbor a soul within it less than kind even though goodness and grace find ways to co-exist in his person. In effect, she mobilizes a more complex inversion of her father's logic that makes Caliban's purported immorality a state of being that is immutable, visible, indelible. Audiences, and we assume Miranda herself, constantly hear Prospero link Caliban's physical deformity—his ugliness—with base instincts and foolishness. His body signifies his depravity. Here, we see how physicality and immorality are yoked together and made static

for Caliban and for his race. The potential for growth, for a change of heart, to be judged on one's sins and merits, to harbor two spirits rather than just a villainous one, to have the benefit of the doubt is a luxury given to Prospero and his kind of human, a privilege that Caliban is denied.

At the conclusion of *The Tempest*, Prospero shows his former enemy a miraculous sight. Alonso sees his dear son, whom he believes is dead, playing chess with Prospero's daughter.

Miranda. Sweet lord, you play me false.

Ferdinand. No, my dearest love, I would not for the world.

Miranda. Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, And I would call it fair play. (5.1.172–75)

Their game of chess serves as a metaphor for the political maneuvers that have led to their union. When Miranda affectionately accuses Ferdinand—the son of the man who originally helped to depose her father—of cheating, she couples her playful censure with a willingness to condone his deceit as good and viable strategy. Her flirtatious consent, I suggest, reminds audiences that Miranda's volitional act of submission to Ferdinand and, on a larger scale, the newly forged community of former foes that their marriage makes possible, are all premised on vulnerability and an acknowledgement that to be bound to another means accepting the possibility that one may be called upon to go against the more rational choice of self-preservation, to make oneself open to deceit and pain, and to suffer willingly. And, while in other chapters of my dissertation I explore how early modern playwrights were invested in depicting the ways that politically, economically, and socially disenfranchised subjects, such as women, servants, and othered foreign bodies, were more often expected to realize their vulnerabilities than their lords and masters, *The Tempest* is keen to insist that

consensual and reciprocal submission based on capricious love *is* a subject's safeguard against abuse and tyranny. When Ariel asks Prospero: "Do you love me, master?" And, he responds in turn: "Dearly my delicate Ariel," Ariel seeks to use love as a means to demand accountability from Prospero.

When Caliban tells Prospero: "And then I loved thee," he admits that his submission was voluntary and calls himself a fool for being moved by the signs of affection he had received from Prospero and Miranda, but Caliban also seeks the validation of their past communion. It is this insistence of a mutual fondness, benefit, accountability, and vulnerability that are conspicuously lacking in Miranda's and Prospero's narratives but are lavishly given to Ferdinand, Alonso, and even to Antonio and Sebastian, the non-repentant traitors who attempt treasonous murder multiple times onstage. In *The Tempest*, both Miranda and Prospero deny having loved the human shape that is something other—"a freckled whelp hag-born" (1.2.283). Surrounded and bound in daily service to the people for whom he once harbored a tender affection, Caliban circulates within their community without being in it. In *The Tempest* a history of consensual submission serves as an acknowledgment of fellowship, which Caliban cannot access, a disavowal of community that forecloses the possibility for forgiveness.

Rethinking Illicit Sex and Miranda's Volition

While Prospero denies Caliban access to a history of volitional submission, he similarly limits the acts to which his daughter can express agency. He omits the possibility that Miranda could be responsible for illicit sexual activity and, thereby, attempts to curb what she can and cannot effectively consent to. Be it consent to desired sexual partners or

resistance to unwanted suitors, Miranda's ability to convey her will disappears in Prospero's prohibitions against sexual relations with his daughter. After Ferdinand and Miranda had informally pledged themselves to one another, Prospero fervently instructs Ferdinand to check his carnal desires and to forego sexual relations with Miranda until the due rites of marriage have been performed. As with Caliban, Prospero conveys that it is Ferdinand who would commit the sin of fornication. It is Ferdinand who "dost break her virgin-knot" (4.1.15) and must abstain from the "fire i'th' blood" (4.1.52). Should this enamored suitor enjoy Miranda prematurely, Prospero warns, "barren hate/ Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew/ The union of your bed with weeds so loathly/ That you shall hate it both" (4.1.19-22). The consequences resulting from Ferdinand's lust resonate with the aftermath of the love affair between the Trojan Aeneas and the Carthaginian Dido, a classical figure whose origin and history is debated in Act 2.²⁵

In the Virgilian epic, Dido and Aeneas consummate their "secret love" under the name of marriage.²⁶ Aeneas eventually deserts Dido and fulfills his predestined imperial mission to travel to Italy, where he eventually marries the chaste Lavinia. Dido's hatred toward Aeneas extends even to the afterlife where she stands, a "burning soul, savagely

²⁵ Early modern England utilized the histories of Dido and Aeneas to establish an imperial origin at a time when England itself was moving toward global expansion. There were numerous versions of Dido readily available to an early modern audience. For example, Justus in his *Historiae Philippicae* explains that Dido committed suicide in order to remain faithful to her deceased husband by evading marriage to King Hiarbus. Chaucer's Dido in his *Legend of Good Women* slew herself due to Aeneas's duplicity and her gullible innocence. See Mary Elizabeth Smith's *Love Kindling Fire: A Study of Christopher Marlowe's "The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage"* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1977). As Deanne Williams notes, Dido was often seen as an analogue for Queen Elizabeth I, who used the possibility of marriage to construct alliances without diminishing her power. Likewise, writers would compliment Elizabeth's choice to remain single by pointing to the Virgilian Dido's victimhood. For more on the dual narratives circulating in England during the early modern period, see Deanne Williams's "Dido, Queen of England" in *ELH* 73.1. (2006):31-59.

²⁶ Virgil's *Aeneid* Book IV, lines 236-8.

glaring back... His enemy still [though his] bride she once had been.”²⁷ Ferdinand placates his future father-in-law’s overzealous anxieties by assuring him that neither “the murkiest den [nor]/ The most opportune place... shall never melt/ [his] honour into lust” (4.1.25-8). Unlike Aeneas who satiates his passion with Dido in a cave when presented with the opportunity, Ferdinand claims to possess foresight that will prevent him from pursuing his sexual appetites, a decision that he insists will heighten the “edge of the day’s celebration” (4.1.29).

Before Prospero leaves the betrothed youths, he warns Ferdinand once more to “[b]e more abstemious/[o]r else good night your vow!”(4.1.52-3). In Act 4, Prospero designates Ferdinand as the sole defender of Miranda’s chastity even though it is Miranda who would likely be held liable either for not protecting her body well enough from his advances or for willingly committing fornication. Although Prospero effaces Miranda’s will, he underscores that the consequences of their transgression would befall not just Ferdinand but Miranda as well. Should Miranda be forced to protect her chastity from Ferdinand’s assaults, then she would be defending her body from an attempted rape. Desired and dangerously accessible, Miranda may be ravished by Caliban and by Ferdinand. More crucially, without a means to articulate sexual desire and will before marriage, Miranda is—by default—always a potential rape victim. This bind also further silences Miranda after marriage because it nullifies the possibility of marital rape.

Ferdinand’s assurance that he would not prematurely take her virginity, Ann Thompson argues, “suggests that the minds of both men [Ferdinand and Prospero] are

²⁷ Virgil’s *Aeneid* Book VI, lines 629, 634-6.

dwelling in morbid detail on the possibilities of completing Caliban's attempted violation."²⁸ Similarly, John Kunat reads the "most opportune place" and "murkiest den" to resonate with Lavinia's gang rape in *Titus Andronicus* rather than with the cave of consensual intercourse in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Interpretations that view the exchange between Prospero and Ferdinand as an indication of his fatherly care and duty to protect his daughter from harm, do not address the knots and tensions that are exacerbated when Prospero's effacement of Miranda's will juxtaposes with Miranda's speeches. While Prospero's silence on the topic of Miranda's ability either to consent or to resist the sexual pursuits of Caliban and Ferdinand could demonstrate his wariness of his daughter as an object of male sexual desire, I argue that it could just as easily indicate his discomfort with Miranda as a sexual being with a voice that articulates her will.

Prospero's preoccupation with the chastity of his daughter may be an attempt to protect his own honor as the patriarch of the family, whose credibility could be sullied by a daughter's illicit sexual activity—both wanted and unwanted.²⁹ It is important to note that the romance of Miranda and Ferdinand follow early seventeenth century courtship practices, which often granted more freedom and privacy to lovers as their courtship progressed. In Act 1, Miranda and Ferdinand are first introduced to one another with

²⁸ Ann Thompson reveals the ways in which rape attempts to destroy the images of Miranda as a chaste and fertile wife but are all founded upon the elusiveness of her mystical chastity. For more on Miranda's sexually chaste body, see "'Miranda, Where's Your Sister?': Reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991): 130-238. Also, in *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Vaughan and Vaughan reveal the parallels between Caliban and Ferdinand. They argue that while Ferdinand gleefully serves Prospero and controls his appetites, the uncivilized mooncalf begrudgingly gathers wood and fails to govern his sexuality, evidenced by his attempted rape of Miranda. Also, see John Kunat's "'Play me False': Rape, Race, and Conquest in *The Tempest*" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.3 (2014): 310.

²⁹ Since ungovernable wives and daughters affected the credibility of patriarchs, female honor was more tied to class and social position than simply to chastity. For more on how recent scholarship have questioned the simple equation of women's chastity and female honor, see the Johanna Rickman's introduction to *Love, Lust, and License in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

Miranda's father performing a rather intrusive role in their exchanges. Later in Act 3, Miranda believes to be paying Ferdinand a clandestine visit, but, unbeknownst to the lovers, they are under Prospero's rapt supervision. After they each have vouched for the seriousness of their attachments and Prospero has verbally relinquished his authority over Miranda, Prospero instructs Ferdinand to "[s]it then and talk with her, she is thine own" (4.1.33). It is at this moment of transition that Prospero warns Ferdinand of the consequences attached to premarital sex. Henceforth, the two enjoy freedom from Prospero's interference even though they have not yet performed the marriage rites, a privacy that provided the opportunity for prenuptial intercourse.³⁰ The lovers are later discovered unsupervised, playing a game of chess in Act 5.

Prospero's staunch invectives against fornication resonate with moral tracts that harangue sex outside of marriage and the work of contemporary historians who point to the hostility exhibited toward pregnant brides. However, more recent scholarship has countered the notion of a hyper-vigilant early modern surveillance of sexuality. For example, in his study of courtship and marriage customs of the lower classes, Richard Adair explains that intimacy and physical contact were understood to serve an important function in the courtship process and that the latter, in particular, occupied a moral gray area left to the discretion of the man and woman:

As a rule, it is true to say that courting couples were allowed a large degree of

³⁰ While contemporary audiences understand that Ferdinand may, in fact, rape Miranda, the early moderns were less likely to prosecute a husband's rape of his wife. For example, Hale writes "The husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract, the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto the husband which she cannot retract." However, men or women could be indicted as principal offenders when they are complicit in the rape of their spouses by another. In the notorious Castlehaven trial of Mervyn Touchet (Lord Audley), Touchet was convicted of buggery and raping his wife by ordering his servant to ravish her, which led to his conviction and beheading. See *Same-Sex Desire in Early Modern England, 1550-1735*, edited by Marie H. Loughlin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

freedom to meet in privacy, and engage in physical contact short of intercourse. It was acceptable to spend a great deal of time together, even during the night in cases of serious courtship, with only a moderate level of supervision. (Adair, 163)

This somewhat lax approach to physical intimacy during the courtship process, which allowed men and women to spend the night with one another, led to a number of prenuptial pregnancies. In one parish in the early seventeenth century, over sixty percent of brides were pregnant, which suggests that for many parishioners, sex outside of marriage was not surprising and, perhaps, even acceptable if the contracted were committed to one another and had been considered “normal respectable inhabitants, apart from this one lapse”(92).³¹ During the late Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, parishes witnessed a spike in prenuptial pregnancies, as evidenced by a rise in the prosecution of offenders. While Martin Ingram argues that this supports the theory that the seventeenth century began a “hardening of attitudes towards sexual immorality,” Adair contends that campaigns to reduce the number of bridal pregnancy lost fervor rather quickly, which could indicate that an increase in ecclesiastical censure was a reaction to the spike in pregnant brides and not a result of widespread disapproval of the custom. For the nobility, Johanna Rickman argues that illicit sex was staunchly policed during Elizabeth’s reign. While both male and female offenders suffered exile from court, male courtiers often found opportunities to regain her majesty’s favor whereas noblewomen never returned to court. Despite the risk of incurring Elizabeth’s disfavor and the social and political consequences that follow, prenuptial pregnancies

³¹ Adair argues that for the lower classes, fornication may not have been deemed a major transgression so long as it led to marriage. Of course, problems arise for communities in cases when men refuse to marry their bedfellows, as was the case of Margaret Thuruall, whose child died shortly after being born, and Katherine Hamon, who cohabited with one Thomas Watson without plans to marry. See Richard Adair’s *Courtship, Illegitimacy, and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester, England and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994).

occurred and were particularly prevalent during the latter years of her reign. During James's reign, illicit sexual activity was largely left unpunished unless it was combined with other non-sexual crimes such as treason or murder.

The prevalence of prenuptial pregnancies not only undermines the notion that premarital sex was an aberrant practice, but it also opens the possibility that an early modern playgoer attending *The Tempest's* first performance in 1611 may not have shared Prospero's utter disdain towards a premature consummation of two unmarried and serious lovers. Audiences are well aware of Ferdinand's attachment to Miranda and, arguably more so, of Miranda's passion for the prince. In an aside to her father, Miranda informs Prospero of her attraction toward Ferdinand, which is immediately followed by Ferdinand's promise to "make [her] the Queen of Naples" (1.2. 449). Prospero reacts to his daughter's infatuation with the prince and Ferdinand's grand promises with caution: "this swift business/ I must uneasy make. Lest too light winning/Make the prize" (1.2.450-52). This hint of unchastity provides a glimpse at Prospero's perception that his daughter could equally play the part of either a Dido—who consummates under the guise of marriage—or a Lavinia from the *Roman d'Eneas*—who exchanges clandestine love letters with Aeneas from afar and remains chaste until he wins her as one of the "spoils" of war. Prospero is clearly reluctant to admit Miranda's sexual autonomy in moments of patriarchal crisis, such as in instances of fornication and rape.³² However, his futile attempts to bridle Miranda become

³² For Heidi Hutner, Prospero's control of Miranda's virginity must be complete since it is through her vestal body that he returns to Europe and, perhaps more importantly, his governance of her body ideologically evinces his authority as a European father. While I would agree that Prospero curbs Miranda's sexuality, he does rely on her consent, which in this section I argue becomes a source of anxiety that necessarily diminishes his ability to control her sexual activity completely. See Heidi Hutner's *Colonial Women: Race and Culture in Stuart Drama* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) pages 34-37.

all the more desperate and, perhaps, comically so through Miranda's constant critiques of her father's usage of power throughout the play beginning with her very first speech.

This seemingly benign view of Prospero's obsession with Miranda's virgin lock drastically alters when we return to Caliban and the iconic exchange between master and slave considered in the previous section of this chapter. Prospero concedes that he once housed Caliban with his own daughter until the ungrateful whelp did "seek to violate/The honor of [his] child" (1.2.348-9).³³ Caliban's retort lacks repentance, conveying a latent threat: "O ho, O ho! Would't had been done; Thou didst prevent me, I had peopled else/ This isle with Calibans" (1.2. 350-2). For Jyotsna Singh, Caliban's plan to take Prospero's daughter seeks above all to forge a new relationship with his paternal figure, a relationship in which he becomes heir to the island and shares sanguinity with Prospero through the bloodline of his children with Miranda. Marriage binds men to one another through the exchange of women, rendering daughters and wives into passive gifts between the male actors in the marriage drama.³⁴ However, unlike other moveable goods, women could prove

³³ Hiewon Shin underscores Prospero's extension of sympathy toward Caliban when he pitied the orphan whelp; he became an adoptive parent to the foundling whom he loved, cherished, and nourished. Although Prospero's abusive treatment of Caliban may stem from Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda, Shin insists that Caliban's failure to act justly and with humane care is a reflection of Prospero's failure as a parental nurturer and educator. For Shin, Prospero employs an androgynous form of pedagogy in which he serves as both father, mother, and schoolmaster to both Miranda and Caliban. See Hiewon Shin's article "Single Parenting, Homeschooling: Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda," in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 48.2 (2008):373-393. In addition, Frances E. Dolan states that Caliban also parallels servant figures in early modern households who were often allowed to live with families and, in fact, were considered a part of those families. The fear of the conspiring servant who attempts to violate their master's wife or daughters is manifested in Shakespeare's Caliban. See *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

³⁴ In Singh's interpretation of *The Tempest*, Miranda serves a very marginal role in a play that dramatizes the bonds and hierarchies between men. She stresses Miranda's objectification in a male-ordered kinship system and focuses on Prospero's manipulation of Ferdinand's courtship. Thereby, Singh refuses to see Miranda as a sexual agent in the gifting of herself to the Prince of Naples. See Jyotsna G. Singh, "Caliban Versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of *The Tempest*" in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 191-210.

non-compliant in the exchange of their bodies as chattel. They may resist a marriage that their fathers deem desirable and consent to the advances of an unwelcomed suitor.

Prospero's omission of any description pertaining to Miranda's will, resistance, or consent to Caliban's aggressions attempt to silence Miranda in an encounter that would have most certainly elicited some sort of response.³⁵

In the attempted rape, Prospero casts Caliban as the sole actor, a rather curious choice since, when intercourse pertained to women above the age of ten, the violation of their honor could occur against or *with* their consent.³⁶ For Caliban's attempted violation of Miranda's honor to be an attempted rape, Prospero needed to prove Miranda's resistance to the attack. I want to make clear that the play does not provide a definitive account of Miranda's resistance. Similarly, Caliban's assertion that sex with Miranda would have led to children allows us to imagine that this sexual encounter could have been consensual for both Caliban and Miranda. The possibility that Caliban's attempt to dishonor Miranda occurred with her consent may be easier to accept if we maintain the tradition of giving the speech prefix of "Abhorred slave" to Prospero rather than to Miranda. I insist, however, that *The Tempest* also provides a space to consider that a consensual sexual encounter between Caliban and Miranda in the past could result in Miranda's fierce onstage

³⁵ Critics have a long history of interpreting Miranda's sexual silence to indicate her status described by Kim Hall as "the emblem of purity and integrity" (*Things of Darkness*, 142). While I agree that Prospero attempts to limit Miranda's ability to voice her will, particularly in moments of heterosocial crisis such as fornication and rape, I insist that this denial of her agency does not reify her perfect "wholeness" but, instead, reveals her dangerous potential to upset her father's plans with her passions and consensual sexual activity.

³⁶ Although the 1575 statute dictates that the rape of a child ten years and younger was a felony with or without the child's consent, there was much debate concerning whether or not intercourse with girls between the ages of ten and twelve should automatically be declared a rape if they had willingly submitted. Since the age of consent to marriage for girls was twelve (fourteen for boys), Hale argues "if she be above the age of ten years and under the age of twelve years, tho she consent it is rape" (629-630). See Sir Matthew Hale's Chapter LVIII in *The History of the Pleas of the Crown* (London: T. Payne, 1800).

repudiation of Caliban in which she articulates a more developed racial logic than any espoused by her father.

The emotionally charged scene that forever severed the relations between Caliban and the Italians could have been a pedagogical moment for both Caliban and Miranda in which they became aware of the ways that interracial/cross-difference sexual desires are perceived by Prospero, the figure who determines the ideologies that dominate the islanders. It is possible that Miranda, in this moment, learned that her lusts for Caliban were considered base and detestable. After having internalized Prospero's disapproval and having witnessed the enslavement of the man she was taught not to desire, Miranda eventually learned to hate and despise the longings she felt (and may continue to feel) for Caliban. Perhaps, then, her assertion that she cannot stand the sight of Caliban as well as her nuanced articulation of an ontological divide between her race and his was a performance for Caliban and for herself that needs to be repeated and reasserted so that both Caliban and Miranda will remember that they could not and can never comingle their bodies and share an intimacy reserved for men of her kind.

"Thou Forget'st": The Malleability of Consent

Over three hundred lines are devoted to characters explaining, reminding, and arguing about the events that have led to the contested relations in *The Tempest*. Even on an island, bereft of complex court politics, the contradictory accounts trouble the bonds that tie characters to one another. Although Miranda cannot remember any woman save the nurses attending her, she is perfectly aware of the narrative value of women's chaste bodies and the role of their implied consent in the histories that bind people together and maintain socio-

political hierarchy. After Prospero reveals that he was once more than a master of a “poor cell” but, in fact, Duke of Milan, the bewildered Miranda asks him to confirm their relationship as father and daughter:

Miranda. Sir, are not you my father?

Prospero. Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father
Was Duke of Milan, and thou his only heir
And princess, no worse issued. (1.2. 55-9)

Since the early moderns often condemned the female sex for their perceived innate moral frailty, Prospero’s paternity rests in the perception of Miranda’s absent mother as chaste and in the purported mother’s declaration that the child she has borne is, indeed, the offspring and possession of Prospero. More specifically, however, Miranda and audiences accept Prospero’s claim of paternity because they believe *his* assertion—whether true or false—that his wife was virtuous and, therefore, that she was a woman who lived by the matrimonial bonds to which she had consented. When confronted by his daughter’s doubts regarding his paternal identity, Prospero’s immediate recourse is to weave a web of relations and political statuses dependent on a character whose body is never seen and whose voice is never heard (much like Caliban’s mother Sycorax) but through him. Ultimately, Prospero’s statement regarding the virtue of Miranda’s mother affirms *his* word that Miranda is his child. This proves a very important claim for Prospero to make; for through his daughter, the exiled Prospero returns home to Milan.

In this syllogistic paternal equation, it is implied that Miranda’s mother consented and adhered to Prospero’s sole access to her reproductive body and, furthermore, that she actively participated in the “gift-giving” of her child to her husband. The fact that Prospero’s wife needed to verbalize that her husband is the father of her child should make us pause.

Even as a formality, her supposed statement indicates that women's sexual fidelity requires re-articulation and that this utterance is, by the purported duplicitous nature of women, susceptible to disbelief. It is also possible that Prospero had fabricated this exchange to tighten the seams of his story, revealing that despite his magic and royal status, this grand Duke and artificer cannot claim paternal authority without the specter of the mother's voice that at once confirms and undermines his claim to paternity. Prospero's possession of Miranda as his daughter relies on his descriptions of his chaste wife that no one on the island would or could refute. Unlike the events that led to the servitude of Ariel, the enslavement of Caliban, and the marriage of Miranda to Ferdinand, there are no counter-narratives or perspectives other than Prospero's story that ties Miranda to him in a bond of filial submission. In a play characterized by what Dympna Callaghan describes as faulty or bad memory, we should—at the least—concede that Prospero's convoluted means of asserting his claim of paternal identity, one of the most important relations in this play, conveys the tenuous nature of that bond.³⁷

Through her father's narrative, Miranda becomes perfectly aware of their mutual dependence on the stories told of women's bodies. While recounting his version of Sebastian's usurpation of the dukedom of Milan, Prospero emphasizes the unnaturalness of his brother's act of treason by stating, "Mark his condition and th'event, then tell me/ If this might be a brother" (1.2.118-21). Miranda responds, "I should sin/ To think but nobly of my grandmother/ Good wombs have borne bad sons" (1.2. 117-9). She calls it a sin for her to think, to imagine, or to create alternative pasts. To do so would be to transgress the

³⁷ For more on the role of ambiguous memory and the Irish influence in *The Tempest*, see Dympna Callaghan's *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000): 100-134.

deference owed by a grandchild to her predecessor. Rather than interpret Prospero's statement as an exclamation underscoring his brother's vile transgression, an act that violates the bonds of family and blood, Miranda curiously takes it as an affront to her grandmother's virtue, requiring her defense of womanhood. Clearly, it is not in Prospero's best interest to tarnish the memory of his mother's womb, which would cast doubt on his own claim to the dukedom of Milan. Prospero himself had not mentioned his mother at all. Stephen Orgel reminds critics, Prospero makes no objections to Miranda's interpretation that his question is a charge of adultery against her grandmother, and it is this attack on her paternal grandmother that Miranda's response purports itself to close but paradoxically opens.³⁸

Miranda's odd defense, nonetheless, drags the memory of her grandmother into the sullied histories of Prospero's island. Through her articulation, audiences, who might not have thought to question the virtue and nobility of Miranda's grandmother—and, by extension, Prospero's regal lineage—have now been presented with yet another possibility that undermines the history of the characters in this play. The Roman matron Lucretia presents a prime example of the hostile slippage between a defense of womanhood and incrimination. In Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, Tarquin threatens that if this Roman Matron does not acquiesce to his will, he will force himself upon her, murder Lucrece, and then lay her body alongside a slave whom he will say that he killed when he found them in a lusty embrace. Rather than being remembered with glory, infamy would surround the name of the once chaste Lucrece. Sung in childhood rhymes, her image would become a

³⁸ See Stephen Orgel, "Prospero's Wife" in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 50-65.

caricature for disgrace, and her “issue [will be] blurr’d with nameless bastardy.”³⁹ In *The History of Rome*, Livy explains that by “this dreadful prospect her resolute modesty was overcome, as if with force” (58). The added simile tries to make clear that the threat of an unchaste reputation had the effect of physical power on Lucrece. In an attempt to ascertain Lucretia’s innocence, however, “as if with force,” emphasizes that verbal coercion still does not fully equate to physical duress. Almost a thousand years later, in Augustine’s *City of God*, Lucretia’s suicide—the very act that in Livy’s *History* attests to the horror of rape and Lucretia’s innocence—fuels Augustine’s infamous questions: “If she was adulterous, why praise her? If chaste, why slay her?”⁴⁰ Prospero’s fragile history—like the histories of Lucrece and her issue—depends on the stories that have been told about the moment of women’s consent or non-consent, stories that are dangerously susceptible to the faultiness of memory and to emendations through time.

This unsettling manipulation and appropriation of women’s histories of consent, chastity, obedience, submission, and resistance surface poignantly in the divergent narratives that arise from Claribel’s marriage with the King of Tunis in Act 2 and again in Act 5. Claribel’s union with a foreign king of distant lands immediately follows the scene in

³⁹ *The Rape of Lucrece*, 522.

⁴⁰ In Livy’s *History of Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) Lucrece states: “It is for you to determine... what is due to him; for my own part, though I acquit myself of the sin, I do not absolve myself from punishment; not in time to come shall ever unchaste woman live through the example of Lucretia” (11). Although Lucretia is not guilty of adultery, she takes her life because she fears that her reputation and story will enable unchaste women—women who have engaged in illicit sexual activity whether it be with or without their consent—to live because of the precedent that she sets. Livy constructs Lucretia to be so invested in maintaining feminine chastity for herself and all women that she punishes herself as well. In *The City of God*, Augustine questions Lucrece’s chastity and her virtuous reputation on the basis of her suicide that for Livy exemplified her unwavering adherence to the dictates of feminine chastity. As the critical history of Lucretia reveals, women’s virtuous reputations remain under assault even post-mortem. The questions that one asks, such as Prospero’s and Miranda’s, mold the narratives that can both preserve and tarnish the reputations of the deceased (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

which the two royal Italians, Miranda and Ferdinand, exhibit an immediate mutual attraction. The two marriages, however, could not be in starker contrast: where Miranda weeps with happiness and disobeys her father by pledging herself to Ferdinand without seeking his approval (3.1.73), it is purported that Claribel only enters into the match as an act of filial obedience. In Sebastian's retelling of Claribel's marriage with the King of Tunis, he contests their union on three counts. His first reason, that "[Alonso] would not bless our Europe with your daughter/ But rather loose her to an African" (2.1.125-6) presupposes that an exogamic alliance should have been spurned by the Neapolitan king in favor of a marriage from within the same continent that had given him life and power. Travel narratives of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century often stress the virility of Africans and the carnal decadence of their foreign customs and sexual practices. Sebastian's admonishment that Alonso had "rather loose her to an African" uncomfortably reminds this father of his daughter's transformation from virgin to a sexually active and desiring being now shared with an other. For Sebastian, miscegenation degrades Claribel's lawful marriage through the taint of cultural promiscuity.

When Sebastian places Europe at odds with an African, he strips Claribel's husband of not only his kingship but also of his status as an appropriate and "natural" suitor of the princess. Alonso's response to Sebastian's charge against him for preferring an exogamic sexual alliance is met with a meek, "Prithee, peace" (2.1.129). Alonso himself can neither defend the marriage to which he had consented nor does he seem to give a body to Claribel's husband. In fact, the King of Tunis is never worth naming. In her discussion of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Margo Hendricks argues that in early modern England, a patrilineal history provided legitimacy for power. She reveals that despite knowledge of

Dido's bloodline, Marlowe curiously omits these details, while devoting over a hundred lines to the lineage of the Roman Aeneas.⁴¹ Likewise in *The Tempest*, a play whose characters are so concerned with ascertaining origins, utterly refuses to even provide a name for Claribel's husband. The decision to refer to him as "an African" resonates with Marlowe's Dido who is referred to as the "Afric Queen" from "Sidon" a Punic Kingdom. While these geographic references indicate the influence of travel narratives that categorized exotic people and cultures based on the names of seas, rivers, kingdoms, and lands, these references also deny legitimacy to important characters in both *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Tempest*.

In response to Sebastian, Alonso gestures to his son-in-law's existence in terms of a geographic locale when he regrets his decision to marry his daughter "there, for coming thence/ My son is lost and (in my rate) she too,/ Who is so far from Italy removed/ I ne'er again shall see her" (2.1.109-12). Alonso uses "there" to refer to the location of the wedding, which required the Italian aristocrats to travel by sea, leading to their fateful encounter with the tempest. Travelling from "there" is blamed for the loss of Alonso's son and daughter, and for this reason, "there" stands for the King of Tunis as well. The only possibility for Claribel to remain within close proximity to Naples would have been if she had chosen a suitor from her clime and of her kind. Unlike Sebastian, Adrian, and Gonzalo who openly discuss Tunis, Carthage, and Africa, Alonso cannot even bring himself to articulate the city, continent, and king from which they had sailed.

⁴¹ See Margo Hendricks's "Managing the Barbarian: *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*" in *Renaissance Drama* 23(1992): 165-188.

Sebastian's second objection reminds Alonso that he was asked to reconsider the union between his daughter and the King of Tunis by a collective, whose unanimous disdain for the match ought to have swayed the king's decision. Based on the predominantly male characters in *The Tempest*, the "all of us," of which Sebastian represents, was more than likely comprised of men, whose supplications attempted to deny sexual access to the body of a woman reserved—at least in their estimation—for someone residing closer to Naples and more like themselves. Indeed, it seems that at this point in the play, Alonso would have preferred to have married Claribel to a fellow Italian rather than an African king. All these arguments made by men against an exogamic alliance between the princess of Naples and the King of Tunis purportedly find support in the responses of Claribel herself, who ultimately marries her father's choice, thus submitting to her filial duty.

Claribel's predicament found a real-life analogue in Lady Elizabeth Stuart, the daughter of James I. During the months immediately preceding the November 1, 1611 performance of *The Tempest*, marriage negotiations for Lady Elizabeth were well underway. James had vacillated between Frederick, the Elector Palatine from Germany, and the heir to the duke of Savoy. The latter evoked much disapproval from the Protestant English, who were less than thrilled with the prospect of a Catholic alliance. Many of the sentiments voiced by Sebastian against Claribel's marriage to the King of Tunis parallel the arguments made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his letter to James:

[F]irst, she must be removed far from her nearest blood... into a country far estranged from our nation as any part of Christendom, and as far differing from us in religion as in climate... Moreover it is greatly to be feared, with what safety and security she can long live free from secret practices and treacheries, in a country so near the pope's jurisdiction... so as when the worthy lady hereafter, by her children or otherwise, has furnished their desire, and fully served their turn, she shall be then either forced to wound her

conscience, by forsaking her faith, or else to undergo the scorns and danger which shall be daily cast upon her.⁴²

According to Donna Hamilton, an alliance with an African must have been as alien to an Italian as a Catholic marriage would have been to those favoring a Protestant match for Elizabeth.⁴³ Like Claribel, Raleigh imagines an Elizabeth estranged from her family, countrymen, and religion.⁴⁴ He even goes so far as to describe the noble lady's sexual misuse at the hands of papist sympathizers who continue to enact violence against Protestants. The marriage that Raleigh envisions for Lady Elizabeth would not be a companionate one of like minds but a union in which she merely serves to please her husband's desires and birth his children. In this projected future, Lady Elizabeth is depicted as a potential victim of coercion and violence, but what Raleigh refuses to acknowledge, of course, is that this hypothetical scenario is only made possible through the princess's consent to the match.

Unlike Lady Elizabeth, who eventually married Frederick the Elector Palatine, a similarly zealous Protestant, Claribel marries the King of Tunis, a union that in Act 2 serves as evidence of Alonso's tyrannical paternal rule and faulty judgment.⁴⁵ From a marriage

⁴² *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 410.

⁴³ By constructing Claribel's marriage to the King of Tunis as a "mistaken political marriage," Hamilton continues, "the play supports the faction that was urging against Savoy" (42). For more on the Lady Elizabeth's marriage prospects and the resonances between Virgil's *Aeneid* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, see Donna B. Hamilton's *Virgil and The Tempest: The Politics of Imitations* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ Victor Amadeus, the heir to the Duke of Savoy, spent most of his childhood living in Madrid. Although England enjoyed an uneasy peace with Spain by the performance of *The Tempest*, the history of hostility between these two kingdoms during Elizabeth's reign as well as the beginning of James' kingship further stress the similarities of the relations between Africa and Italy.

⁴⁵ According to Carola Oman, two eye-witness accounts of the first meeting of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, and Frederick the Elector Palatine describe their mutual attraction for one another. Frederick "kissed her with aplomb. The blonde princess saw the "visage agréable" of "teint noir" promised by the Duke of Bouillon." For a more in depth description of their betrothal, see Carola Oman's *The Winter Queen* (London: Phoenix, 2000): 40-63.

that elicited xenophobic remarks, seemingly justified through nature's punishment of the storm (engineered by Prospero), by the end of the play, the characters sing a far different tune: "O, rejoice... in one voyage/ Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis; and Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife" (5.1. 206, 209-10). With the reunion of Alonso with his son, presumed to have been eaten by a fish, Alonso names the place of Claribel's marriage, replacing the ambiguous "there" with Tunis. When Claribel's marriage becomes situated within the narrative that culminates with the union of Miranda and Ferdinand, the exotic quality of the African King no longer elicits communal condemnation but is celebrated as a boon, which required them to travel by sea, enabling both the Neapolitan prince and princess to find their mates.

While context (re)frames the significance of Claribel's marriage, altering the perception of her union with the King of Tunis from a mistake to a blessing, hindsight alone does not fully address the malleable meanings of Claribel's consent. In *The Booke of Common Prayer* (1605), marriage—a reciprocal act of consent—was ordained for three primary purposes: for "the procreation of children," "for remedie against sinne and to auoyd fornication," and "for the mutuall societie, helpe, and comfort, that one [husband and wife] ought to have of the other" (277). When Claribel and the King of Tunis exchanged vows, they agreed to "keepe [themselves] onely vnto [each other]" (277), to become possessions as well as possessors with sole access to the body of their spouse. In Sebastian's narrative, however, Claribel's marriage does not manifest the mutual virtuous exchange and possession of her body with that of her spouse's. As stated before, Sebastian degrades their vows by figuring the lawful union of an Italian princess and an African king as a form of promiscuity. Like other absent women in this play, such as Sycorax and Prospero's wife,

men speak for Claribel and (re)define the meaning of her consent. According to Sebastian, Claribel exhibited reluctance to the match:

[A]nd the fair soul herself
Weighed between loathness and obedience, at
Which end o'th'beam should bow. We have lost your son,
I fear, for ever. (2.1.129-132)

Sebastian describes Claribel's "loathness," her reluctance to the marriage, which defied the will of her father. Within this account, Claribel's dilemma was not whether or not she should marry but whether she should disobey or obey her father, whether her will or his should prevail. According to *The Booke of Common Prayer*, marriage is an act of reciprocal consent exchanged between spouses. Sebastian's retelling of Claribel's marriage, however, conspicuously lacks her decision to accept the king as her husband and, instead, abruptly transitions to Ferdinand's potential death, leaving audiences with the image of Claribel vacillating between her filial duty and her will but with the knowledge that she ultimately did ratify the marriage with her consent.

This account reveals that coercion—broadly construed—does not invalidate consent. While reverential fear of parents could potentially acquire an annulment in early modern cases concerning child-espousals, it is important to note that this alone did not render the marriage contract null and void. Successful suits for annulment often included testimonies concerning the ceaseless reluctance of the child(ren) demonstrated through their refusal to exchange tokens of affection, to treat one another as husband and wife, to cohabit, and to perform their conjugal duties.⁴⁶ For brides twelve and over, who had reached the age of

⁴⁶ *Child-Marriages, Divorces, and Ratifications, &c. in the Diocese of Chester, A.D. 1561-6* (London: Published for Early English Text Society by K. Paul, Trench, Trübner: 1897), 194. See also Johanna Rickman's article " 'He would never consent in his heart': Child Marriages in Early Modern England" in *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 6.2 (2013): 293-313.

consent, fear of parental displeasure did not sufficiently provide grounds for annulment, which was more easily acquired on the basis of permanent impotence or frigidity. This suggests that when brides and grooms had reached the ages of consent—twelve and fourteen respectively—duress caused by intertwining obligations and pre-existing bonds was anticipated and could be perceived as an opportunity for a son or daughter to prove their submission to parental authority. A daughter, whose body attests to her potential to become a mother, should know the significance of her consent and the many registers upon which it operates. None of the Neapolitans doubt that a marriage—a mutual exchange of consent—had been performed. When Sebastian describes Claribel as a “fair soul” struggling with herself either to obey or resist Alonso, he points to her virtue, which casts her as a subject willing to make a sacrifice that upholds her filial bond. While a child may claim to have said that he uttered the words but “wold never consent to them in his heart,” Sebastian could not claim that Claribel’s vows were empty because to do so would be to undermine her choice to submit to her father’s will.

In Act 2, Claribel’s marriage was an act of consent that attests to her status as a loyal daughter to Alonso. Sebastian alters the significance of her marriage from one that is the consensual and mutual exchange of property in one’s person to an exchange that exemplifies Alonso’s flawed governance. In marrying the King of Tunis, Claribel consents to him as her husband in order to manifest her duty as a daughter. Marriage becomes the last act of service that she performs as a filial subject before she is “banished from [his] eye” and becomes the property of her spouse. In the final act of *The Tempest*, Alonso lends agency to Claribel and frames both his son and his daughter as the actors who find their spouses. According to the OED, to “find” connotes a rather serendipitous means of becoming

“aware of, com[ing] into contact with, or get[ting] possession of, in the course of some activity [the voyage].”⁴⁷ Within his praise that mirrors Claribel’s marriage with that of her brother’s, Alonso re-frames Claribel’s wedding as a proper coupling and presents his daughter as the subject who gains possession of the King of Tunis. At the end of *The Tempest*, marriage is once again stressed as the exchange of consent between a wife and her husband, the joining of two bodies in which both Claribel and Ferdinand, through submitting to their spouses gain possession of them in return.

Claribel, who is granted the political efficacy of her consent, is expected to know how her acquiescence reverberates through her intricate mesh of loyalties. In other words, her relations inevitably circumscribe choice and, in doing so, make her choice all the more profound. And it is for this reason, that the significance of Claribel’s marriage with the King of Tunis exhibits malleability. Only Claribel can explain why she ultimately agreed to the match. Did she consent in adherence to her filial duty as Sebastian purports, in which to have uttered her vows without her heart would have been to diminish her submission to her father? Or, did she come to desire her husband upon their meeting in Tunis, which parallels the more celebratory tune at the end of the play? Further still, did she feel a sense of erotic gratification through the nexus of repulsion and submission to her father’s will? Claribel, Miranda’s mother, and grandmother are either deceased or absent, and their stories come from the mouths of men, whose politics, statuses, and fickle identities depend on the interpretations of their consensual submissions.

⁴⁷ "find, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2016. Web. 2 January 2017.

But, even when the body can speak for itself and voice its pleasure and displeasure, its consent and its resistance—as with Caliban and Miranda—*The Tempest* reveals the manipulative means through which authoritarian figures curb what one has, has not, can and cannot consent to by sometimes violently silencing counter-narratives and erasing the history of agential submission. While consent is the subject's best hope to actualize autonomy and to protect him or her from tyranny, evidenced in the courtship and marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand, this play nonetheless leaves unresolved the tensions and fissures in the manifold narratives that haunt the island of *The Tempest*.

CHAPTER 3

“THE BASE FRUIT OF HER BURNING LUST” THE KNOTTY DISCOURSES OF RACE AND SEXUALITY IN SHAKESPEARE’S *TITUS ANDRONICUS*¹

Shakespeare’s bloodiest tragedy *Titus Andronicus*—like Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*—was an immense success on the Elizabethan stage, a theatrical sensation that established the playwright’s reputation as a dramatist.² This revenge tragedy is replete with scenes of white-on-white violence between Goths and Romans, haunted and manipulated by the Queen of Goths turned Empress of Rome and her lover Aaron the Moor. Although the play begins by distinguishing the victorious and civilized Romans from the defeated barbarian Goths, Shakespeare both undermines the incorporation of othered groups within civil society and underscores the barbarism upon which civilization itself is founded when cruelty and violence masquerade as justice, religion, and policy. In his earliest tragedy that depicts Rome as a “wilderness of tigers” (3.1.54), Shakespeare collapses the comfortable and easy distinctions between self and other, civilized and barbarian, friend and foe.

Even Aaron, who is kept an unassimilable outsider in Shakespeare’s play—Emily C. Bartels reminds us—cannot be considered as an “absolute sign of the Other” due to his uncanny intimacy with European “cultural literacy, his knowledge of classical mythology,

¹ All quotes from the play are from the Arden Shakespeare *Titus Andronicus* edited by Jonathan Bate (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1995).

² R.A. Foakes states that *Titus* pays homage to Marlowe. For more on the ways that Shakespeare’s Aaron is a Tamburlaine-like figure that capitalizes on the popularity of Marlowe’s spectacles of violence and large cast productions, see R.A. Foakes’s *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 53-60.

and his eloquence” (269). With a Moor as its quintessential villain who gives a rare and extended defense of blackness, *Titus* provides a provocative springboard to analyses of the complex, contradictory, and evolving discourses of race in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. While critics have amply discussed the ways that tropes of the lascivious and evil Moor are fully realized in Aaron, Tamora has more often been understood as a character who embodies misogynist preoccupations of the period. Marked by her barbarian roots, Tamora represents the lusty widow and duplicitous wife. Her distinct whiteness, however, has not been considered as raced. Departing from this dominant reading of Tamora, Francesca T. Royster argues that *Titus* challenges our contemporary understanding of race discourses of the early modern period since, she argues, “White is not simply the default racial setting for humanity, not an assumed standard: the play complicates whiteness” (447). Challenging the general perception of Tamora and her Gothic sons as hyper-white, Noemie Ndiaye astutely illuminates the ways that Tamora, “esta-mora... overbrims with Moorishness [and]... is overdetermined as African in keeping with the popular Spanish identity in late sixteenth-century England.”³

In this chapter, I continue the critical exploration of the ways that *Titus* represents the collision of the competition for political and social power with women’s prerogative to exercise consent and the presence of racially marked others in empire. In particular, I will argue that the vilification of Tamora’s sexuality extends broadly to notions of feminine

³ See Emily C. Bartels’s “Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashioning of Race” in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1995), 265-284. See Francesca T. Royster “White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*” in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51.4 (2000), 447. For more on the *Titus*’s refashioning the Goths as Spanish due to Aaron’s contaminating presence in the Gothic Court, see Noémie Ndiaye’s fascinating article “Aaron’s Roots: Spaniards, Englishmen, and Blackamoors in *Titus Andronicus*” in *Early Theatre* 19.2.(2016):59-75.

consent and serves to endorse the sociopolitical disenfranchisement of Aaron and his son, black bodies that allow notions of a shared whiteness to be the unmentioned similitude uniting the barbarian Goths with the civilized Romans. Through my analysis of Tamora's extramarital affair with Aaron the Moor and the hostility of all white characters in this play toward the birth of her blackamoor child, I interrogate the drama's highly complex and nuanced depiction of the interrelated dynamics of interracial desire and kinship. In its treatment of Lavinia's rape through a lexicon of miscegenation, Shakespeare's *Titus* provides a model for thinking about the ways that early modern racial ideologies of blood purity and lineage transition to a more modern understanding of race signified through the color of one's skin.

Interracial Desire and White Allegiances

The hyper-white Tamora Queen of Goths arrives in Rome a prisoner of war. Unable to persuade Titus toward mercy, she fails to protect her eldest son Alarbus, whose severed limbs and entrails are fed to a sacrificial fire for the fallen Andronici. As Rome's captive bereft of political rights, Tamora is entirely at the mercy of her Roman conquerors. In this state of flagrant vulnerability, Saturninus's remark on her pleasing "hue" takes on a leering and predatory tone when he promises: "he [who] comforts you/ Can make you greater than the Queen of Goths" (1.1272-3). Due to the vast difference in power between Saturninus and Tamora at this moment, audiences are well aware that there is little room for Tamora to negotiate her will and sexual desires. But, in an unexpected twist, Tamora changes her sociopolitical position; from captive and potential rape victim or emperor's concubine, she rises to the regal status of royal wife and Empress of Rome:

Saturninus. And therefore, lovely Tamora, queen of Goths,
That like the stately Phoebe 'mongst her nymphs
Dost overshadow the gallant'st dames of Rome,
If thou be pleased with this my sudden choice,
Behold, I choose thee, Tamora, for my bride,
And will create thee empress of Rome,
Speak, Queen of Goths, dost thou applaud my choice?...

Tamora. And here, in sight of heaven, to Rome I swear,
If Saturnine advance the Queen of Goths,
She will a handmaid be to his desires,
A loving nurse, a mother to his youth.

Saturninus. Ascend, fair queen, Pantheon. Lords, accompany
Your noble emperor and his lovely bride,
Sent by the heavens for Prince Saturnine,
Whose wisdom hath her fortune conquered:
There shall we consummate our spousal rites. (1.2.320-6, 334-342)

After his brother claims Lavinia as his own, Saturninus chooses anew and fully conveys his attraction for the Queen of the Goths. Tamora's whiteness captivates and elicits his amorous appetites. Praising her fair "hue" and comparing her with Phoebe, the mythological titan associated with the pale moon, Saturninus boasts that his intended bride far surpasses the beauty of the proudest and most estimable Roman women.⁴ This contrasts with his rather banal and uninspiring initial proposal to marry Lavinia and make her "Rome's royal mistress, mistress of [his] heart" (1.1.245); A contrived union, his decision to make Lavinia his bride derives more from prudence than from the ardor of his affections. Marriage with the daughter of Titus, a popular war hero, would bestow an honor on the Andronici and helps to secure Saturninus's precarious position as emperor through an

⁴ See Francesca T. Royster for her provocative analysis of *Titus Andronicus*, which undercuts the general belief that Romans and Goths recognize their shared whiteness set against Aaron's blackness. Royster, in fact, emphasizes that the play "others" a woman that is hyper-white first by having Saturninus call attention to Tamora's hue that is distinct from and, in his estimation, superior to that of her Roman counterparts. See Royster's article "White Limed Walls" pages 432-455.

alliance with this noble and heroic family. As critics have amply discussed, Lavinia's consent to the match does not matter, for it is Titus whose acquiescence is required. Saturninus's proposal to Tamora, however, underscores the value he places in her consent since he twice asks for her affirmation and pleasure in a situation that he could so easily command. He could have her body without seeking her approval and, above all, without raising her status.

Interestingly, with the juxtaposition of his erotic attraction and Tamora's political increase, Saturninus does not demand his intended bride's amorous affections but simply her approval of the match itself, which he emphasizes will benefit her position. While he lusts for Tamora, this emperor understands that her love is not for him to command. While he gains nothing and, over the course of the play, loses much through his alliance with a captive of Rome, Tamora regains her mobility and is thus able to procure revenge on the Andronici. Marriage—for him—though it clearly holds political repercussions, is not a choice made to aggrandize his empery but to satiate his desires. In comparison, he knows full well that Tamora's agreement more than likely results from her recognition of this opportunistic offer. Saturninus alludes to the politic savviness of her acquiescence when he compliments that her "wisdom hath her fortune conquered" (1.1.341). Tamora confirms her strategizing when she responds not with a plain affirmation but with the conditional: if he advances her status, she will then satisfy all his bodily needs and desires by playing the part of his handmaid, nurse, and mother.

Tamora, however, is clearly not recognized as a discrete and tactful queen. Described throughout the play as a "siren" (2.1.23) of "spotted, detested... honour" (2.2.74), "a most insatiate and luxurious woman" (5.1.88), this barbarian queen epitomizes

a passionate temperament in her liaisons with Aaron the moor, a love affair that eventually jeopardizes her position as Rome's empress. The promiscuous Tamora presents a manifold threat to the Romans, Ania Loomba insists, that challenges Roman patriarchy "militarily (by waging war against Rome), sexually (by marrying and manipulating its ruler and maintaining a lover), and racially (because she and her lover are both 'barbarous')." ⁵

Emphasizing Aaron's racial difference from the Romans and Goths, Kristen Wright argues that even Aaron describes Tamora's "amorous temperament...[as] sinful and unnatural for being a married woman actively pursuing a black man" (176). For Dorothea Kehler, what was likely most troubling for a primarily white early modern audience is not her roots as a barbaric Goth but her "convention flaunting racial preference... What bonds Lucius to the Goths are shared racist, misogynist beliefs. Not only will women deceive you, but they'll deceive you with the race marked out as Other." ⁶ The staged disapproval of Tamora's act of marital infidelity simultaneously feeds and relies on gendered fears of feminine duplicity and racial discourses that aligned barbarians—typically perceived as non-Christian and non-European peoples—with inferior, loose and lascivious sexualities. In what follows, I argue that Tamora's affair with Aaron and their specifically black—not mixed—child participates in vilifying women's sexual consent as it also endorses the sociopolitical disenfranchisement of black persons. The child, a product of miscegenation, serves as the mark of Tamora's

⁵ Ania Loomba's *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 47. Ania Loomba explains that Shakespeare's *Titus* links Tamora and Aaron as embodiments of pure evil, making evil comfortably reside outside Roman patriarchy even though the play undercuts the protection and civility that Rome affords.

⁶ Kristen D. Wright, " 'This thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine': Man's Monstrous Potential in *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus*" in *Disgust and Desire: The Paradox of the Monster*, edited by Kristen D. Wright (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018), 176. Dorothea Kehler, "That Ravenous Tiger Tamora: *Titus Andronicus*'s Lusty Widow, Wife, and M/Other" in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1995), 327.

consent. Through the play's indictment of white female sexuality, the play condones the bonds between black skin and a state of perpetual denigration.

Unlike her pragmatic marriage with the Roman Saturnine, Tamora is "fetter'd in amorous chains" to Aaron. And, while she precisely and conservatively states the roles and functions she will serve as Saturnine's wife, she spares no expense in her seduction of Aaron. From the sight of "chequer'd shadows" (2.2.15) and the "green leaves [that] quiver with the cooling wind"(2.2.14) to the sounds of "babbling echos" (2.2.17) and the melodious chanting birds, Tamora's employs her aroused senses to tempt Aaron:

Aaron, let us sit,
And, whilst the babbling echo mocks the hounds,
Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns,
As if a double hunt were heard at once,
Let us sit down and mark their yelping noise;
And, after conflict such as was supposed
The wandering prince and Dido once enjoy'd...
We may, each wreathed in the other's arms,
Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber;
Whiles hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds
Be unto us as is a nurse's song
Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep. (2.2.16-22, 25-9)

There is no question that Tamora intends to indulge her carnal appetites when she envisions that her rendezvous with the Moor will lead to the scene between Dido and Aeneas in the cave. Not only will they have sex; they will slumber in an embrace, their white and black bodies entwined. Far from keeping her attachment clandestine, Tamora vaunts her affair. The sounds of the hounds and of the Romans become music to their foreplay, which then peculiarly lulls them to relaxation. Rather than fear discovery, it seems that Tamora delights in the danger of being found in the arms of her black lover by the armed men who hunt in the forest and surround them, a possibility that indeed occurs when the unfortunate Bassianus and Lavinia come upon the pair alone in the woods. Her reckless infatuation with

Aaron contrasts the tact and savviness she demonstrated in her acceptance of Saturninus's proposal. While sexual desire and passionate love compulsively draw her to the Moor, the political perk of becoming Rome's queen leads Tamora to accept the title of Saturninus's wife. As her incompetent and gullible husband hunts for stags, she makes one out of him.

Tamora's character, however, does more than simply draw upon existing anxieties and tropes regarding the categorical duplicitous woman. It is worth emphasizing here that Tamora is the only female character who displays her desires. Lavinia—"Rome's rich ornament" (1.1.55)—for example, exhibits no such erotic passions. Even on the morn after her nuptials, when Saturninus complains that Titus had awakened them "too early for new-married ladies" (2.1.15), Lavinia pertly retorts: "I say, no:/ I have been broad awake two hours and more" (2.1.17-8). With such extremely divergent representations of women's erotic lives, Tamora's maligned liaison with the Moor effectively dissociates sexual consent from political acquiescence. In *The Lamentable and Tragical History of Titus Andronicus*, the ballad distinguishes between Tamora's passive rise in social status and her active choice of Aaron. While it was the "Emperor [who] did make the Queen his wife," the ballad makes explicit that "she consented to [the Moor] secretly... And in time a Black-a-Moor she bred."⁷ No mention is made to Tamora's willingness to advance herself in Rome nor does it state that she consensually accepted the emperor's proposal. Instead, the ballad uses consent to refer explicitly to her sexuality and highlights her willingness "to abuse her husband's marriage-bed." Through the only female character who displays her desire, illicit sexuality constitutes women's consent.

⁷ Anon, *The Lamentable Tragical History of Titus Andronicus*, EBBA ID:35486.

I suggest that Shakespeare's tragedy more forcibly yokes Tamora's consent to her bodily urges and sensations. In some ways, her consent to have sex with Aaron only becomes fully evident after the birth of their child. When Bassianus confronts Tamora in the woods he asserts that her "swarth Cimmerian/ Doth make your honour of his body's hue" (2.2.72-3). It is Aaron who darkens her honor. Similarly, Bassianus renders her passive when he explains that "foul desire had... conducted" her to be "sequester'd from all [her] train, dismounted from [her] snow-white goodly steed[,] and wander'd hither to an obscure plot,/ Accompanied but with a barbarous Moor"(2.2.75-9). The ambiguous relation between sexual passivity and her agency ceases with the birth of the "base fruit of her burning lust" (5.1.43). According to the Galenic theory of conception, a woman could not conceive without first generating seed brought about through pleasure, and her bodily pleasure indicated consensual sex. In 1627 lawyer Sir Henry Finch explains that conception presents indisputable evidence against rape victims since "rape is the forcible ravishment of a woman, but if she conceives it is not rape, for she cannot conceive unless she consent."⁸ The black child manifests Tamora's pleasure in the act, revealing the complicated early modern conceptual twinning of women's sexual passivity and consensual submission.

The racial overtones of the encounter between Tamora, Bassianus, and Lavinia further nuance and complicate the condemnation of Tamora's affair. When Bassianus castigates Tamora's rendezvous with Aaron, he compares her "snow-white goodly steed" to a "barbarous Moor." Like her horse, which physically surpasses the strength and height of men, the Roman emperor far eclipses Aaron's ambiguous but certainly inferior political

⁸ Quoted in *Violent Masculinities: Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture*, edited by Jennifer Feather and Catherine E. Thomas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 201.

status. Significantly, Bassianus does not use a metaphor for Aaron, implying that an animal far surpasses a moor in worth. His strategic comparison also serves to craft a kinship between the Romans and the Queen of Goths by constructing a notion of shared whiteness. While *Titus* does draw attention to variations in white complexions, it also engages in the process of uniting European populations against racially marked individuals as well as against white populations infiltrated, bastardized, and polluted by black bodies. Bassianus's emphasis on the color of Tamora's goodly steed presents whiteness itself as indicative of a superior social standing. Her decision to dismount, to choose to walk on the base earth on par with a Moor, makes plain that her decision to be with Aaron could not be due to ulterior motives such as political or social gain. Aaron is where her passions and desires reside. As I stated before, the union between Saturninus and Tamora was one based for him on desire and for her on ulterior motives. In Tamora and Aaron's relationship, the power structure is reversed. Her alliance with Aaron does not come with sociopolitical advantages but with risks. In Tamora, anxieties surrounding the commonplace sexually duplicitous woman diminishes somewhat not because women are less likely to cuckold their spouses, but in an interracial affair—one in which her lover inhabits a socially inferior position—Tamora's inner state becomes legible in her choice of a Moor.

I insist that to the Romans and anti-black Goths in Shakespeare's play, Aaron's inferior position indicates that Tamora could not have chosen him for motives other than her passions, love, lust, and desires. And, because Aaron is not simply occupying an uncertain social and political state but is black as well, the birth of a "Black-a-Moor" rather than a fair child as Muly's wife had delivered serves a twofold function. It ascertains Tamora's pleasure and sexual consent to the act while it also makes a case for the perpetual

exclusion of black bodies from the body politic. While women may marry white men for love and desire, their decisions could also be informed by filial duty and the temptations of political, social, and economic advantages. And, in the case of Tamora these privileges, rather her affections, persuade her to marry Saturnine. A liaison with Aaron, a black man who so clearly occupies the fringes of Roman society, greatly limits speculations regarding Tamora's motivations for being with him, which could explain why Lavinia and Bassianus immediately recognize this meeting in the woods as a lover's tryst.

As Ania Loomba has illuminated, Aaron undoes stereotypes regarding the lascivious Moor since the trope of uncontrolled sexualities are entirely placed on Tamora. While he clearly possesses the capability to and does have sex with Saturninus's wife, Tamora is the one who views their meeting in the woods to be an opportunity to indulge her carnal longings. Aaron, in contrast, declares that lust does not govern his thoughts when he states: "No, madam, these are no venereal signs/ Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand" (2.2.37-8). Significantly, it is Tamora and the Romans who presume that a clandestine meeting between the empress and her Moor would lead to sexual dalliances. In this instance, his rebuff of Tamora's sexual advances is welcomed by her since he plots revenge on her enemies the Andronici.

In its inclusion of Tamora's attraction to Aaron the Moor, the play follows a possible source text "*The History of Titus Andronicus*," which likewise relates the adulterous passion of the Roman empress for a black moor. Shakespeare's tragedy, however, deviates strikingly when it dissociates Tamora's sexual desire and erotic life from maternity. In short, when Tamora seeks erotic pleasure from her liaisons with Aaron and participates in consensual sexual activity, she does not do so with the intention to bear his children. This separation of

women's eroticism from reproduction is one of the means by which Shakespeare's play explores the complex knots of sexual desire as they intersect with changing formations of race in early modern England. In *The History of Titus Andronicus*, the Roman Emperor knew that his wife "brought forth a Blackmoor Child... but she allayed his Anger, by telling him it was conceived by the Force of Imagination."⁹ Readers may assume that the child lived since if the emperor did accept her story that it was black because of her fantasy or because of her viewing of a black person, then the baby she delivered would have been considered his son and heir.¹⁰ As Virginia Mason Vaughan has stated, if this chapbook was indeed a source for the play, then "it is clear that Shakespeare transformed the episode of the black baby from a mere aside into a crucial building block of Aaron's character."¹¹

Just as it further enlarges Aaron's character, Shakespeare's play also develops a racial politics through undermining the links between women's sexual desire and maternal affection as well as between blood relation and social kinship. Repeatedly, Aaron reminds Chiron and Demetrius that his son is their brother (4.2.90, 124, 128), that they and his child have all been imprisoned within the same womb, where they fed on the same blood. Even after Aaron insists that Tamora's white sons are the baby's brother by "the surer side"—a fact that they themselves acknowledge when they charge Aaron with having "undone [their] mother" (4.2.77)—they give no second thought to "broach the tadpole on [their] rapier's

⁹ *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* edited by Geoffrey Bullough, Volume VI, 39.

¹⁰ In *A thousand notable things, of sundry sortes* (1579), a Spanish woman who had given birth to a black baby was acquitted of adultery when a picture of a black man was found in her bedchamber. For more, see the introduction to *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* by Jonathan Burton and Ania Loomba (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 4.

¹¹ Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness*, 45.

point” (4.2.87). Chiron and Demetrius, however, are not alone but act in concert with the nurse and their mother, who damn the “accursed...offspring” (4.2.81), a “devil” (4.2.66) “as loathsome as a toad” (4.2.69). Tamora herself wills Aaron to “christen it with the dagger’s point” (4.2.72). Again, this differs drastically from *The History*, in which the empress secures her safety as well as that of her black baby by managing to convince the emperor that the child was his son. Shakespeare’s Tamora sends her child to its father for him to kill, prompting Aaron’s defense and celebration of blackness.

In Act 1 Tamora pours forth tears for her eldest son Alarbus; for his murder, she makes the rape of Titus’s daughter the means by which her remaining sons prove their filial devotion to her. Even Titus comments on the ferocity of Tamora’s maternal instinct to protect her offspring when he warns Marcus: “But if you hunt these bear-whelps, then beware:/ The dam will wake” (4.1.96). I wish to underscore that her black child, receives no such care and tenderness. It is not dear to her as her white first-born son had been—not even close. Critics have primarily interpreted Tamora’s unmotherly response to the birth of her black child as another instance—like when she refused to be a merciful murderer to Lavinia—that marks Tamora as unwomanly, unnatural, and unkind. I argue, however, that this play casts Tamora’s will to murder her black baby as, in fact, expected and aligned with the racial politics of this particular play. *Titus* offers a nuanced and highly fraught depiction of the intersections of interracial sexual desire and kinship ties. Tamora does not ask for her black child to be hidden from the Roman court, raised by another family as Aaron plans to do. Her dark baby is not simply considered by her to be an expendable body; it requires execution, which his half-brothers Chiron and Demetrius offer to perform as their mother directed.

Though Tamora professes that Aaron the Moor is “sweeter to [her] than life” (2.2.51), she refuses to propagate his kind. Philip C. Kolin argues that this reveals her elevation of sex over motherhood and suggests that Tamora is less under Aaron’s control than he perceives.¹² I emphasize here that the dissociation of sexual desire from motherly affection arises in this play through differences in skin color, a distinction that the nurse, Chiron, Demetrius, and Tamora all use to justify repulsion and murder. Significantly, *Titus* reveals that sexual desire for a black man does not necessarily exempt one from prejudice. Tamora lusts for Aaron but does not recognize the equal right for his son—his line and race—to exist. Though she may transgress the sanctity of her marriage bed, she nonetheless upholds the superiority and inherent privilege of whiteness by seeking to preserve herself and her fair sons by demanding the execution of her black child.

Aaron, himself, reiterates the child’s misfortune that nature had lent the baby his father’s hue rather than his “mother’s look,/ Villain, thou mightst have been an emperor”(5.1.30). Like Tamora’s innocent child, a “dismal, black, and sorrowful issue,” Marcus justifies the killing of a “black ill-favor’d fly” because it is “Like the empress’ Moor” (3.2.67). Black pigmentation—be it Aaron’s skin or the fly’s exoskeleton—is imagined as the crucial link between a fly and a human being, a similarity that marks them as bodies that are either expendable or necessary to be destroyed. Furthermore, the black baby is repeatedly brought onstage as a symbol of illicit sexuality and of villainy, and its life is threatened twice in front of audiences. First, the child’s mother and brothers attempt to kill it while its nurse

¹² See Dorothea Kehler’s “‘That Ravenous Tiger Tamora’: *Titus Andronicus*’s Lusty Widow, Wife, and M/Other” in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., page 327.

begs Aaron to perform the deed. And, later the Roman Lucius orders the Goths to hang Aaron's "fruit of bastardy" (5.1.48). Though Tamora may "unmotherly" seek her child's death, her reaction to the black baby is perfectly in line with the racial politics of this play in which both Romans and Goths see the child as a life without value to anyone but his father.

Like Tamora who separates sexual desire from kinship ties, Aaron, too, declares "My mistress is my mistress; this myself" (4.2.109). And, again, it is the child's color that makes Aaron's son "the vigour and the picture of my youth:/ This before all the world do I prefer;/ This maugre all the world will I keep safe" (4.2.110-12). The prioritization of his child above all—including himself—arises from his recognition of their shared hue, which makes the baby a younger version of himself. As the only Moor depicted onstage, surrounded by fair Romans and hyper-white Goths, Aaron's paternity cannot be denied. While Tamora, Lucius, and the Goths who have allied with Rome condemn the child for its skin color, Aaron loves it not simply because the baby is his but because he sees the child as himself. While this identification with his son could be tied to fantasies of male parthenogenesis, the play emphasizes that not only Aaron but also the allied Romans and Goths see the child as a miniature of the father specifically because of its dark skin.

When Aaron dotes on his son, he reveals an understanding that his child will always occupy a state considered both threatening and inferior to those endowed with fair complexions. Aaron consistently addresses his son by calling his child a "tawny slave" (5.1.27), a "thick lipp'd slave" (4.2.177), a "black slave" (4.2.122), references that draw attention to the entwined status of physical markers of difference and the pejorative. Though he imagines that his son may one day grow to be "a warrior and command a camp" (4.2.182) possibly of Goths and other barbarians beyond Rome's walls, Aaron nonetheless

realizes that, in a world in which his son can be murdered because of his black skin, the child will always occupy a position in society that is unassimilable and vulnerable despite his royal blood and possible future contributions.

Dark Networks

In the previous section, I explored the ways that *Titus* models a paradigm of race that uses the commonplace vilification of women's sexuality to serve the social and political disenfranchisement of black persons. It further showed how the play severs the associations between women's erotic pleasures and desires from their social reproductive and maternal purposes. Despite having consented to sex with Aaron, Tamora does not wish to propagate his kind and actively seeks the destruction of her black child. I wish to stress that Lucius and his allied Goths do not articulate their shared whiteness, just as Tamora does not need to explain the value of her fair sons that far exceeds that of her black offspring. This is the workings of racist ideologies. By insisting that the blackness of Tamora's baby is the very symbol of the illicit and unnatural union between a white mother and a Moor, the Romans and Goths dignify their alliance by creating a fiction that suspends the varying degrees of whiteness between them. In other words, black skin carries the weight to normalize whiteness and naturalize the unlikely union between the Romans and Goths. Saturninus chooses Tamora as his wife, allowing Tamora to declare "I am incorporate in Rome,/ A Roman now adopted happily"(1.1.467-8). While the Andronici convey their distrust of the "subtle Queen of Goths" and newly minted Roman empress, it is worth noting that within a divided Rome, there are those who follow Saturninus and accept Tamora's identification as Roman. Similarly, Lucius forges a political union with the Goths. Both Saturninus and

Lucius esteems these purported barbarian Goths with legitimate, formal, and conventional positions as political partners—wives and allies.

These are not informal and improvisational bonds but strategic and recognizable unions between the purportedly civilized Romans and barbarian Goths, lawful alliances that greatly contrast the ambiguous position that Aaron occupies in relation to his European counterparts throughout the play. Aaron's place in the Gothic court perplexes and remains uncertain in Rome. He certainly never professes himself to be incorporated in the Roman empire as his mistress eventually declares herself to be. A prisoner, servant, slave, lover, political confidant, puppet-master of atrocities—Aaron holds all these positions at once. In a plot device specific to Shakespeare's play, Aaron presents a solution to the birth of his black baby while revealing that this outsider within Rome, this man without a place, has managed to forge his own network among Rome's political outsiders and enemies:

Not far, one Muly lives, my countryman;
His wife but yesternight was brought to bed;
His child is like to her, fair as you are:
Go pack with him, and give the mother gold,
And tell them both the circumstance of all;
And how by this their child shall be advanced,
And be received for the emperor's heir,
And substituted in the place of mine,
To calm this tempest whirling in the court;
And let the emperor dandle him for his own. (4.2.154-63)

Aaron evinces an allegiance to his countryman, a fidelity that ultimately serves to undermine Roman patrilineal succession by placing a child of obscure roots in a position to rule the empire. In a turn of irony, though Titus upholds the laws of primogeniture when he asked the tribunes to crown the emperor's eldest son, Saturninus undermines patrilineal succession by enabling a child without any royal lineage to potentially inherit the Roman empery. According to Aaron's plot, Saturninus would not simply dote on any fair Roman

baby as his own but will see himself in a child whose father is a Moor. Despite blurring distinctions between Romans and Goths, the play distinguishes them through relying on the geographic and cultural differences to which these groups refer. While even the ethnic Goths are depicted in this play as inhabiting and possessing territories recognized by the Romans, we cannot say the same about Aaron and his countryman. From what land or country do these men originate? The flexibility in the early modern usage of the term Moor leads to a web of oftentimes contradictory references, meaning that each reference requires very specific attention to the context in which the term is deployed. Moors were generally considered non-European and non-Christians. They could originate in Africa, but the term was also used capaciously to refer to Berber-Arabs of North Africa, sub-Saharan Africans, Muslims, Egyptians, and even Christian Iberians, specifically the Spanish.¹³ Though Aaron's child is a blackamoor—which usually denotes darker skin pigmentation associated with sub-Saharan Africans—I wish to underscore that this more defined geographic association is far from conclusive

What we can discern from Aaron's plot is that the one black person onstage (of course) knows other Moors residing within reach of the Roman court, and—fortunately for him—one of his connections is also married to a fair woman who had just given birth. While she may be a Roman married to a Moor, as some critics have assumed, the play provides such little description of the fair woman married to Aaron's countryman that her origin should be considered indeterminate.¹⁴ Equally promising is the possibility that she

¹³ Emily C. Bartels underscores that while Moors may be black, white, or tawny, barbarous or civilized, they were *always* Other. See "Making More of the Moor" page 266.

¹⁴ For example, see Emily C. Bartels's reference to Muly's wife as a Roman in her chapter "Race, Nation, and Marlowe" in *Christopher Marlowe in Context* edited by Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 213. Also, while Aaron makes a point to insist that the child received its

could be a fair Moor or even a Goth since Aaron explains to Chiron and Demetrius that the child is “like to her, fair as you are” (4.2.156). I prefer these latter two possibilities that would make Rome’s heir a child without a drop of Roman blood, an outsider and complete other. When Aaron refers to Muly as his “countryman,” an odd description when we consider the geographic capaciousness of “Moor,” I argue that Aaron points to a kind of allegiance, fellowship, and trust that leads him to purchase Muly’s child rather than a Roman’s son. The fact that both men are displaced from their origin and homeland makes Aaron’s affinity to his kind particularly disconcerting from a Roman perspective. Others—strangers living close to or even within Rome’s borders, an inevitable consequence of imperial ambitions—form networks and will collude to undermine the authority of empire.

Curiously, Aaron does not ask Muly and his wife to raise his son. Instead, he has Chiron and Demetrius travel outside of Rome’s imperial seat to his countryman’s residence while he seeks the Goths, “There to dispose this treasure in mine arms,/ And secretly to greet the empress’ friends”(4.2.176). Later, when Aaron awaits the arrival of his “trusty Goth,” he pacifies his crying son and tells him, “when he knows thou art the empress’ babe, / [he w]ill hold thee dearly for thy mother’s sake”(5.1.34-6). While Lucius forges a political alliance with the Goths, formalized with their united presence onstage, Aaron reveals that he and the empress have their own clandestine network with Tamora’s people. And, significantly, these Goths accept Aaron’s position as a close companion or servant to their

fair skin pigmentation from its mother, it might be worth undercutting the general agreement that Aaron’s countryman shares his same skin tone. According to *A Report of the kingdom of Congo* by Duarte Lopes and translated into English by Abraham Hartwell in 1597, the children of women of Congo and Portuguese men do “incline somewhat towards white. So that Signor Odoardo was of opinion, that the black colour did not spring from the heat of the sun, but from the nature of the seed, being induced thereunto by the reasons above mentioned” (London: John Wolfe, 1597). For a well-known early modern source that uses an example of a black child borne from the union between a fair English woman and her Ethiopian husband as evidence that blackness is an infection, see George Best’s *True Discourse*.

Queen to the extent that Aaron believes they will likewise trust his word that the child he bears to them is Tamora's. For her sake, he insists, the Goths loyal to Tamora will adore his black son.

The play makes evident that Aaron possesses an uncanny self-control which enables him to strategize and successfully manipulate the Goths, the Andronici, and Rome. As a father, however, I argue that audiences become aware of Aaron's naïvete and one weakness. After Chiron and Demetrius repeatedly seek to take the life of his baby, Aaron still maintains that they are family and attempts to have Tamora's fair offspring view his black son as their brother. Later when he and his child are captured by Lucius, the inhumane Roman orders the Goths to hang the baby in front of Aaron so that the father will witness his child's murder. Aaron begs, "Save the child,/ And bear it from me to the empress" (5.1.53-4)—the same empress who had wanted the black baby to be christened with its father's dagger. Here, again, Aaron's assumption that his son will be tolerated, accepted, and even held dear by Tamora's Goths screams of excessive optimism that is simply not confirmed by any reaction from white characters presented in this play.

Unlike Titus and Tamora who are willing to murder their own children in order to uphold the status quo, Aaron desperately seeks a life for his child in a society so fully set against its survival. Despite his defense of blackness, Aaron always claims his child's regal and white parentage to protect him: "he is of royal blood" (5.1.49).¹⁵ But, according to the racial politics of *Titus*, even a black baby's innocence cannot protect it from the hostile

¹⁵ When the Prince of Morocco defends his complexion in *The Merchant of Venice*, he states that his skin tone has both emasculated courageous men and have seduced virgins of his clime. Morocco ends his speech by asserting that he "would not change this hue" only to capitulate when he admits that he would give up his darkness to attain Portia's heart (2.1.11-2). Aaron, in contrast, never retreats from his staunch defense of blackness.

intentions of the Goths and Romans. The father is black, without an origin, and occupies an ambiguous position as a (possible) servant while the mother is white, a Queen of Goths, and Empress of Rome. As stated before, Aaron's dark hue represents in *Titus* his status as an outsider as well as his sociopolitical and moral inferiority. Since in this tragedy blackness is yoked to a state of disenfranchisement, a black body is without inherent value and the only way for Aaron to assert his son's right to life is through its white lineage. Since Muly's fair child without any connection to royalty can be so easily placed on the throne, the only thing preventing Aaron's son from being an emperor is his dark complexion, a fact of the play that confirms the capital of white skin. What I previously described as Aaron's naïve hope that his son's fair mother will prove his child's worthiness of life is perhaps more a product of desperation. In a play that casts blackness as ontologically inferior, confirmed through social and political marginalization, his son's white mother is the only avenue available to endow the child with some inherent value worthy of life.

Though Aaron never seems to relinquish hope that his son's white parentage will be acknowledged and respected, *Titus* consistently shows that the baby's mixed blood does not matter. Every single European character depicted onstage who sees the baby only registers its resemblance to Aaron and expresses hostility toward the black child. Noémie Ndiaye explains that in the late sixteenth century, Iberian culture developed a racial episteme to "incorporate and make legible the ongoing hybridization of the imperial population" through a "racial lexicon and a comprehensive and nuanced human chromatic palette." Lucius, asserts Ndiaye, regards "the child with early modern English eyes," ones that see

mixture itself as black.¹⁶ Any drop of non-white blood makes that body expendable, and, unfortunately for Aaron's son, his interracial parentage is written on his body:

Say, wall-eyed slave, whither wouldst thou convey
This growing image of thy fiend-like face?
Why dost not speak? what, deaf? not a word?
A halter, soldiers! hang him on this tree.
And by his side his fruit of bastardy...
Too like the sire for ever being good.
First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl;
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.
Get me a ladder. (5.1.44-8, 50-3)

While critics have posited that Lucius's horrific commands to hang a baby must have elicited contradictory responses from early modern audiences, forcing them to question again the significances of civility, it is impossible to ascertain whether or not playgoers felt compassion toward the black child. What these lines do convey, however, is Lucius's perception that Aaron's son is not considered a distinct being with its own contingent and unpredictable future. The black baby is a growing threat who will one day become the evil that is Aaron. Or, as Virginia Mason Vaughan succinctly states, "Aaron was not black because he was evil, but evil because he was black."¹⁷ In support of Vaughan's syllogism, I recall that the child's mother represents the epitome of feminine duplicity. Although both his parents plot a gory revenge on the Andronici and Rome, the child signifies evil specifically because of his black skin inherited from Aaron. No link is made between the child's complexion and the malign disposition of his mother the Queen of Goths.

¹⁶ Ndiaye, "Aaron's Roots," 67-8.

¹⁷ See Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 49.

According to the play's logic of race, blackness is the sign of an inherited evil. Aaron's son—unlike Muly's fair child—bears the indelible sign of an intrinsic villainy. From Lucius's perspective, the child's worth lies only in its ability to cause Aaron pain. The Roman demands the murder of a black man and his baby in retaliation for the lies Aaron had told that “robb'd Andronicus of his good hand,” for being the bedfellow of a white woman, for producing a child through the empress's person, and for the Moor's stubborn refusal to disclose the “trusty Goth” with whom he expected to meet. Unlike the swift retribution Lucius inflicts on Saturninus for the murder of his father, Lucius's vindictive threat to torture Aaron with extreme psychological pain through the sight of his dying child far exceeds a quid pro quo revenge. Although Lucius sees the Moor as the incarnate devil, Lucius attributes a fatherly affection to Aaron, and, in this recognition of a paternal care, one might say that the Roman acknowledges some kind of humanity in the black man.¹⁸ To be clear, Lucius threatens to hang the baby and have Aaron witness his son struggling for life because the Roman identifies a shared likeness in the Moor. Just as Aaron declares the blackamoor child to be “this myself... the picture of my youth” (4.2.109-10), Lucius names his son after himself; and, throughout the play, the Roman's son is referred to as young Lucius to distinguish him from his father. The love and care Lucius possesses for his child provide the means for this Roman to cause Aaron pain. I suggested in Chapter 2 that an

¹⁸ For Eldred Jones, Aaron's paternal care for his child allows this “monster” to “emerge as a human being after all.” See Eldred Jones's “Aaron” in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1995), 155. Leslie A. Fiedler provocatively underscores that Aaron's humanity can only surface in his recognition of a shared blackness. See Leslie A. Fiedler's “The Stranger in Shakespeare: Aaron” in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing INC., 1995), 161. Aaron's inability to empathize, his refusal to commiserate with the plight of another (unless that other is black like himself), mirrors the Romans' lack of empathy toward black beings in this play. Unlike Lucius and his fellow Romans who have the backing of empire to support their racial preferences and exclusions, subalterns like Aaron and his son unite against the hostilities of a dominant social force.

acknowledgement of a shared humanity is what demands the exclusion of Caliban from Prospero's intimate community. In *Titus*, a sense of mutual fatherhood provides the blueprint for Lucius's gratuitous revenge.¹⁹

Lavinia's Spring with Winter Mixed

Lavinia, Rome's rich ornament, is the victim of rape, a crime that by its very definition is sex without consent. Her hyper-white rapists "revel in [her] treasury" (1.1.631) and "make pillage of her chastity" (2.2.44). In this common figurative language of rape, Lavinia's chastity is imagined as a prize that can be stolen—a tangible and material thing that once taken can never be reclaimed, once marred can never be righted. Despite the prevalence of this metaphor, early modern philosophical and theological discourses often argued that chastity resided in a woman's spirit and mind rather than in her body, meaning that a victim of rape does not just *pass* as chaste but *is* chaste. Furthermore, early modern preoccupations and anxieties surrounding women's virtue belie the fact that spiritual chastity that may (but not necessarily) be embodied only becomes discernable to others through performance.

A woman who has sex outside of marriage, whether willingly or by force, theoretically can perform chastity and, therefore, can choose not to make known the illicit sexual activity. Women who have suffered an attempted sexual assault or rape itself could choose not to raise a "hue and cry" and not to show her torn clothes and injuries to midwives and witnesses. For example, when one Isabell May was asked 1630 how she

¹⁹ Noémie Ndiaye highlights that in Bandello's Moor murders his master's baby boys to exact revenge. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, the Moor's baby precipitates his downfall. "Aaron's Roots," 61.

knew that Agnes Roe would not complain publicly to others about the abuses that Agnes suffered by Isabell's nephew, she responded: "Wee nowe shee would not [speake of it], for it was not a matter to bee Spoken of."²⁰ Just as Isabell May had anticipated, Agnes did not confide in her husband about the ongoing verbal and physical assaults she had sustained from William Hort for months until his violent attempted rape of her person. Since victims of sexual assault often sustained negative social consequences for admitting that they have been forced to submit to their attackers through the process of seeking retribution from their assailants, the pressure to remain silent and to negotiate men's aggression through extralegal means seem to have been the primary means by which women dealt with unwanted sexual interactions.

Unlike Agnes Roe, Lavinia has no choice but to signify her body's abuse. What is "not a matter to bee Spoken of" becomes written on Lavinia's body when her hyper-white rapists not only take her chastity but "worse than Philomel used [Titus's] daughter" (5.2.194) cut off her tongue and hands. Her mutilated body, in part, provides a constant reminder to playgoers of the offstage rape that they cannot ignore and un-see. Chiron and Demetrius made tangible the loss of her immaterial chastity, and, in this way, Lavinia's physical presence onstage manifests the perception of chastity as material. When Titus confronts the Goths for the rape of his daughter, he recounts what they have severed from her: "Both her sweet hands, her tongue, and that more dear/ Than hands or tongue, her spotless chastity" (5.2.175-6). Like her severed limbs, which cannot rejuvenate, Lavinia's "spotless chastity" no longer exists. According to this Roman patriarch, chastity—which

²⁰ Q/SR/62/55-56 (1630).

resided in his daughter's body and not her mind—is a store that does not replenish. Like her hands and tongue reduced to stumps, chastity is material. With internal injuries and psychological trauma written on her person, Lavinia becomes forever unchaste.²¹ She is marked as one incapable of voicing her will and consent, and in this way, the mutilated Lavinia serves as a synecdoche for rape itself.

When Marcus meets his niece in the woods, he forms conjectures on the trauma she has endured based on the signs of her body. He calls her Philomel and states: “But sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee” (2.3.26). The shocking sight of her person onstage confirms the rape to audiences, but despite Marcus's correct reading of her body at the end of Act 2, she becomes an object of interpretative dissonance. Though audiences know all too well the meanings of her amputated person, it takes until Act 4 for Titus to realize that his daughter had been raped.²² For rape to have occurred, Lavinia cannot simply let herself be interpreted but must actively relate the history of her body. She uses the story of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to claim that narrative as her own, leading her father to rue “And rape, I fear, was root of thy annoy... [p]atterned by that the poet here describes” (4.1.49, 57). As precedent for sexual violation, the story of Philomela and Tereus not only serves as a model for rapists in this play, it literally makes rape happen. For almost two acts, Lavinia

²¹ Sid Ray sees Lavinia's disfigured body as a means to displace “internal and mental injuries onto conspicuous limbs” (36). For more on the ways that this play dramatizes the importance of political consent, see Sid Ray's article “‘Rape, I Fear, Was Root of Thy Annoy’: The Politics of Consent in *Titus Andronicus*” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49.1. (1998): 22-39. David Willbern reads Lavinia as a visual reminder of the proximities of marriage, sexuality, rape, and death around which this play constantly revolves. See David Willbern's “Rape and Revenge in *Titus Andronicus*” in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1995), 171-194.

²² Bethany Packard, who emphasizes that for nearly three full acts Lavinia's survival of rape allows her to rewrite the traditional narrative that attends the sexual violation of women, argues that Lavinia emerges as a coauthor who at least postpones the inevitable conclusion to rape myths that end in sacrifice and metamorphoses. See “Lavinia as Coauthor of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*” in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. 50.2. (2010): 281-300.

and her stumps are present onstage but her trauma remains unclear to the remaining male members of the Andronici family. Although audiences know all along the story of her bodily mutilation, Lavinia's trauma only becomes rape to Titus and Marcus when they understand her expressed identification with Philomela's narrative.

Since narratives of rape in this play map Lavinia's trauma, the "pattern" of rape—its recognizable signs and repetition—just as easily misleads as it illuminates. Philomela was ravished by her brother-in-law while Lucretia had been enforced by her husband's kinsman. Both women were raped by someone they knew, someone they trusted, their family. Based on these patterns, it must not come as a surprise that Titus likewise asks Lavinia: "[w]hat Roman lord it was durst do the deed. / Or slunk not Saturnine, as Tarquin erst, / That left the camp to sin in Lucrece' bed?" (4.1.63-5). Unlike contemporary myths about rape, which cast rapists as strangers—detectable, aberrant, and even monstrous—the classical models for women's sexual violation inherited by the early moderns warn that these perpetrators are friends, family members, and servants, occupying places of intimacy in their victims' lives. This trusted position may explain Marcus's reference to Lavinia's rapists as "traitors" (4.1.76). Since she is understood to be the property of her father, Lavinia's rape is perceived as an attack on Titus and the male members of the Andronici. And in this way, rape committed by a fellow Roman is an act of treason, an attack on the esteemed Titus through the body of Lavinia. After she makes known the names of her assailants, Marcus vows "[m]ortal revenge upon these traitorous Goths" (4.1.93). In this pledge, Marcus conveys that Chiron and Demetrius have broken the trust that allowed them to be incorporated within Rome. Despite Tamora's declaration that she is a "Roman now adopted happily," which we may assume extends to her sons as well, Marcus highlights their ethnic difference.

Traitors to Rome but Goths, incorporate but strange, the complicated status of the perpetrators undermines common classical narratives of rape while helping the Romans to distance themselves from the heinous deed.

In the early modern period, rape was often discursively represented as a contamination that traffics in racialized tropes. Although Aaron is constructed as the most nefarious villain in *Titus*, the black man does not directly participate in the gang rape of a white woman. All nonconsensual encounters in this play occur between white bodies. Arthur L. Little, Jr. explains this recurring phenomenon in sixteenth and early seventeenth century drama in more detail, describing a man's "black body and the woman's white one [as the] twain that never do meet. His blackness serves to mark rape with racial pollution without insisting on a literalizing of this contamination."²³ Although the early modern theater shied away from depicting a black man as the rapist of a fair woman, other mediums available to early modern Londoners readily did. In Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554), considered one of the primary sources of Shakespeare's *Titus*, a Moorish slave in Majorca abducts the wife and three sons of his master, convinces the master to cut off his own nose to save his family but reneges on his promise to allow the Spaniard's children to live. Instead, he rapes the master's wife; her cries as well as those of their children are heard by the distraught master. The Moor then proceeds to murder all the sons, slit his mistress's throat, and finally proclaim his revenge complete before killing himself.²⁴ If Bandello's

²³ See Arthur L. Little, Jr. *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Vision of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 60. Likewise, Leslie A. Fiedler also stresses that Aaron's "peripheral connection" to Lavinia's rape must give modern readers pause who are used to "the black... [as the] rapist par excellence for a century or more" (160). Fiedler furthermore insists that Aaron is only symbolically associated with the horrors of the play. Departing from Little and Fiedler, Eldred Jones argues that Aaron is the ultimate "schemer of evil," the real "breeder of these dire events" (5.3.178).

²⁴ Quoted in *Performing Blackness*, 44.

Moor was the inspiration for Shakespeare's Aaron, then the problem that Little poses regarding the "twain that never do meet" is a significant issue especially when we consider that around a decade or so after *Titus* was first performed Shakespeare does stage a Moor laying violent hands on a white woman against her will.²⁵

While I will continue to foreground the ways that Aaron's black body is racially distinguished from the hyper-white Goths, as Little does, I caution against presupposing that Lavinia's rape by Chiron and Demetrius is not considered a literal racialization of her body. Instead, what I suggest we consider are the ways that Titus's understanding of his daughter's sullied lineage is related to "color-based" understandings of race prevalent to modern audiences. Armed with the knowledge that his daughter's assailants are not Romans but Goths, Titus's description of Lavinia's sexual violation accentuates the conflation of sex without consent as a pollution of the blood and miscegenation:

O villains, Chiron and Demetrius,
Here stands the spring whom you have stained with mud,
This goodly summer with your winter mixed...
Inhuman traitors, you constrained and forced. (5.2.169-71, 177)

Besmirched and impure, her humor is now mixed with theirs. Lavinia has been changed through rape, a transformation that cannot be undone.²⁶ Here, Titus figures Lavinia as once the opposite of her rapists, now a comingling of summer and winter that goes against nature

²⁵ In *Othello*, Shakespeare stages an evocative murder scene, in which the Moor of Venice attacks his wife, the fair Desdemona who begs to live just one day more. But, curiously, when her maidservant Emilia asks the momentarily revived Desdemona to name "who hath done this deed," the white Venetian responds, "Nobody, I myself. Farewell/ Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!" (5.2.134-5). Through her submission to Othello, Desdemona turns from being like Lavinia to a figure akin to Tamora, a white character who gives her consent to a black man.

²⁶ Arthur L. Little, Jr. insists that Lavinia's rape requires sacrifice to re-purify society. For more on the ways that early modern discourses of sexual violation figured rape as a form of racialization, see Arthur L. Little Jr.'s book *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Vision of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

itself. She is the once pristine spring sullied by base mud. For Lavinia's father, this crime committed against him is not between Romans but between two different kinds of people: the superior and civilized Romans against the ignoble barbarian Goths. I wish to emphasize here that the discourse of purity that informs Titus's description of the aftermath of rape also relies on notions of blood purity ascertained through lineage. While Lavinia's parentage and ancestry is known—she is the pure spring that can be traced back to an origin—Tamora's brood has sprung from two to up to four different men. They are the sludge that cannot even declare with certitude the names of their fathers.

The ability to trace one's genealogy, to state with certainty the stock from which one derives, dignifies one's bloodline and was commonly used as a means to claim superiority over others. For example, in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser explains his reasons for considering the Spaniard the most "bastardlie":

And yet, after all these, the Moors and the Barbarians, breaking over out of Africa, did finally possess all Spain, or the most part thereof, and did tread down under their foul heathenish feet whatever little they found there yet standing. The which, though afterwards they were beaten out by Ferdinand of Aragon, and Isabella his wife, yet they were not so cleansed but that, through the marriages which they had made and mixture of the people of the land during their long continuance there, they had left no pure drop of Spanish blood, no more than of Roman or Scythian. So that of all the nations under heaven, I suppose the Spaniard is the most mingled and most uncertain....²⁷

Spenser intimates his understanding that there was once a "pure drop of Spanish blood" as there had been of Roman and of Scythian. But, due to the intermarriages and intermingling of moors and barbarian groups, that pure heritage has long ceased to exist. In *Basilikon*

²⁷ Sir Edmund Spenser's Spenser, Edmund. *A view on the present state of Ireland*. (St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1971).

Doron, King James VI also emphasizes the importance of purity when he advises his son to select a wife carefully, writing:

And lastly, remember to choose your wife as I advised you to choose your servants: that she be of a whole and clean race, not subject to the hereditary sicknesses, either of the soul or of the body: For if a man will be careful to breed horses and dogs of good kinds, how much more careful should he be, for the breed of his own loins?²⁸

I have purposefully paired a description of Lavinia's rape with two sources that discuss marriage, a rite that presumably leads to consensual sex. Like Lavinia's body whose summer has "mixed" with winter, the Spaniard—according to Spenser—is a "mixture," the most "mingled and most uncertain." And, unlike James's ideal bride, the "stained" Lavinia cannot claim cleanliness and literally is *not* whole. Women's chastity, blood purity, and lineages are central and co-constitutive elements to early modern discourses of race. And, in *Titus Andronicus*, they gain an additional edge to underscore the atrocity of rape. Lavinia's violation by the Goths goes from a crime between Romans to an unnatural deed that transgresses the boundaries of kind. His daughter's blood purity had been carefully culled generation-after-generation only to be contaminated by the sons of a barbarian Goth who revels in her exogamous and unlawful sexual relations with a blackamoor.

Although the imperialist Romans dignify relations with the barbarian Goths by forming lawful unions and alliances with them—as I have argued above—Titus's description of rape through tropes of miscegenation suggests that superiority of kind derives from the ability to distance oneself from an ancestry deemed obscure. The newly incorporated Goths whose paternity is suspected due to their mother's hyper-sexuality are,

²⁸ *The Political Works of James I.*, edited by Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1918), 36.

therefore, particularly susceptible to discrimination because of their undefined lineage; the inability to ascertain their paternity and trace their genealogy translate to impurity of blood in an early modern understanding of race. To be clear: the atrocities committed upon Lavinia's person did not require Titus's emphasis on her racially mixed body. Though he ends with a quick overview of the loss of her "sweet hands, her tongue...and spotless chastity," which the Goths "constrained and forced" from her, his decision to reiterate her impurity through a figurative language of miscegenation is both gratuitous and demonstrative of his perception that rape is a crime against men and against a woman's family. Titus demands that Chiron and Demetrius look not at Lavinia but at the once "spring" and "summer" now besmirched. Rather than force them to meet the eyes of the woman Lavinia, Titus orders them to regard the once chaste symbol of the Andronici family, a representation of imperial Rome. Revenge against his daughter's rapists is less for Lavinia than for the Andronici.

The condemnation of his daughter's once clean and now sullied line mixed with the barbarians' obscure roots evinces the deep-seated conviction that superiority of race comes from the certainty of lineage made possible only through the chastity of women. It is important to remember that while Titus distances his daughter's rapists through labeling her attackers as the impure brood of the lascivious Tamora, he is not the only person who condemns Tamora for being unchaste. When Aaron is captured, he is "rushed upon" by a Goth the moment he makes known that the mother of his "coal-black calf" is the duplicitous Roman empress (5.1.20-39). The Goth attacks Aaron when he learns that the blackamoor baby comes from the fair body of their former queen and now empress of Rome. Thus, the Goths who join in league with Lucius apprehend Aaron not because they

know of his foul participation in the demise of the Andronici but because they hear him confess to having exogamous and illicit sex with Tamora.

Overtime, through intermarriage with Romans, Goths may cultivate a respectable lineage. I insist that it is through these early modern discourses of race via genealogy that the improvisational bonds tying Aaron to white characters in this play makes sense. When imperialists prefer informal and unlawful liaisons with the subaltern, they perpetuate the notion that their kind—their race—is superior to the colonized other. By refusing to forge lawful unions with Aaron, Goths and Romans participate in maintaining the inferiority of Aaron's kind by ensuring that his line remains the "seed of bastardy."

A Model of Modern Racial Paradigms

This chapter began with an analysis of Tamora's consensual sexual relationship with Aaron, resulting in the damned "issue of an irreligious Moor" (5.3.120). In another consensual exchange between Goths and Aaron the Moor, Chiron and Demetrius approve of Aaron's stratagem that will lead to Lavinia's gang rape, their subsequent execution, and their bodies baked in a pie and eaten by their mother. Even the Roman Titus forges a pact with Aaron of his own volition: "Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine" (3.1.188). He deceives his brother and son Lucius, loses a hand that did Rome service, a victorious hand that had once blessed his daughter at the beginning of the play. As a consequence of their confederacy, Titus receives his two sons' decapitated heads and his mangled hand sent back to mock him. In all instances in which a white person is in league with Aaron of their own volition, the issue of their interracial unions always maligns and hurts the Goths and Romans.

In contrast, violent acts of non-consent witnessed by audiences occur between the white characters in this play. Titus gives his daughter to Saturninus without consulting Lavinia and against the will of Bassianus and the rest of his Andronici family. In defense of Bassianus and his sister's honor, Mutius refuses to let his father pursue his sister and her first betrothed love. For his resistance, Titus murders his son. The hyper-white Goths murder Bassianus, for which the white Romans likewise take the lives of Titus's two other sons under the guise of justice. The Roman Titus slits the throats of Chiron and Demetrius, and in the bloody feast that ends the play, Titus takes life from his voiceless daughter Lavinia and then proceeds to stab Tamora. In response, Saturninus kills Titus, and Lucius ends the massacre by performing the like on the emperor's person. This chapter ends by interrogating the white-on-white violence that pervades this play. I argue that the spectacle of Lavinia's body distracts from the other murders committed by Romans and Goths, and through this diversion, the heinous crimes of rape and dismemberment committed by Tamora's sons serve to normalize intra-racial violence. The deaths of Lavinia and Tamora as well as the punishment allotted to Aaron are central to the union of Romans and Goths despite the hostilities between them.

After Lavinia identifies her traumatic experiences with the Ovidian narrative of Philomela, her father assumes the role of Procne. Philomela, throughout Ovid's retelling of the myth, actively pursues revenge against Tereus. While Lavinia's agency ceases when she finally names her rapists, Philomela slits the throat of Itys even though her sister's fatal stab to her son's heart would have sufficed. Later, during Tereus's feast, Philomela throws the head of Itys at her abuser. In Ovid's narrative, Philomela's vengeance is sought for the crimes committed against her person. In contrast, Titus repeatedly instructs a possibly timid

Lavinia to draw nearer to collect the blood of her rapists: “Come, come, Lavinia” (5.2.166) then again “Lavinia, come” (5.2.196) and to all again “Come, come be everyone officious”(5.2.201). When Titus feeds Tamora with the “flesh that she herself hath bred” (5.3.61), he directs the masterpiece of his vengeance not at Lavinia’s attackers but at their mother. Through Titus’s redirection of retribution, I contend that he exhibits the dominant early modern perception of rape as ultimately a crime performed upon Lavinia’s person but against Rome, her lineage, her family, and, specifically, her father.

When Titus kills his daughter, he declares: “Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee,/ And with thy shame thy father’s sorrow die” (5.3.45-6). The shame that Lavinia possesses and that causes Titus anguish arises from the certainty that she her body has been polluted. As stated before, dismemberment perpetuates the trauma of her rape and once its significances are correctly read by her father, he cannot see his daughter without the blot that she possesses and stains her lineage. And, although chastity can be argued to reside in the mind and heart of a woman who withholds her consent though her body be defiled, in this specific Shakespearean play, Lavinia’s resistance does not acquit her of punishment. The idea of chastity that *Titus* constantly reinforces is one that promotes an idea of feminine virtue as embodied and material, a persistent and debilitating cultural perception that somehow renders victims of rape as participants and co-conspirators of their attackers. In a rape case from 1615, George Morgan, a labourer, had been called to work by Arthur Brooke, and when he returned sooner than anticipated, Morgan found Brooke “forcible assayein to enforce his wife *against her will*... in his Chamber striveinge to have his pleasure of her.” The petition mentions force twice and even explicitly states that Brooke’s assault was “against her will.” Clearly, his wife did not consent, and in her own examination, she

corroborates her husband's version of events. Despite the fact that she resisted the assault, her husband informed other laborers that "Brooke *and his wife* [Marie Morgan] had misused Him."²⁹ As this deposition and Titus's understanding of Lavinia's shame suggest, the misogynistic pressure for women to signify an embodied chastity means that the loss of it, despite their decision to withhold consent, nonetheless registers as complicity. Marie Morgan and Lavinia abuse and shame their husbands and fathers because they are women forced to protect an immaterial virtue that the men in their lives demand they make concrete and corporeal.

At the conclusion of the play, Lucius announces that Lavinia will be entombed in the Andronici household monument as Tamora's corpse is cast beyond the walls of Rome and left to "beasts and birds to prey" (5.3.197). While one ostensibly seems incorporated within empire while the other is disowned, both white women are comfortably shut out; their narratives of trauma and hostility are sealed from the Romans and from Goths to sustain a precarious peace. Aaron the Moor solidifies this reconciliation in which the sacrifices of Lavinia and Tamora take part. When he saves his child by manifesting the evil that Lucius desires to see, the Moor gives empire and the northern barbarian hordes a common enemy to unite against. Aaron understands his role as the scapegoat for a white alliance to be forged and uses this to secure his son's safety through a confession to heinous acts beyond the scope of this play. The declaration that his only grief is that he "cannot do ten thousand more" (5.1.144), over-performs his villainy. In these ways, Aaron becomes the threat that is

²⁹ Q/SR/23/59 (1615)

needed to heal a divided Rome, for it is through his “confession” that Marcus is then able to declare Aaron the “chief architect and plotter of these woes” (5.3.121).

In the first Quarto of 1594, Lucius ends the play with an invective against the “rauinous tiger *Tamora*... [whose] life was beastlie and deuouide of pittie,/ And being dead let birds on her take pittie.”³⁰ The 1623 Folio, however, contains a startling alteration with the inclusion of four additional lines:

See Iustice done on Aaron that damn'd Moore,
From whom, our heauy happes had their beginning:
Then afterwards, to Order well the State,
That like Euent, may ne're it Ruinate.³¹

Although both texts blame Aaron as the “Breeder of these dyre euent”(Q1 and F, line 2682), Q1 ends with an emphasis on Roman antipathy toward Tamora whereas F, within a mere twenty-lines, gratuitously recapitulates the belief that Aaron is the source of all their woes.³² Lucius condemns Aaron to starve to death buried breast-deep in the earth and imagines the Moor raving and crying for food, exercising his ability to speak even after the play concludes as though to confirm that the tentative peace that has been restored in Rome needs a linchpin, a black man, to continue confessing, to remain unrepentant “of the evils [he has] done,” to profess his will to perform deeds “ten thousand worse” (5.3. 186), and to

³⁰ Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus* (Quarto I, 1594) in *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, edited by David Bevington, modern ed., University of Victoria, 16 June 2018. 2703-4.

³¹ Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus* (Folio, 1623) in *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, edited by David Bevington, modern ed. University of Victoria, 16 June 2018. 2705-8.

³² Leah Marcus argues that a study of Shakespeare’s revisions of *Othello* reveals shifting contemporary understandings of race in England. The textual variations between Q1 1594 and F 1623 supports her influential claim. See her fascinating chapter, “The two texts of ‘Othello’ and early modern constructions of race” in *Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare’s Drama*, edited by Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33.

be the salve that unites Romans and Goths.³³ Shakespeare's *Titus* evinces the ways that misogyny and early modern discourses of race provided the condition for warring European factions to develop a sense of comradeship through the constructed fiction of a shared masculine white identity. More importantly, however, is the play's textual history, which provides evidence that the threatening figure of a duplicitous fair woman only pales in comparison to the danger presented through a Moor, whose racial otherness is coded in the blackness of his skin. The early modern stage, then, was a place that developed ways of thinking *about* and *with* race, and, in doing so, *Titus* modelled for its Shakespearean playgoers a racial paradigm that is more recognizable to modern audiences, one that understands race as written on the body through complexion.

³³ For more on the way that Aaron is used as a scapegoat, uniting Romans and Goths against his barbarism, see Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Performing Blackness* page 50. In *Anti-Black Racism*, Matthieu Chapman argues that *Titus* depicts civil society as predicated on the ontological death of the black. In this way, Lucius does "not offer a plan for rebuilding society, but rather to place the blame for the collapse of civil structures onto the shoulders of Aaron's incorporation" (173). For more on the role of blackness as the threatening face not of a collapsing Roman order but of a new world, see *Anti-Black Racism in Early Modern English Drama: The Other "Other"* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

CHAPTER 4

CULTIVATING RACE THROUGH CONSENT AND SELF-POSSESSION IN JOHN MARSTON'S *THE WONDER OF WOMEN, OR THE TRAGEDY OF SOPHONISBA*

John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba*, performed by the Children of the Revels (c.a. 1606), adapts a story from the Second Punic War about the suicide of a Carthaginian princess famed for the devotion she harbored toward her kingdom. Marston deviates conspicuously from source texts and alerts his audiences to these alterations when he claims that he does not labor "to relate any thing as an historian but to inlarge every thing as a Poet" (72).¹ In both Livy and Appian, Sophonisba is the wife to two living husbands—Syphax and Massinissa.² Whereas Livy casts the princess as a cunning seductress, who employs the currency of her beauty to inveigle men from their alliances with Rome, Appian includes a backstory of a broken betrothal between the princess and Massinissa, severed in order for Carthage to receive military support from the Numidian king Syphax against the advancing Romans.³ Despite these variations, all sources agree that

¹ All references to *The Wonder of Women* are taken from the critical edition edited by William Kemp. Hereafter, quotations from this play will be cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line numbers.

² According to Livy and Appian, when Massinissa—an ally of Rome—met Sophonisba, he immediately became enamored of the Carthaginian princess and married her to save her from Roman bondage despite the fact that her husband Syphax still lived as Scipio's captive.

³ See, also, Anthony Cope's *The historie of two the most noble capitaines of the worlde, Anniball and Scipio*, published in 1544, which describes the marriage between Syphax and Sophonisba as one that was conceived by her father as a military stratagem but was also based on mutual love and affection between husband and wife. Furthermore, Cope disapprovingly judges Massinissa's decision to marry Sophonisba as a rash and foolish device that inevitably fails to protect her (125-6). In William Painter's version of the victorious Massinissa's first meeting with the defeated Sophonisba, Painter emphasizes how the young and lusty prince was entrapped in the amorous nets cast by the wily Carthaginian queen. See pages 50-9 in *The second tome of the Palace of pleasure* (1567).

the aged Syphax was Sophonisba's first husband. However, in Marston's adaptation Sophonisba is given only one marriage to Massinissa, whom she loves; she also dies a virgin. Marston relegates the war between Rome and Carthage to the setting for his drama and, instead, makes the struggle to exploit, possess, and deflower the fair body of the princess the catalyst that drive the actions of the primary male characters.⁴

In *The Wonder of Women*, audiences first glimpse the loving husband and wife together onstage as they prepare to consummate their marriage, but their bliss ends before Massinissa is able to claim his wife to be entirely his own. While battling against the combined forces of love-scorned Syphax and the Romans, his prized possession is expropriated by Sophonisba's father Asdruball and the Carthaginian senate who decide to give Sophonisba to Syphax's bed (2.1.10). Scenes of sexual violence dominate the third and fourth acts of this play with a barely dressed Sophonisba fleeing from Syphax's relentless pursuit and threats to "tack [her] head/to the low earth, whilst strength of too black knaves,/ [her] limbes all wide shall straine"(3.1.9-11). Fortuitously, Syphax fails in each of his attempts, and the duplicity of the Carthaginian senate results in their humiliating defeat. When Massinissa overcomes Syphax in one-on-one combat, he demands that his foe tell him whether Sophonisba remains pure, "yet ours unforced" (5.2.46). For both Syphax and Massinissa, the act of deflowering a virgin becomes synonymous with the assertion of masculine dominance. The duel ends with Massinissa rejoicing in his military and potential sexual victory over Syphax. However, his happiness is short-lived; his newly forged alliance with the Romans comes at a price. Scipio demands that Massinissa deliver the princess as a

⁴ For a comparative analysis of the popular European versions of the Carthaginian Sophonisba during the medieval and early modern periods, see Muir's *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: The Plays and Their Legacy* pages 185-195.

prisoner of war. After being trafficked from one man to another and evading the licentious clutches of her attempted rapist, Sophonisba drinks poison to save her husband, Carthage, and her integrity.

Recent critics of Marston's *The Wonder of Women*, primarily focusing on the gratuitous descriptions of sexual violence that pervade this drama, have passionately underscored the treatment of Sophonisba as merely one of men's moveable goods, a possession who is given, exchanged, and expropriated for the benefit of male homosocial bonds. Although patriarchy requires Sophonisba to remain chaste, Sukanya Senapati points out that she is paradoxically "circulated like a common whore" (136).⁵ Unfortunately for beautiful women who rail against the inconsistencies of masculine authority, as T.F. Wharton concludes, Marston creates exemplary female figures, like Sophonisba, only to kill them off at the end, a choice that retroactively undermines the agency of feminine exemplars (6). In stark comparison, critics such as Peter Ure and Reginald W. Ingram interpret the objectification of Sophonisba as trials that exemplify her constancy, self-denial, and ability to control her passions, attributes which figure the princess as a Stoic model for men whose suicide is not an abnegation but a move towards a Senecan apotheosis (90).⁶ For

⁵ Sukanya B. Senapati analyzes Marston's portrayal of indefinite gender identities and reveals the failure of masculine ideologies, which forces men to make contradictory homosocial and heterosocial vows that they cannot fulfill. Furthermore, she insists that while patriarchal abuses are displayed throughout the play, Sophonisba assertively exposes their violations. The tendency to focus on the objectification of the princess leads critics to interpret Sophonisba's suicide as an act that underscores her victimization and complicity with misogynistic male agendas. For example, Vaska Tumir's reference to Sophonisba's death scene emphasizes how she comforts her husband, which has been interpreted by critics as one of the many ways that Sophonisba embodies the chaste feminine ideal (414). I suggest that these interpretations, which highlight her victimization rather than her longing to prove her virtue, stem from the notion that feminine agency looks like resistance and survival rather than submission and death. In this chapter, I argue that acts which are complicit with the demands of an exploitative male society paradoxically serve to manifest Sophonisba's self-possession.

⁶ T.F. Wharton explains that many post-WWII critics exhibited a tendency to read Sophonisba as a model for stoical endurance, which was for them a "refuge of comfort" (54). For more on Sophonisba as an endorsement for Stoicism and Marston's interest in the virtues of constancy, fortitude, and resignation see T.F. Wharton's

Philip J. Finkelpearl, Sophonisba's manifestation of Stoic values exhibits Marston's reservations concerning this ideal heroic code. Only a wonder—a true marvel—can fully adhere to the fortitude and resilience required of this philosophy. Finkelpearl concludes that Sophonisba's final sacrifice shames men precisely because no mortal can be expected to follow her example.

With her resolute constancy, Sophonisba contrasts with the Carthaginian men who break vows for temporary peace and who buy political alliances with blood and prostitution. The archetype of scheming and fickleness seen in Sophonisba's Carthaginian counterparts comes in the shape of her sexual aggressor Syphax. Enslaved by his lusts, Syphax serves as her foil to highlight the self-mastery and solace that stoical endurance awards to the virtuous princess. Self-possession in this play, thus, has primarily been understood as the control of one's ignoble appetites, base longings that distract and deter the fulfillment of duty and the preservation of honor. Instead, this chapter defines self-possession as having the right to property in one's person and the ability to assert self-autonomy.

Although men attempt to strip her of a voice, Sophonisba confronts them with an unshakeable insistence on the importance of her will. She boldly challenges the commodification of her person and maneuvers to determine to whom she submits and to what extent. This chapter argues that Marston's drama presents consent as the last and most important means to protect the basis from which all political rights derive—a subject's property in her person. Rather than dramatize an utter lack of female mobility and a

The Critical Fall and Rise of John Marston 54-60. See also, Philip J. Finkelpearl's *John Marston of the Middle Temple: An Elizabethan Dramatist in his Social Setting* and Reginald W. Ingram's *John Marston*, which focuses on the fierce quality of Sophonisba's constancy. Finally, for Marston as a Neo-Stoic who dismisses traditional Stoic apathy, see Anthony Caputi's *John Marston: Satirist*.

woman's compromised or non-existent will, Marston presents a compelling portrayal of a fair woman as a political subject who understands the value of her bonds while acknowledging the cultural biases that deny her self-possession and attempt to occlude the realization of her will. In *The Wonder of Women*, those who understand the true meaning of consent are not Massinissa, Scipio, Asdruball, or Syphax—hegemonic male figures who make vows only to break them—but the vulnerable and objectified individuals whose bodies experience the erotic and, oftentimes, destructive consequences of power.

Although *The Wonder of Women* safeguards the primacy of the fair Carthaginian's consent and endows her with the ability to harness a lexis of pleasure, will, and submission previously reserved for white male political subjects, it does so at the expense of black bodies, who are forced to sustain violent reductions to their materiality. Audiences witness abhorrent scenes in which bodies of alterity are rendered dispensable and incapable of defending themselves from a totalizing dispossession that the drama unsympathetically justifies. In a play that exploits the objectification of women, servants, and slaves, *The Wonder of Women* distinguishes Sophonisba from other possessions and fashions her with a political personhood through conditioning audiences to the sight of dispossessed and violated dark bodies.⁷ Ultimately, those who are marked with darkness are denied pleasure and the fundamental right to self-possession for the whitened Sophonisba to have hers.

⁷ Marston has been understood to highlight Sophonisba's whiteness and virginity through her juxtaposition with the figurative moral darkness of both Syphax and the witch Erichtho and the embodied blackness of the debased and racialized characters Vangue and Zanthia. See Virginia Mason Vaughan, page 86. According to George L. Geckle, *The Wonder of Women* holds a very important place for Marston scholars since it is "Marston's last complete play and the one he seems to have cared most about" (177). In his critique, Syphax represents the bestial tyrant whose inhumanity and threat of a necrophilic rape directly contrasts Sophonisba's white virtue. For a lucid commentary on the changes Marston's makes in his adaptation, see Geckle's *John Marston's Drama: Themes, Images, Sources* 177-201. Critic Albert H. Tricomi argues that Marston has a "reductive and binary understanding of woman's nature... endemic to his art" (119). In this chapter, I challenge his interpretation of Sophonisba as a simplified feminine ideal by emphasizing her similarities with

A Woman's Property in Her Person

Legal tracts in England, especially after the 1530s, sought to clarify the ambiguities concerning what exactly constituted rape.⁸ Specifically, the statutes of 1555 and 1597 reiterated that it was a felony, distinct from the abduction of a man's goods, requiring the violation of a woman against her will. This re-emphasized that her lack of consent—not that of her father or husband—was the decisive factor for whether or not rape had occurred. Thus, the woman and not her family was the primary victim.⁹ This legal transition in the definition of rape made possible the presupposition that a woman not only protected her body as a good steward would care for the belongings of her husband but as a subject who possesses ownership of her person. However, the cultural perception of women as goods, whose wills were subsumed by that of their owners, would not so easily be uprooted and continued to influence rape prosecutions until the end of the seventeenth century. One particular legal conundrum presented at the Inner Temple and documented in Harvey 1691 exemplifies the tensions that arise at this transitory period when feminine bodies—men's

other vilified possessions. Black and blackened bodies are reduced and simplified to differentiate Sophonisba from men's other moveable goods.

⁸ See Anthony Fitzherbert's *The newe booke of Justices of Peas*, which underwent thirty-six printed editions between the years 1506 and 1580, and Michael Dalton's *The Countrey Justice* (1618). Refer also to Greenstadt's article " 'Read it in Me': The Authors Will in Lucrece" for a note on various legal manuals that discuss rape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁹ Quoted in *The Institutes of the Laws of England*, cap.11. When parliament passed the 1576 bill that denied benefit of clergy to rapists, they heightened the severity of the crime. However, as Deborah G. Burks insists, this statute also sent a message to women that at a very young age they were responsible for their sexual activity (768). Although Barbara J. Baines concedes that these laws resulted in a shift in the perception of rape, she states that in practice, "convictions for rape continued to be very rare and almost always involved the rape of a child or young girl whose virginity was presumed forfeited" (72). For more statistics on rape cases that were presented at court, see Nazife Bashar's "Rape in England between 1550-1700" and Lee A. Ritscher *The Semiotics of Rape*.

possessions—were endowed with the ability to voice their wills and to have their consent and resistance gain legal traction.

In the case presented, a woman is raped while she and her husband are separated and seeking divorce. She subsequently files an appeal under her name, and as her appeal of rape is pending, the husband and wife revoke their divorce. The question posed is whether or not the husband and wife may have a new joint appeal of rape. The first unnamed lawyer who responds denies their petition for a new appeal since the crime did not occur when the woman belonged to her husband. This would set a dangerous precedent that would allow a man to indict another for the ravishment of goods that the plaintiff did not possess at the time when the crime was allegedly committed. He goes further yet, stating: “if a woman who has cause of appeal marries, the appeal is gone” (180).¹⁰ During her assault and when the original appeal was made, the woman was unmarried, unclaimed, and the sole owner of her body. According to this lawyer, the espousal, which made her person the possession of her husband, retroactively annuls her original appeal since a wife no longer owns her person. He perceives rape less as an assault than as an improper seizure, a distinction that diminishes the significance of the woman’s choice to withhold her consent. He contends that a single woman is fundamentally different from one whose person is incorporate with that of her husband’s. The owner of the unlawfully seized body, who had made the original appeal, simply no longer exists in this lawyer’s strict interpretation of English law.

Fulwood, the second to respond, counters each of the arguments posed by the unnamed lawyer. He begins with the claim that the divorce never took place since it was

¹⁰ The unnamed lawyer conveys doubt by repeatedly framing his claims with “as I think” (180). It seems that he himself is aware that the legal perception of a woman’s relation to her body and the efficacy of her will were in transition. See *Readings and Moots* 180-181.

lawfully revoked, which thereby enables the husband and wife to file a joint appeal. Furthermore, even if the woman had married another man “(which [he does] not concede in this case), she still remains *the same person to whom the wrong was done*” (181, emphasis mine). For Fulwood, rape—unlike divorce—cannot be effaced because the woman’s relation to herself is immutable. It was her person that had been violated and remains her person after marriage. These starkly divergent responses reveal that the legal move toward recognizing the efficacy of women’s consent was in part hindered by a conceptual schism between proponents, like Fulwood, who held that rape is ultimately a crime against the primary owner—the woman whose body was violated without her consent—and those like the unnamed lawyer who maintained with cruel persistence that the relation between a woman and her body was not absolute.

Marston’s *The Wonder of Women* captures this interpretive gulf illustrated in Harvey 1691, by underscoring the difficulty faced by Sophonisba when she claims a political personhood and self-autonomy that rival the demands of men who perceive her as a commodity. While Sophonisba submits to her identity as their subject, she nonetheless uses her position of subordination to plead persuasively for the importance of her volition. By turning Sophonisba’s story, one that has been treated as a minor historical aside in the eventual defeat of Carthage and the rise of imperial Rome, into a drama about attempted rape and a woman’s willful submission, Marston upholds the right for a white woman to control her bodily fate and does so in such a way that confounds the categorical distinctions of agency and passivity, possessor and possession.

The Making of a Political Subject

At the most sexually charged moment in Act 1 when Massinissa moves to embrace his wife and consummate their marriage, a wounded soldier suddenly disrupts the intimate space of the bedroom and calls the groom to war. Massinissa, Carthalo, and Asdruball then share a lengthy conversation on the Roman threat while a mute and partially dressed Sophonisba observes their military stratagems. After an exchange of approximately one-hundred lines, the men exit the stage together, entirely ignoring her presence. The onstage gendered divide between a silent wife and a circle of assertive and vocal patriarchs explicitly illustrate that in certain conversations—particularly, that of military defense—a woman’s perspective does not matter even if it concerns the well-being of her kingdom, her people, and her husband on the eve of their nuptials. When Massinissa returns onstage, he is armed cap-a-pie and ready for battle against the combined forces of love-scorned Syphax and the Roman Scipio.

Without consulting Sophonisba, Massinissa decides to relinquish his duties as a husband in service to Carthage. Fearing that she will weaken his resolve, he attempts to prevent her speech with his command: “Peace my eares are steele/ I must not heare thy much inticing voice” (1.2.212-13). Disregarding his order, Sophonisba speaks and surprises her husband with a firm blessing, instructing him to serve Carthage rather than their sexual longings:

...[v]ent thy youthfull heate
In fields, not beds...
...Goe best man
And make me proud to be a soldiers wife
That valews his renoun above faint pleasures.
Think every honor that doth grace thy sword
Trebbles my love. (1.2.217-8, 220-24)

In these parting words, Sophonisba performs the role of an honorable Carthaginian subject and a stoic wife to a warrior husband.¹¹ Ever mindful of her dutiful subjection to Massinissa, Sophonisba allegedly values his glory above her own. Although the princess demotes sexual gratification to a trifling enjoyment, which merely begets children who often “disgrace [their] haplesse parents” (1.2.220), she nonetheless describes their carnal restraint in erotic terms. Rather than fulfill her reproductive role as a wife, which requires Massinissa’s physical presence in their bed, she renounces her obligation to bear children, a woman’s traditional path to esteem, in favor of her husband’s martial fame. Sophonisba constructs the bed and the field as interchangeable places for men to exercise their virility. According to this bride, however, the enemy’s flesh becomes the better choice for male aggression than a woman’s womb. It is not the penetration of her body but of his victims that yields to her a vicarious enjoyment, augmenting her love for him. By tying her pleasure to Massinissa’s glory on the battlefield, Sophonisba undermines the gendered division that so clearly marks the beginning of this scene when she was a spectator in the bedroom, alienated by the men’s martial conversations. By figuring her sexual restraint and her husband’s martial glory as both gratifying and love-inducing, she makes it clear to Massinissa that her consent was neither compulsory nor the inevitable consequence of his decision.

While Sophonisba dutifully insists that she has “no lust/ [b]ut of [his] glory” (1.2.223-4) and values Massinissa’s fame above her own, the princess obscures the significations of her feminine sacrifice since her professed self-effacement accompanies a

¹¹ Finkelppearl states that since audiences are aware of “Sophonisba’s sexual desire, we can admire all the more her instant abdication of her womanly rights” (242). Similarly, Ingram reads her self-effacement at face-value when he notes her “selfless desire to be a soldier’s wife” (139). I wish to trouble the implication that Marston depicts copulation as the only means through which a woman may receive erotic gratification and pleasure.

dismissal of her husband's well-being. Both a victorious and a deceased Massinissa give her honor as a soldier's wife, and though she might lose a husband, Sophonisba proclaims that she will not be wretched (2.1.227). This willingness to accept her husband's loss, which may seem to demonstrate a lack of wifely concern just as it attests to her Stoic resilience, reveals how Sophonisba's constrained pleasure confounds the obedience that she enacts.

Sophonisba wishes "[she] were no woman, that [her] armes might speake/ [her] hart to Carthage" (1.2. 183-4). Like her husband, she desires to prove herself an honorable Carthaginian through exposing her body to peril, but since the conventional avenues for acquiring martial fame are denied to women, Sophonisba must suffer through her husband and sacrifice his body rather than her own. Sophonisba does not consent in obedience to the authority vested in Massinissa as her husband and head. Neither is she simply a piece of property that either obsequiously and without question or begrudgingly follows her master's directives. Instead, her approval and his decision are entwined, constituting one another, such that it becomes difficult to discern who is the head and who the body, whether her will or his alone begets Massinissa's choice to fight on the battlefield rather than consummate their marriage.

After Sophonisba sends Massinissa to war, her acquiescence is once again requested. Her father Asdruball had forged a martial alliance with Syphax through bartering his virgin daughter, and the whole Carthaginian senate had agreed (2.1.107), mandating the exchange of her person. With firm resolve, Sophonisba accepts their command to ensure the safety of Carthage by placing herself within Syphax's domain:

My answers thus,
Whats safe to Carthage, shall be sweet to me...
The ayre and earth of Carthage ownes my body,
It is their servant; what decree they of it? (2.1.109-10, 141-2)

Sophonisba's avenues to make a choice are limited or, possibly, even non-existent. But, rather than declare that she fulfills the order of the senate, thereby honoring the mandates of her father and other men who chose political manipulation over honesty, she strategically reframes her submission as an act of obedience to Carthage. The Carthaginian air and soil sustain Sophonisba, and thus her being is indebted to the kingdom that has given her life. While the princess declares herself to be the possession of Carthage, she also foregrounds her affective bond to it and the pleasure she will take in playing an important role that will secure her kingdom. Due to this emotional connection, a submission that might be perceived as the product of compulsion also appears as an act of volition. The senate had presented Sophonisba with the opportunity to satisfy her desire for her "armes [to] speake [her] hart to Carthage" (1.2. 183-4). Sophonisba intimates her understanding that to be a good subject requires a consensual submission most acutely and erotically felt when one wills the endangerment of one's body. As with the blessing that she gives to Massinissa, Sophonisba once again renders ambiguous the dynamic of her willing obedience. At first glance, her consent seems coerced but because of her articulation of pleasure, Sophonisba refuses to play the part of a passive conduit through which Asdruball and Syphax achieve their ends and, instead, wills her role in procuring the safety of her kingdom.¹²

¹² Once forced to prove her subjection to Carthage vicariously through her husband, Sophonisba now appropriates martial heroism by tapping into a domain of pleasure that exists beyond the bodily sensations of copulation and into the realm of destruction. The play resonates with Audre Lorde who champions an understanding of erotic fulfillment beyond the bedroom and Leo Bersani who resists the indoctrinated idea that bodily genital pleasure is "the root [and limit] of *all* our possible pleasure" (13). Unlike Sophonisba's servant, Zanthia, who insists that women are only "created to beare children" (1.2.22), Sophonisba finds joy in the repression of carnal acts and the scintillating threat of endangering her body. Had she been a man with more purpose than to reproduce, this active desire to engage in tests of fortitude, to decline the safe comforts of a bed and a lover's soft embrace, and to fight—sustaining cuts and bruises from an assortment of instruments—and to die for honor would have been a well-known narrative of male heroism. By applying this rhetoric of martial sacrifice to her consensual relocation to Cirta, Sophonisba reveals that women may appropriate discourses of masculine heroism to articulate their virtue.

The princess understands that as a subject, nurtured and educated by Carthage, she has entered into a social contract to prioritize this kingdom over her own well-being, but she has also pledged herself to Massinissa.¹³ Sophonisba critiques the betrayal of the senate and the possible risk to her wifely chastity entailed by her removal from Massinissa's to Syphax's domain:

We all have sworne good Massinissa faith,
Speach makes us men, and thers no other bond
Twixt man and man, but words: O equall Gods
Make us once know the consequence of vowes (2.1. 118-121)

In this reproach, Sophonisba speaks of herself as one of their equals, a political subject who has likewise given her allegiance to Massinissa. The ability to communicate through language yokes men together, creating community and the bonds that structure society. A political subject who breaks vows for the sake of self-preservation renders obsolete the value of his consent. Sophonisba professes that it was her “choyse of love [that] hath given this suddein danger...My choice vext Syphax... yet Sophonisba not repents” (1.2.168, 170-1). Rather than regret her decision to marry Massinissa, the princess stands behind her prior consent despite the consequences of having imperiled her home, her husband, and her own existence.¹⁴ This recognition demonstrates that when a political subject exercises consent,

¹³ In Plato's *Crito*, Socrates explains that by virtue of living within the borders of a kingdom, a subject has entered into an implied contract both to enjoy the benefits of the city-state and also to obey political mandates that may lead to misery, pain, and even death. Plato reveals that if the subordination of a political subject is contingent upon his satisfaction and safety, then the authority of the State is weakened. In *The Wonder of Women*, Marston depicts Carthage as a kingdom that is imperiled by cowardice, betrayal, and other forms of internal instability. The repercussions of its senate's Machiavellian politics and selfish decisions contribute to Carthage's humiliating defeat. See Plato's *Crito* 7-9.

¹⁴ Elaine Scarry describes the body as a site wherein sovereignty most acutely exercises its power and is “the locus of the act of consent itself” (874-5). Indeed, Sophonisba's willful submission is sought throughout the play, and her consent is specifically tied to her sexualized body. In *The Wonder of Women*, the decisions either to withhold consent or to submit to authority manifest themselves most prominently on issues of bodily violation and death.

she must also be willing to take responsibility for her choices and negotiate the repercussions of getting her will. When Syphax, Massinissa, and Asdruball break and forge alliances based on selfish motives, these men not only nullify the authority of the State but also diminish the significance of their bonds and of their consent, the structures by which the maintenance of society depends. Sophonisba possesses an affective bond to Carthage and to her husband, and instead of relinquishing one to fulfill the other, she privileges her will by upholding both bonds that define her. In magnifying Carthage's sovereignty and her duty to Massinissa, she maneuvers between the expectations and commands imposed on her as one of men's goods and underscores her status as a political subject whose consent and pleasure have value.

Audiences next view Sophonisba in her nightgown and petticoat struggling with Syphax as he drags her resistant body onstage, proclaiming: "Thou are in Cirta, in my Pallace, Foole./ Dost thinke he pittie the teares, that knows to rule?"(3.1.5-6). Since Sophonisba exists within Syphax's kingdom, he tyrannically declares control of her flesh. In Tudor and Stuart England, discourses on monarchy often likened the relationship between a ruler and his subject to a marriage between husband and wife. Syphax's despotic presumption of access to Sophonisba's sexual body due to her location within his jurisdiction reflects his conflation of political power with conjugal rights.¹⁵ Although she fully apprehends Syphax's dangerous lust, she consents to placing herself within his dominion to test her virtue by enduring misery and, ultimately, to prove herself as an honorable political and domestic subject. Clearly, Sophonisba does not agree that her

¹⁵ This language—modeled after a rhetoric of kingship—also expresses that, for household female members such as servants like Alice Ashmore (1605) and subjects like Sophonisba, subjugation to authority could be understood by some tyrants as loss of property in one's person, including one's ability to consent to sexual activity. See Laura Gowing's *Common Bodies*.

physical existence in Cirta automatically gives the king access to her body. Through her intricate network of loyalties, Sophonisba constructs her own unique political personhood—one that depends on an affective bond manifested by her consent, labels her as a Carthaginian and a wife, and limits the socially acceptable interactions of others with her body. Judith Butler explains, “Power not only acts on a subject but, in a transitive sense, enacts the subject into being.”¹⁶ While Sophonisba’s formation as a subject—her entrance into a state of being—requires her prior subjections to the authority of Carthage and of Massinissa, the importance of these submissions goes beyond the formation of her self-perception. As mentioned above, Sophonisba understands vows to be the primary means whereby relations between people are formed, enabling the condition for society to develop. These bonds serve a crucial role in delineating appropriate from inappropriate social engagements that can be understood and recognized by others. Through the maintenance of her vows, she claims ownership of her person and insists that she circulate as a political subject rather than chattel by setting the boundaries of her body.

Incensed with her recalcitrance, Syphax threatens to order two black slaves to hold down her white body as he forces himself upon her. Although the Numidian tyrant continuously reminds Sophonisba and the audience that he has the ability to do as he pleases, his threats are hollow:

Sophonisba. Thou maiest inforce my body but not mee.

¹⁶ Self-fashioning, Stephen Greenblatt delineates, “involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self” and “is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile” (9). Sophonisba understands that her identity is not inherent to her being but derived from her loyalties to Carthage and to her husband, allegiances that make her a Carthaginian and a wife—a warrior for her land and a chaste woman resisting unwanted touch. The process of fashioning Sophonisba, one of man’s possessions, to a political subject includes the diminution, demonization, and destruction of black and blackened bodies. See also Judith Butler who explains the seemingly contradictory existence of the subject who seeks recognition through categories that signify subordination.

Syphax. Not?

Sophonisba. No.

Syphax. No?

Sophonisba. No. Off with thy loathed armes. (3.1.15-19)

Sophonisba's redundant yet resounding "no," astounds Syphax.¹⁷ She espouses a seemingly Augustinian solution to rape, insisting that the decision to withhold consent protects herself—a self that is not tied to the violence endured by her corporeal shell.¹⁸ In this exchange, Sophonisba asserts that she can only be had through an act of volition and not bodily enforcement. The princess somehow remains undefiled from beginning to end, a characteristic that resonates with a notion of miraculous chastity. In Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, the mystifying state of virginity has its own protective powers for it "hath oft times defended women against great capitaynes, tyrants, and great [h]ostes of

¹⁷ It is important to note that in the early modern period, conventions pertaining to feminine modesty often cast resistance itself as a form of feigned dissent that paradoxically demonstrated a victim's desire for sex. Since a believable victim of rape would embody the feminine ideals of chastity and obedience, a victim's aggressive defense of her body could make her appear disorderly, which may detract from the strength of her appeal. I suggest that in light of a proscriptive femininity that praised women's passivity and influence(d) the adjudication of rape cases, we entertain the possibility that Sophonisba was less of a feminine ideal than critics make her out to be. After all, we must consider that her stalwart resistance to Syphax's graphic threats could have provoked audience condemnation as well as arousal; an outward disavowal of rape does not necessarily preclude the potential for erotic excitement felt by audiences who view theatrical depictions of sexual assault, and this arousal could be displaced onto the character of Sophonisba. Perhaps Marston felt it necessary to deviate from source texts by making Massinissa—rather than Syphax—the first and only husband of Sophonisba because of her possibly incriminating push against the limits of misogynist perceptions of female virtue. For more on rape depositions and the vilification of women's outward resistance, see Garthine Walker's "Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England." For a study on the narratives of rape found in seventeenth century depositions, see Miranda Chaytor's article "Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century."

¹⁸ Regarding sexual pleasure in cases of rape, Augustine states, "[Lust] will not pollute if it be another's; if it pollutes, it will not be another's...Purity is the possession of the soul, neither is it lost when the body is violated" (I.XVIII. 79,81). Sophonisba's self and the authority she possesses over her person, cannot be lost, expropriated by the state, or taken by force. See Catty, Greenstadt, and Webb for more on Augustine concerning the duality of a chaste will in a violated body, particularly on the problem of Lucretia's rape and suicide.

men[.] We haue redde of women that haue ben taken and let go agayne of the moste unruly soudyours, only for the reuerence of the name of virginite” (sig. G2). When even the lusts of the most aggressive men are cooled by a woman’s praiseworthy armor of virtue, virginity paradoxically repels assailants through attraction. Vives effectively places blame on the victim of rape because she alone possesses the mystical agency to deter her rapist.¹⁹ Although Sophonisba, whose eternal maidenhead receives both praise and blame for tempting Syphax, may seem to recapitulate the myth of miraculous virginity, Marston emphasizes that it is not the intact hymen that deters this attack but Sophonisba’s understanding that her consent has clout since it signifies her intimate bonds of power with others and the hierarchies between men.

Unlike Vives, Marston portrays sex as a dynamic negotiation of power. When Syphax repeatedly reminds the princess, “King’s glory is their force... [that] can make thee more than wretched” (3.1.4, 21), he equates his totalizing physical domination of her person with his identity as a sovereign. Rather than attempt to sway the tyrant’s purpose by advertising her virginity and relying on its protective capabilities, Sophonisba tactfully emphasizes that force does not always align with power. She insists that while a sovereign may use tyranny to get his will, this hateful act transforms him to “a beast” (3.1.19) that is incapable of moving a subject to submission. Since he possesses the brawn to top her

¹⁹ Nancy Weitz Miller underscores Vives’s double standard that attributes all men with a reverence for virginity while perceiving women as always vulnerable to the temptations of wayward desires, requiring that they be repeatedly reminded of their duty to protect their chastity (142). For a critique of Vives’s work, see Nancy Weitz Miller’s “Metaphor and Mystification of Chastity in Vives’s *Instruction of a Christen Woman*” pages 132-145. Reverence for and infatuation with virginity may easily be conflated. Sophonisba’s virginity both adds to her desirability and labels her as a danger to the bonds between men. In this play, the attraction of female sexual purity becomes damning evidence against Sophonisba when Syphax explains to Scipio the reason for his act of treason: “Hir Himeneall torch burnt downe my house” (5.2.79). Syphax uses the attraction to female virginity as a scapegoat with which other men like the Roman Scipio sympathize.

unwilling body, Sophonisba states that she “live[s] or die[s]/To Massinissa”(4.1. 66-7), a statement that confirms Syphax’s inferiority to his competitor in love.²⁰ When political subjects, like Sophonisba, prefer physical torment over aggression against their dominant, Melissa E. Sanchez states, “the subject forces the sovereign into the role of aggressor and thereby translates resistance into self-defense. It is the sadistic tyrant who ends up in a position of feminized impotence, the limits of his or her power exposed, while the martyr ascends to a position of masculine conquest” (35).²¹

Sophonisba’s will shields her from harm because it is given a symbolic value that manifests authority, a value that Syphax comprehends and that Sophonisba harnesses to her advantage. The king was right when he proclaimed his indifference to her tears. What stays this political and sexual tyrant from committing rape is the recognition that totalizing aggression curtails his sovereign power and renders him inferior to both Massinissa *and* Sophonisba. Although got by conquest, in preferring to treat Sophonisba as a political subject, Syphax may augment his power by seducing her submission, “cemented by loue,

²⁰ In my analysis of Syphax, carnal lusts alone do not drive this king but his twofold desire to restore his self-esteem while publicly evincing his superiority to Massinissa. This is crucial because it enables Sophonisba to negotiate the importance of her consent. From his opening speech in Act I, Syphax does not blame his jealousy and discontent on lust but on his bruised ego: “*Reputation!*/ Wert not for thee Syphax could beare this skorne” (1.1.12-13). He perceives Sophonisba’s choice to marry Massinissa instead of the Numidian king to be a direct affront that offends his self-esteem. When Vangue informs him that the Roman Scipio will invade Carthage, Syphax does not imagine the hellish deeds he would do to Sophonisba’s body but salivates over the thought of “Sophonisba, Carthage, [and] Asdruball” feeling “their weaknes in preferring weaknes and one lesse great then we” (1.1.66-8). Syphax yearns for the opportunity to make her realize whom Sophonisba had wronged. Certainly, Sophonisba’s defeat could manifest itself through a nonconsensual domination over her body, but I insist that it is not the subjugation of the flesh alone that he is after but of her will coupled with her body which he can only access through her consent.

²¹ For more on rebellion, martyrdom, and moral authority, see Melissa E. Sanchez’s *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature*, pages 31-55. She argues that sixteenth and seventeenth century representations of martial heroism and Stoicism—like the one manifested by Sophonisba—do not present the rites of ascesis as an indifference to pain or pleasure but as “an excess of feeling” (35).

the onely sure bond of subiection or friendship” (162).²² As we will see in the next section, the ability for the subject to call on consent to define the inviolable boundaries of the body is never guaranteed. Sophonisba’s tactic to convince Syphax to alter his approach requires that she make him acknowledge her political personhood, which distinguishes her submission from the subjugation of other possessed bodies. Through her entanglement of allegiances and interwoven obligations, she defines her status as a subject whose relation to power is based on her will and pleasure that can never be coerced.

Blackness and Dispossession

From the moment audiences are introduced to Sophonisba, blackness frames the fair body of the chaste Carthaginian princess. In the first act of the play, her dark and bawdy maidservant undresses Sophonisba as she prepares for the culmination of her long awaited nuptial rites. Later Syphax threatens to gang rape the princess by commanding two black servants Zanthia and Vangue to pinion Sophonisba’s resistant white body to the ground, and in another scene with equally heightened erotic fervor and scintillating violence, Sophonisba orchestrates a bedtrick that substitutes her place with the body of an Ethiopian male slave. Critics have often noted how *The Wonder of Women* exploits the traditional opposition of black and white dichotomies to amplify the virtue of Marston’s heroine. These crucial insights into the strategic deployment of early modern symbols of alterity have

²² This quote from James VI and I’s “A Speech to both the Hovses of Parliament, Delivered in the Great Chamber at White-Hall, The Last Day of March 1607” explains the union between England and Scotland as a marriage—an eternal bond—that reconciles previous enmities, and in this marriage, England will be the husband and Scotland the wife. “You[England] conquerours, they as conquered, though not by the sword, but by the sweet and sure bond of loue” (164). Their union should not simply be the superficial coming together of acquaintances. England’s domination of Scotland is ensured through their figurative sharing of the same roof and lying in bed together (163).

helped to elucidate the discursive construction of English superiority along the lines of aesthetic, moral, and racial differences. In the section that follows, this chapter makes a twofold argument. First, dark bodies and white feminine ones occupy similarly disenfranchised statuses on the eve of modernity. It is this proximity that enables the exploitation of blackness for the emergence of fair women as political subjects. Second, *The Wonder of Women* makes a case for Sophonisba's right to pleasure, self-possession, and efficacy of consent only through inuring English audiences to the reduction of black and blackened bodies to their commodified materiality.²³

The Epithalamium of Ben Jonson's masque *Hymenaei* (1606) instructs: "Shrink not, soft virgin, you will love,/ Anon what you so fear to prove" (87).²⁴ Patriarchal society sought to make legible a woman's embodied virginity so that men could read and diagnose the true state of a woman's spiritual and physical self. For example, early modern conduct manuals often praised maidens who blushed and "shrunk" from sexual knowledge and interpreted such purported involuntary bodily reactions as indications of a woman's innocence and modesty.²⁵ Unlike the virgin idealized by Ben Jonson, the Carthaginian

²³ I take my cue from Jonathan Goldberg who states that "[c]ivilized violence...is violence rendered civil, the standardizing of forced restrictions of impositions upon those within or outside the society to effect ends at the relative expense of or at least without complete consideration of those targeted or implicated, or enabling less violent possibilities to take effect" (45). While political treatises and edicts concerning, for example, English campaigns in Ireland and blackamoors in Elizabethan England more readily translate to a form of state terror, like the ones Goldberg describes, I insist that the theater, such as Marston's *The Wonder of Women*, had the potential to affirm the political civilizing process by producing a general sense of national superiority while negating the value of other societies and peoples. For more on the role of civility and Englishness, see Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) and John Davies *A discoverie of the true causes why Ireland was neuer entirely subdued* (1612), and Andrew Hadfield's *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience*.

²⁴ Quoted in *Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* by Judith Deborah Haber.

²⁵ In *A Table of Humane Passions*, French Theologian, Nicolas Coeffeteau emphasizes the importance of blushing as a means of building virtue through social shaming. He states, "But there is no kinde of people in whom an honest bashfulnesse is more commendable, yea, upon the lightest occasions, then in Virgins, and Women: for to blush for words, for motions, and for the least licencious actions, is a signe of an exact modesty, which is the rarest and the most rich ornament of their sex" (501).

princess describes her husband in strictly sensual terms and fantasizes of her “soft armes/
Clasping his well strong lims with glossfull steele” (1.2.164-5). Sophonisba scrutinizes the
customs forcing women to feign bashfulness at the prospect of losing the lock of virginity by
“seem[ing] to flie what we most seeke/And hide our selves from that we faine would find
us” (1.2.13-4). According to the conditions of virtue imposed by men on women and
bemoaned by Sophonisba, a virgin must mask her erotic excitement, mislead her husband
by playing the role of the timid bride, and prove a traitor to her natural passions.

As Zanthia undresses her mistress, she responds with a frank defense of those
cultural expectations scorned by Sophonisba:

We things cal'd women, onely made for show
And pleasure, created to beare children
And play at shuttle-coke, we imperfect mixtures
Without respective *Ceremonie* us'd
And ever complement, alas what are we? (1.2.20-4)

The Moor begins with an invocation of their shared womanhood, which is immediately
undermined by the theatrical performance of *The Wonder of Women*. Like the women
described by Zanthia, the Children of the Revels were on display to please their private
audiences.²⁶ Significantly, it is the young boy actor costumed in the clothes of a maidservant
wearing blackface who describes a state of femininity that is inherently artificial.²⁷ Women,

²⁶ Edel Lamb explains that the sexually-charged representations of boy actors arise, in part, from being in an inferior position of feminized subjection: “[i]n the children’s plays, the potential physical attributes of the boy and their status as servants or page boys are equally crucial to the representation of the boy as sexually desirable” (52). For more on boy actors and their contributions to the erotics of performance, see, also, Barbour and Huebert.

²⁷ It is likely that the boy actor playing Sophonisba would have used cosmetics to amplify the whiteness of his skin, which signified femininity and better contrasted the figure of his character from Zanthia and Vangue, played by boy actors in blackface. See “Inventing Whiteness: Cosmetics, Race, and Women in Early Modern England” by Kimberly Poitevin for more on the cosmetic practices that participated in the construction of color as a marker of ethnic and moral difference.

who function as ornamental pleasures and entertainment for their masculine counterparts, can neither claim possession over their reproductive capacities nor their children for both become the properties of their husbands. Zanthia the Moor figures women as empty vessels without inherent worth; their values depend on their services to men.

In a similar vein, black men and women in the Scottish court had typically been treated as commodities used for entertainment and discarded at the pleasure of their owners. Kim Hall explains that they were “kept there as dehumanized alien curiosities, on par with James’s pet lion and his collection of exotic animals” (128). In the midst of a cold winter wedding in Norway, James IV ordered “four young Negroes [to] dance... naked in the snow in front of the royal carriage” (21).²⁸ The first entertainment for this royal couple had proven lethal for the four black performers who succumbed to pneumonia shortly after. It was not enough for James that they dance at his command. Their skin needed to be bare and available for visual consumption. Above all, it was their *blackness* that entertained, the novelty that served as a spectacle symbolizing James’s power. No mention is given regarding the defiance or possible willingness of the black performers to be stripped naked and made to dance in the snow before the people of Oslo.²⁹ The point, however, is not that James’s “negroes” could—like women—experience pleasure but that their pleasure and will were rendered obsolete by a system that deprived them of all meaning save the significance attached to their bodies through “customs” and “ceremonies” determined by their captors

²⁸ For a description of James’s wedding with Anne of Denmark in Oslo, see Ethel Carleton Williams’s *Anne of Denmark*, pages 20-22, who notes the unusual severity of the winter of 1589-1590. See also a brief description of the wedding in Louise Schleiner’s *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, page 130.

²⁹ Hortense Spillers further argues that in conditions of non-freedom, “the customary lexis of sexuality, including ‘reproduction,’ ‘motherhood,’ ‘pleasure,’ and ‘desire’ are thrown into unrelieved crisis” (Spillers, 76). The denial of the right for an enslaved woman to consent depoliticizes her pleasure and bodily experiences.

and possessors. In Zanthia's explanation, both the pleasure of women and of James's expendable black wedding entertainers have no place, but it is precisely pleasure and the efficacy of her will that Sophonisba confidently voices. When the dark-skinned Zanthia defends the superficial traditions and expectations required of women to give them meaning and value as objects circulating in society, she speaks less as a woman than as a dark woman whose blackness marks her body's difference from the white-faced Sophonisba.

In another scene in which the sexual violation of Sophonisba's body is again diverted, *The Wonder of Women* continues to racialize pleasure, consent, and possession. Sophonisba succeeds in procuring a boon of one hour to offer a sacrifice in honor of her husband Massinissa.³⁰ During that time, she performs a bedtrick—a ploy that essentially involves a man duped into sleeping with someone other than the intended object of his affections. The bedtrick enables her escape while Vangue, Syphax's black male slave, becomes the sacrifice penetrated by his master. After offering Vangue wine laced with opium, an act that foreshadows her future suicide, Sophonisba places the slave's naked body in the bed and draws the curtains while stating:

There lye Syphax bride
A naked man is soone undrest;
There bide dishonoured passion. (3.1.163-5)

Both Virginia Mason Vaughan and Sukanya Senapati interpret this bedtrick as a theatrical convention that ridicules the tyrant with a homosexual assignation, labelling Syphax's excessive lust for the chaste princess as unnatural. Vaughan further insists that the slave

³⁰ Since Sophonisba identifies herself as Massinissa's chaste wife, she will never give Syphax her consent so long as Massinissa lives. The Numidian King recognizes her complete bodily, spiritual, and emotional subjection to her husband and informs her that Massinissa has fallen in battle. After learning that her husband still lives, Sophonisba—like Dido—pretends to offer a sacrifice to her purportedly deceased husband, but instead, maneuvers to get her will.

status and physical blackness of Vangue mark the intended rape of Sophonisba as “socially and racially—not just sexually—monstrous” (88). Building upon these readings, I propose that the bedtrick not only utilizes the negative cultural significations of blackness to convey the horrors of sexual violence but continues to foreground Sophonisba’s pleasure and consent at the expense of dark bodies. The theatrical device of the bedtrick, particularly in the seventeenth century, most commonly substituted a black female servant in place of her fair mistress to satiate men’s rapacious and illicit carnal urges.³¹ The ploy takes advantage of the interchangeability of bodies in which the black maidservant—or in this case, male slave—serves as the erotic double of the chaste white mistress.

Rather than interpret Sophonisba as unquestionably different from both Zanthia and Vangue, I suggest that the usage of blackface symbolically delineates promiscuous bodies from chaste ones precisely because of the uncomfortable slippages and convergent qualities shared between the princess and her dark doubles. This affinity between Sophonisba and the black servants is most explicitly conveyed when the fair Carthaginian reviews her handiwork and satisfactorily comments, “A naked man is soone undrest” (3.1.164). Here, the princess mimics the bawdy jests of Zanthia the Moor. While undressing and preparing

³¹ In Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Monsieur Thomas* (1615), the loyal Moorish waiting-woman Kate receives the unwanted sexual advances of Thomas who then verbally and physically abuses her when he realizes that a “devil” lies with him in lieu of her fair mistress Mary. Kate’s loyalty and patience is rewarded with a new petticoat. In Richard Brome’s *The Novella* performed in 1632, Victoria, disguised as the courtesan “the Novella,” offers her virginity to Pantaloni, but keeps her maidenhead and 2,000 ducats because her loyal Moorish servant Jacconetta instead takes her place in bed. Jacconetta is later revealed to be Jacomo, a “eunuch Moor.” For more on early modern theatrical bedtricks in which black and blackened servants serve as the bawdy doubles of their fair mistresses or the appropriate places for men to release their lusts, see Vaughan and Barthelemy. I argue that the early modern bedtrick often depicts the erotic desires of black characters as either illicit or comical, which thereby concretizes whose pleasure is delegitimized and stripped of political efficacy. For more on the ways that discourses intertwining beauty, morality, and color produce and perpetuate hierarchical systems of power that protect the unstable secondary position of white women such as Sophonisba at the expense of racial and gendered inferiors like Vangue, the Ethiopian slave, and Zanthia, her black maid, see Kim Hall’s *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*.

her mistress for the matrimonial bed, Zanthia laughs at Sophonisba's sexual excitement, stating, "You had bin undone if you had not bin undone" (1.1.4). In both cases, the bodies of Vangue and Sophonisba have already been undressed, undone, and penetrated prior to the act. While Sophonisba's commentary challenges the notion that unchaste tongues equate to loose nether-regions, it nonetheless brings Sophonisba intriguingly close to Zanthia and, simultaneously, to Vangue. After all, the bride that Sophonisba invokes while surveying Vangue's nakedness should have been herself and, indeed, was once herself when Massinissa was her groom. When Sophonisba describes her womanly weaknesses and sexual appetites as "loe" (1.2.178) her self-projection parallels Syphax's view of Vangue as a "base, o're-thirsty slave" (3.1.199), demeaning characteristics used to justify a loss of self-possession. Through her own concession, Sophonisba intimates that there are aspects to her being that abate her claims to self-sovereignty. While the bedtrick serves as an affront to Syphax, this device also signifies the destruction of Sophonisba's abject and objectified representation.

There is another crucial distinction that needs to be made between typical early modern bedtricks and the one that Sophonisba orchestrates. The white woman's double often consents to filling her mistress's place in bed, but Vangue is drugged. He becomes the target for his king's destructive passions not of his own volition but because he unsuspectingly fulfills the ceremonies that Sophonisba asks him to enact. Like Lucretia who welcomed Tarquin into her home and played the role of a generous Roman matron and host, Vangue performed a typical custom and drank to his master's health. Further attending to the theme of rape, the image of an unconscious and naked Vangue parallels Renaissance paintings of Lucretia's bare body open to touch and violent penetration.

Despite this shared vulnerability, *The Wonder of Women* casts approval on Vangue's state of endangerment. Unlike Shakespeare's Lucrece who does not consider the benefits of becoming Tarquin's "secret friend" (526) but registers his unfamiliar presence in her bed as a "terror" (455), Vangue awakens, acknowledges a familiar place and notes his unfamiliar place in it, but, rather than resist, he entertains its possible implications. He questions, "How cam I laid?... Where am I? Think, or is my state advanc'd?" (3.1.194-5). The sexual pun in his bewildered queries intimates a willingness to prostitute himself for a rise in social status. Driving home this point, Vangue's erotic rapture of "O Jove how pleasant is it but to sleepe in a Kings bed!" (3.1.196-7) prompts Syphax to stab the black slave, declaring: "Dy pleas'd a kings couch is thy too proud grave" (3.1.197).

While critics have interpreted Syphax's fatal thrust as an act that parallels his aggressive desire for Sophonisba, they curiously refuse to consider the significance of Vangue's claims to pleasure resembling the princess's own sexual excitement at the prospect of sharing conjugal intimacies with her husband. Vangue's initial delight and feelings of erotic satisfaction, combined with the play on the word "couch," which references Syphax's bed and his kingly lap, give Vangue's gratification an improper assignation. Specifically, it makes his black body and not the body of a fair woman like Lucrece or Sophonisba the proper place for "dishonoured passion." Just as Zanthia denies the recognition of pleasure to women by labeling this affect as the prerogative of men, Vangue's ambitions and pleasure as a slave is likewise depicted as justifications for the violence performed upon his body. Murder becomes the penalty for the expression of a slave's feelings of erotic satisfaction. Although both Vangue and Sophonisba voice their wills, the play legitimizes the pleasure and consent of only one subject—the fair Carthaginian princess.

Vangue is denied meaning beyond that which is assigned to his material flesh. Critics have often referred to George Best's *A true discourse of the late voyages of discoverie* (1578) to explain the early modern perception of black skin as a somatic mark of eternal sin, a hereditary infection of the blood beginning with the sin of Noah's white son Cham. God punished Cham's disobedience by marking his son Chus and all his posterity with bodies both "blacke & loathsome, that it might remaine a spectacle of disobedience to all the World" (31). In this account, blackness is passed down from one generation to another irrespective of the desires of Cham's descendants. And, as Patricia Akhimie points out, somatic markers perceived as hereditary and natural were also understood as "endowed at birth. The power of racist ideology then allowed that the meanings associated with somatic marks were also inherited, linking possessors of such marks as related by some biological or blood tie" (187).³² Should the darkness formulated by Best represent sin, then this suggests that the static bond of a black moor to his materiality binds him as well to a perceived immorality, justifying not only his enslavement but the dispossession of all those who bear the mark of blackness. Vangue's status as a slave, which yokes him to his master, realizes racist ideologies that see the mark of his physical body as an indication of his unworthiness for self-possession. Due to his compulsory obedience, his affective allegiance to Syphax does not factor within their master-slave dynamic. This is not a relation based on

³² Patricia Akhimie reminds her readers that race initially referred to kinship ties, blood rather than biological connections. She argues that, in *The Comedy of Errors* and its subsequent critical history, one notices a sideways shift that validates oppression by using race in reference to physiological distinctions between larger populations rather than to describe the intimate bonds of kinship (188). For more on a critique of the class system in *The Comedy of Errors* that reveals the seemingly temporary bruise to be, in fact, a stigmatized indelible somatic mark, see "Bruised with Adversity: Reading Race in *The Comedy of Errors*."

power, which—as Michel Foucault explains—depends on the freedom of subjects (790).³³ Enslavement occurs through physical determination or the limits of the body, rendering nugatory the emotional bonds that motivate obedience and subjection within power relations.

In cases of rape and slavery, the subject is not free to choose. That which pleases him or her is of little consequence, and it is this refusal to grant Vangue’s will, desires, hopes, and aspirations leverage that Syphax makes brutally evident through murder. Unlike Vangue whose pleasure is cause for his destruction, *The Wonder of Women* continues to foreground Sophonisba’s ability to maneuver as a political subject and even preserve her virginity through the cultural significances placed on the value of her pleasure and consent. In this light, the bedtrick also enacts a sacrifice, representing Sophonisba’s resistance to the notion that her flesh encapsulates her complete being. By drugging a black male slave—an object whose consent clearly does not matter—Sophonisba places her corporeal limitations onto Vangue’s body. It is this Ethiopian slave who must serve as the darkened sacrifice that figuratively frees the princess from bodily subjugation. She offers his flesh for her hymen, his blood for hers to remain uncontaminated. Problematically, Sophonisba foregrounds consent and pleasure as essential to navigating oneself as a political subject only through fashioning

³³ Michel Foucault explains that “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (790). Freedom requires that subjects retain various avenues for action. This, of course, does not exclude constraint or limitations on a subject’s viable options. One may recognize that a subject is unfree when the subject’s avenues for action or inaction are overdetermined as in cases of rape and slavery. Syphax’s repeated threats of rape remain unfulfilled because he recognizes the importance of maintaining her freedom since her choice to become his bedfellow, to satisfy him, to forego her chastity, and to dishonor Massinissa evince his superiority and augment his power.

her self-representation in such a way that capitalizes on Vangue's already objectified black flesh.³⁴

In Syphax's final attempt to rape Sophonisba, the princess takes out her knife and threatens to penetrate her body with "Massinissa this good steele" and "set her soule on wing" (4.1.54-55). Sophonisba's last resort, an aggressively conventional move, aligns with the misogynistic expectation that a truly virtuous woman would rather die than succumb to the unwanted lusts of her attacker, an expectation that made survival of rape itself incriminating evidence since, as Garthine Walker states, "an assertion of rape—that penile penetration had occurred without the woman's consent—implied that she had been forced to *submit* to the rapist," and, as *The Wonder of Women* underscores, "submission indicate[s] consent" (6). Sophonisba goes further yet by exclaiming that she will enjoy her husband's figurative penetration, setting her soul free. Incensed, Syphax derisively replies:

Doe strike thy breast, know being dead, Ile use,
With highest lust of sense thy senselesse flesh,
And even then thy vexed soule shall see,
Without resistance, thy trunk prostitute,
Unto our appetite. (4.1.58-62)

In this highly disturbing speech, Syphax loses sight of his desire for her consensual submission and threatens to perform a necrophilic rape. He states that her soul will be forced to watch as her "trunke" is violated. His language refers back to Vangue's enslaved, penetrated, and dead body. Like the slave who does not possess his corporeal self and

³⁴ In *Shakespeare's Jungle Fever*, Arthur L. Little Jr. states that in representations of rape in early modern drama and literature, the sacrifice of the victim was framed as both inevitable and necessary for the community. "Rome kills Lucrece," Little contends, "not because her body is polluted but because her mind is pure" (57). Throughout this section, I've insisted that Sophonisba pushes the boundaries of proper feminine decorum and reveals an awareness of the slippages between herself and the black servants who surround her. I believe that the bedtrick serves as a sacrifice akin to the deaths of Rome's Lucrece and Titus's Lavinia in that the slave becomes Sophonisba's projected darkened body, sullied through sexual contamination, that must die so her pure self may be free.

whose pleasure does not factor into the master-slave dynamic, Sophonisba's stump can neither receive sexual gratification from the encounter nor can it resist what is being done to it. From his own mouth, Syphax reveals that an act of sexual violence without consent transforms the victim to a slave and to a corpse.

When Syphax scathingly replies that she will watch her defenseless body serve his carnal longings, he reveals that his struggle with Sophonisba is about power. Although she may kill herself, he still claims to hold her soul captive with the sight of her violation. In response to the tyrant's bestial threat, Sophonisba courageously declares that she does not fear Syphax and that even in death her allegiance lies with Massinissa (4.1.66-7). This reminds Syphax that rape divests him of his regal identity by diminishing his power from a king, who enjoys a dominion that is at once physical but also ideological, spiritual, and erotic, to a being—like Vangue, a slave—limited to his material body.³⁵ While rape may look like power, her words recast her consent as the locus of Syphax's authority, making him desperate for her to take pleasure in being *his* subject.

Sophonisba's ability to choose either to submit or to withhold her consent limits Syphax's authority over her body and becomes the primary bulwark separating herself from his assault because of the cultural values given to her volition. Retracting his previous words, he says:

Womans forced use,
Like unripe fruites, no sooner got but waste,
They have proportion, colour but no taste. (4.1.70-2)

³⁵ For more on the paradox in which Tarquin, metaphorically enslaved to his lusts, uses the figure of the slave to threaten the Roman matron Lucrece, whose status derives from an empire founded upon colonization and slavery, see Catherine Belsey's article "Tarquin Dispossessed: Expropriation and Consent in *The Rape of Lucrece*" pages 322-4.

Syphax realizes that not waiting for a woman's consent is like eating an unripe fruit that quickly spoils, an imagery that recalls Vangue's corpse decaying in the king's bed and continues the trope of decomposing bodies. Although Syphax could certainly fulfill his sexual drive against her will—enjoying her proportion and color—the ultimate purpose for this act remains ungratified. Just as devouring an unripe fruit fails to satiate taste, the very sensation meant to receive pleasure while eating, rape likewise fails to fulfill Syphax's desire for erotic and social dominance. He finally realizes his great dependence on her consent and now finds himself in quite a pickle. Especially after threatening to rape her dead corpse, the likelihood of him ever winning her heart and abiding submission is quite slim to none.

Syphax's failed attempts at attaining Sophonisba's submission lead him to resort to dark magic in the hopes that he could trick the princess into loving him. When the witch Erictho appears, Syphax narrates her repellant actions which seem to perform the necrophilic rape he had previously described. Erictho finds a corpse still fresh and climbs on top of it. She lurks close, "bites his gelled lips, and stick[s] her blacke tongue in his drie throat" (4.1.20-21). Once again, blackness becomes associated with death, materiality, and non-consent as Erictho posthumously penetrates the cadaver. Since it is impossible for this deceased and decaying object to withhold consent, Erictho does as she desires to attain her pleasure. Both Vangue's replaceable existence as a slave and a man's corpse present the consequences of the material body without the recourse of language to intercede on its behalf. While dramatic and poetic works of the early modern period explore the problematic malleability of language as prone to slippages and equivocation, Marston reveals language to be the last defense of a political subject.

After promising the desperate king that she has magically transformed Sophonisba's hate to love, Erictho veils herself in the form of Sophonisba, and sleeps with Syphax.³⁶ In the morning, the king discovers the ploy, promptly leaps out of bed, and draws his sword; to which, Erictho laughs and says, "Why foole of kings, could thy weake soule imagin/ That t'is within the graspe of Heaven or Hell/ To inforce love?"(5.1.4-6). The witch declares that love, this affective phenomenon and passion of the will, exists beyond the coercive powers of the gods and belongs entirely to Sophonisba. I end this section by emphasizing that when the witch impersonated Sophonisba, she had fraudulently procured Syphax's consent and "inforce[d] love." Critics of this play have generally remained silent about this act of sex-by-deception committed by a woman, the dismissal of which may reflect the numerous conflicting legal approaches to male rape and cases in which the plaintiff's consent was induced through means of artifice and concealment.³⁷

The play's approval of this act of trickery divulges the contradictory impulses of this work. On the one hand, Marston maintains the crucial significance of consent, particularly when it comes to sexual acts, to determine objects and other moveable goods from political subjects. On the other hand, by casting satisfaction on the sexual assault perpetrated by the witch, the play undermines the importance of consent that it had heretofore supported.

³⁶ See Cynthia E. Garrett's article "Sexual Consent and the Art of Love in the Early Modern English Lyric" 37-58 for more on the conflation of love and force, seduction and rape.

³⁷ According to Elizabeth II's Sexual Offences Act 2003, although women may be charged with accessory to rape, they cannot be charged with rape in England and Wales. For the ambivalence in cases of rape-by-deception, see the California Penal Code Section 261, subdivision (a)(5). First codified in 1872, it defined sex achieved through fraudulent means as rape only when the victim is married and the perpetrator of the crime is not the victim's spouse. Accordingly, rape by impersonation only applies to a married plaintiff. The original penal code also exempted a spouse from charges of rape-by-fraud even if he or she was not the person to whom the plaintiff had consented. Only in 2013 has this section been expanded to define rape as an act of sexual intercourse "where a person submits under the belief that the person committing the act is *someone known to the victim other than the accused*" (italics mine).

Most unsettling, *The Wonder of Women* dramatizes that sexual violence can be justified in certain cases if used as either a corrective or as an act of retribution such that the ravisher is dealt what he himself had given. In the critical history of Marlowe's drama, the omission—whether unknowing or deliberate—of Erictho's sex-by-deception attests to a certain level of social comfort with consent as something that must be earned and can be taken away, an arbitrariness that has served racist objectives through the vilification and subsequent legitimized dispossession of dark bodies.

The Cost of Self-Possession

Although *The Wonder of Women* safeguards the princess's consent, it does so at the expense of black or blackened bodies who sustain violent reductions to their materiality in order for Sophonisba to claim a political personhood. By professing herself to be an honorable Carthaginian and wife, she underscores her status as a political subject with the right to determine the boundaries of her body even when those options seem predetermined. This constant reiteration of her loyalties strategically makes her pleasure and consent matter, as I have been arguing, but it also reveals the problematic precariousness of consent since in order for a person's will to be given efficacy, he or she must be deemed deserving of the social protection of the right to exercise consent.

Marston's heroine is all too cognizant of the ease with which her consent can be obscured and her status from political subject can slip into object. In response to this incessant threat, she articulates a concept of possession in one's person that never ceases irrespective of her status as the property of her father or husband, the subject of a king, or her location within an amicable or hostile environment. When Sophonisba asserts her will,

she also demonstrates a keen understanding of what it means to make a choice, accepting pain and even embracing the extremity of passivity—death. Throughout the play, the men in her life come dangerously close to effacing her complexity as a political subject by understanding her obedience to be compulsory and her fulfillment of their wills as an act devoid of hers. While the reduction of the princess to an inert prize to be silenced, exchanged, and touched at the whims of men still occurs—though postmortem—the simple distinctions between passivity and agency, male owners and female possessions, victors and captives are complicated by the fact that Marston’s Sophonisba authorizes her death and the exchange of her lifeless body. Unlike other goods, such as a slave, the princess makes clear that she possesses a network of loyalties through which men’s relations to one another are forged, a dependence that gives her consent—the articulation of her will—meaning.

When the Roman Scipio orders Massinissa to prove his allegiance to Rome by resigning his wife to their power, he invests Massinissa with the capabilities of Sophonisba’s sole proprietor. This diminution of Sophonisba to a human trophy is further exemplified when Lelius warns Massinissa that should he “detaine/A Roman prisoner, due to this great triumph,” he will “answere Rome and him” (5.3.53-5). Again, Massinissa’s wife—his prized possession—is expropriated by the commands of his superior, who seizes ownership of this Carthaginian noblewoman by labeling her a prisoner of war. According to the Roman general, Massinissa can only postpone the inevitable, and it is Massinissa who must choose either to “yield” to the desires of Rome or to oppose, “detaine,” and thereby, “answere” to their hate. This homosocial male transaction denies the figure of the woman any say in or responsibility for what shall befall her body. Like other male figures in this play, Scipio and Lelius refuse to acknowledge that unlike other moveable goods, Sophonisba is bound to

Massinissa through a reciprocal act of consent and submission, which entails Massinissa's mutual subjection to the princess and curtails a husband's perceived absolute authority over his wife. Unlike the power-play between Syphax and Sophonisba, in which sex would manifest the princess's willful submission to the Numidian king—securing his position of dominance over other men—the transaction of power that requires her enslavement to Scipio entirely negates her personhood and only recognizes Massinissa as a loyal ally of Rome in possession of an object that belongs to the victors. When Scipio proclaims, “[s]he is Carthaginian, now our law's” (5.2.96), he asserts that like the Ethiopian slave, whose blackness binds him to his materiality, Sophonisba's identity as a Carthaginian binds her to the Romans as their property.

Sophonisba is well aware that a Roman victory in conjunction with her existence as a woman places her in a vulnerable position. When she meets her husband, whose closed helmet conceals his identity, she immediately addresses the prospect of future enslavement and states her definitive will:

Let me not kneele to Rome...
Therefore, with teares that wash thy feet, with hands
Unusde to beg I claspe thy manlie knees,
O save me from their fetters and contempt,
Their proud insultes, and more then insolence.
Or if it rest not in thy grace of breath
To grant such freedom, give me long wishd death,
For tis not much loathde life, that now we crave
Onely an unshamd death, and silent grave
We will now daine to bend for. (5.3.13, 20-8)³⁸

³⁸ It is hard not to compare Marston's Sophonisba with Shakespeare's Cleopatra. These threatening political female figures from Carthage and Egypt, respectively, have both been regarded as seductresses who chose death rather than the prospect of being led through the streets of Rome as symbols of defeat. Like Sophonisba, Cleopatra refuses to endure the debasements of Roman captivity that would include seeing “Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness/ I' the posture of a whore” (5.2.216-217). Cleopatra's metatheatrical assertion draws attention to the ironic fact that both her majestic figure and Sophonisba's paradigmatic character were enacted by boys on early modern stages. Marston's *The Wonder of Women* was performed a year or two before Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In this performance of humility and deference, Sophonisba kneels before her husband, imploring him to prevent her subjugation to Roman bondage. Although Sophonisba seems to inhabit the most disenfranchised status between the two, as a Carthaginian and the property of men, she manipulates her position as a circumscribed feminine subject to negotiate strategies for resistance. Like Shakespeare's Desdemona who defends her marriage to Othello by framing her radical elopement as an appropriate and non-threatening transition modeled after her mother from chaste daughter to virtuous wife, Sophonisba similarly disguises her desire for death as a supplication that seemingly reifies patriarchal authority.³⁹ She adheres to convention by acknowledging the general's control over her body and life, but she binds him to a vow that preemptively secures a verbal contract through which her will and not that of Rome alone may be realized.

Marston's conspicuous deviations from source texts give the Carthaginian princess a self-assertive death. In Appian's *An Auncient historie*, Massinissa brings poison to Sophonisba, informs her that she "must presently drinke it, or remayne a slaue to the Romanes" (186), and then promptly takes to his horse and rides away. Livy, in contrast, focuses on Massinissa's private ruminations, his sighs, groans, and feelings of impotence as a husband incapable of protecting his wife from enslavement and death. According to Livy, a regret-laden Massinissa cannot even face his wife but sends a messenger with his gift of poison. As in Appian's source, Livy's Massinissa anticipates her susceptibility to the temptation of life and advises his wife to commit suicide. He presses her to do so in

³⁹ Emily C. Bartels describes Desdemona as a brilliant actress, adept at manipulating patriarchal systems from within. She notes that through Desdemona's speech, her elopement and miscegenation "become not only acceptable but also expected behavior" (425), forcing Brabantio to relinquish his suit against Othello. For more on the ways that acts of submission may in fact assert a woman's will, see her article "Strategies of Submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the Assertion of Desire."

remembrance of “her father a noble warrior and Commaunder of her native countrie, of two kings to whom she had been married,” and finally, “to save her owne honour” (750).⁴⁰

In both the accounts of Appian and Livy, a humiliated Massinissa fails to perform the duties of a husband, who according to Thomas Bentley “ought to be the head, vaile, and defence of his wife, to preserve and keepe her from all dangers” (15). His head belongs to Scipio and the best he can do to protect his wife is to initiate her suicide. By contrast, Marston keeps Sophonisba’s voice central to her sacrifice, made all the more explicit when juxtaposed with the weak vacillations of her husband. Although Massinissa had initially vowed by his “right hand” that his wife should “live free” (5.3.28), he promises the Roman messenger—again, without having consulted his wife—to deliver Sophonisba unto Scipio. Once Lelius exits the stage, Massinissa commands his wife to prepare for slavery:

Massinissa. [W]reath backe thine armes, bend down thy necke
Practise base Praiers, make fit thyself for bondage...Roman bondage.

Sophonisba. No, no!

Massinissa. How then have I vowed well to Scipio?

Sophonisba. How then to Sophonisba?

Massinissa. Right, which way?
Run mad! Impossible distraction!

Sophonisba. Dear lord, thy patience, let it maze all power;
And list to her in whose sole heart it rests
To keep thy faith upright. (5.4.76-84)

⁴⁰ In other sources, Sophonisba asks Massinissa when they meet for either freedom from Roman bondage or death, but as stated in this chapter, the actions leading to her suicide cast her death as the best thing that Massinissa could give to Sophonisba. In comparison, Marston’s adaptation makes her suicide the gift she gives to her husband and to herself.

Massinissa assumes that a husband's directives supersede the desires of a wife. His decision to relinquish Sophonisba's freedom and deliver her in chains rather than prove false to Scipio repeats similar attempts to pass the silent female corpus from the hands of one man to another in honor of male homosocial vows, placing the locus of consent and resistance in the men who possess Sophonisba rather than in the body that is trafficked. Yet, in entertaining these alternatives, he neglects to consider his wife's foremost desire requested during the initial moments of their reunion—that she be granted liberty from Roman bondage through death. He fails to consider his wife as a subject vested with the ability to negotiate how and in what manner her body should be used.

As in other scenes throughout the play, Sophonisba's adept response to her husband's command mobilizes compliance to enable the efficacy of her will.⁴¹ Although it is her person that is bartered for Scipio to maintain confidence in Massinissa, it *is* hers. Sophonisba insists that he abide by her desires that trump both Roman demands and even Massinissa's inclinations. Massinissa may be her lord, but his manhood depends on her choice to keep him "upright." She points to her "heart," and in doing so, reorients their relations such that it is her pleasure that dictates her physical fate and not her husband's fealty to Rome. In her response, Sophonisba uses obeisance to diminish Massinissa's

⁴¹ Kathryn Schwarz explains that such acts of volition "confound the distinction between affective allegiance and appropriative defiance ... [by] rearticulat[ing] dominant discourses from unexpected locations" (10). This ambiguity is all the more unsettling because feminine will is integral to the perpetuation of patriarchal systems of power. Mastery requires a limit on feminine desire. Too little will undermine the contractual agreement and exposes that bond to be coerced and nonconsensual. Alternatively, too much will threaten to destabilize the woman's subservient position. Although Sophonisba's suicide is an act of submission to both her kingdom and her husband, her language also reveals this self-destruction to be what Schwarz describes as "an unassimilated volition that shifts mastery toward imposture" (68). See Kathryn Schwarz's *What You Will*. Lorraine Helms also locates a transgressive potential and possibility of play in Renaissance performances of Senecan tragedy, such as Marston's *The Wonder of Women*. Along those lines, Marston's drama experiments with the potential for self-destruction to disconcert patriarchal authority even though Sophonisba ultimately obeys Roman demands

presumed authority over her body and to clarify that her volition—not her husband’s—preserves Massinissa’s reputation.

Just as Sophonisba’s political submission as a subject to Carthage and wife to Massinissa strategically exercises her agency, suicide paradoxically accentuates her voice and self-autonomy. Through Erictho’s corpse and the penetrated Vangue, the danger of obscuring consent is made both grotesque and palpable. With Sophonisba however, death—which had once presented the epitome of objectification in Syphax’s threat of necrophilic rape—serves to manifest her will. Unlike the accounts of Livy and Appian, in which Massinissa instructs or compels her to commit suicide, in Marston’s version of her death, Massinissa weeps while Sophonisba performs the authoritative role of a woman who most intimately understands the gravity of a consent that affirms the destruction of her body:

Massinissa. Wilt thou be slav’d?

Sophonisba. No free.

Massinissa. How then keepe I my faith?

Sophonisba. My death
Giv’s helpe to all: From Rome so rest we free.
So brought to Scipio, faith is kept in thee.

Massinissa. Thou darst not die...

Sophonisba. Behold me Massinissa, like thy selfe,
A king and souldier. (5.3.84-88, 93-4)

The implacable conditions set by the Romans to which Sophonisba’s husband initially prescribes eliminate the potential for Massinissa’s fealty to coincide with Sophonisba’s freedom. In a move unexpected by the men who surround her, Sophonisba mobilizes death to liberate her from the limitations of the body while fulfilling Roman terms. As she prepares to die, she commands Massinissa to look upon her as his equal, a woman who

favors a passionate self-destruction rivaling his masculine heroism on the battlefield. She bears arms against herself to save her kingdom and her spouse. In contrast to other early modern sources on Sophonisba, Marston crucially makes the princess reaffirm with “undismaid resolve” her willed desire for death (5.3.96).

Sophonisba is both subject and sovereign, an individual who saves the integrity of her person by choosing to submit her body to her will. Rather than play the part of the passive benefactor of her husband’s sacrifice on the battlefield—glorified “*through him, with him, and in him*”—she takes up the poisoned chalice and glorifies herself through *her* sacrifice, with *her* will, and in *her* body.⁴² Her decision to die rather than enter the gates of Rome as its prisoner, evokes praise from Massinissa as well as his light reproach for being a “Covetous, Fame-greedy lady” seeking not merely admiration but adoration (5.3.108). Massinissa, as expected, yields the non-sentient remains of his wife to the Romans. And in return, Scipio adorns him with a crown, a robe of triumph, a conqueror’s wreath, and scepter, while praising Massinissa’s eternal fame and bestowing him with the accolade of “Rome’s very minion” (5. 3. 160-3).

However, as the title of Marston’s tragedy reveals, it was not Massinissa whose narrative would most capture the imagination of the early moderns. Although “minion” could be used to describe a popular hero and public favorite, I want to play with the less benign definitions of this term; those that suggest base servility and effeminacy, more on par

⁴² Thomas Rist interprets Sophonisba as a Marian figure who fulfills a convention of miraculous virginity until her suicide, which contrasts starkly with Mary’s Assumption. While I do appreciate Rist’s insights regarding the Catholic echoes in this play, I maintain that Sophonisba’s successful protection of her body comes not from her virgin armor but from her strategic insistence on the value of her consent as a political subject whose act of volition, rather than the forced usage of her body, reflects the power hierarchies between men. For more on Sophonisba as an outlet for repressed Jacobean Catholic idolatry, see his article “The Wonder of Women: Virginité, Sexuality and Religio-Politics in Marston’s *The Tragedy of Sophonisba*.”

with “pandors [or] pimpes” and in line with Marston’s rendering of Massinissa, who trades the body of his wife to receive Rome’s endearment.⁴³ Passively bedecked in the accoutrement of power—cheap tokens paid by the willing sacrifice of Sophonisba whose deceased body present onstage shadows his moment of triumph—Massinissa feels his glory at best diminished or, otherwise, undeserved. Surpassed by his wife, Massinissa’s final words express both his grief and humiliation when he calls Sophonisba: “Women’s right wonder and just shame of men” (5.3.174).

Coda

When Lucretia procures a vow of revenge from the patriarchs who witness her unexpected suicide, she transfers agency to them, stating: “what is his [the perpetrator’s] due to have, see you to that” (Livy 41). Brutus and her kinsmen decide to parade her bleeding corpse, inciting the Romans to revolt against all the Tarquins—not just her rapist Sextus.⁴⁴ The aftermath of Sophonisba’s similar suicide, which astounds the men who surround her, differs from Lucretia’s politicized body, reduced to the symbol of a suffering people and

⁴³ Quoted in the Percy Society’s *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages*, volume 29, page 69, which contains a collection of ballads, poems, and epitaphs written about James’s favorite, the controversial George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.

⁴⁴ Amy Greenstadt analyzes the ways that authors experimented with representations of rape to express the misappropriation and silencing of the author’s will. Like authors who send out their work, becoming susceptible to the censure and misinterpretations of their audience and readership, Greenstadt argues that Lucrece “acknowledge[es] that in death she must entrust her will to others... impl[y]ing that her posthumous intentions may be vulnerable to a violation similar to rape” (79). The mystification of the active and passive described by Elaine Scarry, seems particularly useful when analyzing the voluntary transference of Lucrece’s will to the men who witnessed her suicide. Scarry suggests that one interpretation of this paradox is that “consent becomes...an exercise of the artefactual response at a moment when the will is in danger of being impaired... [I]t entails understanding consent as a redistributive site where inequalities are transformed into equalities, and vice versa” (882). In this way, the phenomenon of consent obscures the categories of active and passive for it is the deceased Lucrece whose authorization could be understood to have guided the hands of her avengers.

salvaged—by the hands of men—to birth posthumously the Roman Republic. Sophonisba’s final act restricts rather than multiplies the various avenues for male action. Her sacrifice compels Massinissa to bring forth her specific interpretation of what it means to keep his vow with the Romans and with his wife. Sophonisba’s deceased body surrendered to Scipio and the audience in the last scene of this play neither signifies a relinquishment of her agency nor is her body silent, though it is mute, but instead affirms her self-possession through her final consent.

Indeed, the Sophonisba myth lacks a popular uprising, the overthrow of a tyrannical monarchy, and the establishment of a government based on the consent of the governed, a heroic political narrative that conscripts Lucretia’s rape and suicide. Although Sophonisba gives her life to protect her kingdom, a defeated Carthage would be humiliated by Rome’s demands, and in the aftermath of the Third Punic War, would cease as an independent empire with its people sold into slavery and remaining territories annexed by Rome, leaving ruins to attest to Carthage’s former greatness.⁴⁵ And, perhaps for these reasons, Sophonisba’s story is particularly apt for displaying the difficulty that a woman faces when exercising her will and defining the boundaries of her body.

Lest I conclude on a triumphant note, akin to critics who have extolled Sophonisba’s strict adherence to Stoic principles and who interpret her selfless and resilient sacrifice not as

⁴⁵ A year after Sophonisba’s suicide (circa 202 B.C.), Carthage, led by Hannibal, fell to the Roman army commanded by Scipio and his ally Massinissa. The Battle of Zama (203 B.C.) was a decisive victory for the Romans that ended the Second Punic War and Carthaginian independence, preventing Carthage from posing a future threat to Roman dominance. The Third Punic War, which began in 149 B.C. and ended three years later, realized Rome’s demand “that Carthage, which had observed, and more than observed, every obligation whereto she was bound in treaty, should nevertheless, for the greater advantage of Rome, cease to exist” (Rawlinson 453). According to Goldsworthy, Rome did not wage a culture war against the Carthaginians but a war based on domination. “Carthage the political entity, source of its population’s identity and their focus of loyalty, was utterly destroyed” (Goldsworthy, 357). See, also, Appian pages 174-248.

a tragedy, but as Finkelpearl would insist, “a positive and triumphant act to leave such a world” (244), I wish to trouble the victorious tone sometimes elicited by her sacrifice.⁴⁶ Rebecca Yearling has already argued that the play questions whether suicide, even for the sake of adhering to Stoicism’s doctrines, “could ever truly be considered a triumph” (121). And perhaps, “triumph”—a term of such relentless certitude, ushering in images of imperial male valor—is precisely what is being undermined in this play when applied to consent. Sophonisba’s suicide confounds submission, but it is still an act of obedience. Although she gets her freedom, Scipio receives her body—albeit without life, and as with Lucretia, Sophonisba could not ascertain whether her corpse would be treated with decorum or defiled in the streets of Rome. As the title *The Wonder of Women or, the Tragedy of Sophonisba* conveys, narratives of consent are rarely—if ever—emphatically victorious. Instead, a dual tone is more applicable to the phenomenon of consent presented in this play; for in the affirmation of the will, Sophonisba’s assent acknowledges and accepts the vulnerability and dispossession upon which her status as a political subject is founded and maintained. When both Sophonisba and Lucretia choose to die, they authorize others—both allies and foes—to speak and act for them. It is this artefactual suspension of agency, that can never be harnessed by bodies of alterity, the black characters who become scapegoats in order for Sophonisba to have her will. Through the dispossession and violation of characters marked with the color of their skin, *The Wonder of Women* shows audiences that it is a privilege—necessary but not a given—to be endowed with the ability to defend, question, and redefine

⁴⁶ See Ure who reads Sophonisba’s death as an escape for a Stoic heroine. In contrast, Anja I. Müller insists that her passionate patriotism, although noble, actually makes her less of an ideal Stoic and reveals her to be potentially corruptible. For Müller, her death is not the epitome of Stoical fortitude but a necessary sacrifice to re-establish stability for the male “social fabric” (100).

the terms of one's relation to society and to oneself. It is a privilege to have a choice to rebel or to submit, or, like Sophonisba, to perform an act that encompasses the two, even if it means choosing to realize one's mortality.

AFTERWARD

“Whether or not the captive female and/or her sexual oppressor derived “pleasure” from their seductions and couplings is not a question we can politely ask.”
- Hortense Spillers¹

There is something eerie about this quote from Hortense Spillers’s “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” an important work heralded as a turning point of African-American criticism. At its core, the statement conveys that while we know that slaves were raped, had sex and coupled with their masters, an interrogation of these erotic interactions as anything other than nonconsensual is strictly “off-limits.” It would be impolite to do so. The turn to decorum as a means to delimit thinking about pleasure, consent, and desire in moments of extreme crises, in situations that ostensibly negate their existence intrigues as much as it haunts me. After all, what is “polite” and acceptable often falls under the umbrella of what is civil. Though to be courteous perhaps enables tolerance, it nonetheless maintains the our contemporary status quo that is itself a condition of our inherited history of heteronormativity and racism.

By turning to civility as a means to caution against the pursuit of vexed and deeply uncomfortable questions, are we nonetheless protecting and upholding oppressive and hegemonic ideologies? Spillers’s statement haunts because it begins with the indisputable presupposition that slavery strips a human being of self-possession—of her right to property in her person—and her ability to exercise consent. By contemplating the possibility of a slave’s pleasure and ability to voice her will, we risk diminishing the brutality of this forced

¹ Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” in *Diacritics* 17.2. 64-81.

system of dispossession and may inadvertently bolster the idea that, as Kanye West has so eloquently stated, “slavery for 400 years—for 400 years? That sounds like a choice.”²

But, why is it that a consideration of a slave’s or rape victim’s pleasure, in effect, initiates a slippery slide that dangerously enters the territory of condoning conditions of forced and inherited bondage, of violence against the will of another? How did My dissertation began the process of answering this question by interrogating the entwined early modern discourses of consent and pleasure. *Representations of Race, Rape, and Consent in Early Modern English Drama* argues that bonds of consensual submission forge community through mutual obligation, responsibility, and shared vulnerability. In *The Tempest*, reciprocal submission allows people to be recognize within civil society, but the plays featured in this work also highlights that consent is arbitrary and contingent, always under threat of erasure and manipulation. What these chapters reveal is the way that consent legitimates and ratifies. Society depends on consent to perpetuate. It demarcates the licit from illicit and makes lawful not just specific unions and alliances but the very structures that enable that union. For example, every time a couple marries, they confirm their union while also validating the purpose of the institution of marriage.

And, therein lies the crux. Consent jettisons away from the specificity of a particular bond and interpersonal dynamic and reifies the structures that create the environment through which the will of a political subject is realized. Throughout this dissertation, I draw attention to the ways that the early moderns yoked consent to bodily pleasure. Cases of rape from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries attest to the disastrous consequence of

² Quoted in Tara Isabella Burton’s “The insidious cultural history of Kanye West’s slavery comments,” *Vox*. May 2, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/5/2/17311148/kanye-west-slavery-choice-harriet-tubman-quote-comments-trump>.

conflating consent with the psychosomatic terrain of pleasure since claims that a victim had enjoyed the act meant that rape could not have occurred. When physical pleasure is tied to consent, is it possible to perceive of the two without considering their existence as a means to legitimate harmful institutions? Marlowe's Zenocrate—maligned for her promiscuous and open body—has often been interpreted as a figure who capitulates to Tamburlaine's genocidal agenda. Her specific and highly complex web of affiliations are reduced to a single consent that supports the destructive and tyrannical force that Tamburlaine represents.

Indeed, the primary difficulty that I encountered in this project was the seduction of teleology. I wanted to think in relation to narratives of history without being subsumed by them, and this endeavor proved more arduous than I had anticipated. The final two chapters on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Marston's *The Wonder of Women* more forcefully pursue questions that link the early modern period to the transatlantic slave trade. It questions the effect of staging white-on-white violence especially when juxtaposed with discourses and theatrical presentations of the expendable and worthless black body. What happens when a black child's future is made static and predetermined, his life destined toward villainy? A growing threat, he can never truly be a child. And, in this way, *Titus* constructs the very notion of "child"—innocent and valued—as a category inaccessible to black bodies.

It is impossible for me to think of Aaron's son without remembering Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Cameron Tillman.

What this dissertation has helped me to think through are the connections between the period that I study and the terrorizing U.S. racial politics of our contemporary moment.

Although my larger project is just beginning, these first steps have shown the ways that a democratizing consent is itself fastened to and, indeed, predicated upon the dispossession of some. The English renaissance stage exploited and explored the contradictions and discursive ambiguities of consent, will, gender, and sexuality to model changing perceptions of community, kinship, and human value; and, in doing so, the theater provides us—scholars, teachers, students—with the threads that help us to explore the vexed knots of our present through and with the early moderns.

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