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OPHELIA'S DESIRE
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Every great theory is founded on a problem it cannot solve.¹ For psychoanalytic criticism, that problem is Ophelia. Sigmund Freud's Oedipal reading of Hamlet, mutually constitutive with his reading of Oedipus Rex, initiates the project of Freudian literary interpretation.² But that reading must, by its most basic logic, displace Ophelia and render her an anomaly. If the Queen is Hamlet's primary erotic object, why does he have another love interest? Why such a specific and unusual love interest? The answer that Freud and his disciples offer is that Hamlet's expressions of love or rage toward Ophelia are displacements of his cathexis on the queen.³ That argument is tautological – one might as easily say that Hamlet displaces his cathected frustration with Ophelia onto the Queen – and requires that some evidence from the text be ignored — “No, good mother,” Hamlet tells the Queen, “here's metal more attractive” (3.2.106) — but the idea of the Queen as Hamlet's primary affective object remains a standard orthodoxy, common even in feminist Freudians' readings of Hamlet.⁴ Janet Adelman's Suffocating Mothers, for example, takes the mother-son dyad as central, while Julia Reinhard Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard highlight the symbolic condensation of Ophelia with the Queen.⁵ The argument for Ophelia as substitute object may reach its apotheosis in Jacques Lacan's famous essay on Hamlet, which begins with “that piece of bait named Ophelia” only to use her

as an example of Hamlet's estrangement from his own desire.⁶

Margreta de Grazia's "Hamlet" without Hamlet has illuminated how the romantic tradition of Hamlet criticism, from which Freud's own Hamlet criticism derives, focuses on Hamlet's psychology at the expense of the play's other characters, who are reduced to figures in the Prince's individual psychomachia.⁷ While psychoanalytic reading objectifies all of Hamlet's supporting characters, Ophelia is not even allowed to be an object in her own right. Insistently demoted to a secondary or surrogate object, Ophelia becomes mysteriously superfluous, like a symptom unconnected from its cause. Ophelia is the foundational problem, the nagging flaw in psychoanalytic criticism's cornerstone. The play becomes very different if Ophelia is decoupled from the Queen and read as an independent and structurally central character, as a primary object of desire, and even as a desiring subject in her own right.

I do not mean to describe the character as a real person, with a fully human psychology; Ophelia is a fiction, constructed from intersecting and contradicting generic expectations.⁸ But in those generic terms Ophelia is startlingly unusual, indeed unique, in ways that psychoanalytic criticism has been reluctant to recognize. If stage characters become individuated to the extent that they deviate from established convention, acting against type, then Ophelia is one of Shakespeare's most richly individual heroines. And if Shakespeare creates the illusion of interiority, or invites his audience to collaborate in that illusion, by withholding easy explanations of motive, Ophelia's inner life is rich with mystery. Attention to the elements of Ophelia's character that psychoanalytic readings resist or repress illuminates the deeper fantasies shaping psychoanalytic discourse. The literary dreams underpinning psychoanalysis are not simply to be debunked nor to be reconstituted, but to be analyzed. If, as the debates over

psychoanalysis over the last three decades have shown, much of Freudian thinking is not science, then it is fantasy, and fantasy, as Freud himself teaches, rewards strict attention. Ophelia, rightly attended, may tell us something about Hamlet, and about Hamlet, that critics have not always wished to know. To see Ophelia clearly would also make it clear how closely Hamlet resembles her and how faithfully his tragic arc follows hers.

II: Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria

Perhaps the most striking absence in Freudian discussions of Ophelia is the lack of interest in Ophelia's madness. Poetic madness is Freudian criticism's raison d'être. This lapse is all the more striking because Freud's medical practice originally centered on the neuroses of "hysterical" young women. Psychoanalysis's patient zero is Bertha Pappenheim, the privileged young hysteric known as "Anna O.," and during the formative years when Freud was developing his basic theories he made much of his living by analyzing troubled women, Vienna's Ophelias.⁹ An intellectual project which began by investigating troubled women's psychiatric symptoms leaves an iconic female character's mental illness unexplored. Considerations of Ophelia's mad scenes can be very scanty, sometimes no more than a single sentence. It is shockingly easy to publish a psychoanalytic account of Hamlet, such as Lacan's, which ignores Ophelia's madness completely.¹⁰

One reason for this lack of attention to Ophelia's madness is that many critics, cathected upon Hamlet's imagined subjectivity to the exclusion of all others', have been interested only in Hamlet's perception of Ophelia rather than in Ophelia herself. But the Ophelia of Acts One and Four operates independently of Hamlet's gaze; the two characters share no dialogue in those

acts, and Hamlet never witnesses Act Four's mad scenes. When Ophelia appears on stage without Hamlet, critical attention can lapse. Lacan goes so far as to pronounce Ophelia "completely null and dissolved as a love object" after Act Three's "get thee to a nunnery" scene, only to be recuperated as an object of Hamlet's desire after her death; Lacan takes virtually no interest in Ophelia's mad scenes because in those scenes, according to Lacan, Ophelia is no longer an object of Hamlet's desire.¹¹ Lacan is interested only in one phrase related to Ophelia in Act Four, and that is Gertrude's mention of "dead men's fingers" (4.7.169), convenient to Lacan's argument that Ophelia has symbolically become Hamlet's phallus.¹² Lacan, like most psychoanalytic critics, is not interested in an Ophelia who is imaginatively separate from the Queen or distinct from Hamlet's imagination of her. An Ophelia who is outside Hamlet's speech, not yet being described or interpellated by him, is forgettable, to be forgotten.

Lacan emphasizes Hamlet's perspective so resolutely that he makes gross errors recounting Hamlet's plot. According to Lacan, "we first hear Ophelia spoken of" in Act Two, Scene Two, when Polonius discusses her to the King and Queen, and "we first encounter Ophelia" in Act Two, Scene One, narrating her disturbing encounter with Hamlet.¹³ Lacan is not interested in remembering the Ophelia of Act One, just as he is not interested in thinking about the Ophelia of Act Four. Put another way, Lacan is interested in not remembering the Ophelia of Act One and so represses that Ophelia's existence, simply erasing her first scene. What Lacan's error serves to repress is an Ophelia whose courtship with Hamlet does not yet display signs of incestuous entanglement with the Queen nor the evidence of sexual disgust toward Ophelia that Freudians construe as a hallmark of that entanglement. The unproblematic wooing that Ophelia reports provides no help to the argument that Gertrude's remarriage is the root of Hamlet's

hostility toward Ophelia; such an argument requires that characters be credited with experiences outside the text. Although Hamlet's first soliloquy expresses bitter displeasure with Gertrude's remarriage, in the very next scene Ophelia reports what an effective wooer Hamlet is, "how he hath importuned [her] with love / In honourable fashion /.../ And given countenance to his speech ... / With almost all the holy vows of heaven" (1.3.109–110, 112–13). Neither is Laertes concerned that Hamlet will woo Ophelia neurotically or self-destructively; he rather fears that Hamlet will woo too well (1.3.14–31). There is no sign in the text that Hamlet's displeasure at Gertrude's "wicked speed! To post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets" (1.2.156–57) has yet become displaced onto Ophelia or begun to interfere with his courtship of her.

But at the beginning of Act Two, Hamlet's addresses toward Ophelia have become catastrophically inappropriate, and remain so for the rest of the play. What the play shows taking place between Ophelia's two descriptions of Hamlet, first as a persuasive lover and then as a melancholic in mute disarray, has nothing to do with mothers. What intervenes between those reports of Hamlet, as lover and as madman, is paternal authority: Polonius's command to Ophelia and Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost. There is a key structural parallel between Ophelia's interview with Polonius and Hamlet's interview with the Ghost, paired scenes that disrupt Hamlet and Ophelia's erotic relationship and set each character's tragic arc. Freudian readings make nothing of that parallel, just as they overlook Ophelia's mad scenes. Psychoanalytic criticism is not interested in seeing structural resemblances between Ophelia and Hamlet. And yet Ophelia herself comes to resemble Hamlet as no other character in the play does. Only two characters in this play are mad.

Hamlet's resemblance to his male foils, Laertes and Fortinbras, fellow avengers of slain

fathers, is a critical bromide. But to note Hamlet's resemblance to Ophelia, his fellow in madness, is quite rare. To understand a play's representation of madness by examining another representation of madness in the same play is perhaps too obvious an exercise. Certainly, psychoanalytic readings take every possible route around this obvious path. Sigmund Freud manages it by never writing a full explication of his theory of Hamlet, central though that theory is to the rest of his intellectual system; Freud's discussions of Hamlet always come as an apparent digression or aside, sometimes literally as a footnote. He left the full prosecution of his argument to followers such as Ernest Jones, who anxiously and insistently decouples Hamlet's madness from Ophelia's:

the dramatic effect produced by Hamlet's personality and
behaviour ... would be quite other were ... [he] to represent merely
a 'case of insanity.' When that happens, as with Ophelia, such a
person passes beyond our ken, is in a sense no more human,
whereas Hamlet successfully claims our interest and sympathy to
the very end. Shakespeare certainly never intended us to regard
Hamlet as insane, so that the 'mind o'erthrown' must have some
other meaning than its literal one.¹⁴

Note here that Shakespeare's language may be cast aside, its literal meaning cast in doubt, if it is also Ophelia's language. Ophelia is discounted as a witness.

Feminist critics have rebutted Jones by taking Ophelia's madness as both human and interesting, but in so doing have conceded a crucial point to Jones. By gendering Ophelia's madness, critics as brilliant as Carol Thomas Neely and Elaine Showalter continue to promote

the idea that Hamlet and Ophelia's maladies are fundamentally unlike. Neely claims that Hamlet's "madness is in every way contrasted with" Ophelia's, denying that Hamlet is mad at all while comparing Ophelia's condition to "hysteria."¹⁵ Neely does not only take a maximalist position in the debate over the extent of Hamlet's madness, but ignores Ophelia's testimony — and for that matter Hamlet's, including his description of his madness as "poor Hamlet's enemy" (5.2.217) — in order to preserve a radical distinction between the characters. Readings such as Showalter's and Neely's construe the Ophelia of the mad scenes as a powerful voice from the play's margin, but Ophelia is only marginal because critics have marginalized her. If critics approached Ophelia's madness as seriously as they approached Hamlet's, they would be forced both to imagine Ophelia as an independent character, separate from Hamlet's perceptions of her and firmly at the play's center. Ophelia could no longer be read as merely an extension of Hamlet nor as a refraction of the Queen's image in his mind, but as a full counterpart, who acts and suffers as Hamlet suffers and acts. Hypotheses about Hamlet's madness that excluded Ophelia's would require explanation and defense. And if Ophelia's madness were understood as the mirror of Hamlet's, critics might be forced to acknowledge how much Hamlet mirrors Ophelia.

Perhaps most importantly, Freudian critics giving serious consideration to Ophelia's madness would need to give serious consideration to Ophelia's desire. For Freud locates the heart of all neurosis, the root of humanity's discontent, in our uneasy relationship with our own desires. Every dream, Freud teaches, is a concealed wish; the engines of our neuroses are our own unacknowledged needs and drives. Freud's account of Hamlet's madness centers on what Hamlet desires but cannot accept desiring. If one accepts Ophelia's madness as something as real

and as interesting as Hamlet's madness, as something fully human, one must consequently ask the question, "What does this woman want?"

III: Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence

Ophelia seems to express few desires, and many critics have read her as passive. But not getting what one wants is where every psychoanalytic story begins, and few characters are better than Ophelia at not getting what she wants. Ophelia is unique among daughters in Shakespeare, the only such character who does not attain the lover whom her father forbids. What is exceptional about Ophelia, generically sui generis, is typically obscured by discussing her as if she were a real person, governed by the laws of history and plausibility. It was normal and unremarkable for daughters in Shakespeare's England or in medieval Denmark to obey a father and thus deny a lover. But Ophelia is fictional, not governed by the laws of nations nor of nature but by literary convention. In an Elizabethan or Jacobean playhouse, the conventional result of Polonius's command should be Ophelia's elopement. An early modern stage father forbidding his daughter to see her lover is essentially reading the first of the banns of marriage. This rule is most obvious in comedy, but also clearly in force in tragedy, as in the cases of Baptista and Capulet, and no daughter, even in the comedies, has a father more comic than Ophelia's. This is an instance where Hamlet's hyper-canonical status, its tendency to exist for modern readers in the always-already, makes it difficult to see how unconventional the play is. An early modern playgoer watching Act One, Scene Three of Hamlet, a ridiculous old man telling his daughter to break off her love affair, would entertain no doubts about what would happen next, but that is not what happens next.

Ophelia does not desire in the way that a natural person does. But she has a conventional telos, a normative ending toward which her dramatic type is expected to move, an outcome which the character, as a formal component of the play, is understood to be seeking. Avengers move toward revenge, rivals for the throne strive to become king, and unmarried young ladies move toward marriage with a socially and sexually appropriate partner. This formal telos dovetails with a set of prescriptive cultural expectations for the character's age, class, and gender. Young ladies such as Ophelia are also presumed to prefer young gentlemen as marriage partners and to be repulsed by old men, commoners, and fools; paternal interdiction is either counterproductive or moot. The stage puella is governed by a generic standard of sexual desire and distaste. (Freud inscribes similar normative desires on his unmarried female patients, but presumes their sexual attraction to older men rather than to age peers.)¹⁶ Precisely because Ophelia is not a biological person but a stage type, she can be presumed to possess a stereotyped set of desires, drives, and erotic preferences. Those desires help constitute her dramatic identity as surely as Polonius is constituted by his follies or the Clown by his fooling. And precisely because Ophelia is a character rather than a person, her choice of obedience must be read as vividly unusual, inviting the viewer to speculate about her emotional state. Ophelia makes only one clear decision in Hamlet, the decision to obey her father and deny her own desires, but that decision is radical and ultimately disastrous. Ophelia's sacrifice of her erotic drive marks her as entirely out of the ordinary. Her obedience to her father is disobedience to the laws of genre. And her refusal of her desires is her character, just as Hamlet's delay of his revenge is his.

Ophelia's originals in Shakespeare's sources, Belleforest and Saxo Grammaticus, display none of her self-destructive compliance. In Saxo and Belleforest, an unnamed young woman is

set to trap Amleth into sex in order to test whether or not he is mad. (These narratives presume that a Hamlet-figure capable of acting on his sexual drives would therefore also be capable of taking his revenge and seizing the crown; sexual desire, political ambition, and aggression are imagined as intertwined and inseparable.) The nameless proto-Ophelia not only warns Amleth so that he does not betray himself, but colludes with him to find a discreet place where they can couple unobserved.¹⁷ (This lover is distinct from the two wives whom the chronicle-history Amleth later bigamously marries.) Hamlet and Ophelia's originals are willful, direct, and uninhibited; Hamlet and Ophelia are distinguished instead by how much they do not do.

Ophelia's self-abnegation is so powerful that she not only refuses Hamlet but also serves as Polonius's pawn against him, directly reversing both the chronicle-history sources and the usual dramatic expectations. A daughter helping her father deceive her lover rather than the other way around is a shocking perversion of theatrical convention. It simply is not done. The "get thee to a nunnery" dialogue plays out against the backdrop of this inverted stage triangle, with the doddering father who should be gulled by his daughter and her lover instead spying from behind a curtain while his daughter attempts to gull her lover. Ophelia's plaint "I was the more deceived" (3.1.119), seems especially inappropriate in this context, a displacement of who, in her dialogue with Hamlet, is "the more deceived." Moreover, Ophelia's unprecedented collusion with Polonius enables the very behavior, eavesdropping on Hamlet, that leads to Polonius's death. The repeated image of Polonius hiding behind the curtain could not be clearer. Ophelia abets Polonius in the enterprise that eventually kills him. If Ophelia cannot be credited with feelings of guilt, ambivalence, or internal conflict here, then no character in Hamlet can, including Hamlet himself. Hamlet's obedience to his father stems from that father's death;

Ophelia's obedience to her father helps lead, however indirectly, to that father's death.

Ophelia's radical denial of desire should be intensely interesting to psychoanalytic criticism. After all, psychoanalysis identifies sexual repression, and perhaps most of all women's sexual repression, as the fundamental wellspring of neurosis. From that perspective, the price of Ophelia's denial must be steep, its consequences dire. Hamlet surely senses trouble in Ophelia's unprecedented obedience to her father, taking it both as disloyalty on Ophelia's part and as aggression on Polonius's. He twice addresses Polonius as "Jephthah," the Judge of Israel who, in fulfillment of a poorly-worded vow to Yahweh, sacrificed his only daughter as a burnt offering (2.2.339, 2.2.346).¹⁸ Jephthah was well known to early audiences from a popular ballad and from a play by a rival acting company.¹⁹ The allusion has been noted by several scholars, most recently by Cameron Hunt McNabb.²⁰ Indeed, the allusion to Jephthah is more textually durable than Polonius's own name. Even in the First Quarto and in the truncated German adaptation Der bestrafte Burdermord, both of which call the old man "Corambis," he is called Jephthah.²¹ That the reference survives in the highly corrupt German adaptation suggests something about its legibility and perceived importance. Hamlet identifies Ophelia with Jephthah's daughter, a figure of such filial obedience that she agrees to death at her father's hand, and he implicitly accuses Polonius of murderous paternal aggression.

To be like Jephthah, here, is to strive at all costs to preserve a daughter's virginity, not simply until marriage but until death. The Book of Judges specifies that Jephthah's daughter "knew no man" (Judg. 11:39), that she died a virgin. One of the many verbal cruelties of the "get thee to a nunnery" scene is that Hamlet is continuing this Biblical allusion. Before Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed, she was allowed to withdraw for two months of seclusion with a group

of other unmarried women to “bewail [her] virginity” (Judg. 11:38). To enter a nunnery is to be like Jephthah's daughter by renouncing one's sexuality and fertility, but also to prepare for murder by one's father.

IV: A Neurosis of Demoniactal Possession in the Seventeenth Century

Hamlet, like Ophelia, accepts his own sacrifice at his father's hands. His central tragic arc is simply a longer and more elaborate rehearsal of Ophelia's briefer, more elemental tragedy. Her display of radical obedience to her father is immediately followed by his display of the same catastrophic and unwavering filial piety. Hamlet makes his own version of Ophelia's choice, but Ophelia is shown making it first. Polonius's command that his daughter deny a princely suitor is followed hard upon by the Ghost's command that the Prince sacrifice his ambitions and his life. And like Ophelia, Hamlet obeys a father who prefaces his commands with lengthy orations that badly undermine his paternal authority. Polonius's long-winded speeches establish his comic folly, but the Ghost's yet-longer-winded speeches establish his profound spiritual jeopardy, making it clear that he is no “spirit of health” (1.4.40). He, like Polonius, is not a father to be obeyed.²²

The Ghost does not explicitly require his son's death when he requires his services. But it is worth paying attention to what the Ghost does not say. He commands his son to revenge him, but not to succeed him. Nothing is spoken of the younger Hamlet becoming King. And the generic constraints of early modern revenge tragedy foreclose the possibility. The Amleth in the source texts, a creature of chronicle history, could avenge his father and achieve the throne. But the rules of early English revenge tragedy do not permit any avenger, any regicide, to take the

crown. In almost every case, the avenger must expiate his regicide with his life; the single notable exception, Marston's Antonio, renounces the throne to live in a monastery.²³ By accepting his father's command, Hamlet implicitly agrees to sacrifice his life, his soul, and his future kingship. The Ghost, speaking only of the past and of the duties young Hamlet owes to that past, says nothing of survival or succession. "The serpent that did sting thy father's life," he tells Hamlet, "Now wears his crown" (1.5.39–40). In the Ghost's language, the crown is still his, the older Hamlet's and not the younger's. It is not "thy crown," not Hamlet's, not the Prince's rightful inheritance. The dead man has not relinquished his claim upon it.

Nor should we be surprised. The Ghost is Senecan, and Seneca's ghosts have a habit of demanding and reveling in the deaths of their own heirs and the extinction of their bloodlines. Seneca's Thyestes opens with Tantalus's ghost being tasked to plague his line to destruction; Agamemnon begins with Thyestes's Ghost relishing the imminent bloodletting of his descendants.²⁴ And then, of course, there is the Ghost of Laius, Oedipus's father, whom I quote from Alexander Nevyle's Elizabethan translation of Seneca's Oedipus:

But I thee, thee that Scepter holdst, thy Father wil pursue,
And wreacke my selfe on thee and thyne with plagues and vengeance due.

...

I wil subvert thy Houses cleane, for this thy lothsome lust:

I wil do this thou wretch: And thee, and thyne consume to dust.²⁵

Here Laius does not merely desire Oedipus's death, which Laius has sought since Oedipus was a baby, but also the deaths of all Oedipus's descendants. That this would leave Laius too without descendants seems to be his primary goal. Senecan ghosts, the household gods from hell,

habitually urge the end of their own family lines.

But the story of the king who wishes no heirs is far older than Seneca; in Greek mythology, long before Laius was a ghost in Latin drama, he was dedicated to ending his own family line. Laius exposes his only child on the sacred mountain and takes pains to get no others.²⁶ The tale is a familiar one; the Oedipus story, which Freud posits as universal, is actually quite rare in Western folklore, but stories of kings like Laius are pervasive. A king, often prompted by an oracle or prophecy, becomes murderously hostile to a male child or to a younger man whom he perceives as his successor. Saturn swallows his children; King Amulius exposes his great-nephews Romulus and Remus; Herod seeks the newborn King of the Jews augured by the star; Saul yearns for the death of the anointed David.²⁷ Several more stories of this type were known in early modern England; of course, a still larger number of tales, unknown to the English, were distributed throughout the Indo-European world. But a murderous or rebellious son seldom appears in these stories. The early Freudians' attempts to collect and categorize Oedipus tales, spearheaded by Otto Rank, are actually collections of Laius stories, filled with violence against sons.²⁸ The lack of parricidal violence in these stories is explained as repression of taboo impulses; the proliferation of filicidal violence is explained as a projection of filial hostility. Freud reads Hamlet, the story of a son who casts away his life in filial obedience, as a model story of filial rebellion.

Old Hamlet's Ghost does not explicitly desire that his family line be destroyed, but he implicitly demands it. The dead king has two male heirs, his brother and his son. He sends the second to kill the first. As David Lee Miller puts it, "the ghost of the dead king seems more than willing to sacrifice his living son in the name of revenge."²⁹ And young Hamlet, as an obedient

son, renounces his future. Hamlet's greatest resemblance to Sophocles's Oedipus is to the figure at the end of Oedipus Rex, accepting the judgment of the dead and relinquishing his claims to kingship. The possibility that Hamlet might take the throne himself is never spoken of again, just as Ophelia and her father cease to speak of love or marriage. The life path for which Hamlet was born (or rather the socially and dramatically expected telos for such a character), becomes something repressed, unthinkable and unspeakable. The Ghost's explicit command to revenge seems to carry an implicit taboo against succession and inheritance, something Hamlet internalizes almost immediately. "Oh cursèd spite / That ever I was born," Hamlet says shortly after their encounter (1.5.186–87), wishing that his father's bloodline had already ended.

Hamlet's self-sacrifice, and the end of Old Hamlet's family line, also demands the sacrifice of any life with Ophelia. Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost ruptures Hamlet and Ophelia's erotic relationship as surely as Polonius's intervention does, because it renders Ophelia's love impossible for Hamlet to accept. To embrace Ophelia, with "love / In honorable fashion," (1.3.109–110) would mean committing to continue the life Hamlet has foresworn. Ophelia, whom the Queen "hoped" would "have been my Hamlet's wife" (5.1.233), represents the danger of maturity and fatherhood, the assumption of royal and paternal authority which Hamlet treats as taboo. Ophelia is most thoroughly unacceptable because she represents generativity and fertility, the possibility of yet more heirs in Old Hamlet's line. "Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" he demands. "[I]t were better my mother had not borne me" (3.1.120–24). Old Hamlet already has one heir too many.

The "To be or not to be" soliloquy is striking for how stubbornly Hamlet refuses to imagine himself as a potential king or as his murdered father's heir. The speech, posing itself as

a dilemma, excludes Hamlet's actual choices.³⁰ The life of a King of Denmark might be "weary," but he is not required to "grunt and sweat" (3.1.76). Nor, surely, will Hamlet ever be expected, either as King or Prince, to "fardels bear" (3.1.75). Henry V in soliloquy may imagine the laboring peasant's life as happier than a king's, but Hamlet simply imagines himself a laboring peasant and not a prince.³¹ Hamlet's list of ills that the living must suffer, the "whips and scorns of time," is — with the key exception of "disprized love" — entirely composed of problems foreign to Hamlet's station: "The oppressor's wrong, the proud mans contumely, / ... the law's delay, / The insolence of office and the spurns / That patient merit of the unworthy takes" (3.1.69–73). Although Hamlet does have a great many problems, he does not have these problems. Treated with deference even by enemies, Hamlet never suffers the proud insolence of local Osrics. He does not lack patronage. He is not oppressed by his landlord. And he has not been stymied by a slow-moving lawsuit. One might, with ingenuity and some brute force, try to apply some of these phrases to Hamlet's relationship to the King, but even then most of the specific details are fantastic. Moreover, if the King were the problem, the King could be replaced. The aptness with which Shakespeare typically fits his characters' speech to their station is mysteriously absent from this soliloquy. The details are concrete and specific but entirely irrelevant to the character speaking. Their irrelevance is the point. Hamlet's famous shift to abstraction and putative universality in the "To be or not to be" speech, the sudden disappearance of the pronoun "I," is part of the speech's occlusion of Hamlet's own situation, the erasure of the concrete perils and possibilities he faces. The "heartaches and thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to" are not all to which Hamlet is heir, but he refuses to imagine inheriting those things which are specifically and personally his own. And of the problems he enumerates, only the

problem of Ophelia, the problem of “disprized love” is real. The universal, philosophical perspective Hamlet favors, which has in turn won Hamlet enormous favor with the critics, might instead be read as a defense mechanism. Hamlet universalizes and intellectualizes in order to avoid more immediately pressing questions.

Hamlet's discussion of death in “To be or not to be” is likewise inappropriate. The famous description of death as “The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler returns” (3.1.78–79) is lovely and almost universally apt, except for Hamlet himself. If no traveler returned from the undiscovered country's bourn, then Hamlet would have no Act One.³² Hamlet's professed mystification about the “something after death,” the “ills ... that we know not of” (3.1.77, 80–81), only represents further self-deception. Hamlet cannot plead ignorance of the afterlife, having recently met a Ghost released from a prison house of torment. While that Ghost has not been forthcoming about details, Hamlet has been given a reasonable sense of the attendant ills. He can thus be quite confident that taking his revenge will lead him in turn to the torments of Purgatory, if not to Hell itself. Yet Hamlet persists in describing the afterlife as speculative and hypothetical. His lines “to die, to sleep – / No more” (3.1.59–60), ignore the character's actual experience of the dead. The soliloquy's disingenuous rhetoric begins with the renowned opening words, because “To be” and “not to be” (3.1.55) do not represent the only choices; Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost, gone but not departed, confounds the categories of life and death, being and not-being, and makes such simple binaries untenable. The most famous speech in Hamlet is strangely disconnected from the rest of Hamlet. It represses both Hamlet's knowledge of sin and damnation and the possibilities that life might hold for him.

The “To be or not to be” soliloquy can be better read as persuasive rhetoric, an oration

through which Hamlet seeks to sway himself. Rather than attempting to choose between equally balanced possibilities, Hamlet makes a concerted case for death over life, repeatedly tilting the scale in death's favor. He has come a long way from his first soliloquy's wish "that the Everlasting had not fixed / His canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (1.2.131–32). The Christian prohibition on suicide is no longer mentioned. But in Hamlet's first soliloquy, explicit authority commands him to live and thus excuses survival; the canon of the Everlasting permits Hamlet to articulate a wish he cannot enact, and lets him frame his survival as Christian obedience. In Hamlet's third soliloquy, God's commands are excluded from consideration, and Hamlet strives to frame his will to the Ghost's implicit commands. Hamlet maximizes the difficulty of life, enumerating burdens and struggles that he himself will never face, and minimizes the consequences of sinful death, reducing the spectacular warning he has received to a mere set of speculative uncertainties. Hamlet is not passively indecisive, but actively attempting to talk himself out of his life. It is striking, considering how thoroughly Hamlet has stacked the rhetorical deck against survival, that he does not succeed. The desire to survive may be disowned and disavowed, but evidently has not yet been dispelled. Hamlet is not suicidal, but believes that he ought to be. In his most famous soliloquy, he exhorts himself to embrace death and thus to satisfy his ghostly father's demands. The closing line of the speech proleptically imagines Hamlet himself as dead and Ophelia as a votary praying for his soul: "in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered" (3.1.88–89). Hamlet will have need of Ophelia's intercessory prayers if he joins his father in the guilt of Purgatory. At the moment when he physically moves to join Ophelia on stage, his language betrays his psychological union with the Ghost.

Hamlet can only imagine his relationship with Ophelia in the past or else in the future

anterior, a future in which Hamlet himself has become irretrievably part of the past. He prefers the vision of Ophelia remembering him to the vision of Ophelia living with him. His command that she get herself to a nunnery, beyond its ominous allusions to the Jephthah story, is quite literal. The act he prefers to imagine Ophelia undertaking is intercessory prayer, those prayers that the saved do not need and the damned cannot use.³³ More seriously, he can imagine no sexual future for her but a pejorative one; he will not marry her and he refuses to imagine her with another legitimate partner. "I say we will have no more marriage" (3.1.145) adopts the Ghost's apocalyptic perspective, envisioning an end to future generations. But it also absolves Hamlet from a choice he refuses to make, a choice between accepting Ophelia or relinquishing her to another. Ophelia's hand is like the Danish crown, a prize that Hamlet will not take but wishes no one else to have. And, perhaps most tellingly of all, Hamlet's imagination casts Ophelia playing the role toward him that he himself plays toward the Ghost: remembering a guilty but beloved soul. As Marjorie Garber has pointed out, the Ghost's command "Remember me" (1.5.91) is transformed in Hamlet's command, "Be all my sins remembered" (3.1.89) and then into Ophelia's command "Pray you, love, remember" (4.5.170): a chain of injunctions not simply to remember the dead, but to cherish the arguably damned.³⁴

Ophelia responds to Hamlet's plea to be remembered by returning "remembrances" to him (3.1.92); the echo could not be closer. In effect, Ophelia is negating the memory of their love affair, in an attempt to sanitize or erase their shared past. And the Ghost haunts this scene far more terribly and effectively than he haunts the later scene in Gertrude's closet. The Ghost has indoctrinated Hamlet in an emotional logic which not only prioritizes the past but construes any "disloyalty" to that past as invalidating or nullifying former intimacies. "If thou didst ever

thy dear father love" (1.5.23), the Ghost begins, implying that present disobedience annuls past filial affection. For Hamlet to deny the Ghost's command would, by this logic, not simply mean that he has ceased to love his father, but that he has retroactively ceased to have loved his father, that the love he once felt will not only cease to exist but to cease having existed; refusal to follow his father's script will rewrite the past, erasing emotional experiences Hamlet once cherished. Hamlet will not simply forget them; they will cease to have happened.

Primed by the Ghost to fixate on the past's emotional integrity and to see changing relationships as threats, Hamlet responds to Ophelia's return of remembrances as a fundamental attack. "I never gave you aught" (3.1.95) is a denial of the relationship's previous existence, precisely the emotional punishment with which the Ghost has threatened Hamlet. Hamlet's cruel word games with Ophelia, his self-retracting "I did love you once ... I loved you not" (3.1.114, 118), rehearse and replay his own indecision about the Ghost, the doubts and cavils he cannot directly express: whether to affirm the past, static and unchanging, and so be bound to sacrifice his future on that past's behalf, or to deny that past, nullifying its claims on him in order to liberate himself into the future.

For Ophelia and Hamlet, flawlessly obedient to flawed fathers, the past conquers the present. Indeed, both Ophelia and Hamlet seem incapable of discussing their emotions in the present tense. Hamlet's response to Ophelia's rejection is "I did love you once." Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia is "I loved you not." Whether he does or does not love Ophelia now is something he never articulates, perhaps never accesses. "Do" and "do not" have been displaced by "did" and "did not." Ophelia too, enjoined by her father from continuing the romance, can only speak of love in the past tense: "you know right well you did," "you made me believe so,"

"I was the more deceived" (3.1.96, 115, 119). The nunnery scene becomes the most bizarre of lover's quarrels, wrangling not over whether or not the couple loves one another but over whether or not the couple formerly loved one another. The dialogue goes so poorly because Ophelia and Hamlet are so emotionally well-matched, so identically committed to filial loyalty and to self-denial; these characters are, quite literally, made for one another. They are so unable or unwilling to discuss their desires that they cannot even manage to deny loving each other in the present. They do not permit themselves, are not permitted, to consider any emotional reality except that of the past.

Hamlet escalates and concludes the nunnery scene by moving beyond Ophelia as an individual object of love or rage to a more universalized set of complaints about womankind: "God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another" (3.1.142–43), slipping from the singular to the plural in mid-sentence as he shifts to an indictment of Ophelia's entire gender. As in the "To be or not to be" speech, Hamlet moves evasively from concrete specifics to a set of commonplaces with no special relevance to the object, or the subject, he is nominally discussing. Rather than consider his own particular fate, he generalizes about the lot of the common man; rather than consider Ophelia, he generalizes his rant to womankind. The discourse of misogyny, which denies meaningful differences between individual women, provides Hamlet refuge from the emotional threat posed by any particular woman's love. Hamlet's universalizing strategy of repression or evasion continues until he is standing at Ophelia's grave, unaware it is hers: "Now get you to my lady's table and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come" (5.1.182–84), with "my lady" still a universal, proverbial lady. Only when Hamlet understands that this is indeed his lady's grave is his ambivalence toward Ophelia resolved. Standing in her

grave, he is free to declare his love unequivocally, because that relationship has moved unequivocally into the past and no longer threatens any fertile future. "I loved Ophelia" (5.1.258) becomes a simple declaration in the past tense. His triangular relationship with his two most important affective objects, Ophelia and the Ghost, has been resolved. Ophelia no longer threatens his relationship with the Ghost, no longer poses the danger that Hamlet might be tempted to live. Instead both love objects become safely aligned, figures of the past for whom Hamlet's love, because completed, can be considered perfect. And again, as Hamlet moves physically onstage toward Ophelia's body, his language identifies him with his father's spirit: "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.246–47), using his spectral father's royal title.

V: The Taboo of Virginity

And what of Ophelia's conflicts over Hamlet? What of her own unaccepted desires, deferred and disowned? The death of Polonius brings her into still closer parallel with Hamlet. The father to whom she is unbendingly obedient is dead. Her primary erotic object is, on her father's account, now utterly taboo; the man who killed her father cannot become her husband, cannot be openly desired as a husband. Any desire for Hamlet becomes, necessarily, unacceptable and unthinkable. And her state is even more dire than Hamlet's precisely because her dead father no longer speaks to her, gives her no dread commands. The selflessly obedient daughter has no father to obey; the figure of Jephthah's daughter has no father to accept her sacrifice. Ophelia is left adrift, with neither the object for whom she renounced her desires nor the desired object she renounced, without the self she obediently effaced, without even the expected telos of sacrificial, and thereby sacred, death.

By Act Four, Scene Five, Ophelia can only express her griefs indirectly, speaking through allusions and fantasies that she forces the other characters to interpret. Hers, like Hamlet's, is a riddling madness, that refuses to speak directly and thus obliges witnesses to construe its possible causes or cause.³⁵ Her song, "Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's" (4.5.48–66) makes explicit Polonius's fearful projections, the "wrack" (2.1.110) of the maiden's lost virginity. While one popular stream of criticism construes the Saint Valentine's song as evidence that Hamlet and Ophelia have had sex, its narrative of seduction and abandonment does not fit Hamlet's plot; the play clearly represents Ophelia, not Hamlet, ending the courtship. Instead, Ophelia sings her father's and brother's fears. The cruel irony is that the result of Polonius's warning proves far worse than what he feared. Ophelia has lost much, much more than her virginity. Thus the Saint Valentine's song can also function as a fantasy of a road not taken, an expression of Ophelia's renounced erotic desires, the sexual consummation that cannot be wished devoutly but must nonetheless be wished. Reading the song as erotic autobiography serves as a defense against the more frightening truth that sexual continence has been the source of disaster. (Even if one imagines Ophelia and Hamlet as consummating their relationship before the beginning of the play, the central problem of their love affair is its interruption.) Ophelia is not punished for breaking the rules, but for following them. She is punished for her virtue. Hamlet is the tragedy of the obedient child.

The theme of refusal is developed, allusively, in the enigmatic remark "They say the owl was a baker's daughter" (4.5.42–43). Bakers' daughters were proverbially loose, and on a basic level Ophelia is referring to an English folktale about a baker's daughter transformed into an owl after refusing Jesus some bread.³⁶ This baker's daughter's crime is not looseness but ungenerous

denial: a sin against "Saint Charity" which might hint at the refusal of a cherished lover. But the story's transformation of the daughter into an owl would also suggest Ovidian associations to early modern auditors. The owl was of course sacred to the virginal Minerva, the chaste daughter perfectly obedient to her father Jove's authority. And Ovid's Metamorphoses tell an important parallel tale of a daughter's transformation. Nyctimene, the King of Lesbos's daughter, was either seduced or raped by her father and, overwhelmed by shame, refused to show her face. Minerva, taking pity, changed Nyctimene into a night bird, the first owl.³⁷ Although Ophelia's narrative arc has no classical or early-modern precedent, her story resonates in different ways with all three allusions: the withholding baker's daughter, unyieldingly chaste Minerva, and Nyctimene the victim of an invasive father.

If Ophelia expresses her displaced erotic desires in song, Hamlet expresses his in silence, entering Ophelia's chamber in partial undress not to plead his case but to perform inexplicable dumbshows. Ophelia reports that the lover to whom she had "denied ... access" (2.1.106–107) does not plead with her, but merely gives her "piteous" (2.1.79) looks. Hamlet enacts his distress and regret at the end of the relationship, but does not attempt to repair it. The final act Ophelia reports is Hamlet literally walking away from her without breaking his gaze, performing his reluctance to leave but actually leaving (2.1.93–97).

If Hamlet ever expresses his repressed desires in other spheres, in terms of ambition and kingship, it is displaced into his strangely intense admiration for Fortinbras in the Second Quarto text. Many modern readers find Hamlet's description of a "delicate and tender prince" moved by "divine ambition" (4.4.47–48) jarring, with recent editors protesting that these "seem inappropriate adjectives to apply to Fortinbras" and concluding that "Perhaps the underlying

problem is that Hamlet insists on admiring Fortinbras.”³⁸ Fortinbras has frequently been figured in production as Hamlet's foreboding, unpalatable opposite, an anti-Hamlet bereft of the beloved hero's moral introspection, with the source of Hamlet's surprisingly insistent admiration going unexplored. But early modern audiences would not necessarily have viewed a prince who renounces his revenge as Hamlet's moral inferior. And it may be precisely because Fortinbras is an anti-Hamlet that Hamlet admires him. Forgoing revenge liberates Fortinbras to pursue other ends and live upon his own behalf. Fortinbras moves into active, independent manhood and finally achieves the natural telos for a character of his type, kingship. He becomes a figure of the possibilities Hamlet has abjured. And it is Fortinbras who remarks on the soldier and king that Hamlet might have been, how “he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal” (5.2.381–82). Hamlet sees in Fortinbras, as Fortinbras sees in Hamlet, the life Hamlet sacrifices to his father.

Ophelia has no parallel figure upon whom to displace her regrets. Hamlet offers no other female characters except the Queen, whose place as “the beauteous majesty of Denmark” (4.5.21) might have become Ophelia's. But Ophelia afflicts the Queen. While some critics, including Reinhard and Lupton, insist on identifying these two characters with one another in Act Four, their putative resemblance is at its weakest, since one is mad and one is sane.³⁹ Ophelia and the Queen no more resemble one another in Act Four than Hamlet and the King resemble one another, and also no less. Indeed, Ophelia's relationship to the Queen in Act Four clearly parallels that of Hamlet to the King. Ophelia's madness transforms her into Hamlet, an imitation or emulation of the love object she can neither abandon nor abide. Hamlet and Ophelia's madnesses differ in superficial expression, just as Neely and Showalter have

established, but are structurally alike. Ophelia wanders Elsinore disheveled, with the disarray of her hair rather than her garments signifying the gender difference. She expresses her madness in riddling provocations, singing where the masculine Hamlet reads. And Ophelia clearly “serves as a double for Hamlet during his absence” in Act Four, discomforting the court and plaguing the conscience of its monarch.⁴⁰ As a woman, she focuses her torments on the Queen’s conscience while Hamlet provoked the King’s. Ophelia has become the beloved she may no longer love.

But Ophelia goes a step further. In a revision of René Girard’s theory of triangular and mimetic desire, Ophelia progresses from emulating her desired object to emulating the rival object whom her own object desires. In Girard’s classic formulation, first outlined in his Deceit, Desire, and the Novel, the lover pursues the beloved of an emulated rival, becoming ever more like that rival.⁴¹ Ophelia instead imitates first her own beloved and then the object her beloved emulates. First she becomes Hamlet, and then she becomes the person Hamlet loves most of all: the Ghost. Ophelia’s ambiguous death leaves her, like Hamlet’s father, a departed soul in a doubtful and possibly damned state, deprived of her full funeral rites and thus, by conventional presumption, a perturbed spirt. In so doing, Ophelia manages to gain Hamlet’s undivided, uncontested attention. He is finally free to proclaim his love for Ophelia, histrionically and to excess.

Ophelia’s drowning resolves the play’s central emotional triangle, that of Hamlet, Ophelia, and the Ghost, collapsing the three figures into a miserably unified trinity. And in the final acts, other characters play out similar mimetic triangulation, emulating their own lost love objects’ lost love objects. Laertes, having lost his sister Ophelia, becomes a simulation or semblance of Hamlet, a masculine revenge figure. Gertrude, taking her fatal drink, makes herself

over in the image of Ophelia, her son's lost beloved: perhaps a suicide and perhaps an accident, another soul in mortal doubt. Julia Reinhard Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard have pointed out how Gertrude's cry "The drink! The drink!" (5.2.295) echoes the "drink" that pulls Ophelia "to muddy death" (4.7.179, 181), but the conflation here comes from the Queen's own language in both examples; it is Gertrude whose words identify her with Ophelia, who proposes herself as Ophelia's double and surrogate.⁴²

Ophelia is swiftest and best at this game of triangular mimesis, and thereby beats Hamlet at his own game. He has, throughout the tragedy, been moving steadily toward his own emulation and identification with the Ghost; Ophelia gets to Hamlet's goal first. Hamlet's inner conflicts are resolved when he stands, like his father, armed but already slain, in a state of sin, permitted to walk the stage for a certain term but with his hour almost come, no reckoning made but sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head. Hamlet, poisoned in the act of murderous revenge, no longer chooses between his father and himself, life and revenge; he avenges both his father's life and his own. Hamlet has, at last, become Hamlet's Ghost.

Mortally wounded, Hamlet assumes his independent political authority for the first time, giving Fortinbras his "dying voice" (5.2.340) as next king. In so doing, Hamlet endorses the figure of his own disavowed potential; Fortinbras represents the obverse of Hamlet's choice, renouncing revenge in exchange for life and the continuation of the family dynasty. Hamlet's dying vote also serves to end Hamlet's own dynastic line, moving the crown outside his extinguished bloodline. This, too, is in keeping with what Senecan specters command. Hamlet's dying voice endorses the choice he did not make, the future self he disavowed, even as it cements his final allegiance to the Ghost.

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2 The readings of Hamlet and Oedipus Rex appear together from the first, even in Freud's manuscripts. See Freud's letter of October 15, 1897 in The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, trans. and ed. by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) pp. 270–73, and Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965) p. 299.

3 Freud, Interpretation p. 299; Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus (New York: Doubleday, 1954) p. 98.

4 All quotations from Hamlet are taken from Hamlet, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London: Arden, 2006). Quotations from other works by Shakespeare are taken from The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition, 2d Ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 2004).

5 Janet Adelman, Suffocating Mothers, Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992) pp. 11–37; Julia Reinhard Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard, After Oedipus. Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) pp. 77–82.

6 Jacques Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet," ed. Jacques-Alain Miller,

trans, James Hulbert, Yale French Studies 55/56 (1977): 11–52, p. 11.

7 Margreta de Grazia, “Hamlet” without Hamlet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 18–22.

8 For Ophelia's status as a product of performance history, see Gina Bloom, Anston Bosman, and William N. West, “Ophelia's Intertheatricality, or, How Performance is History,” Theatre Journal 65:2 (2013) pp. 165–82.

9 Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, Studies in Hysteria, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al., 24 vols., (London: Hogarth Press: 1953–1974) [cited hereafter as *SE*] pp. 2:19–181; Sigmund Freud, “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,” *SE* pp. 7:1–122; Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, Freud's Women. (New York: Basic Books, 1992) pp. 72–116, 171–182.

10 William Kerrigan, Hamlet's Perfection (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1994) gives Ophelia's madness a single brief mention in a book-length study, despite a chapter nominally dedicated to Ophelia (115). Lupton and Reinhard likewise mention Ophelia's madness once, to describe Ophelia's “theater of madness” in her “erotic songs” (81). Garber does give consideration to Ophelia's madness, but not in her chapter on *Hamlet* itself (25). Perhaps most notably, Philip Armstrong's Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis (New York: Routledge, 2001), conceived as a guide to major psychoanalytic criticism, omits the subjects of Ophelia's madness and Ophelia's subjectivity.

11 Lacan pp. 22–24.

12 Lacan p. 23.

13 Lacan pp. 20, 21.

14 Jones p. 76.

15 Carol Thomas Neely, Distracted Subjects. Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) pp. 52–54; Elaine Showalter, “Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism” in Shakespeare and the Question of Theory, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985) pp. 77–94.

16 For example, Freud announces to the governess “Lucy R.” that she is secretly in love with her employer (*SE* p. 2:117), and tells the teenaged “Dora” that she is repressing feelings of love and “sexual excitement” for her married and unwelcome pursuer, Herr K. (*SE* pp. 7:27—30, 70, 85—87).

17 Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, 8 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957–75) pp. 7:63–64, 7:91–93.

18 Judges 11:30-40, cited from The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition, The King James Version, Facsimile (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).

19 See Harold Jenkins’s edition of Hamlet, The Arden Shakespeare Second Series (New York: Routledge, 1982) pp. 475–77.

20 Cameron Hunt, “Jephthah’s Daughter’s Daughter: Ophelia,” ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews, 22:4 (2009): 13–16. See also James J. Manaway, “Ophelia and Jephthah’s Daughter,” Shakespeare Quarterly 21 (1970) 198–200, and Nona Fienberg, “Jephthah’s Daughter: The Parts Ophelia Plays,” Old Testament Women in Western Literature,

eds. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik (Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1991) 128–43.

21 James J. Marino, Owning William Shakespeare. The King's Men and Their Intellectual Property (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) p. 99.

²² On the Ghost's spiritual condition and call for revenge, see Stephen Greenblatt, Hamlet in Purgatory (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) p. 244.

23. John Marston, Antonio's Revenge, ed. G. K. Hunter (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 5.3.145–170.

24 Agamemnon ll. 1–52, Thyestes ll. 1–122, in Seneca, Seneca's Tragedies, ed. and trans. Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1927), vol. 2. Compare the Elizabethan translations in Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, ed. Thomas Newton (London, 1581) Repr., intro. T. S. Eliot. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1960) pp. 1:55–58, 2:101–103.

25 Tenne Tragedies p. 1:212; compare Oedipus ll. 642–46, in Seneca, Tragedies, vol. 1.

26 Oedipus Tyrannus in Sophocles, Ajax. Electra. Oedipus Tyrannus, ed. and trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) ll. 707–725.

²⁷ For Saturn and his gastronomic approach to child-rearing, see Hesiod, *Theogony*, ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006): 154–206 and Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. J. G. Frazer (London: Heinemann, 1921), vol. 1: Book I, i.1–ii.1; for Romulus and Remus's story, see Plutarch, *Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914): 3.1–8.10 or *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. Thomas North (London: 1579): STC 20065, B5r-C1v; and Livy, *Ab urbe condita* (New

York: Putnam 1920–29): 1:4–7 or *The Romane Historie Written by T. Livius of Padua*, trans.

Philemon Holland (London: 1600): STC 16613, B2v-B3v; for the Herod story, see Matthew 2:1–20; for the story of Saul and David, see 1 Kings 16–31, especially 18–20.

28 See especially Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero, A Psychological Exploration of Myth, expanded and updated edition, trans. Gregory C. Richter and E. James Lieberman, intro. Robert A. Segal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

29 David Lee Miller, Dreams of the Burning Child: Sacrificial Sons and the Father's Witness (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2003), p. 98.

30 Philip Arrington, following James Hirsh, argues that the speech itself is a theatrical pretense, conditioned by Hamlet's knowledge or suspicion that he is being overheard. See Philip Arrington, "Feigned Soliloquy, Feigned Argument: Hamlet's 'To Be or Not to Be' Speech as Sophistic Dissoi Logoi," The Ben Jonson Journal 22.1 (2015) pp. 101–118.

31 Henry V 4.1.249–266.

32 This point has been discussed in criticism of the soliloquy since the 18th century. See Zachary Lesser, Hamlet after Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2106) p. 162.

33 Stephen Greenblatt, Hamlet in Purgatory (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001) p. 19.

34 Marjorie Garber, Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality (New York: Methuen, 1987) p. 162.

35 See Scott A. Trudell, "The Mediation of Poesie: Ophelia's Orphic Song," Shakespeare

Quarterly 63:1 (2012) 146–176, 65–65 on Ophelia's musical revision of Hamlet's humanist quotations.

36 Jenkins pp. 532–33.

37 Ovid, The Metamorphoses, trans. Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939–64) pp. 2:589–596; compare Golding: Ovid's Metamorphoses, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. Madeleine Forey (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) pp. 2:741–750. Nyctimene's story was well known enough for Drayton to cite it his 1604 poem The Owl: Michael Drayton, The Owle. (London: 1604) ESTC 7212, EEBO. Drayton lays the blame clearly upon Nyctimene's father, whom “blinde lust the fleshly letcher led / On his owne childe, unnaturally to praye” (Drayton sig c2v).

38. Thompson and Taylor pp. 370n47, 371n52–5.

39 Reinhard and Lupton pp. 81–82.

40. Neely p. 53.

41. René Girard, Desire, Deceit, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).

42. Lupton and Reinhard p. 82.