PLAYING THE QUEEN THEN AND NOW:

AN INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S FEMALE LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Shakespeare's representations of female leaders, studying his queen characters in relation to female leaders both historical and modern. I argue that society's interpretations of these characters have developed along with its evolving attitudes toward female leaders. A unique and important aspect of this project is its fusion of competing critical approaches. In Part I of my thesis I take an approach that reflects "Historicism" and I examine a selection of plays featuring queen characters—*Titus Andronicus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth*—to determine how their presence in the public sphere would have reflected and/or influenced Elizabeth I's reign and legacy. Part II of my thesis develops a more "Presentist" approach to the topic of female political leadership in Shakespeare's works; it examines the plays in the context of contemporary audiences and their experiences of political life. In the following sections of my thesis, I discuss three modern productions: The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* (2008), The English Shakespeare Company's *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) and the Stratford Festival's *The Tempest* (2018). By turning to films and modern productions of plays, I am able to examine the representation of the queens in these productions as they relate to contemporary female leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Theresa May. The study of the representations of Shakespeare's queen characters speaks to the qualities that society ascribes to female leaders and, by consequence, the stereotypes which they perpetuate, and sometimes, challenge.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse se concentrera sur la représentation des dirigeantes politiques en étudiant les reines de Shakespeare en relation avec des dirigeantes historiques et modernes. Mon argument est que les interprétations de ces personnages par la société se sont développées à côté d'attitudes en évolution par rapport aux femmes dirigeantes. Un aspect unique et important de ce projet est sa fusion d'approches critiques compétitives. Dans la première partie de ma thèse, j'utilise une approche qui reflète "l'Historicisme" et j'examine une sélection de pièces mettant en scènes des reines — *Titus Andronicus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, et *Macbeth*— pour déterminer comment leur présence dans le domaine public aurait reflété et/ou influencé le règne et l'héritage de Elizabeth I. La partie II de ma thèse développe une approche du sujet de la gouvernance politique féminine dans les pièces de Shakespeare plus "Présentiste" ; cette approche examine les pièces dans le contexte d'un public contemporain et de ses expériences de la vie politique. Dans la section de ma thèse qui suit, j'étudie trois productions modernes: *Macbeth* de Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company (2008), *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) de The English Shakespeare Company, et *The Tempest* du festival de Stratford (2018). En me tournant vers des films et des productions modernes des pièces, je suis capable d'examiner les représentations de reines dans ces productions par rapport à des dirigeantes telles que Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Rodham Clinton et Theresa May. L'étude de la représentation des reines de Shakespeare entre en dialogue avec les qualités que la société impose à ses dirigeantes, et par conséquent, les stéréotypes qui sont perpétués et parfois défiés.

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Introduction: Playing the Queen Then and Now

Today few countries are governed by monarchs, yet queens continue to rule the stage, as well as dominate film and television screens. Kate Hennig's plays, *The Virgin Trial* (2016) and *Mother's Daughter* (2019), are inspired by England's Elizabeth I and Mary I. In television, *The Crown* (2016-present) and *Victoria* (2016-present) dramatize the reigns of Elizabeth II and Queen Victoria. The 2018 film *Mary Queen of Scots* explored the relationship of the titular queen and her cousin, Elizabeth I, and Olivia Colman's portrayal of Queen Anne in *The Favourite* (2018) recently earned her an academy award (Desai). When contemplating the popularity of these productions one asks, what prompted this demand for historical dramas featuring queens? The answer is not simply nostalgia for the past or enthusiasm for period costumes. Rather, these queen characters inspire us and resonate with our contemporary experience. Invoking figures from the past to speak to the present is hardly a new innovation; Shakespeare did it nearly six centuries earlier. His queen characters—among which are Tamora, Titania, Hippolyta, Queen Margaret, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth—are drawn from history and myth, yet respond to his contemporaries' experience of life under a female sovereign, Elizabeth I. Likewise, we continue to stage productions of Shakespeare's plays because they are not bound to the context in which they were written, but instead continue to speak to contemporary audiences, to their times and to their experience of political life. The presence of these queen characters on the stage recalls the presence of female leaders on the political stage, including Margaret Thatcher, Theresa May and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

This thesis examines Shakespeare's queen characters in relation to female leaders from the early modern period and from the twentieth and twenty first centuries. I argue that society's interpretations of these characters evolve in a dialogical relationship along with society's shifting

attitudes toward female leaders. As Phyllis Rackin, former president of the Shakespeare Association of America, has argued, "the ways we interpret Shakespeare's plays have real consequences as well as real causes in the present" (14). Likewise, these plays have recently been interpreted through the lens of Presentism, an approach that privileges the contemporary context and its values as these conditions "speak back" to Shakespeare and his works (Holbo 1097). Further, New Historicist Louis A. Montrose has influentially examined how Shakespeare's plays perpetuate and legitimize the political structure and theory of gender present in Elizabeth I's court ("Shaping Fantasies" 86). Like Montrose, I wish to recognize the historical specificity of these works, but also to go further in exploring how modern productions of the plays might continue to shape our view of female leaders in the present. I argue that by studying the characterization of Shakespeare's queen characters, it reveals the qualities that early modern and modern societies ascribe to their female leaders, and by consequence the stereotypes which these characters both perpetuate and challenge.

In Part I of my thesis, I will take a "historical" approach, by examining a selection of Shakespeare's female monarchs in relation to the early modern monarch Elizabeth I. Shakespeare's career as a writer spanned the end of Elizabeth's reign, as well as the beginning of the reign of her successor, James I. I have chosen two Elizabethan plays and two Jacobean plays which feature queen characters in order to reflect how these characters' presence in the public sphere would have influenced and reflected Elizabeth's reign and legacy. While *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are contemporary to Elizabeth's reign, the latter two plays that I plan to examine, *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, were written during the reign of James I, and thus reflect how Elizabeth was regarded after her passing.

In the first section I will examine *Titus Andronicus*, since the character Tamora is a queen who, like Elizabeth, is a female sovereign of a nation at war. Tamora is a character from the Roman Empire; she is both the Queen of the Goths and consort to the Emperor. Still, she reflects Shakespeare's contemporary context as she faces the same obstacles that Elizabeth encountered as a female monarch in the early modern period. Both Tamora and Elizabeth's sexuality, relationships with men and adherence to traditional gender roles influence their reigns, and inform whether their subjects accept or reject their authority. Elizabeth's strategy of portraying herself as a symbolic mother-figure and wife to her nation, while abstaining from marital or sexual relationships contrasts with that of Tamora who actively pursues marriage and lovers, produces children and fails to guard her chastity (Jankowski 62). Thus, Tamora flatters Elizabeth by acting as a foil to Elizabeth's successful reign and exacting standards.

In the second section I will examine *A Midsummer Night's Dream'*s Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, and Titania, Queen of the Fairies. Although the play is set in ancient Greece, these queen characters resemble Elizabeth because they are monarchs in their own right. Further, they evoke two of Elizabeth's archetypal personae: her Tilbury androgynous warrior identity and her identity as Gloriana, the Fairy Queen. Like Tamora, these queen characters serve as foils to Elizabeth's successful reign. Unlike Elizabeth, Hippolyta and Titania subscribe to traditional gender roles and as a result forfeit their power and independence. They reflect Shakespeare's contemporaries' contradicting fears that political instability would arise if Elizabeth refused to conform to gender roles (Elizabeth 74), but that England would risk being ruled by a foreigner if Elizabeth married and became subordinate to her husband (Jankowski 55).

In the final two sections of Part I, I will examine queen characters Shakespeare created following Elizabeth's death. Shakespeare's Queen Cleopatra from *Anthony and Cleopatra*

employs the same political strategies that Elizabeth successfully used during her reign. Both Cleopatra and Elizabeth consolidate their power by cultivating the personae of goddess and androgynous warrior and by converting powerful foreign heads of state into courtly suitors that they can manipulate for power (Beauclerk 26, 11). While these strategies proved effective during Elizabeth's reign, Cleopatra is ultimately deposed by a young, male ruler.

In the final section of Part I, I will examine Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth.* This queen from medieval Scotland emulates Elizabeth's rejection of gender roles. She appears strong-willed and strong enough to challenge and win authority from her male rivals. However, her attempts to gain power, through feats of murder, as well as her untimely, grisly death imply that it is futile for women to attempt to "appropriate" traditional male roles of authority. These queen characters which Shakespeare created in the Jacobean period—Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth—suggest that in the aftermath of Elizabeth's reign female leadership returned to being more openly regarded as unruly, unsuccessful and undesirable.

In Part II of my thesis I will develop a more "Presentist" and more expansive approach to the topic of female political leadership in Shakespeare's works. By turning to films and modern productions of plays, I will examine the representation of the queens in these productions as they relate to contemporary female leaders such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. My thesis will not engage in a discussion of the politics of the individual politicians. Rather, I will examine how, despite belonging to different ends of the political spectrum—Rodham Clinton is a liberal and Thatcher and May are both conservatives—they all face the same challenge of overcoming stereotypes regarding female leadership.

In the first section, I will examine the 2008 filmed theatre production of the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth*, which took place in Washington D.C.. I am interested in this production due to its temporal and geographical links to the 2008 American presidential election, during which Hillary Rodham Clinton attempted to become the Democratic Party candidate. Rodham Clinton is a figure who has popularly been compared to Lady Macbeth (Smith 9). While scholarship has drawn parallels between Rodham Clinton the First Lady and Lady Macbeth (Smith 9), I plan to also interpret the production in light of her status as a political leader in her own right. I will examine how the production challenges and reflects the stereotypes of female leadership which continue to plague politicians in the twenty-first century.

In the following section I will examine Michael Bogdanov's 1991 filmed English Shakespeare Company's (ESC) production of *Henry VI Part II: The House of York.* It features a female monarch named Margaret and is temporally and geographically linked to Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister of the UK. Furthermore, this production is reminiscent of the 1986-9 ESC theatre productions of the *Henry VI* plays which were likewise directed by Bogdanov and which featured June Watson as a Margaret Anjou who clearly emulated Thatcher's "hairdo and manner" (Martin 330). In her article "Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship," Patricia-Ann Lee argues that Shakespeare uses his queen character Margaret of Anjou "to personify but also to comment upon feminine rule" (184). Likewise, Bogdanov's Margaret reflects Margaret Thatcher's style of leadership, such has her involvement in the Falklands (Bogdanov and Pennington 23). Bogdanov's Margaret evokes the biases against female leadership which Thatcher encountered when she acted as prime minister.

In the final section I will examine the 2018 Stratford Festival's theatre production of *The Tempest*. The production is temporally linked to both the 2016 UK and USA elections, in which

Hillary Rodham Clinton lost the presidential election and Theresa May became prime minister of the UK, but experienced the ensuing crisis of Britain attempting to leave the European Union and was eventually forced to announce her plans to resign in May 2019 (Rayner NP4). The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* features a female Prospero. This interpretation of Prospero resonates with our contemporary situation since it explores a deposed female leader who must grapple to reclaim power. I will examine how Prospero's abilities—her power, wealth and knowledge—are viewed and, at times, maligned by the other characters since this aligns with how women in positions of power are often denigrated in patriarchal societies (Beames). I will also examine the negative backlash that the production experienced at the beginning of its season. This hostility towards the cross-gender casting of Prospero parallels the opposition that female leaders face when assuming positions of power.

In *Playing the Queen Then and Now*, I explore how from the modern period to our contemporary society, Shakespeare's queen characters have continually been invoked to reflect and respond to our admiration, discomfort and ongoing questions regarding female leadership and its place in society. All the female characters examined in this thesis, with the exception of Prospero, are queens. In the case of the Stratford Festival's *Tempest*, Martha Henry is playing the "duke" as the "duchess." However, exceptions are positive. They indicate how we have progressed from boys playing female roles on the stage to women taking on "male roles"—both on the stage and in the political arena.

PART I

The Female Leader: Shakespeare's Queens in the Elizabethan Period

In his *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Raphaell Holinshed describes Elizabeth I's ascension to the English throne as "a quitsest [release] from former broiles, of a turbulent estate,

and a world of blessings" (155). In the same passage he emphasizes that Elizabeth was the "lawfull and right inheritrice to the crowne of this realme" by virtue of her being "second daughter to our late souereigne lord of noble memorie king Henrie the eight" (Holinshed 155). While Elizabeth was certainly revered by her supporters as the daughter of Henry VIII and a defender of the Protestant faith, her reign was not as idyllic or uncontested as Holinshed describes. Her ability to rule was not only questioned because of her faith and allegedly illegitimate status, but also because she was a woman. Elizabeth was hardly the first female monarch or even the first female monarch to rule England. Her contemporary subjects would have been familiar with Biblical and Classical examples including the Queen of Sheba, Queen Dido of Carthage and Queen Hippolyta of the Amazons. Elizabeth's own half-sister and immediate predecessor, Mary Tudor, was the first English female monarch. Their cousin Mary Stuart was crowned queen of Scotland in infancy and Mary Tudor's grandmother, Queen Isabella, famously and successfully ruled Spain with her husband and co-ruler Ferdinand of Aragon. However, while there was an abundance of Biblical, Classical and contemporary examples of female monarchs, they were hardly regarded as exemplary rulers. Even successful ones such as Isabella were regarded as anomalies more than as exempla. As Paula Louise Scalingi has argued in her article "The Scepter or the Distaff: The Question of Female Sovereignty, 1516-1607," gynaecocracy, "government by a woman or women" (*OED*), was a contentious topic of debate throughout the early modern period. Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), a staunch defender of Catholicism and the former High Chancellor of Henry VIII, did not consider women to be equal to the task of ruling (Jankowski 57). A generation later, John Knox (1513-1572), a Scottish minister and devout Protestant, vehemently opposed gynaecocracy in his treatise "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" (Scalingi

60). Thus, even historic figures from different generations and opposing religious backgrounds might find common ground in their resistance to female rulers. When Elizabeth was crowned queen, the prospect of a female monarch was still considered to be dangerous, uncharted territory. The recent experience of the realm under her half-sister was brief and far from auspicious. To succeed, Elizabeth developed survival strategies to overcome the biases against her gender. Her best defense was the regular performance of monarchial ritual which displayed her power. Through pageantry, speeches, writing, portraiture and costume, she reacted to and confronted objections to her biological status including the preconception that women were too psychologically and physically weak, as well as too preoccupied with their traditional gender roles to effectively rule a country. Therefore, it is perhaps no coincidence that the term "queendom" first came into usage in 1603, the year of Elizabeth's death and thus the culmination of her long and successful reign (*OED*).

A major challenge to Elizabeth's authority was the preconception that women were physically and psychologically weaker than men and thereby unfit to rule. To overcome this obstacle, Elizabeth presented herself as an exception to other women, an "honorary male" who embodied male virtues in addition to female graces (Heisch 45). Cultivating this androgynous identity made her reign more palatable to her subjects because it enabled them to compartmentalize the aspects of her identity which they found contradictory: her femininity and her status as a monarch. She made use of the idea of the king's two bodies: the concept that the body politic, her role as the head of state, was separate from her physical, female body (Resende 207-8). She reinforced this androgynous identity through her writing, as shown by her choice to publish a collection of prayers (c.1558-1572) which she had penned to God and which served to defend her abilities as a ruler:

> Thou hast done me so special and so rare a mercy that, being a woman by my nature weak, timid, and delicate, as are all women, Thou hast caused me to be vigorous, brave, and strong in order to resist such multitude of Indumeneans, Ishmaelites, Moabites, Muhammadans, and other infinity of people and nations who have conjoined, plotted, conspired, and made league against Thee. (Elizabeth 157)

In this passage Elizabeth deflects her subjects' concerns about her capabilities as a female ruler by reminding them of the lists of enemies who threaten the English realm. In the following years Elizabeth and her subjects would face threats of foreign invasion such as the 1585 Babington plot to place a Catholic ruler, Mary Queen of Scots, on the English throne (Elizabeth 285 n 2) and the Spanish Armada of 1588 (Shepherd 22). There would also be threats of internal rebellion and civil war: the Earl of Tyrone's Irish rebellion against the English in 1599 (Elizabeth 390 n4) and the Earl of Essex's rebellion in 1601 (Elizabeth 345 n 3). These threats, especially the Armada, served to bind the English people to their queen by giving them a common enemy to face and revile. In addition to her published writing, Elizabeth used speeches and titles to position herself as an "honorary male" figure. Instead of referring to herself as "the Queen our sovereign Lady" as Queen Mary Tudor had, she chose variants like "Monarch and prince sovereign" or "the Queen's most excellent majesty in her princely nature considering" (Jankowski 65). Similarly, she differentiated herself from other female rulers by choosing to refer to herself as "prince" and referring to her rival, Mary Queen of Scots, as "princess" (Marcus 140). In her famous Tilbury speech, Elizabeth bolstered the confidence of her troops by stressing her masculine qualities. Her "heart and stomach of a king" overshadowed her "body of a weak and feeble woman" (Jankowski 65). The costume she wore to Tilbury also evoked her androgynous identity. By sporting a "cuirass and carrying a truncheon" (Jankowski 65) she

aligned herself with Amazons and female warriors—exceptional women who had likewise distinguished themselves from the rest of their gender by equalling men in strength and military prowess. Elizabeth frequently drew upon Amazons and prominent female figures in the Bible to bolster her power as a ruler. In a published prayer, she vowed that God gave her "strength so that I, like another Deborah, like another Judith, like another Esther, may free Thy people of Israel from the hands of Thy enemies" (Elizabeth 157). Pageants celebrating Elizabeth's reign likewise aligned her with these women. One particular pageant featured Debora in the dress of a crowned monarch, "richlie apparelled in parlement robes," to honour Elizabeth (Holinshed 170). Further, a contemporary English poet chose to celebrate the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) by writing a poem in which he compared Elizabeth to the Queen of the Amazons (Schleiner 170). A Dutch engraving (1598) commemorating Elizabeth's victory over the Spanish Armada depicted the queen bearing a sword and exposing one of her breasts, a pose which aligned her with the Amazons who likewise carried arms and were often depicted with a single uncovered breast (Schleiner 164, 167). Although Elizabeth was known to show off her bare breasts, this fashion statement was not only to connote her androgynous warrior persona. It also signified that she was a "maiden" since traditionally it was only the unmarried women who kept their breasts uncovered in the English court (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 64). Elizabeth's alignment with Amazons was effective because it not only stressed her status as an "honorary male," a woman with exceptional qualities, but did so without denying her femininity.

As soon as Elizabeth assumed the throne, she was pressured to marry. However, while she was expected to conform to female gender roles and become a wife, it was also feared that her wifely duties would interfere with her responsibilities as a monarch. A wife was expected to "submit herself to her husband and to acknowledge and reverence him as her head in all things"

(Montrose, "Purpose of Playing" 120). Thus, vocal opponents to female leadership, like John Knox, feared that the "'nature' of a woman ruler's subservience to her husband could lead to the dangerous situation of a country being ruled by a foreign consort who is unsympathetic to the cultural and religious needs of his subjects" (Jankowski 63). This exact situation occurred during the reign of Elizabeth's predecessor when Mary Tudor allowed her husband Phillip to rule as King of England (Jankowski 55). Instead of marrying and surrendering her power, Elizabeth used the prospect of marriage as a political tool to consolidate her power. The promise of marriage alliances helped "create valuable Continental alliances" (Beauclerk 11) and enabled Elizabeth to convert potential suitors into allies she could pit against one another. Even when Elizabeth was beyond the age of childbearing and no longer considered eligible for marriage, she appropriated the role of wife to suit her political agenda. She claimed the symbolic role of wife to her subjects (Jankowski 62) and/or to God (Holinshed 178). By assuming this symbolic role she side-stepped her subjects' attempts to pressure her to marry. It also allowed her to remain a "virgin," aligning her with other mythological, powerful women like the Virgin Mary and Diana. Likewise, Louis Adrian Montrose notes that she was often represented as "a virgin-mother-part Madonna, part Ephesian Diana" ("Shaping Fantasies" 64).

As a monarch and woman in the early modern period, Elizabeth had an unspoken obligation to marry and produce children. However, the traditional gender role of a mother also conflicted with her role as a monarch. There was the risk she could die in childbirth. Elizabeth's grandmother, Elizabeth of York, perished from an infection she contracted while attempting to provide the Tudor dynasty with a spare male heir (Okerlund 186, 202-3). Further, two of Elizabeth's stepmothers died in childbirth. Jane Seymour died following the birth of Edward VI (Loades 31-2). Henry VIII's widow, Katherine Parr, died while trying to provide her new

husband, Thomas Seymour, with an heir (Mueller 30). Despite these potential risks to Elizabeth's person, she was pressured to produce heirs for the security of the realm. A Commons Petition from 1563 reminded her that an heir was needed to avoid the outbreak of another civil war like the War of the Roses, which had resulted from factions competing for an empty throne (Elizabeth 74). The petitioners specifically made reference to the need for Elizabeth to marry since her enemies were scheming to put a "stranger," Mary Queen of Scots, on the English throne (Elizabeth 74). Mary, who had previously been living in France, had by this time returned to Scotland and it was feared that her proximity to England would stir up rebellion amongst Elizabeth's Catholic subjects (Elizabeth 74). In addition to the security of her realm, Elizabeth felt pressured to produce heirs to protect herself. After all, Mary Tudor's inability to produce an heir was viewed as further proof of "the incompetence of her rule" (Jankowski 55). Elizabeth likewise realized that her lack of an heir put her in a precarious situation. In 1561, at the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth acknowledged to the Scottish ambassador the importance of having heirs in order to reinforce her authority:

> It is true that some of them has [sic] made declaration to the world that they are more worthy of it than either [Mary Stuart] or I, by experience that they are not barren but able to have children. (Elizabeth 63)

Of course, Elizabeth's political strategy of avoiding marriage blocked her ability to have children. Without a husband, she could have only produced illegitimate children, which would have discredited her status as a queen. As Mihoko Suzuki notes, "popular questioning of Elizabeth's ability was expressed in the malicious gossip that Elizabeth had given birth to illegitimate children" (122). These rumours discredited her power since it made Elizabeth "sexual, more human, and unexceptional—more like [women] who did not wield any political

power in Elizabethan England" (Suzuki 122). To avoid the pitfalls of these rumours and the pressure to produce heirs, Elizabeth responded by reaffirming her status as exceptional to other women. One strategy she employed was to portray herself as a symbolic mother figure, the mother of her people. In other words, she employed the same strategy she used when her subjects pressured her to marry. Aimara da Cunha Resende suggests that Elizabeth conflated these two roles, mother and wife. She notes that Elizabeth's role as a "frail and tender mother/wife" was a foil to her more aggressive androgynous warrior persona (210-11). In a speech to her subjects, Elizabeth emphasized her maternal role, vowing that "For the weale and good safetie whereof, as a good mother of my countrie, I will neuer shun to spend my life" (Holinshed 179). This image of Elizabeth as a selfless mother aligns her with the pelican, a bird which was thought to "pierce her breast in order to feed or revive her young" (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 88). Likewise, in the "Pelican Portrait" (c. 1575), Elizabeth is depicted wearing a pelican pedant on her bosom to symbolize her status as a selfless mother figure (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 88, 64). At the end of her reign, she consolidated this position as mother to her people by announcing "And so I assure yow all that though after my death you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any, a more naturall mother, than I meane to be vnto yow all" (Heisch 50). In this speech she attempts to differentiate herself from other women, emphasizing that she is the "true" mother, while they are merely "stepdames" or surrogates. As Elizabeth grew older, it might have been easier to maintain the symbolic role of a mother, rather than that of a wife. After all, in 1579, when Elizabeth was considering marrying the Duke of Alençon, one of her subjects crudely suggested that she was no longer an eligible bride at age 49 (Orgel, "I am Richard II" 27). In his *Gaping Gulf Wherein England is Like to Be Swallowed* (1579), the Puritan author John Stubbs wrote: "What…does a young man like that want with an old woman like you?

Young men only pursue older women for their money; and so forth" (Orgel, "I am Richard II" 27). Thus, when the elderly Elizabeth displayed her breasts in low-cut gowns, it might have evoked her role as a "selfless and bountiful mother," rather than as an eligible bride (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 64). Likewise, one of her subjects compared Elizabeth's patronage of the Earl of Essex to breastfeeding, noting that she overindulged his "insatiable thirst for those offices and honors which were in the Queen's gift" (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 64). A further strategy Elizabeth used to distinguish herself from other women was to identify herself with youthful, immortal goddesses such as Diana, goddess of the moon and chastity (Knight 47). By portraying herself as immortal and invulnerable, she made the prospect of an heir seem redundant. A true goddess like Diana would require no heir to replace her.

Elizabeth I was successful as a monarch because she understood the importance of using performance to overcome the restrictive gender roles and stereotypes of female weakness" which served as obstacles to her reign. Using elements of performance such as speeches, pageantry, costume and writing, she was able to transform herself into a myriad of archetypal personae to suit her reign, including androgynous warrior queen, wife, mother and virgin goddess. Likewise, as Charles Beauclerk writes, "Elizabeth had always known how to play the role of queen—for her courtiers, for her people, for Europe, for posterity—moving from one mythic persona to the next with the lightning dexterity of a quick-change artist" (Beauclerk 26). It is fitting to compare Elizabeth's reign to a role since like the collaboration between playwrights and actors, she cultivated her identity as Queen by drafting, performing and publishing her speeches (Bell 7). Elizabeth herself acknowledges the similarity between a ruler practicing statecraft and an actor on the stage as she famously informed her subjects, "we princes…are set on stages, in the sight

and view of all the world dulie observed; the eies of manie behold our actions" (Montrose, "Purpose of Playing" 76).

Elizabeth's public persona as Queen of England, the role she played in her court, is similar to the role an actor might play on the stage. During her reign and in the years following it, Shakespeare created diverse compelling queen characters including Tamora, Hippolyta, Titania, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. These female monarchs are heirs and rivals to Elizabeth. They resemble her, reflect some of her strategies of self-representation and inherit the same struggles and biases which come with being a woman in the early modern period. They reflect qualities of Elizabeth, including her adoption of a goddess-like persona and play with gender norms, but none are true copies of her. Instead they continue to engage with the issue of female leadership, responding to Elizabeth's strengths and weaknesses, as reflected by their own individual merits and deficiencies. Like Elizabeth, the queens' sexuality is treated through all the plays as a dangerous entity, serving to manipulate and corrupt men and/or the queen herself who attempts to make use of it. The characters also, like Elizabeth, grapple with problems of succession and loss of power through marriage. They play with the persona of goddess, but unlike Elizabeth, their association with these goddess figures showcases their own weakness and deficiency. By comparison, Tamora, Hippolyta and Titania never quite measure up to the promise of the Virgin Goddess Diana to which they are explicitly or implicitly compared. For Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, the moon goddess becomes corrupted into an ageing human figure or monster. Similarly, the queen characters who emulate Elizabeth by adopting an androgynous identity do so with varying success. Hippolyta casts off her Amazon identity before the beginning of the play and appears to meekly submit to her new role as Theseus's wife. Cleopatra's and Lady Macbeth's attempts to dabble with masculine roles have disastrous results.

By contrast, Elizabeth's easy manipulation of gender roles appears exceptional and beyond the ability of any ordinary queen. Unlike Elizabeth, these five Queen characters of Shakespeare's creation are all portrayed as foreign or as outsiders, distanced from the rest of society. This underscores how despite there being an abundance of female monarchs in the age of Shakespeare, the prospect of gynaecocracy was still regarded as an exception to the norm, and Elizabeth's long reign, as exceptional in itself.

Female Sovereigns of Nations at War: Elizabeth I and Tamora

Although William Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus* is set centuries before Shakespeare's time, during the declining years of the Roman Empire, the work speaks to his contemporary experience of Elizabethan England. The play explores the topical issue of gynaecocracy and features a female sovereign who rules the Goths, and who later briefly rules the Roman Empire. Eldridge Carney estimates that *Titus Andronicus* was written "anywhere from 1589 to January of 1594" (416) which would place the play within the last decade of Elizabeth I's reign, and roughly contemporary with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587 (Wormald 197). At first glance, Elizabeth I and Shakespeare's Tamora, Queen of the Goths appear to share only shallow similarities: they are both female sovereigns of warlike nations—Elizabeth was immortalized as a warrior queen because of her famous Tilbury speech and her people's defeat of the Spanish Armada (Resende 212). Tamora bears a greater resemblance to Mary Queen of Scots, who was likewise a northern ruler, deposed monarch and conspirator to murder. However, I argue that Tamora is not merely a character meant to juxtapose with Elizabeth and thereby flatter her reputation. Rather, she is a character who embodies both the strengths which Elizabeth used to consolidate power, as well as the perceived weaknesses attributed to female leadership with which Elizabeth was forced to contend. These strengths and weaknesses Tamora reflects all

relate to the idea that the queen's sexuality and her relationships with men would directly influence her reign.

Elizabeth I used a carefully-constructed image of her own sexuality to maintain power and stability throughout her reign. Charles Beauclerk writes that Elizabeth's virginity, "a metaphor for the impregnability of England, became a sort of a national talisman protecting the country from invasion" (11). Further, she was able to convert potential enemies into allies as her "official chastity…helped create valuable Continental alliances through the promise of marriage" (Beauclerk 11). Like Elizabeth, Tamora achieves power by presenting herself as chaste. Tamora does so by covering up her sexual transgressions. While Tamora is not a virgin, her status as a widow and married woman does not disqualify her from claiming chastity. Rather, she can strive for a version of chastity applicable to married women which was gaining currency in Shakespeare's time – a chastity which is "pure in mind, and thus chaste, without being physically a virgin" (Dusinberre,"Nature of Women" 31). This idea of chastity is best embodied by Tamora's rival, Lavinia, who deems it a greater mercy to be murdered alongside her husband than to live with the trauma of having been raped by Tamora's sons. Like Elizabeth, Tamora curates the perception of her chastity in order to create a marriage alliance and thereby attain the position of Empress of Rome. Emperor Saturninus alludes to Tamora's chastity as a deciding factor in his choice to marry her when he describes her as "lovely Tamora, Queen of Goths, / That like the stately Phoebe 'mongst her nymphs / Dost overshine the gallant'st dames of Rome" (1.1.312-4). The conflation of Tamora with Phoebe aligns her with Elizabeth, who frequently adopted the personae of virgin moon goddesses such as Diana, Cynthia and Bel-phoebe to evoke her virginity and desirability (Schleiner 163). Since Tamora's power depends on her chaste reputation, it is fitting that Bassianus and Lavinia discredit her reputation by mocking her

persona as Diana. Their remark that Tamora has "a goodly gift in horning" (2.3.67) converts the myth of Diana and Actaeon into a story whereby Actaeon becomes a husband transformed into a cuckold by his wife's sexual transgressions.

Since Elizabeth I and Tamora's political authorities depend on their chastity, charges of sexual illicitness would threaten to undermine their respective reigns. Elizabeth's coronation celebrations enjoined the queen to remain chaste, warning her that she would be secure on her throne "so long as she imbrased vertue, and held vice under foot. For if vice once got up the head, it would put the seat of government in perill of falling" (Holinshed 165). To undermine her authority, Elizabeth's subjects might seek to spread rumours that she had produced illegitimate children (Suzuki 122). These rumours of Elizabeth's sexuality threatened her power to the extent it was believed that "unruly sexuality made her unfit to rule" (Suzuki 122). In *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora's position is likewise undermined by her own "unruly sexuality." Not only would the revelation of her illegitimate child cause the Emperor to "doom her death" (4.2.113), it would also alienate her subjects and lead them to revolt. Chiron laments that "Rome will despise her for this foul escape" (4.2.112), while the Goths vow to "be avenged on cursèd Tamora" and side with Lucius to overthrow her (5.1.16).

Tamora's self-determined sexuality is not the only anxiety surrounding female rule faced by early modern queens such as Elizabeth. Tamora also reflects contemporary concerns that the female sovereign's ability to rule will be compromised by her natural inclination to be subservient to her husband, or worse, a lover. The concept of a female ruler was an uncomfortable oxymoron in Shakespeare's time in the sense that women were traditionally the "sexual property of their male relatives" (Maus 404) and thus supposed to be ruled, rather than assert their authority. According to English common law, marriage entailed that "a wife

surrender control of her property, lose all legal status, and submit to physical chastisement by her husband" (Kehler 319). Raphaell Holinshed notes that Elizabeth was reluctant to marry in light of witnessing contemporary examples of other female monarchs who had lost their power through marriage (189). When Mary Queen of Scots married her first husband, Francis II of France, she was "gouerned, so as she was not able to vse the libertie of hir crowne" (Holinshed 189). Elizabeth vowed not to give her prospective bridegroom "vocem negativam," the power to interfere with the policy of her realm (Elizabeth 234), unlike her sister Mary Tudor who did so when she married Phillip of Spain (Jankowski 55). While Tamora's marriage to Saturninus might not limit her power, it certainly limits the degree to which she cares for and maintains connection with her birth country. Once she becomes Empress of Rome she seemingly relinquishes all ties to her former country and declares "Titus, I am incorporate in Rome, / A Roman now adopted happily" (1.1.459-60). She loses all interest in contacting or even aiding the Goths in their fight against Rome. Instead, she abandons them to the point that Lucius can turn to them for assistance in his fight against her. Tamora's adulterous relationship with her servant Aaron also reflects the danger of a female monarch being swayed by a man's influence. Aaron emphasizes his ability to control Tamora when he boasts that she is "faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes / Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus" (2.1.16-17). This comparison of Tamora to a tortured and bound captive emphasizes that her position of power might be delusional in that from his perspective she still resembles the prisoner she was when she first arrived in Rome. These examples of Tamora's position undermined by her relationships with men mirror those of Mary Queen of Scots, who Elizabeth accused of shirking her duties as queen due to romantic entanglements. When James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, was accused of murdering Mary's second husband, Elizabeth advised her to hold him accountable even though she had an affection for him:

> I counsel you, and I beseech you to take this thing so much to heart that you will not fear to touch even him whom you have nearest to you if the thing touches him, and that no persuasion will prevent you from making an example out of this to the world: that you are both a noble princess and a loyal wife. (Elizabeth 116)

By contrast, Mary not only pardoned Hepburn, but married him and made him the King of Scotland (Wormald 169). Much like Tamora, Mary's alignment with Hepburn would contribute to the alienation of her people and the forced relinquishment of her throne (Wormald 173).

Although Tamora's sexual reputation differs vastly from that of Elizabeth I, she nonetheless reflects a weakness which threatened to destabilize the "Virgin Queen's" reign: the lack of a legitimate heir. By the end of *Titus Andronicus* all of Tamora's children are dead, save for the illegitimate child from her affair with Aaron. She not only endangers the Roman Empire's succession, but that of her native kingdom of the Goths, as well. Her lack of an heir not only leads to the throne of the Goths passing to a figure outside of her immediate family, but to a foreigner who only too recently waged war against her country. While Tamora has long since abandoned the throne of the Goths and is indifferent to the plight of her former subjects, this alienation is dangerous since it leaves a void to be filled by her enemy. Lucius rises to rule both the Goths and the Roman Empire simply because there is no other heir who can effectively challenge his claim. The lack of a legitimate heir to the Roman Empire even leaves an opening for a Goth to assume control as Aaron concocts a plot to put the son of his countryman on the throne (4.2.151-7). Lauren J. Rogener argues that "The problematic succession dramatized in *Titus* would have resonated with early modern audiences viewing the play at the twilight of Elizabeth's reign and anticipating a similarly troublesome political inheritance due to the lack of an heir apparent" (58). Shakespeare's contemporaries would have had little difficulty drawing

comparisons between the "problematic succession" of the Roman Empire and that occurring in their current political context. Likewise, a Commons Petition from 1563 used examples from ancient history to remind Elizabeth I of the importance of producing an heir:

> Your majesty hath weighed the examples of foreign nations, as what ensued the death of great Alexander, when for want of certain heirs by him begotten or appointed, the varieties of titles, the diversity of dispositions in them that had titles, the ambitions of them that had color of doubtfulness of titles, forsook all obedience of titles, destroyed the dividers of his dominions, and wasted their posterity with mutual wars and slaughters. (Elizabeth 74)

Tamora's only surviving child, the son she produced with Aaron, might best exemplify this threat of leaving an heir who has "color of doubtfulness of titles." His status as the illegitimate son of a Queen and Empress, as well as of an African slave, marks him as an offspring with an ambivalent claim to nobility. Further, he is an heir who would bring instability rather than stability to the throne. Understanding the threat his son represents, Aaron plots to raise the child away from the Roman Empire:

> I'll make you feed on berries and on roots,
> And fat on curds and whey, and suck the goat,
> And cabin in a cave, and bring you up
> To be a warrior and command a camp. (4.2.176-9)

This description of a royal child raised in obscurity to become a warrior is reminiscent of the Greek myth wherein the infant Zeus was hidden in a cave and nourished by a goat because he was deemed a threat to the reign of his father (Hard 75). The connection of Tamora's child to Zeus implies a future of civil unrest since the myth involves Zeus overthrowing his father to

claim his power (Hard 65). Thus, Tamora risks breeding civil war by producing heirs that threaten her realm. Her illegitimate child is not merely a private indiscretion, but has political implications as it is both Tamora's "shame and stately Rome's disgrace" (4.2.60).

While all monarchies are pressured to produce viable heirs to ensure succession, the process is even more critical for a gynaecocracy. An early modern monarch such as Elizabeth I would not only risk the succession by not producing heirs, but risk her life if she endeavored to produce them. The prospect of a female monarch dying in childbirth is alluded to in *Titus Andronicus* 4.2 when Tamora gives birth and her sons and lover anxiously await the outcome. When the nurse announces "She is delivered, lords, she is delivered" (4.2.61), Tamora's fate seems ambiguous since the word "delivered" can equally mean she has born a child and that she has died. The prospect that either outcome is equally likely evokes how dangerous childbirth was in the early modern period. Several of Elizabeth's female relatives died in childbirth, including her paternal grandmother (Okerlund 202-3) and two of her stepmothers (Loades 31-2, Mueller 30). Thus, the play examines how a female monarch's fertility not only has bearing on the survival of the monarchy, but on the monarch as well. This link between death and degree of fertility is further examined in 2.3, when Tamora accuses Bassianus and Lavinia of luring her to an inhospitable place in order to kill her. The imagery she uses to describe the woods is evocative of infertility and monstrous childbirth as if poor fertility is akin to a death sentence for a queen. She describes it as "A barren detested vale" (2.3.93) where "nothing breeds / Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven" (2.3.96-7). The association between her prospective murder site and barrenness again suggests the dangers childbirth poses to a female monarch. It risks killing the monarch, as well as the succession. Further, the fact that the place is only fertile with monstrous creatures symbolizes the prospect of Tamora producing unviable heirs.

When one seriously considers the dangers surrounding early modern childbirth it is understandable that Elizabeth I resisted marrying and producing heirs. It is significant in light of this that Elizabeth chose to consolidate her power over her people by constructing the persona of a mother (Heisch 50). She presented herself as "both mother and martial protectress of the State," a strategy Tamora emulates as she likewise adopts a "rhetoric of martial motherhood" to establish her authority (Rogener 60-1, 59). Unlike Elizabeth, who professes to defend the interests of her surrogate-children and be "so careful of [their] well-doings, and mind ever so to be" (Elizabeth 58), Tamora's solicitude for her surrogate son appears to derive mainly from self-interest. She adopts the role of maternal figure towards her husband in order to gain influence over him (Rogener 59), offering herself as a "handmaid…to his desires, / A loving nurse, a mother to his youth" (1.1.328-9). These assumed roles as nurse and "mother to his youth" puts her in a position of power over him. According to Simon Shepherd, "the image of female dominance and male effeminacy is an image of disorder" (Jankowski 55). Tamora upsets the status quo since Saturninus follows her counsel instead of that of Titus, a respected patriarch. Her nurturing role is a means to control Saturninus, as Titus acknowledges by remarking that she "lulls him whilst she playeth on her back, / And when he sleeps will she do what she list" (4.1.98-9). Titus suggests she is infantilizing Saturninus as a means to delude him: "lulling" evokes a mother rocking an infant to put him to sleep. While Tamora informs Titus that she must "advise the Emperor for his good" (1.1.461), it is implied that she is in fact advising him for her good. That Tamora's maternal persona is self-serving is evidenced by the fact that she sacrifices her biological children for the sake of her power and reputation.

When Lavinia notes that "Some say that ravens foster forlorn children / The whilst their own birds famish in their nests" (2.3.153-4), she could be alluding to Tamora's own child-

rearing practices since she fosters Saturninus while neglecting her own children. Her bond with her sons Demetrius and Chiron is not that of a doting mother but of a ruler who expects tribute from her vassals. She enforces them to "Revenge it as you love your mother's life, / Or be ye not henceforward called my children" (2.3.114-5), manipulating them to kill Bassianus for slandering her reputation. When Demetrius greets Tamora he uses the words "How now, dear sovereign and our gracious mother" (2.3.89). This implies he views her in the first instance as his monarch. Her relation as his mother is secondary. She orders Aaron to take their newborn son and "christen it with thy dagger's point" (4.2.70) because his very existence threatens her reputation. To further her interests she makes the mistake of leaving Chiron and Demetrius alone with Titus:

> Whiles I go tell my lord the Emperor
> How I have governed our determined jest?
> Yield to this humour, smooth and speak him fair,
> And tarry with him till I turn again. (5.2.138-141)

The cost of her entertainment is that Titus takes the opportunity to murder her sons and bake them into a pie. Titus's plan to serve Tamora the pie so that she "Like to the earth swallow[s] her own increase" (5.2.190) is a fitting metaphor for how Tamora disregards her children's interests for her own agenda.

While Elizabeth's persona as a benevolent mother figure generally stands in contrast to Tamora, it does nonetheless at times betray a similar self-interestedness. Elizabeth's maternal role as mother figure and protectress "could not disguise the crisis of succession that Elizabeth's virginity inevitably engendered" (Beauclerk 11). While it was a policy that suited her reign, it threatened the stability of her surrogate-children—the people of England—who would inevitably

outlive her. Further, while her unwillingness to marry was strategic in avoiding creating enemies that would endanger her state, it also reflects a vanity to protect her image as virgin goddess. While she professes to be mindful of her people's well-being, she also states "in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin" (Elizabeth 58). Her emphasis—even for a moment—on her greatest achievement being a stone monument, rather than her people, suggests a propensity to put her own interests first.

Amazons and Fairy Queens: Elizabeth I, Titania and Hippolyta

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* features two female monarchs who bear a striking resemblance to the personae Elizabeth I cultivated during her reign. Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, recalls Elizabeth's incarnation as the female warrior which she famously adopted in 1588 at Tilbury to marshal her troops against the incoming Spanish Armada (Shepherd 22). Shakespeare's Titania, Queen and co-ruler of the fairies, resembles Elizabeth's Gloriana, an identity by which she was likewise celebrated as the beautiful fairy queen in Edmund Spenser's epic romance *The Faerie Queene* (Mullaney 166). However, while it is tempting to interpret these queen characters as theatrical references to Elizabeth I and her power, I wish to argue that they also reflect the obstacles and weaknesses to which early modern queens were themselves subject. Titania and Hippolyta's beauty, youth and/or immortality stand in contrast to Elizabeth I, who by the time the play was written—between 1594 and 1596—was in her late sixties and "showing her age" (Mullaney 166). Further, Shakespeare's queen characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* differ from Elizabeth in that they marry and are forced to conform to traditional gender roles. Mihoko Suzuki suggests that Elizabeth would have regarded these characters "as an attempt to discipline her into a gendered role as wife" (121). Despite their respective immortality

and strengths, Titania and Hippolyta are not depicted as idealized queens. Rather, they are shown to be human-like in their fallibility. Throughout the events of the play they are subject to their husbands' power and to the pull of their own desires. Shakespeare's play does not offer an example of the perfect female ruler; instead it shows the precarious and unique situation of an early modern female monarch attempting to rule while impeded by masculine presence.

A recurring motif in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the danger of anyone—especially female monarchs—pursuing their sexual desires. As Stephen Greenblatt writes, "Desires in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are intense, irrational, and alarmingly mobile" (845). They can easily lead to downfall. Hermia naively alludes to this danger when she swears her love to Lysander by invoking "that fire which burned the Carthage queen / When the false Trojan under sail was seen" (1.1.173-4). Hermia is referring of course to Dido, Queen of Carthage, who committed suicide when she was abandoned by her lover Aeneas (Greenblatt 853 n 9). While Dido was primarily led by her sexual desires, Aeneas was able to overcome them when they threatened his goal of founding Rome. Unlike his lover, he resisted the amorous desires which would impair his ability to lead and rule.

Like Dido, Shakespeare's Titania appears susceptible to "love-in-idleness" (2.1.168), the aptly named herb which distracts her from her responsibilities and leads her to pursue an ill-advised love affair. She develops an infatuation with Bottom, a weaver whose head has been transfigured into that of a donkey. While under the influence of the herb Titania readily gives up her guardianship of her Indian boy to Oberon, an exchange which symbolizes that she has discarded her independence. The irrationality of her desires is emphasized when Bottom responds to her infatuation by informing her: "Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for / that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little com- / pany together nowadays"

(3.1.126-8). Titania's reckless, unrestrained sexuality is reminiscent of Tamora from *Titus Andronicus*, who is likewise blinded by her lust for her paramour and insensible to the consequences that her affair with him entail. It might seem that Titania's sexuality likewise interferes with her ability to effectively rule. However, since her pursuit of Bottom is induced by a drug administered by her husband and co-ruler, Oberon, this suggests that she is not pursuing her desires free of patriarchal constraints. Oberon clearly administers the drug with the intent to humiliate and control his wife. Besides refusing to hand over the boy to him, she has "forsworn his bed and company" (2.1.62). As a result of these actions, he vows that she will "not from this grove / Till I torment [her] for this injury" (2.1.146-7) and sends Puck to retrieve the herb which will enable him to humiliate her. Oberon seeks to control Titania by controlling her sexuality. Although he has love affairs with other women—"versing love / To amorous Phillida" (2.1.67-8) and even pursuing Hippolyta (2.1.71)—he appears jealous of Titania's rumoured affair with Duke Theseus (2.1.76). Titania's pursuit of Theseus—which is discussed in 2.1—can be easily distinguished from that of her infatuation with Bottom in 4.1. The former is the result of freely pursuing her sexuality without interference from a patriarchal authority seeking to control her. Further, her relationship with Theseus does not impede her ability to rule. She appears more than capable of asserting her will when Oberon demands she give up her boy 2.1. By contrast, in 4.1. her induced desires have blinded her judgment and she is no longer able to "Be as [she] wast wont to be, / See as [she] wast wont to see" (4.1.68-9).

Although Hippolyta is never subject to a fairy love potion, her sexuality is likewise controlled by her future husband. In 1.1, her fiancé, Theseus, tells her, "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee injuries" (1.1.16-7). His words allude to his "military conquest of the Amazons" (Greenblatt 849 n 2), but they may also suggest a sexual

conquest. Madelon Gohlke writes that in these lines, "the sword may be the metaphoric equivalent of the phallus" and that "love may be either generated or secured by hostility" (151). There is a history of depicting Amazons as sexually unrestrained women (Shepherd 16). After all, Titania refers to Hippolyta as Oberon's "buskined mistress and [his] warrior love" (2.1.71), which suggests that before Theseus's interference she was free to pursue her desires. Simon Shepherd notes that "The marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta in the *Teseida* of Boccaccio and *The Knight's Tale* of Chaucer can be seen as a taming of lust…[since] Theseus 'with his wisdom and his chivalrie, /…conquered al the regne of Femenye'" (16). Much like Titania, Hippolyta's free pursuit of her sexuality, especially given her status as a female monarch, is perceived as a threat to patriarchal societies.

In response to this discomfort towards female sexuality free of patriarchal control, Elizabeth I's chastity might seem like an effective stance for an early modern female monarch to take. While patriarchal values did encourage unmarried women to remain chaste, Elizabeth's choice to remain celibate can nonetheless be interpreted as a form of asserting her independence vis à vis patriarchal forces. In Shakespeare's play, the antidote to "love-in-idleness," Oberon's means of controlling Titania, is "Dian's bud" (4.1.70) which could be "*Agnus castus*, or chaste tree: said to preserve chastity" (Greenblatt 881 n 9). Hence, the only antidote to perceived reckless desire seems to be to remain vigilantly chaste, like Elizabeth I. Elizabeth is directly invoked in the play as the "fair vestal thronèd by the west" who cupid sought to shoot with a love arrow (2.1.158). Oberon describes how he saw "Cupid's fiery shaft / Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon, / And the imperial vot'ress passèd on, / In maiden meditation, fancy-free" (2.1.161-4). As Stephen Greenblatt notes, the moon is "The emblem of Diana, goddess of chastity" (851 n 9).

While at first glance, it is implied that queens should emulate Elizabeth and strive to be chaste, it is revealed that Elizabeth's virginity might not be a practical solution. Theodora A. Jankowski suggests that "Elizabeth was threatening to her male subjects because she was anomalous, a virgin with political power" (89). Theseus's lamentation about time passing slowly in 1.1 can be interpreted as a reference to Elizabeth's subjects' impatience to gain a new monarch to replace her. When Theseus remarks, "methinks how slow / This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires / Like to a stepdame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue" (1.1.3-6), his words could allude to Elizabeth I since she was associated with the moon and was an elderly woman at the time of the play. Steven Mullaney observes:

> In 1597 [roughly contemporary to when the play was written], André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse and Ambassador Extraordinary from Henri IV, noted that although the English people still professed love for their aging queen, the sentiments of the nobility were such that 'the English would never again submit to the rule of a woman.' (161)

Thus, Elizabeth's chastity, her status as the elderly Virgin Queen, was not a fool-proof political strategy to keep her realm in check. The interpretation of her as a waning moon suggests that younger, ambitious heirs were waiting in the wings to supplant her. The Earl of Essex would attempt a rebellion in 1601 (Elizabeth 345 n 3), and James VI of Scotland would eventually succeed her in 1603, following her death (Grant 176, 179).

As well as creating political instability, it is implied that Elizabeth's status as a celibate female monarch was difficult to maintain. It was frequently contested by her people, as they urged her through petitions to marry. It is implied that they only accepted her choice to remain unwed once she had passed the age when it was possible to bear children. According to Stephen Knight, "When the idea of Elizabeth remaining without a partner did surface it tended to be late

in her reign, when the notion of marriage had faded and was often presented in symbolic and elevated allegorical terms" (47). Further, her choice to remain unwed is constructed at best as a sacrifice, and at worst as a burden to the realm. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the choice for a woman to remain celibate is viewed as a punishment. Duke Theseus sentences Hermia "To live a barren sister all your life" (1.1.72) and live "Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" (1.1.73) for refusing to marry Demetrius. His belief that "But earthlier happy is the rose distilled / Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn, / Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness" (1.1.76-8) suggests that Elizabeth's life choices are not ones which should be emulated. Elizabeth is a withered rose who has not "fulfilled her potential" as a woman by marrying and producing children. Likewise, Titania observes that "The moon…looks with a wat'ry eye / And when she weeps, weeps every little flower, / Lamenting some enforcèd chastity" (3.1.179-81). This again suggests that Elizabeth's lifestyle is hard to sustain. It is easy to imagine that the weeping moon and flowers parallel Elizabeth and her subjects.

Queens Eclipsed by Kings: Elizabeth I and Cleopatra

Unlike *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* features an unmarried female monarch. Although Cleopatra is in this sense evocative of Elizabeth I, the play was not written during Elizabeth's reign, but rather three or four years into the reign of her successor, James I. While the play was written within the context of a male monarchy, it is striking that it is concerned primarily with the subject of gynaecocracy. As Theodora A. Jankowski observes, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is a play which attempts "to address the issue of how a female monarch can rule successfully and how she can ensure her sovereignty in an essentially hostile patriarchal universe" (73). The play has been interpreted either as "a Jacobean statement about the rise of the new Augustus, James I…or as nostalgia for the glorious past of

the Elizabethan age" (Dusinberre, "Squeaking Cleopatras" 54). I suggest that these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Cleopatra is a queen whose death heralds the more successful reign of a male monarch, Octavius, who will become Augustus Caesar. Further, Cleopatra seems to reflect Elizabeth I's celebrated wit and temperament. Charles Beauclerk writes:

> Like Elizabeth on the eve of the Armada, rousing her troops at Tilbury "with the heart and stomach of a king," Cleopatra insists on taking the field at Actium: "A charge we bear i' the war, / And as the president of my kingdom will / Appear there for a man." (54)

Nonetheless, while Cleopatra shares these similarities with Elizabeth, she also pales in comparison to the English queen. Keith Rinehart argues that Elizabeth I was "notoriously courageous," while he notes that Cleopatra cowardly flees from her own battle (81). I argue that Cleopatra appears to be a foil to successful male rulers such as Octavius, the future Caesar Augustus, and King James I of England, as well as to Elizabeth I. Elizabeth and Cleopatra employ similar strategies to gain authority as monarchs. To do so, they strive to prove that they are exceptional to other women and thus worthy of ruling over men (Heisch 45). As Allison Heisch notes, "Queen Elizabeth I for all her power and phenomenal success as a monarch, had no particular impact—unless it were indirect or negative—on the status of women in England, either during her reign or in the pre-war years following" (45). Elizabeth's reign and legacy is not based on supporting her sister queens, but in competing against them and proving her superiority. Much as she was set against Catholic rivals such as Mary Queen of Scots, Mary Tudor and Catherine de Medici, regent of France, she is set against Cleopatra. Thus, while

Cleopatra might mirror the strategies of statecraft Elizabeth employed, she is not drawn to equal or surpass Elizabeth.

Both Elizabeth and Cleopatra establish their power as monarchs by creating cults in which they are venerated as moon goddesses. In doing so, they strive to distinguish themselves from ordinary women and thus validate their authority as female monarchs within a patriarchal society. While Elizabeth adopts the persona of the Greek goddess Diana, Cleopatra chooses her Egyptian counterpart, Isis. Cleopatra's role as Isis, the "divine mother and sacred bride" (Beauclerk 52), is reminiscent of Elizabeth I who likewise cultivated an image as mother and wife to protect the stability of her throne. However, while Shakespeare depicts Cleopatra as having relationships with three Roman leaders, as well as bearing children by them, "Elizabeth's amours were never fleshly" (Rinehart 81). Elizabeth I adopted the role of wife and mother symbolically, presenting herself as the wife of her country and the mother of her subjects (Jankowski 62). Unlike Cleopatra, Elizabeth chose an incarnation of the archetypal moon goddess who is desirable, yet most importantly, virginal and unattainable. She is the Diana/Artemis incarnation who slew Actaeon for perceiving her nakedness and thus Stephen Knight describes her as "a version of Diana, an aggressive, potent form of female isolation" (47). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Elizabeth is presented as the "fair vestal thronèd by the west" who remains untouched by Cupid's arrow (2.1.158). In accordance with this moon goddess persona, Elizabeth appears immutable and beyond the touch of sin. Susan Bassnett writes that "The process of glorifying Elizabeth was linked to a process of denying her femininity, wherein she was elevated to some kind of higher than earthly status, transformed into an archetype instead of a woman" (29). Thus, I interpret Shakespeare's Cleopatra's diminished power as a

result of her forsaking her detached, divine image and instead presenting one that is human and subject to human desires.

Cleopatra's alignment with a moon goddess who embraces "amours that are fleshly" in turn makes her fleshy. Rather than a goddess who patronizes the moon, she becomes a common woman subject to earthly powers like the moon. Michael Neill writes, "the psychology of female characters in Renaissance drama can never be wholly detached from the notion of women as biologically 'governed by the moon', and thus so passionately given to change as to be virtually incapable of unified subjectivity" ("Introduction" 80). Cleopatra's personality, as well as her changing health suggests she is not exceptional, but rather subject to the moon's changes, like an ordinary woman. Thus, Shakespeare's contemporaries would regard Cleopatra's fainting spell in 4.16 as "a symptom of her mere womanhood" (Neill, "Notes" 297 n 75). This is further compounded by Cleopatra's announcements that she is "No more but e'en a woman, and commanded / By such poor passion as the maid that milks" (4.16.74-5). Unlike Elizabeth who "fictionalized her own body relentlessly, so that its manifest ageing and incapacity for child-bearing bore no relation to the narratives she continued to spin" (Dusinberre, "Squeaking Cleopatras" 53), Cleopatra draws attention to her ageing, human body. She describes herself as "wrinkled deep in time" (1.5.29). Further, Pompey refers to her as "waned lip" (2.1.21), which suggests her beauty has diminished from its former glory. The word "waned" also evokes the moon and suggests that if Cleopatra identifies with the moon, she is one that is in decline. Part of what made Elizabeth an exceptional ruler was that she suppressed depictions of herself which were aged and instead disseminated immortal, youthful ones such as The Rainbow Portrait (Mullaney 166). Cleopatra's reduction in status is further suggested when Anthony states "Alack, our terrene moon / Is now eclipsed, and it portends alone / The fall of Anthony" (3.13.154-6).

Anthony interprets Cleopatra merely as the "terrene moon," suggesting she is more human than heavenly. Further she is not only eclipsed, suggesting her power has diminished, but her power has diminished to the point that she is being used as a metaphor to express a patriarchal figure's fall from grace.

Like Elizabeth, Cleopatra uses courtship to establish lucrative alliances with foreign nations. As Jankowski notes, "Her seduction of Julius Caesar with the mattress, and Mark Anthony with the barge on the Cydnus, are not private temptations, but public attempts to control these two men politically by controlling them sexually" (158). The barge is not merely meant to appeal to Anthony's senses, but also to emphasize Cleopatra's status and power. Enobarbus describes the barge as "like a burnished throne" (2.2.198); it is in fact a throne since it is Cleopatra's seat of power. The purple sails and pavilion made of cloth-of-gold tissue (2.2.200, 206) likewise recall the coronation robes and cloth-of-state canopy which signify a monarch's authority. Further, Enobarbus compares Cleopatra to Venus, an alignment which underlies both her sensual and political power. Cleopatra's relationship with Anthony is compared to that of Venus and Mars, whereby the former subdued and unarmed the latter (Neill "Notes" 193 n 234). Likewise, throughout the play, Cleopatra is described as disarming men: "She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed" (2.2.234) and she boasts how she "wore [Anthony's] sword Philippan" (2.5.23). Unlike in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Hippolyta is "wooed" and then subdued by Theseus's sword, Cleopatra appears able to disarm and subdue Anthony. She only seems to lose power when her sensual allure and courtship is used for personal, rather than political ends. According to Jankowski, "Since she has given her heart to Anthony, she has, essentially, given away her body natural and removed it from service to her body politic" (163). Cleopatra's sexuality and desire for Anthony is self-destructive as it distracts her from her political ends. She

refers to her love for Anthony as "most delicious poison" (1.5.27), implying it enfeebles her. The self-destructive nature of her desires is further implied when she remarks "O happy horse, to bear the weight of Anthony" (1.5.21). As Michael Neill notes, "Riding is traditionally bawdy for intercourse" and horse might be a pun on whore ("Notes" 174 n 20-2). Thus, Cleopatra is fantasizing about intercourse with Anthony and in doing so, she is imagining herself beneath him in a position of subjugation. Since horsemanship was also used as an analogy for statecraft, it implies that Cleopatra is neglecting the reigns of state for the sake of pleasing herself and her lover. When Anthony leaves to return to Rome, Cleopatra's desire to drink mandragora so that she "might sleep out this great gap of time / My Anthony is away" (1.5.5-6) underlines how her desires cause her to defer her royal duties.

It is not only Cleopatra's sexual desires which pose a threat, but the way in which her sexuality is interpreted and disseminated by other people, without her consent or control. As Jankowski observes, "Cleopatra's power is shown to lie largely in the dramatic skill that enables her to control her world by controlling how others see her, through her careful staging of her natural body to serve her political ends" (161). Her parade in the barge is successful because she convinces the ever cynical Enobarbus that she has "O'erpictur[ed] that Venus where we see / The fancy out-work nature" (2.2.207-8). She surpasses representations of the love goddess and is likewise a woman to be coveted. When she becomes careless and subsequently loses control of how her sexuality is represented it no longer serves as a means of empowerment, but rather a means to denigrate and control her. Throughout the play, her sexuality is denigrated by comparing her to food. She is treated as someone who has no agency and is meant for consumption. Enobarbus calls her an "Egyptian dish" (2.7.125), Pompey describes her as "Salt Cleopatra" (2.1.21) and Anthony even refers to her as a "morsel, cold upon / Dead Caesar's

trencher" and as "a fragment / Of Gneius Pompey's" (3.13.117-9). Earlier in the play, Cleopatra imagined herself as having an active role in her relationship with her lovers. She boasts, "Tawny-fine fishes, my bended hook shall pierce / Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up, / I'll think them everyone an Anthony" (2.5.12-4), imagining herself as actively pursuing Anthony. However, in the eyes of her male acquaintances, she has been reduced to the status of a fish: a passive being who is preyed upon and consumed. The worst reinterpretation of Cleopatra's sexuality occurs when Thidias manipulates her to reinterpret her relationship with Anthony as one of rape. This removes her agency and the mutual affection that existed in their relationship. Thidias tells Cleopatra, Octavius "knows that you embraced not Anthony / As you did love, but as you feared him" (3.13.56-7). Cleopatra, dependent on Octavius for political protection, is forced to agree that "Mine honour was not yielded, / But conquered merely" (3.13.61-2). Similarly, Elizabeth I's contemporary, Mary Queen of Scots, was pressured to say she had been raped and kidnapped by James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, because it was not considered acceptable for her to pursue a love affair with him (Wormald 169, 219). It was more palatable to her subjects that her relationship with him had been against her will, rather than reciprocated because he was considered an unsuitable match. This portrayal of the sexualities of Mary and Cleopatra renders them powerless puppets. It anticipates how in the play Cleopatra fears she will be reduced to the role of an "Egyptian puppet…shown / In Rome" (5.2.208-9) and will be forced to watch "Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I'th'posture of a whore' (5.2.220-1). Her sexuality will be depicted for other people's amusement and consumption, long after she is rendered powerless.

Un-sexed Queens: Elizabeth I and Lady Macbeth

Like *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Macbeth* is a play that features a strong-willed queen who rules by rebelling against gender norms. While Lady Macbeth's official title is consort to the King of Scotland, her extreme influence over her husband and her involvement in the affairs of state make her status equivalent to that of a co-ruler. After all, Macbeth's claim to the throne was through murder and usurpation, crimes with which Lady Macbeth collaborated. Both Gary Willis and Gay Smith have noted this connection between *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, even arguing that the same actor portrayed Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth when the plays debuted at the Globe Theatre (Smith 21). According to Smith, by "Seeing [John] Rice play both roles in the same season, the audience could connect Lady Macbeth with Cleopatra as having similar characteristics—both characters are powerful women having strong influence over their mates" (Smith 21). The plays were written in the early years of King James I's reign and reflect how Elizabeth's political strategies were remembered and regarded after her passing. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra emulate Elizabeth who likewise consolidated her power through her "play with gender roles and with the manipulations of her own femininity for political purposes" (Dusinberre, "Squeaking Cleopatras" 53-4). While Elizabeth's strategies might have been lauded during her reign, following her death these queen characters who emulate her by rejecting gender norms were regarded as unruly and unsuccessful leaders. Both plays end with the queen cornered by a rival male monarch and driven to take her own life. However, their suicides are treated differently. Cleopatra subjects herself to a poisonous asp's bite which her attendant, Charmian, claims is "fitting for a princess / Descended of so many royal kings" (5.2.324-5). By contrast, Lady Macbeth is described as the "fiend-like queen" (5.8.82) who "'tis thought, by self and violent hands, / Took off her life" (5.8.83-4). I argue that Cleopatra is

regarded as having made a "good death" because her suicide is symbolic of her acceptance and reaffirmation of female gender norms. The asp bite to her breast is evocative of breastfeeding an infant and thus places her back within acceptable female behaviour. As a result, her past transgressions might be forgiven. By contrast, Lady Macbeth's fall off the castle tower is akin to her downfall as a result of her rejection of gender norms. In her attempts to appropriate male roles, she oversteps the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour and in turn falls from what position she can lawfully hold as a woman. I agree with Hilda H. Ma's argument that *Macbeth* is concerned with "the need for 'proper patriarchal governance'" (162) since the play not only suggests that Lady Macbeth is an ineffective ruler, but that she must be governed by men.

Lady Macbeth feels the need to reject her femininity in order to rule since her status as a woman gives her limited power and authority. As Alan Shepherd notes, James I "preferred his women to be ignorant, to sew rather than to learn, and opined that they only came to London to mar their reputations and rob their husbands" (Shepherd 41). A person who fell within this category would be an ineffective ruler as she would be powerless and uneducated. Thus, to gain power, Lady Macbeth adopts Elizabeth's strategy of using a male persona and differentiating herself from other women. Through language, Elizabeth symbolically transformed herself into a man when it suited her interests. In the Tilbury speech, she used the title of prince to establish her authority and gain the confidence of her people, informing them: "I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them" (Elizabeth 326). She chose to refer to herself as a prince instead of a princess because she used the latter as "a term of disparagement applied to discredited female monarchs like Mary Queen of Scots" (Marcus 140). In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth similarly strives to transform herself into a man through language. However her

attempts seem aggressive and monstrous since she does not use metaphor, but rather utterances that border on witchcraft. She invokes spirits to "unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty" (1.5.48-50). Her actions appear destructive and unnatural since "she phrases this unsexing as the undoing of her own bodily maternal function" (Adelman 97). Her request that the spirits "Make thick my blood. / Stop up th' access and passage to remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose" (1.5.50-3) is not just a desire to quell her guilt, but to reject her maternal role, to stop her menstruation (Ma 156). To a contemporary audience the removal of Lady Macbeth's ability to procreate would render her male since it was believed that "women who experience the unnatural stoppage of menstruation 'are robust and of a manly Constitution'" (Ma 156).

Lady Macbeth's bid to reject her maternal role appears unnatural and monstrous because it is implied to be murderous. She invites the spirits to "Come to my woman's breasts / And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers" (1.5.54-5). This could signify her willingness to sacrifice her own children for the sake of power, "poisoning any infant that comes to nurse from it" (Ma 156). This invocation to the spirits foreshadows her boast that she would have "dashed the brains out" of her children for the sake of power (1.7.66). It also aligns her with the witches who likewise gain power through the perversion of their "natural" maternal role. Two of the key ingredients in their spell are the "Finger of [a] birth-strangled babe" (4.1.30) and "sow's blood that hath eaten / Her nine farrow" (4.1.71-2). This image of a sow devouring her children recalls Queen Tamora from *Titus Andronicus* who likewise devoured her own children, albeit inadvertently, as a result of her actions to attain revenge. In Shakespeare's time, a woman's unwillingness to bear children could be interpreted as a "type of female 'criminality,' the destruction of genealogical lines, which is evocative of infanticide" (Ma 149). According to the

Book of Homilies, a collection of sermons outlining the Church of England's doctrines, the point of marriage was to provide children as a "means of enlarging God's kingdom" (Klein 242). Thus, Lady Macbeth's unwillingness could be constituted as treason. Lady Macbeth's so-called complicity in destroying Macbeth's genealogical lines and ensuring he will have a "barren scepter" (3.1.67) might also correspond to how Elizabeth I's subjects were frustrated that she refused to marry and provide heirs.

Even when Lady Macbeth does not reject her femininity, her actions appear negative and manipulative. She appears to overstep boundaries of acceptable female behaviour by attempting to wield power over men, rather than conforming to a subordinate role. Susan Bassnett credits Elizabeth I with employing a similar strategy, using her femininity as "an instrument in winning over the loyalty of her men" (20). Lady Macbeth's desire to "pour [her] spirits in [Macbeth's] ear / And chastise with the valor of [her] tongue / All that impedes [him] from the golden round" (1.5.29-31) is reminiscent of Queen Tamora's attempts to manipulate Titus Andronicus. Tamora boasts, "I can smooth and fill his agèd ears / With golden promises that, were his heart / Almost impregnable, his old ears deaf, / Yet should both ear and heart obey my tongue" (4.4.95-8). Like Tamora who coerces her sons to commit murder in order to prove their love, Lady Macbeth pressures Macbeth to prove himself by killing Duncan. When he refuses, she berates him, demanding "What beast was't then, / That made you break this enterprise to me?" (1.7.54-5). Even Lady Macbeth's reception of her husband when he returns from battle is not as subservient as it appears, but instead betrays a sinister intent. Her greeting, "Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor, / Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter!" (1.5.62-3), reiterates the witches' prophesies and emphasizes her resemblance to these manipulative figures. Lady Macbeth's active role in

inciting her husband to murder contradicts James I's own view of how a wife should behave. James advised his son that he should:

> Treat [his wife] as your own flesh, command her as her Lord, cherish her as your helper, rule her as your pupil, and please her in all things reasonable; but teach her not to be curious in things that belong her not: Ye are the head, shee is your body; It is your office to command, and hers to obey. (Shepherd 42)

By contrast, Macbeth regards Lady Macbeth as his "dearest partner of greatness" (1.5.11) and readily shares the witches' prophecies with her so that she might "not lose the dues of rejoicing by being igno- / rant of what greatness is promised thee" (1.5.12-3). He ignores James's rules, instead treating Lady Macbeth as an equal and sharing his power and knowledge with her. As the play suggests, this "unwarranted" indulgence leads to Macbeth's dishonour. Macbeth is referred to by his acquaintances as "Bellona's bridegroom" (1.3.62), an epithet which is meant to honour his prowess as a warrior. However, it also alludes to the fact that he has married an independent and warlike woman, as Bellona was the "Roman goddess of war" (Mowat and Werstine 12 n 62) and her Greek counterpart, Enyo, was known as "the sacker of cities" (Hard 168). It is almost an inversion of Duke Theseus's marriage to Hippolyta. Whereas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the warrior wife is subdued and forced to conform to her husband's will, in *Macbeth*, the titular character is driven to meet his wife's demands.

Another aspect of Elizabeth I's power which *Macbeth* perverts and portrays as malign is the strategy of a female monarch identifying as a moon goddess to emphasize her power and virtues. Instead of Diana, the goddess of the moon and chastity, Lady Macbeth and the witches are aligned with her cousin, Hecate, the goddess of the moon and witchcraft (Mowat and Werstine 52 n 64). This could reflect Jacobean men's unease with allowing a woman to be

worshiped at the centre of an institution. After all, even during Elizabeth I's reign her subjects balked at the prospect of making her the head of the Church of England (Tennenhouse 28). Thus, in the play, the moon goddess is a figure who creates chaos and harms society. Rather than Diana, her virtuous, nurturing counterpart, Hecate is malicious and self-serving as she berates the witches that "all you have done / Hath been but for a wayward son, / Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do, / Loves for his own ends, not for you" (3.5.10-3). She is not beholden to men, but instead seeks to control them for her own amusement. The appearance of Hecate in the play might be to align Lady Macbeth with Medea, a devotee of Hecate who was infamous in Greek mythology for killing her own brother and children in order to achieve her ambitions and fulfill her revenge (Hard 194). In Shakespeare's Elizabethan plays, the goddess Diana is referenced as a benign figure who acts as a foil to Queen Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* and as an extension of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Even in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, a form of the benign moon goddess appears, this time as the Egyptian goddess Isis. It is only in *Macbeth* that the archetypal moon goddess is introduced as a malevolent figure, perhaps to underline the perceived ruthlessness and unnaturalness of Lady Macbeth's actions.

While Elizabeth was able to draw on male and female gender roles to suit her political interests, Lady Macbeth fails to successfully adopt a male persona, suggesting she is attempting to wield a power that is beyond her reach. Joan Larsen Klein argues that "Shakespeare intended us to think that Lady Macbeth, despite her attempt to unsex herself, is never able to separate herself completely from womankind" (241). For example, despite her boasts of courage and strength, Lady Macbeth is "troubled with thick-coming fancies / That keep her from her rest" (5.3.47-8), a symptom which reflects the contemporary belief that women were "prone to fears and subject to the vagaries of their imaginations" (Klein 240). Her fainting after the revelation of

Duncan's murder could be to emphasize that she is like other women and thus "weaker than men in reason and physical strength" (Klein 240). It also suggests that her attempts to "unsex" herself have in fact made her weaker since her fainting could be an indication that she is post-menopausal and as a result is subject to "the symptoms that accompany such unnatural stoppage" (Ma 158). Her boast that she would be prepared to murder her own infant seems hollow since she openly admits that she could not kill Duncan since he "resembled / [Her] father as he slept" (2.2.16-7).

Conclusion to Part I – Unrivaled: Elizabeth I and Shakespeare's Queens

Elizabeth I reigned for 44 years (Grant 176), a far cry from the longest reigning English monarch, Elizabeth II, whose tenure has lasted 67 years and counting (Grant 230), or even compared to English monarchs who proceeded Elizabeth I's reign. Her ancestor Henry III ruled for a respectable 56 years (Grant 140), a length that exceeds Elizabeth's own by nearly a decade and a half. To understand how Elizabeth's legacy endures is to acknowledge how she remained alive and ever-present in the collective memory of the English people, exciting their imagination and anxieties with her domineering, strategic and often contradictory nature. She professed to have a selfless motherly devotion, yet stubbornly refused to marry and produce children. She had the "body of a weak and feeble woman" and also the "heart and stomach of a king" (Jankowski 65). Her flatterers attributed to her the beauty of an immortal Goddess, yet she exhibited the tell-tale signs of an elderly woman of her age. Whether admired as a capable ruler, or reviled as one of the "Monstrous Regiment of Women" (Scalingi 60), Elizabeth provided an example of how a female leader could rule and retain her throne during the early modern period. Elizabeth captured the imagination of her subjects, but she also was captured within their imagination. Shakespeare wrote about distant times and places—ancient Greece, the Roman Empire and medieval

Scotland—but his plays nonetheless reflect his contemporary experience of living in Elizabethan England under a female monarch. His anxiety and admiration for Elizabeth I is reflected in how he crafts his queen characters. Shakespeare's queens seem to simultaneously flatter and poke fun at Elizabeth's archetypal personae. His proud, immortal and unwittingly lovesick Titania bears a striking resemblance to Elizabeth's Gloriana, a Fairy Queen whose chastity, unlike Titania, is beyond reproach, let alone any man's reach. Shades of Elizabeth's Tilbury warrior resurface in Shakespeare's Hippolyta, Lady Macbeth and most pointedly when Cleopatra dons armour to prepare for her own naval battle against an invading Empire. However none of these would-be female warriors prove as resilient as Elizabeth and are ultimately defeated in combat. Tamora and Cleopatra's excelling beauty and casual seduction of foreign monarchs resembles Elizabeth's persona as a Helen of Troy figure, an attractive and fickle woman with numerous suitors. Shakespeare's queen characters span Elizabeth's reign and the immediate period after, when she was succeeded by James I. They reflect how she was regarded during and immediately following her reign by those who knew her as subjects.

At first glance, the Elizabethan queens—Tamora, Titania and Hippolyta—appear to be incarnations meant to flatter Elizabeth. Like her, they are idealized as beautiful and youthful. Tamora seems untouched by age, able to attract the much younger Emperor Saturninus and even eclipse the youthful Lavinia's beauty. Further, Hippolyta and Titania are not only attractive, but immortal; they are, respectively, a demi-goddess and a fairy. While outwardly all three queens are beautiful, they are also shown to possess flaws which hamper their ability to rule. These common flaws not only point to their inadequacy as rulers, but also reflect anxieties about Elizabeth's own reign since the obstacles which they faced are ones with which Elizabeth also struggled.

While the queen characters might meet the exacting expectations of the Goddess Diana's youth and beauty, they fail to meet that of her chastity. They are victimized either by their own sexual desires or by the attempts of patriarchal figures to control and manipulate their sexuality. Tamora's willful pursuit of her desires makes her a captive of her own servant, Aaron. Titania for her part falls for an ass, and Hippolyta's loss of power to Duke Theseus is compared to a sexual assault. The queen characters in this aspect stand in contrast to Elizabeth's supposed indisputable chastity, but they also reflect doubts about Elizabeth's ability to maintain that state. The shameful seduction of Tamora and Titania might even point to anxiety over Elizabeth's entanglement with unsuitable suitors: the Duke of Alençon (Orgel, "I am Richard II" 27) and the Earl of Essex (Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" 64)

As well as concerns about chastity, the queen characters reflect anxiety about female rulers marrying. All three marry and as a result suffer a loss of power. Tamora loses her kingdom when she marries and becomes a naturalized Roman. Hippolyta is demoted from queen to duchess and Titania inevitably is forced to acquiesce and become a submissive, supportive consort. The queens' relinquishment of their power through marriage is emblematic of queens like Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart who did the same and were deemed to be poor rulers. Nonetheless, this could also be an implicit criticism of Elizabeth's unmarried status, as if Shakespeare was purposely reproaching Elizabeth by inundating her with references to married female monarchs. Even her insistence on remaining unmarried had repercussions for her reign, producing instability due to the lack of an heir. Like Elizabeth, these three queen characters reflect this anxiety about the succession of the throne. Hippolyta is childless. Titania carelessly loses her adopted son. And Tamora attempts to kill one of her children while the remaining two die from her negligence. On the surface, they appear to be unfit for motherhood. The queen characters'

maternal status might also reference the varied and contradictory identities Elizabeth chose to assume in order to field complaints regarding her lack of an heir. At varying times she posed as a childless virgin—like the yet-to-be-married Hippolyta—and as the surrogate or natural mother of her people. However, the fluidity with which Elizabeth adopted and dropped these personae made them seem instable and ineffective for ultimately assuaging her subjects' concerns about the succession.

Shakespeare's Elizabethan queen characters address and reflect contemporary concerns about Elizabeth's reign, and the idea of female leadership more generally. While generally these theatrical examples of female leadership are favorable and even flattering to Elizabeth, they also contain underlying criticism about her reign. The plays were written in the last decade of her life, when she was elderly, ineligible to marry and incapable of bearing children. Yet she was persistently idealized as a great beauty and immortal goddess. This representation of Elizabeth corresponds to how the actors portraying Shakespeare's characters are likewise less than their idealized projections: young boys, rather than beautiful women. Just like the audience's willingness to suspend their disbelief for the enjoyment of the play, the courtiers good-naturedly or perhaps fearfully, accept the queen's self-representation for the sake of the smooth running of the state. It is only during the reign of Elizabeth's successor that the queen characters become more human and more critical of Elizabeth's image.

In the Jacobean period, the queen characters—Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth—are not idealized as immortal or beautiful. Instead, they are physically and emotionally flawed, and reflect the anxiety that English people felt towards an ageing, childless, female monarch ruling a kingdom. Unlike Elizabeth, who chose to depict herself as perpetually young and beautiful throughout her reign, these queens show their age. They appear post-menopausal and weak.

Further, these queens are associated with corrupted versions of the Goddess Diana, which Elizabeth often invoked for use in propaganda. The Jacobean goddesses appear human and even malevolent. As well as being depicted as past their prime, the queens appear past their ability to bear children. However, their lack of an heir is not depicted as a cause for concern, but rather a natural opportunity for a capable, male ruler to replace the "unsuitable" female monarch. Just as James was heralded as the successor to Elizabeth, so too were Octavius and Malcolm depicted as rejuvenating the barren thrones of Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. Though resistant to this change, both queens prove powerless to stop the male monarchs' ascent. They cannot harness their sexuality or their androgynous personae to effectively oppose them. Nevertheless, despite depicting the male monarchs as the natural successors, they can never fully repress the queens. The queens' suicides transgress the socially-acceptable behaviour sanctioned by men (in Cleopatra's case she is actually more successful in her attempt to reclaim personal honour in this way than Anthony is); it also removes them from the domain and control of men. The way they violently stage their deaths reflects how the queen characters' interaction with the audience on the stage steps beyond the audience's comfort by imposing on them once more the memory of the transgressive female monarch. Thus, Elizabeth's multiple personae continue to haunt the stage, and the memory of her reign likewise continues to baffle and haunt the mind of the audience. The plays resurface and so does their ability to invoke female leadership.

PART II

The Female Leader: Shakespeare's Female Sovereigns in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Just as Shakespeare drew examples from history and myth to speak to his experience of living under a female ruler, we continue to do the same, looking back to Shakespeare's queens—characters who emerged in the early modern period—to speak about our current female

politicians. In the twenty-first century, female heads of state are even more prevalent than in the early modern period. As well as female monarchs, there are elected female politicians. Thus, women no longer govern solely by right of their descent from a male patriarch, but also through election. Nonetheless, while strides have been made with regards to increasing female power, there still exist many parallels between the early modern period and the present day. For example, there is yet to be a female president of the United States. Nichola D. Gutgold draws attention to this contradiction in her book, *Almost Madam President: Why Hillary Clinton "Won" in 2008*:

> Since America is heralded the world over as a beacon of freedom and opportunity it is perplexing to note that America hasn't had a woman president. If we travel to Argentina, Chile, Finland, India, Ireland, Liberia, and The Philippines, we may catch a glimpse of Madam President… In about thirty other countries women serve as president or prime minister. In the United States, however, we have yet to break that proverbial "glass ceiling." (3)

As in Elizabeth's time, despite there being an abundance of contemporary and historical examples of female leaders, the prospect of a female leader of a powerful nation is still considered uncharted territory, which raises similar questions about women's supposed psychological and physical inferiority, as well as concerns about their neglect of traditional gender roles. It is perhaps no coincidence that when Hillary Rodham Clinton made her bid for the Democratic candidacy in 2008 she did so after she had finished raising her daughter and loyally supported her husband's own two terms as president. Thus, she had fulfilled both "traditional" gender roles before pursuing her own political career. Much like Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, Rodham Clinton's 2016 election campaign also raised uncomfortable

questions about the status and power of a female leader. People worried about what her title would be if she became president since a woman had never before been elected president of the United States. Further, they debated what they would call her husband, the traditional consort of the president being "The First Lady." Bill Clinton at the time suggested "first gentleman," while Hillary Rodham Clinton playfully mentioned that she was "partial to First Mate or First Dude" (Winsor). This amusingly resembles how Elizabeth I's ministers grappled with what title and degree of power to confer on her prospective bridegroom so as not to diminish her power. Their concerns were evidently relevant even centuries later, as Elizabeth I's descendent and namesake, Elizabeth II, noticeably chose to refer to her husband not as the King, but as the Duke of Edinburgh.

Even in countries with an established history of female leadership, the prospect of elected female leaders is still met with resistance. Compared to the USA, the UK has a long history of female elected heads of state, but only by a margin of two. The UK can boast of two female prime ministers: the late Margaret Thatcher and the current head of state, Theresa May. Like Elizabeth I, their authority as leaders has constantly been questioned. To prove their capabilities, they have been forced to challenge stereotypes of female leadership, including the belief that women are either too weak or conniving to effectively govern their country, that they neglect their families to pursue politics and that they only achieve power by stealing it from men. Like Elizabeth I, their sexuality and marital status has also been scrutinized to determine their worthiness as candidates. As in the case of Rodham Clinton, a married woman with a grown child, both Thatcher and May were "safely" married before they dared pursue politics. May's lack of children was considered an asset since it meant she would not have to "sacrifice" her political duties to care for her family (Bates), while Thatcher's decision to enter politics, despite

having young children, was considered a liability (Steinberg 213). It is notable that Thatcher, May and Rodham Clinton were all "matrons" when they became high profile politicians and serious contenders for the position of leader of their respective countries. This emphasis on Thatcher, May and Rodham Clinton's marital status recalls the Elizabethan idea of the importance of married chastity, "pure in mind, and thus chaste, without being physically a virgin" (Dusinberre, "Nature of Women" 31) and suggests that like in Elizabeth I's time, chastity is still regarded as a deciding factor in a woman's political career. Further, like Elizabeth, these modern politicians continue to use the strategy as portraying themselves as warriors to cement their authority. Nichola D. Gutgold credits Thatcher as a capable leader because of her military prowess:

> That women can lead well has been proven time and again. Margaret Thatcher's impressive management of the United Kingdom's role in the Falkland Island War demonstrated her leadership. (3)

Similarly, Rodham Clinton embellished her experiences on a military base to prove her strength as a leader, famously declaring that when she travelled to Bosnia to greet American troops in 1996, she remembered "landing under sniper fire," although a CBS video suggested that the visit had in fact been sniper-free (Gutgold 41). While modern female leaders appear to employ similar strategies to ones used by their early modern predecessors, their situation also greatly differs from leaders like Elizabeth I. As elected leaders of secular states, Thatcher, May and Rodham Clinton cannot follow Elizabeth I's example and simply draw upon royal lineages or cult-like statuses as Virgin icons to bolster their authority. Rather, they must continually defend their positions since they can be dismissed in an election. Unlike Elizabeth, their position is not guaranteed for life.

While Elizabeth I clearly lived in a different historic context from that of modern politicians such as Margaret Thatcher, Theresa May and Hillary Rodham Clinton, there are still parallels in their experiences as female leaders. Despite being from different centuries, they share the same challenges of a woman struggling to assert her power in a traditionally male domain. This continuity is underscored by the fact that the societies in which they live continue to draw upon the same cultural texts—Shakespeare's plays—to understand and respond to this experience of female leadership. Gay Smith writes:

> Just as Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth posed dramatic questions about women in power in his own time, the actors interpreting Lady Macbeth in America have reflected audiences' questions about powerful political wives in their times. (185)

As a female presidential candidate, Rodham Clinton, like Elizabeth I, was accused by some of overstepping the bounds of acceptable female behaviour by grasping for power considered to be beyond her reach (Clinton 40). Such accusations dated back to her time as first lady (Gardetto 226). Further, these same accusations have been applied to Margaret Thatcher (Steinberg 213). While Thatcher has not been compared to Lady Macbeth, she has been equated with another domineering Shakespearean queen character—Queen Margaret of Anjou (Martin 330). Obvious similarities between the two characters include their ambition for power, penchant to dominate their husbands, and tendency to adopt androgynous warrior identities to emphasize their strength as leaders. Evidently the leaders who are equated with these characters, Thatcher and Rodham Clinton, are presumed to exhibit these same traits. In the following sections of this thesis, I will examine three current productions featuring female leaders that refer to contemporary women in power overtly and/or implicitly: the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* (2008); the English Shakespeare Company's *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991); and

the Stratford Festival's *The Tempest* (2018). *Macbeth* (2008) and *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) bear temporal and geographic ties to the respective political campaigns of Rodham Clinton and Thatcher. The 2018 Stratford Festival's *Tempest*, which featured a female Prospero, recalls another leader of an island nations who at the time was struggling to cement her position of authority and reclaim it from usurpation—Theresa May. On May 24, 2019 she was forced to make her resignation speech and announce that she would "step down as Conservative Party leader June 7" (Rayner NP4). The play's theme speaks to the danger of withdrawing from power and leaving a void for less scrupulous leaders to fill, which recalls the aftermath of the 2016 American presidential election. Not only did Hillary Rodham Clinton lose the election to Donald Trump, but it was considered a bitter loss because many potential Rodham Clinton supporters did not even bother to vote and, as a result, contributed to her opponent's victory (Clinton 14). Thus, the ability of Shakespeare's plays to respond to female leadership does not end in the early modern period, but continues to speak across time, and even continents, as will be explored in the remainder of this thesis.

First Ladies: Hillary Rodham Clinton and Lady Macbeth

Hillary Rodham Clinton's political career seems to follow the familiar "American Dream" narrative of success and upward social mobility. Born into a middle-class family, she rose to the position of First Lady of the United States and eventually became a US Senator (Smith 16). In 2008 she ran for the position of the Democratic candidate in the US presidential election (Smith 17). While she lost the nomination to Barack Obama, she would later serve as Obama's Secretary of State. Hillary Rodham Clinton's career trajectory could be glamorized as a rags-to-riches story, but more often than not she has been caricatured as a scheming villain. In his book, *Unlimited Access*, FBI agent Gary Aldrich depicts her as "'Queen Hillary,' a deranged, power-

mad emasculator" (Brock vi). This characterization is all too reminiscent of Shakespeare's own "fiend-like queen" (5.8.82), Lady Macbeth. In fact, many have drawn parallels between these two "first ladies." In 1994, *The American Spectator* chose to depict Rodham Clinton as a parody of Lady Macbeth in a satirical skit entitled "MacDeth (sic)" (Smith 9). Further, when Rodham Clinton announced her intention to compete for the position of Democratic presidential candidate in the 2008 election, author John Irving advised her to refrain from reading or watching productions of *Macbeth* since "self-comparisons with Lady Macbeth could prove too close for comfort" (Smith 17). Considering the public's fascination with comparing Rodham Clinton to Lady Macbeth it is hardly a coincidence that her 2008 presidential campaign coincided with the run of an American production of *Macbeth.* The 2008 Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* was performed in Washington, D.C. and clearly has a temporal and geographic link to the 2008 American presidential election. The actress portraying Lady Macbeth even bears a passing resemblance to circa 1990s First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton with her shoulder-length blonde hair, blue eyes and commanding presence. While the production does not overtly propose itself as an allegory for the election, it does engage with the topic of women governing a state. Further, this production forced the audience to re-examine their perception of female leadership in a historic moment when the United States was faced with the possibility of electing a female Democratic candidate and possible president. Evelyn Gajowksi writes that "Analyzing changing cultural interpretations of [Lady Macbeth's] character helps us to tease out ideologies of gender that have constructed us—as much as we have constructed them" (679). I interpret this 2008 production of *Macbeth* as having examined and/or deconstructed the same biases against female leadership which Hillary Rodham Clinton encountered. These stereotypes of female leadership include the belief that ambitious women are

unlikeable, that their power comes from emasculating or manipulating men, that their pursuit of political careers leads them to neglect their families, that their proficiency as leaders can be assessed from their appearance, and finally that they are too physically and psychologically weak to be effective leaders.

In her book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg found that while men were more well-liked the more successful they became, it was the exact inverse for women (Sandberg 40). This double-standard of celebrating ambitious men and demonizing ambitious women is reflected in the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth*. Kate Eastwood Norris, the actress who portrays Lady Macbeth, notes that her character is "known as the epitome of evil" and a "battle-axe of a possessed dark force woman" ("Mr. & Mrs. Macbeth"). As a woman involved in politics, Hillary Rodham Clinton has likewise been demonized for her ambitions. Her desire to run for president was viewed as "some dark ambition and craving for power" (Clinton 40). In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth's ambition is depicted as analogous to ruthlessness since she enjoins the spirits to "fill [her]…top-full / Of direst cruelty…[so] That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake [her] fell purpose, nor keep peace between / Th' effect and it" (1.5.49-54; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:17:21).[1] She rejects compassion as an obstacle to the achievement of her goals. Although fewer die at the hands of Lady Macbeth than at those of her husband, Gay Smith notes that audiences tend to be more sympathetic towards Macbeth than his wife (1). This parallels how male ambition is regarded with less animosity than female ambition. As Rodham Clinton observes, male politicians who

[1] Since the quotations I use are taken from a filmed production, The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* (2008), I have provided the "timing" at which point the actor begins speaking his or her lines, as well as a citation from the play text. (FT/TR refers to the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company)

expressed an intention to run for president were not "psychoanalyzed" as she had been (40). Admittedly the co-director of the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth*, Aaron Posner, did express an intention to portray Lady Macbeth and her ambition in a more positive light. He describes his production as "the story of the woman who loves her husband, who thinks he deserves it all and hopes that just by doing this one terrible thing, maybe this one time, we can get away with it" (Mr. & Mrs. Macbeth). This interpretation is more benign since it portrays Lady Macbeth's actions as motivated by good intentions. Rather than viewing her as inherently evil, it suggests that her ambition should be viewed as a tragic flaw, much like Macbeth. However, while this production was designed to present Lady Macbeth and Macbeth as equally sympathetic, yet flawed, Posner's intent does not fully succeed. His Lady Macbeth still appears to reflect this bias against female ambition.

This continued bias against ambitious females is best exemplified by a *Washington Post* review of the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth*. The critic depicts Macbeth in a sympathetic light. He writes:

> The effortlessly likable Peakes is a great choice for Macbeth; he comes across as an athletic, all-American sort, a guy who projects an ease with himself, and makes others feel utterly comfortable in the process. Who'd ever imagine such a decent chap would advance his career by killing his boss? Deftly, too, Peakes plants the powerful suggestion of Macbeth's remorse from the very outset, just as the couple's regicidal plan is being hatched. (Marks)

While this review interprets Macbeth as an affable, tragic character, Lady Macbeth is depicted as dangerously unstable. The same review describes her as follows:

> a bundle of ambitious nerves so close to the edge that when she reads Macbeth's

> letter about his new titles, she positively quivers with anticipation. (When Norris asks the ether to "unsex" her, it's as if she's pleading for a tranquilizer). (Marks)

The review also suggests that Lady Macbeth's ambition is the catalyst for Macbeth's destructive actions: "Her fever for power is the ignition for his" (Marks). It is striking how differently the ambitions of these two characters are interpreted by the same critic. While Macbeth is viewed as a tragic, heroic figure, Lady Macbeth appears hysterical and her ambition likened to a "fever." This depiction of the ambitious woman as physically and mentally unstable aligns with how Hillary Rodham Clinton and other female leaders are psychoanalyzed when they express desires to pursue politics (Clinton 40). The sleepwalking scene in 5.1 of the production reflects this stereotype of female ambition as unnatural, depicting the character suffering a mental collapse as a result of pursuing her goals. In this production the audience members see the blood that Lady Macbeth hallucinates ("Part II FT/TR Macbeth" 0:27:49). The blood streaming down her face and sleeveless, white nightgown recalls the titular character from the film *Carrie* (1976). It might well be an homage to this film as the directors of *Macbeth* acknowledge that they "thought of Macbeth as a classic horror movie" and presumably drew inspiration from other movies of that genre ("Capturing Macbeth"). This parallel between Lady Macbeth and Carrie is fitting since both characters are marginalized women who wield destructive powers. While Lady Macbeth may not possess Carrie's telekinetic aptitudes, her verbal persuasiveness and driven ambition prove equally threatening to the society in which she lives. Further, like Carrie, Lady Macbeth's powers awaken in reaction to a repressive force. In *Macbeth*, the domineering presence is not a tyrannical mother, but the patriarchal society which subordinates her and restrains her from participating in the sphere outside of the domestic realm. Like Carrie, Lady Macbeth embodies the societal fear of a woman wielding a power that she neither fully grasps nor fully controls.

Thus, even though the directors attempt to portray their Lady Macbeth's motivations as sympathetic, her characterization reflects how the public remains skeptical of female ambition and the ability of female politicians to effectively wield the power they desire to possess.

Another stereotype of female leadership which the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* examines is the belief that power is a zero-sum game and that for women to gain power, it requires them to steal it from men. A popular question debated in the press during Hillary Rodham Clinton's tenure as First Lady was: "If a woman is powerful, a wife and a public figure, does she somehow diminish her husband's power?" (Gardetto 226). Her accomplishments as First Lady—chairing an important task force on health care, campaigning for more women to fill administrative posts and limiting discrimination by establishing a "gender bias task force" (Beasley 202, Brock 125)—were included among her credentials when campaigning to be president in the 2008 election. However, these accomplishments were also viewed as evidence of Rodham Clinton interfering in her husband's business. As Maurine H. Beasley notes, "she risk[ed] being accused of using her marriage as a route to advancement" (205). In the Folger Theatre /Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth's gestures of affection towards her husband overlap with her plotting, suggesting that this intimacy might be a form of manipulation. In 1.5 Lady Macbeth enthusiastically greets her husband by kissing him passionately. However, this reunion follows her earlier speech in which she declares her intentions to control Macbeth. Moments before Macbeth enters the scene, she vows that she will "pour [her] spirits in [his] ear / And chastise with the valour of [her] tongue / All that impedes [him] from the golden round" (1.5.29-31; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:16:18). She showers Macbeth with kisses and caresses while she instructs him to "Look like th' innocent/flower, / But be the serpent under't" (1.5.76-8; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:18:57). Her advice that he

manipulate Duncan by feigning allegiance prompts the audience to question if Lady Macbeth herself is genuine in her affection towards her husband or if she is merely playing the "innocent flower." Likewise, Kate Eastwood Norris interprets Lady Macbeth as using "a lot of various types of manipulation to get him to kill the king," including using sarcasm to emasculate him and emotionally manipulating him to commit murder in order to prove his love ("Mr. & Mrs. Macbeth"). This is best shown in 1.7 of the production when Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth oscillates between beating her husband and embracing him. Her instinct to aggressively shove Macbeth against a door seems to fit her emasculating rebuke: "When you durst do it, then you were a man" (1.7.56; "Part I FT/RT Macbeth" 0:23:44). By contrast, she tenderly embraces him and strokes his face when she encourages him to kill Duncan, telling him "And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man" (1.7.57-8; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:23:48).

While Lady Macbeth might feel she has her husband's best interests in mind, she is not above using manipulation to achieve them. Her overt sexuality—her public displays of affection and scantily-cut outfits—are the polar opposite of Hillary Rodham Clinton's professional and restrained public persona. Still, I perceive a link between the two. Lady Macbeth's emotional and sexual manipulation of her husband can be read as symbolic of the fear of female politicians achieving power by dominating men. A *Time* magazine article from 1992 notes that Rodham Clinton has an "image as a tough career woman ... used to dominating whatever situation she is in by force of mind" (Carlson and Painton 28). Those who believe power is a zero-sum game would view Rodham Clinton's efforts to increase the number of women in administrative offices as an attempt to limit men's power by "stealing" their jobs and subverting "traditional" gender roles.

A frequent criticism levelled against female leaders is that they neglect their families to pursue their political careers. Carla Spivack interprets Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth as a response to female leaders like Elizabeth I choosing to reign rather than marry and raise children. Spivack writes, "the female ruler is easily demonized into the 'unnatural' female, a wet nurse who withholds life-giving milk from the infant in her care, who (like Lady Macbeth) could 'pluck[] [her] nipple from his boneless gums / [a]nd dash[] the brains out'" (73). Similarly, right-wing critics of Rodham Clinton suggest that she sacrificed her family for politics: "Hillary, they proposed, like Lady Macbeth, had unsexed herself (abandoning her daughter in pursuit of her career)" (Collins 201). While Lady Macbeth has traditionally been adduced to chastise female leaders for their subversion of traditional gender roles, the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's production seems to complicate this view. Lady Macbeth appears dissatisfied with her life choices when she declares "Naught's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content. / 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy / Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy" (3.2.6-9; "Part II FT/TR Macbeth" 0:56:13-26). Presumably her involvement in political schemes is unfulfilling compared to adhering to the traditional gender roles of mother and housewife. However, her foil, Lady Macduff, who does conform to these gender roles, appears no happier nor safer than Lady Macbeth. In this production Lady Macduff is depicted as heavily pregnant when her husband absconds and leaves her sequestered in their house. Her death—stabbed through the stomach ("Part II FT/TR Macbeth" 0:13:43)—seems equally as frustrating as Lady Macbeth's guilt-ridden sleepwalking. Rather than devalue Lady Macbeth's choice to embrace politics, the production appeared more concerned with unequal relationships between spouses. After all, Lady Macbeth's depression and listless existence is not only due to her guilt over Duncan's death, but also because Macbeth prevents her from taking part in his political schemes.

In 3.1, he literally shuts her out, forcing her from the room and sending his servant to close the door in her face so that he can plot Banquo's assassination ("Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:52:56). In my interpretation, this production does not demonize women for pursuing politics. Rather, it suggests that women should not be forced to remain in the domestic realm.

As well as judging female leaders according to their adherence to traditional gender roles, they are judged according to their appearance. The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* responds to this idea of female leaders' abilities being equated with their clothing choices. When Hillary Rodham Clinton ran for president, her appearance was harshly and minutely scrutinized. She felt pressured to hide her femininity in order to gain credibility as a candidate (Gutgold 84). After all, the press considered a low-neckline to be politically damaging and labelled one incident "Cleavage-gate" (Gutgold 3). Unlike Rodham Clinton, Kate Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth fearlessly flaunts her feminine style with floor-length dresses ranging in colour from magenta to burgundy. Her Lady Macbeth's request that the spirits "unsex me here" (1.5.48; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:17:20) might seem like a fruitless attempt to repress her femininity. When she makes this speech, she is facing a mirror and smoothing her hands over the obvious feminine curves that are displayed by her pink dress. Rather than downplay her femininity, Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth seems to emphasize it, suggesting that her professed desire to divorce herself from her femininity is misplaced. Lady Macbeth's costume is the antithesis of Rodham Clinton's campaign uniform of pant suits in subdued colours (Clinton 88). Rodham Clinton justified her clothing choices as a way of "unsexing" herself:

> I…thought it would be good to do what male politicians do and wear more or less the same thing every day. As a woman running for president, I liked the visual cue that I was different from the men but also familiar. (88)

During her 2008 election campaign she made the choice to reject being featured on the cover of *Vogue* magazine because she was "attempting to manage her public image and to de-emphasize her feminine side, a strategy that has been proven successful for women seeking office" (Gutgold 84). Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*, heavily criticized Rodham Clinton's decision, arguing that "The notion that a contemporary woman must look mannish in order to be taken seriously as a seeker of power is frankly dismaying" (qtd. in Gutgold 83). Unlike Rodham Clinton, Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth seems to embody Wintour's view. She is not afraid to wear pink dresses with thigh-high slits. Rather than empathize her incapability as a leader, her bold bright gowns suggest that her ability to lead has no bearing on her clothing. When she tells Macbeth "Give me the daggers" (2.2.69; "Part I FT/RT Macbeth" 0:34:29), she merely rolls up her sleeves and proceeds with the deed of framing Duncan's guards for his murder. She is not physically burdened by her clothing, nor is she mentally burdened, as she is able to execute her plans without compromising herself or her husband.

The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* confronts the idea that female leaders must project an image of physical and psychological strength in order to be accepted as capable leaders. As Nichola D. Gutgold notes, Hillary Rodham Clinton's speeches frequently emphasize her toughness in order to evoke her strength as a leader (36). In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth also draws upon feats of strength in order to convince Macbeth of her worthiness as a political ally. In 1.7, she aims to show her commitment to the enterprise to murder Duncan by boasting that she could murder her own child ("Part I FT/RT Macbeth" 0:23:34). Nonetheless, while Lady Macbeth asks to be filled "from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty" (1.5.49-50; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:17:21) and feigns indifference to committing violence, she consistently betrays her bold claims with expressions of compassion and/or disgust. In 2.2 when

she is waiting for Macbeth to return from murdering Duncan, she screams and starts when she hears a noise, before laughing that "It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman" (2.2.5; "Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:32:29). Her reaction suggests that despite her show of indifference she has scruples about committing the murder. When Duncan's murder is revealed, she cannot help succumbing to a dead faint ("Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:45:32). Although she planned the murder, she cannot suppress her instinct to feel revulsion. Lady Macbeth's reactions are not simply signs of cowardice or weakness. Rather, they emphasize her naivety regarding the qualities required to form a strong leader. Whereas she assumes that a woman must be steely and unfeeling to achieve power, Rodham Clinton argues that women in politics need to have a mix of strength and compassion:

> the balancing act women in politics have to master is challenging at every level, but it gets worse the higher you rise. If we're too tough, we're unlikeable. If we're too soft, we're not cut out for the big leagues. (119)

Mounting a production of this play in the twenty-first century dramatizes this dichotomy between our beliefs of what female leadership involves and what it actually demands. It shows that our stereotypes of female leadership are incongruous with how society actually functions, and with the roles women play within it.

Hillary Rodham Clinton's failed bid for the Democrat candidacy in the 2008 American presidential election happened to coincide with The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's production of *Macbeth*. While the production is not an allegory of her loss, it does reflect on some of the obstacles she encountered as a female politician. The production re-examines many biased beliefs against female leadership, including the idea that ambitious women are stigmatized, that women only gain power through emasculating and manipulating

men, that they choose to sacrifice their families in order to pursue power, that they are judged according to their appearance and are not strong enough to lead. Like these beliefs about female leadership, incarnations of Lady Macbeth have changed over the years. This production responds to many of these issues, but still reflects many stereotypes, which demonstrates how our contemporary society is still coming to terms with female leadership and the place female leaders should occupy in society. .

The Iron Lady and the Iron of Naples: Margaret Thatcher and Shakespeare's Queen Margaret

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first female prime minister. Her election to this position and subsequent long tenure as the head of state from 1979 to 1990 (Hadley 2) was a feat which placed her on equal footing with Queen Elizabeth I, a female British leader who likewise defied societal expectations by governing a country for several decades (Grant 176). By the time Thatcher was elected, the United Kingdom had experienced the reigns of several female sovereigns including: Mary I, Elizabeth I, Mary II, Queen Anne, Queen Victoria and Thatcher's contemporary, Elizabeth II. While the UK had long grown accustomed to having female monarchs, the prospect of elected female leaders was still a contentious proposition. Unlike her queen Elizabeth II, Thatcher could not bolster her authority by drawing upon a royal lineage. As David Grant Moss notes, "Thatcher was not a queen…she was an elected official who could be dismissed without a coup or revolution, which is what ultimately happened in 1989" (809). Nonetheless, while Thatcher lacked a royal pedigree, this did not stop her from attempting to assert her authority by drawing upon "royal imagery and metaphor which was, in many instances, overtly Elizabethan" (Moss 808). Critics even noted how her speeches were peppered with the "royal we." To celebrate the birth of her grandchild, she made the bizarre pronouncement: "We are become a grandmother" (Martin 325). Moreover, her critics often

depicted her as a tyrannical queen. Like Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was often caricatured as a conniving version of Lady Macbeth, Thatcher was compared to another of Shakespeare's dominating queen consorts: Queen Margaret, the wife of the mild-mannered Henry VI. This parallel between Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady and Shakespeare's Queen Margaret, the "Iron of Naples, hid with English gilt" (3H6 2.2.139), was heavily emphasized in Michael Bogdanov's 1991 filmed English Shakespeare Company (ESC) production *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*. Bogdanov's production was inspired by the ESC's earlier productions that constituted *The Wars of the Roses* (1986-89), a series which focused on Shakespeare's tetralogies. *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part II* and *Henry VI Part III* had a clear temporal and geographic link to Thatcher. As Gabriele Bernhard Jackson notes, its version of Queen Margaret "has a hairdo and manner that bring to mind a more recent iron lady" (208). Randall Martin describes the theatrical representation as a "politically inspired caricature" that is "self-consciously post-Falklands" (330). It is no coincidence that Director Bogdanov had a scathing regard for Thatcher's politics. He was not only outraged by her government's budget cuts to arts funding (Martin 325), but also by the 1982 Falklands War, a two-month military campaign led by Thatcher to reclaim "a group of sparsely populated islands which, since 1833, have been under British rule" (Hartley 76). However, this 1991 Shakespeare production does not merely reflect one disgruntled director's grudge against his prime minister. Rather, it also reveals the societal beliefs and biases against female leadership which persisted in 20th century Britain. These stereotypes of female leadership include many of the beliefs we have previously rehearsed: that female politicians gain power through emasculating or manipulating men, that their pursuit of political careers leads them to neglect their families, that their proficiency as

leaders can be assessed from their appearance, and that they are too physically and psychologically weak to be effective leaders.

The ESC's *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* engages with the stereotype that female politicians gain power by controlling men. In this production women's struggle for power is depicted as a zero-sum game. Queen Margaret must either dominate men or become a victim to their domination. The ESC's Margaret makes her first stage debut in the production that precedes *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*. In *Henry VI Part I: The House of Lancaster* she is first seen fleeing from Suffolk. Her plight is echoed by the young French woman with whom she crosses paths when she enters the stage ("House of Lancaster" 1:00:24)[2]. The woman flees rape at the hands of English soldiers. Suffolk likewise draws his sword and threatens Margaret ("House of Lancaster" 1:00:33). Unlike the unnamed French woman, Margaret escapes assault. Her safety is assured by her agreement to become Henry VI's wife and in doing so she takes her first steps to ensuring her freedom from male domination. As David Fuller notes, the ESC's incarnation of Queen Margaret in *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* is "matronly—more like her boy-Henry's mother than his wife" (132). This reflects how Margaret is perceived as dominating her husband and co-opting the power which is believed to be his birthright. Like the ESC's Margaret, Margaret Thatcher was herself often depicted as both a controlling wife and queen. Barbra Castle compared Thatcher's male supporters to "knights jousting a tourney for a

[2] Since the quotations I use are taken from a filmed production, The ESC's *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991), I have provided the "timing" at which point the actor begins speaking his or her lines. Further, this production is a conflation of two of Shakespeare's plays—2H6 and 3H6—and thus borrows dialogue from both play texts. As a result, I will provide a citation referring to the movie "timing," as well as a textual citation to indicate how the quotation originally appeared in either 2H6 or 3H6.

lady's favours, showing off their paces by making an unholy row at every opportunity over everything that the Government does" (qtd. in Campbell 313). Rather than professionals pursuing politics, they were depicted as vapid flatterers. The press also criticized Thatcher's government by commenting upon her relationship with her husband, referring to Mr. Thatcher as "emasculated Dennis" (Martin 325). As David Grant Moss notes, "no one has ever suggested that Denis [sic] Thatcher had any influence on government policy during his wife's administration" (813). Whereas Hillary Rodham Clinton was criticized for "interfering" in her husband's political career, Margaret appears to have been critiqued for the opposite. Presumably, Thatcher was considered to have "selfishly" denied her husband the opportunity to pursue politics, an interpretation which this ESC production seems to explore. Actress June Watson's Queen Margaret is portrayed as a Thatcher doppelgänger who not only dominates her husband, but who effectively usurps his position as the head of state.

In *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*, Queen Margaret's main strategy to control men is to treat them like children. She seeks to subvert Edward of York's rebellion by berating him as if he were merely an unruly child: "Go rate thy minions, proud insulting boy!" ("House of York" 1:12:03; 3H6 2.2.84). By positioning him as a child and herself as an adult, she nearly succeeds in undermining his authority. Edward resists Margaret's manipulation but he acknowledges her ability to control her husband, referring to her as "You that are king, though he do wear the crown" ("House of York" 1:12:19; 3H6 2.2.90). Margaret dominates Henry VI by infantilizing him and thus treating him as a child incapable of making decisions. When he does make a decision, agreeing to make the Duke of York his heir and to disinherit his own son, Prince Edward, Margaret treats him as a child who has misbehaved. She scolds him: "Thou hast spoke too much already" ("House of York" 0:41:59; 3H6 1.1.259). She resembles an irate mother who

is punishing her son, rather than a wife speaking to her husband and equal. Henry clearly resents Margaret's condescension and complains to her, "I am a king, and privileged to speak" ("House of York" 1:13:23; 3H6 2.2.120). While he seeks to re-establish his authority as the head of state, Margaret has clearly stolen it from him. This is emphasized when Clifford informs Henry that he must leave the very battle that will decide the outcome of his throne. Clifford tells Henry, "I would your highness would depart the field— / The Queen hath best success when you are absent" ("House of York" 1:11:41; 2.2.73-4). The battle has become Margaret's, not Henry's, fight, and he has been relegated to the position of a consort and supporter. Margaret's domination of her husband is reflected in the drastic change in appearance the actor portraying Henry undergoes between his first appearance in *Henry VI Part I: The House of Lancaster* and his final appearance in *Henry VI Part II: The House of York.* In the former production he has a full head of hair and wears military regalia, replete with epaulets and a sword hanging at his side ("House of Lancaster" 1:16:01). His appearance evokes strength and confidence. By contrast, in his later incarnation, he appears frail and timid. His dull-grey dress-pants, black swallow-tail coat, balding head and large glasses make him look delicate and vulnerable ("House of York" 0:31:55). He resembles the "emasculated Dennis" Thatcher who was frequently depicted in photographs as a slight, be-speckled man, standing behind Prime Minister Thatcher. In the case of this production, Henry's diminished appearance gives the impression that his hair loss is not merely from age, but also from the stress of his wife's domination. As well as scolding him, Margaret anticipates Lady Macbeth's strategy of controlling her husband by shaming him. When Henry VI refuses to stand up to York, Margaret complains, "Enforced thee? Art thou king, and wilt be forced? / I shame to hear thee speak! Ah, timorous wretch" ("House of York" 0:41:09; 3H6 1.1.231-2). She employs this same strategy of emasculation when she seeks to inspire her

troops to fight Edward of York's army: "Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss, / But cheerly seek how to redress their harms" ("House of York" 2:22:20; 3H6 5.4.1-2). To prove their worth as men they must fight her battle. Margaret also bolsters the loyalty from her troops by publically humiliating the Duke of York. She chooses to make him stand on a molehill to emphasize that he "wrought at mountains with outstretchèd arms / Yet parted but the shadow with his hand" ("House of York" 0:53:55; 3H6 1.4.69-70). She emasculates her political rival by forcing him to wear a paper crown and sit on a molehill as opposed to the throne that he coveted ("House of York" 0:57:33). It is no coincidence that when Margaret chases her husband from his own battle that he, like York, is forced to sit on a molehill, a humble and humiliating alternative to the English throne ("House of York" 1:17:48). Randall Martin writes that Shakespeare's Queen Margaret has often been depicted as an Amazon, a category of woman whose "monstrous otherness was defined largely in sexual terms insofar as they deviated from a 'natural' maternal destiny, defied patriarchal control, and usurped the male privilege of acting rather than being acted upon" (325). Likewise, both Queen Margaret and Margaret Thatcher were criticized for defying gender norms in order to pursue their political agendas.

Henry VI Part II: The House of York responds to the societal debate regarding whether female politicians must sacrifice their families to pursue political careers. As a mother, as well as the prime minister of the UK, Thatcher was often criticized for having neglected her children and her husband. When she attempted to gain a parliamentary seat, she was continually rejected by constituency associations because "while they were impressed with her qualifications and intelligence, they questioned whether a young wife with two babies would not be better off staying at home" (Steinberg 213). Further, members of the press would often criticize Thatcher by drawing attention to her dysfunctional family—"crack-head Mark and drunken emasculated

Dennis"—to emphasize her incompetence (Martin 325). The roles of wife-mother and politician seemed to be mutually exclusive in the eyes of the British public. When soldiers returned from the Falklands War, Thatcher assumed the role of "warrior general" and reviewed her troops (Moss 808). By contrast, Queen Elizabeth II was "confined to that of worried mother rather than warrior general" (Moss 808). The only soldier she greeted was her son, Prince Andrew (Moss 808). Thus, the respective roles of mother and head of state seemed to be diametrically opposed. The ESC's Queen Margaret responds to this question of whether a woman can be both. As Randall Martin suggests, Shakespeare designed Queen Margaret as a "fierce amazon *and* aggrieved mother, as a woman who savagely repudiates her political marginalization *and* champions the dynastic rights of her child" (325). Margaret is a mother, as well as a political leader. Fortunately for Margaret, most of her political ambitions seem to align with her protective, maternal instincts. By securing her throne, she also guarantees her son's inheritance. However, Margaret's relationship with her husband, especially considering the ESC's production, suggests that the balance between her career and family is extremely strained. After all, she appears estranged from her husband, choosing political ambitions over their relationship. When she learns of his decision to resign the throne to York, she announces her intention to separate from him "I here divorce myself / Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed, / Until that act of parliament be repealed / Whereby my son is disinherited" ("House of York" 0:41:41; 3H6 1.1.248-51). Since her relationship with her husband was already contentious—she consistently emasculates and infantilizes him—it makes the audience question whether her intentions to separate from him are purely motivated by a maternal instinct to protect her son. After all, she often condescends to treat her husband as a child who disappoints her. Also, the actress who portrayed Margaret in this production looked matronly and significantly older than Henry.

Henry, although harried and balding, did not look much older than his son. Thus, Margaret might also view her son as a political pawn and replacement for her husband.

As well as her ambitions having an impact on her family life, Queen Margaret's role as the head of state has an impact on the families of her subjects. *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* suggests that Margaret's desire to fight for her throne and take part in the civil war contributes to the fracturing of families. After having been chased from his own war, Henry VI helplessly watches from his molehill as son kills father and father kills son. Margaret's participation in the murder of York's son, Rutland, seems particularly gratuitous since her willingness to spite a political rival leads her to kill an innocent man. It foreshadows her own son's death at the hands of York's children. Margaret fails to recognize the irony of her situation, instead berating York's sons: "You have no children, butchers; if you had, / The thought of them would have stirred up remorse" ("House of York" 2:29:16; 3H6 5.5.63-4). When Margaret contemplated the murder of Rutland, she had a child, but she allowed her political ambitions to outweigh her maternal instincts. This double-standard by which Margaret perceives herself to be an exception to the rule is reminiscent of how politicians like Elizabeth I and Thatcher have positioned themselves as an exception to their gender, while simultaneously enforcing their people to conform to traditional gender roles. As David Grant Moss notes, "programs which were designed to make life easier for working mothers were either dismantled or reduced during Thatcher's government, with the Prime Minister arguing that women should be most concerned with the domestic sphere" (812). In a speech to commemorate British suffragist Margery Corbett Ashby, Thatcher announced:

> The home should be the centre but not the boundary of a woman's life…
>
> Like Dame Margery [suffragists] had the inestimable privilege of being

> wives and mothers and they pursued their public work against the background of full and happy domestic lives. They neglected no detail of those lives… (Thatcher, "Speech" 7)

Rather than empowering women and offering a realistic role model, Thatcher presented an "and/or" binary of womanhood which was limiting. Women could be mothers and/or mother-politicians if they were exceptional like Thatcher and managed to raise themselves up by their "boot-strings." She did not imagine a situation where women could be leaders and/or leader-mothers as the home was naturally "the centre…of a woman's life" (Thatcher, "Speech" 7).

Henry VI Part II: The House of York reflects the belief that a woman's proficiency as a leader can be assessed from her appearance. When Queen Margaret announces her intention to challenge Edward of York for the throne, she instructs the messenger "Tell him my mourning weeds are laid aside, / And I am ready to put armour on" ("House of York" 1:55:50; 3H6 3.3.229-30). She is announcing her intention to compete with him. Mourning weeds would signify her isolation within the domestic realm since mourners, specifically women, defer their public lives to participate in private, introspective rituals. The armour aligns her with soldiers and male leaders like Edward, and thus signals that she is a strong and capable leader who can rival any male. Thatcher followed Queen Margaret and Elizabeth I's example and also adopted a male warrior persona to gain credibility as a leader (Moss 810). Like Elizabeth I, who is mythologised as donning armour to inspire her troops at Tilbury, Thatcher chose to wear "a camouflage jacket worn by a female soldier of the Ulster Defence Regiment" to greet troops taking part in the Falklands War (Thatcher, "Downing Street Years" 57). The ESC's Queen Margaret references Thatcher's Falklands camouflage costume and preference for aligning herself with great military leaders such as Winston Churchill. As Randall Martin writes, June

Watson's Margaret "appeared rumpled in a Second World War uniform, bedizened in medals with her cap jauntily askew, and rhetorically stentorian, thereby conveying the kind of Churchillian simulacrum some people believed Mrs. Thatcher was always trying to ape" (330). Even Margaret's civilian clothing, her severe skirt-suit, high-collared blouse and coiffed blonde hair reference Thatcher's typical campaign outfit and might be the precursor to the power suits worn by Hillary Rodham Clinton. The ESC's Margaret's suits are a far cry from the fussy, white dress she is shown wearing in *Henry VI Part I: The House of Lancaster.* Margaret's floor-length, lacy white dress seems to underscore her earlier situation as a vulnerable young woman ("House of Lancaster" 1:00:33). The impractical nature of her outfit is emphasized by the fact that she must carry the train to try and outrun Suffolk as he advances upon her, sword-drawn. By contrast, in the later production, her skirt-suit is a practical length and her square shoulders make her look intimidating and strong when she is standing amongst the other characters, despite being a head shorter than the other male actors.

Henry VI Part II: The House of York reflects the idea that women are too physically and psychologically weak to be strong leaders. When the Duke of York first learns that Margaret intends to besiege him with twenty thousand men, his sons dismiss the threat because they rationalize that "A woman's general—what should we fear?" ("House of York" 0:44:45; 3H6 1.2.68). Margaret is thus judged to be an incompetent leader by virtue of her being a woman. Like Margaret, Thatcher made claims of being an exception to her gender and having "become a kind of honorary man, 'one of the boys'" (Moss 810). As David Grant Moss notes, Thatcher was known as the "Iron Lady" and her "measure [was] taken by her ferrous constitution" (810). Queen Margaret likewise emphasizes her capability as a leader through her feats of strength. Her son praises her as an exceptional leader when he says: "Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit /

Should, if a coward heard her speak these words, / Infuse his blood with magnanimity" ("House of York" 2:24:03; 3H6 5.4.39-41). It is significant that the ESC cut the following lines spoken by Margaret when she mourns Suffolk: "Oft have I heard that grief softens the mind, / And makes it fearful and degenerate; / Think, therefore, on revenge, and cease to weep. / But who can cease to weep and look on this?" (2H6 4.4.1-4). This soliloquy, spoken by Margaret but excluded from the ESC production, evokes how Margaret feels pressured to portray herself as resilient and unfeeling in order to be viewed as a capable leader. She fails to recognize that her emotional response is not "womanly weakness," but rather part of human nature. By contrast, the ESC's Queen Margaret appears unfeeling since she fails to express this natural human response. While Queen Margaret attempts to convey a façade of iron will, she unwittingly appears irrational and cruel.

Like Margaret Thatcher, Queen Margaret strives to appear strong, to be an "Iron Lady." However, her feats of "valor" often fall short of heroic. Rather than the Iron Lady, she resembles an Iron Maiden as she appears cruel and inhuman. York reproaches her for killing Rutland, telling her "That face of his the hungry cannibals / Would not have touched…But you are more inhuman, more inexorable, / O, ten times more, than tigers of Hyrcania" ("House of York" 1:00:20; 3H6 1.4.153-6). He describes her as worse than the most monstrous humans. Likewise, Margaret's enemies frequently dehumanize her by comparing her to vicious animals. As well as aligning her with tigers, York describes her as the "She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France, / Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth" ("House of York" 0:58:16; 3H6 1.4.112-3). In the ESC's production Martin notes that June Watson's Margaret "did not flinch through York's impassioned invective, expressed impatient contempt for Northumberland's weakened resolve, and at the end of the scene 'stabbed York in a business-like manner and

continued on her way'" (330). She appears cold, practical and unfeeling. York rejects her attempts at valor as irrational and cruel, commenting "How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex / To triumph like an Amazonian trull" ("House of York" 0:58:26; 3H6 1.4.114-5). While he does associate her with a female warrior it is not to commemorate her strength, but rather to slander her as excessively vicious and a discredit to her gender. Rather than condone Margaret's actions to secure his throne, Henry VI expresses revulsion when Margaret shows him York's head displayed on a pike. He tells her, "To see this sight, it irks my very soul" ("House of York" 1:10:11; 3H6 2.2.6). As well as her feats of strength betraying her cruelty, Margaret's so-called military strategies seem to betray an irrational mind. In the scene in which she rebukes her husband for promising the throne to York, The ESC production chooses to cut several lines of Margaret's speech. The omitted lines enumerate the threats to Henry that Margaret perceives York using against them: "Warwick is Chancellor and the Lord of Calais; / Stern Falconbridge commands the narrow seas; / The Duke is made Protector of the Realm" (3H6 1.1 239-41). As Martin notes, the ESC's decision to exclude these lines suggest that "Margaret acts less on good intelligence and rational calculation and more on instinct and passion" (329). Likewise, the director of *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* was highly critical of Margaret Thatcher's political enterprises, especially her Falklands War. Michael Bogdanov writes:

> I was burning with anger at the iniquity of the British electoral system. Eleven million people had voted for Thatcher, fourteen million against…Moreover, Boadicea had rallied her troops around her with a senseless war of expediency, sailing heroically (in some people's eyes) twelve thousand miles to the Falklands to do battle for 'a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name / To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it.' (Bogdanov and Pennington 23)

He portrays her as deluded and irrational. While Thatcher viewed the Falklands War as a national victory, many thought it was a far cry from England's defeat of the Spanish Armada and other national tales with which she sought to align it (Moss 811).

When asked why he chose to make a production of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays, Michael Bogdanov responded that "The parallels were plain. *The Henrys* were plays for today, the lessons of history unlearnt" (Bogdanov and Pennington 24). The temporal and geographic links to Margaret Thatcher's government which are found in his *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* clearly attest to this belief. John Fuller writes that "June Watson's rigidly set blond coiffure suggests the Margaret then dominating the political world outside the theatre, a suggestion which connects with the Falklands War jingoism" (132). Likewise, it is fitting to draw upon Shakespeare, and especially his history plays, to discuss contemporary debates. Gabriele Bernhard Jackson writes that "Shakespeare's concern is with people involved in the pursuit, legitimization, retention, use, and abuse of power, and while arenas change, patterns of behavior persist and historical processes recur" (209). Bogdanov's production goes beyond caricaturing Thatcher's political campaigns. It demonstrates another way in which the lessons of history remain unlearnt: female leaders continue to be depicted as schemers who not only steal men's power, but abandon their traditional gender roles to do so. They are shamed for being perceived as too "frail" and "female" and demonized when they are perceived as "steely" and "masculine." *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* not only emphasizes the continuity between how female leaders like Queen Margaret and Margaret Thatcher are depicted and regarded by their society, but also gestures towards how female leaders in the twenty-first century—Hillary Rodham Clinton and Theresa May—continue to be regarded in this same light.

Prospering: Female Leadership in *The Tempest* and the Aftermath of the 2016 USA and UK Elections

2016 heralded a year of milestones for female leadership in the USA and UK. Theresa May became the UK's second female Prime Minister (Rayner NP4) and Hillary Rodham Clinton became "the first woman ever nominated by a major political party for President of the United States" (Clinton xii). Yet despite their promise, both politicians ultimately fell short of their expected goals. Rodham Clinton lost the presidency to Donald Trump and Theresa May continues to be plagued with political instability both within her country and her own party. Although May survived "a brush with political mortality…winning a no-confidence vote that would have ended her leadership of party and country….[this vote] reflected the discontent within the party over her handling of Britain's exit from the European Union" (Lawless NP4). Further, her victory was, at best, only partial since "she promised not to run for re-election in 2022" (Lawless NP4). She agreed to "political exile" to avoid "political mortality." As Laura Bates notes, "ongoing debate over the future of the country has seen commenters, both experienced and amateur, refer to [the] next Prime Minister as 'him' – and argue about what 'he' might do, or say, or decide" (Bates). In other words it seems that both the UK and the USA are anticipating a near future in which their country is run by a male head of state and expectations for female politicians are frustrated. This disappointing loss of opportunity for female leadership resonates with the Ontario Stratford Festival's 2018 production of *The Tempest.* In this latest production, the role of Prospero is reimagined as the Duchess, rather than the Duke, of Milan. As the Stratford Festival's first female Prospero, actress Martha Henry steps into a traditionally male role (Enright), just as Rodham Clinton and May have challenged societal expectations by campaigning to become the leaders of their respective countries. This 2018 theatre production is of course temporally linked to those recent political campaigns. As

well as the 2016 elections, the production resonates with May's ensuing political struggles and the publication of Rodham Clinton's book *What Happened* (2017), which discusses the aftermath of her failed presidential bid. The Stratford Festival's interpretation of *The Tempest* responds to our contemporary situation since Martha Henry's Prospero is not only a deposed leader, but a woman who struggles to regain power in a society dominated by male leaders. Her Prospero confronts the stereotypes which serve as obstacles to female leaders, including the beliefs we have been treating throughout this thesis, that ambitious women are unlikeable, that women only achieve power by stealing it from men, that women sacrifice their traditional gender roles to pursue politics, that their competence is reflected in their appearance, and that they are physically and psychologically too weak to be effective leaders. The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* challenges these stereotypes and reflects how, despite setbacks, female leadership has taken long strides since Elizabeth I fought to keep her throne.

The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* responds to the double standard whereby ambitious men are celebrated and ambitious women are criticised as aggressive and unnatural. This bias against ambitious women remains prevalent in our society, as indicated by the backlash against female politicians running for office. When Hillary Rodham Clinton became the Democratic candidate for the 2016 presidential election she was caricatured as "deranged" and "power-mad" (Brock vi). Although her desire to become the President of the United States was a fairly common ambition and one shared by her male counterparts, Rodham Clinton was singled out because a woman expressing such motivations was regarded as suspicious (Clinton 40). Theresa May experienced a similar backlash when she ran for the Conservative party leadership in the UK. Laura Bates notes that there was a surge in Twitter posts attacking her during her campaign; "May was called a 'bitch', 'ugly', and (over and over again) that sexist and ageist term: 'witch'"

(Bates). One anonymous post denounced May as an "Annoying authoritarian old witch" and declared that she was "the ideal leader to guarantee the death of the Conservative Party" (qtd. in Bates). These Twitter posts evoke the sheer hostility against the prospect of a woman running for the position of head of state. In an episode of CBC Radio's *The Sunday Edition*, actress Seana McKenna drew attention to the fact that this bias against ambitious female leaders is mirrored in our bias against ambitious female characters:

> we know we have different words for an aggressive male and an aggressive woman, or a confident woman and a confident man…[Shakespeare's] women who are avaricious, ambitious, aggressive, like the Margarets in *Henry VI* or the Regans and the Gonerils—they're called unnatural in the plays. So that's a label that is put upon them, but when you're playing them, you don't put that on yourself, you say, what do I want? I'm entitled to this. (Enright)

As McKenna points out, Shakespeare's female characters, like our female politicians, are regarded as inherently ruthless for pursuing their ambitions. They are not granted the same license as their male counterparts. Rather than heroic or misguided, they are characterized as "deranged" and "power-hungry." Shakespeare's male character Prospero has traditionally been viewed in an at least largely positive light. His tenacious drive to reclaim his dukedom is viewed as natural, and he is treated as a largely sympathetic character. However, as director Julie Taymor points out, *The Tempest* is not simply the story of a heroic, noble character reclaiming his former status. Rather, "*The Tempest* is at once a revenge drama, romance, and a black comedy" (Taymor 13). While Prospero does not physically harm his political enemies, he does appear to take a perverse pleasure in psychologically torturing them: sending a tempest to lay waste to their ship, separating them and frightening them with harpies and other visions. His

actions seem on par with *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*'s Queen Margaret, who famously tortures Richard of York by taunting him with a handkerchief smeared in the blood of his murdered son. Nonetheless, despite these acts of revenge, Prospero is viewed in a positive light, whereas Margaret is demonized. This 2018 *Tempest* production responds to this double standard of depicting ambition differentially in men and women by choosing an actress to portray Prospero. Making Prospero a woman disrupts this status quo of regarding ambitious women as inherently evil since the audience still feels the natural sympathy they do towards the character Shakespeare has created: a leader exiled from his/her rightful dukedom. Further, this female Prospero acts as a foil to the male characters in the play whose ambitions appear unnatural and morally corrupt. Antonio is motivated to exile his own sister and niece to seize control of the dukedom of Milan, and Sebastian contemplates the murder of his brother to become the King of Naples.

As well as responding to this bias against female ambition, The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* also complicates the stereotype that women only gain power by stealing it from men. The choice to cast Prospero as a woman inverts the societal preconception of women stealing men's power since in this production Antonio steals the dukedom from his *sister*. Prospero proudly informs her daughter Miranda, "thy mother / Was Duchess of Milan, and [that Miranda is] her only heir / And princess no worse issued" (1.2.57-9)[3]. This statement seems revolutionary

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Since the quotations I use are taken from an un-filmed theatrical production, the Stratford Festival's 2018 production of *The Tempest*, I have provided the citations for equivalent lines in the original play text to help the reader. I have retained the changes to the script that the Stratford Festival production used—e.g. the "Duchess" instead of the "Duke" of Milan

since it was only recently that the rules governing the order of succession for the British royal family were reversed so that in the next generation, the monarch's first child, rather than first male child, would inherit the throne (Kennedy). According to the old rules of primogeniture, Antonio would inherit before his sister Prospero. However, in this production, he only "inherits" "By foul play" (1.2.62). Thus, this production of the *Tempest* dispels the idea that men are naturally entitled to positions of power over women. Rather, it suggests that female leaders must be wary of usurpation, and alludes to how women's power has historically been co-opted by men in order to consolidate their authority. As Margaret Simons notes, sexist ideology usually depicts women as the inferior "Other" to men to justify their dependent status vis-à-vis men (386). Prospero envisions her brother as a usurping growth; Antonio is "The ivy which had hid my princely trunk, / And sucked my verdure out on't" (1.2.86-7). As Stephen Orgel notes, ivy on a trunk was "a familiar topos, usually representing the perils of symbiotic relationships" ("Notes" 106 n 86-7). When Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, this line alluded to a younger brother betraying an older brother. This new production of *The Tempest* adds another dimension since it is not merely a sibling betraying his sibling, but also a man betraying a woman. Prospero decries Antonio for having "set all hearts i'th' state / To what tune pleased his ear" (1.2.84-5). He undermined her authority and set her people against her. This eerily recalls the troubles that Theresa May has encountered while trying to negotiate Brexit and ensure solidarity within her party. Her enforced agreement to refrain from running for re-election in 2022 (Lawless NP4) is an exile akin to what Prospero experiences when she is ousted from her own seat of power. Further, Jesse Green's review of the Stratford Festival's production draws parallels between the production and women's historic disenfranchisement:

> That [Prospero] survived in silence on a remote island—and now has it in her power to wreak revenge—inevitably aligns Shakespeare with current events; women speaking out as part of the #MeToo movement have endured a comparable exile and silencing. To me, that makes Prospero's decision to forgive her abusers especially complex and therefore moving. (Green)

The production could of course directly allude to the #MeToo movement since Miranda is the victim of sexual assault. Prospero rebukes Caliban because he "didst seek to violate / The honour of my child" (1.2.347-8). When confronted with his attempted rape, Caliban exhibits a sense of entitlement and appears indifferent to Miranda's trauma. The only regret he acknowledges is that he did not succeed in raping her: "Thou didst prevent me—I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.349-50). He does not view Miranda as a person but as a political tool to consolidate his power over the island. The production's denouncement of sexual assault and male privilege relates to how female politicians like Hillary Rodham Clinton are engaged with encouraging women to speak out and challenge men. Even after losing the election to Donald Trump, Rodham Clinton discussed how she took comfort while watching the Woman's March since she saw "young girls holding up quotes from speeches over the years: 'Women's Rights Are Human Rights.' 'I Am Powerful and Valuable'" (15). This production responds to the stereotype of women stealing men's power and asserts that instead, women need to take power back.

While Prospero's authority over Milan is uncontested, her dubious claim to the island raises uncomfortable questions about how she achieved this power. Clearly Prospero did not steal control of the island from privileged white males, but there is still the lingering accusation that she did steal it from someone. According to Caliban, Prospero usurped the island from him.

He declares, “This island’s mine by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak’st from me” (1.2.331-2). In Shakespeare’s original play in which Prospero is depicted as male, Caliban and Prospero’s quarrel over the ownership of the island is a contest between Caliban’s claim through his matrilineal descent and Prospero’s claim by virtue of him being a male conqueror. Prospero regards Sycorax’s claim to the island as null and void and further attempts to invalidate her claim through character assassination. He refers to her as a “wicked dam” (1.2.320) and “The foul witch Sycorax” (1.2.258). His slander of Sycorax is similar to how people attempt to discredit female leaders’ authority by demonizing them. Theresa May is frequently referred to as a “witch” (Bates) and Hillary Rodham Clinton is caricatured as a power-hungry “Lady Macbeth” (Smith 9). While the Stratford Festival’s Prospero is female, she still follows the patriarchal precedent of demonizing female political rivals to discredit them. Historically, female leaders like Elizabeth I have followed this same strategy of elevating themselves by seeking to differentiate themselves from other women (Marcus 140). Director Julie Taymor’s 2010 film *The Tempest* also features a female Prospero who seeks to distance herself from Sycorax in order to validate her authority. As Jonathan Bate writes:

> Prospera recognizes a resemblance between her own dark arts and those of Sycorax…The more Prospera protests that her magic is white whereas that of Sycorax was black, the less convinced we become that black and white magic can be kept neatly apart in separate boxes. (10)

Likewise, the Stratford Festival’s production emphasizes the similarities between Prospero and Sycorax. Both wield magic. Prospero refers to Sycorax as “The foul witch” (1.2.257), but in the Stratford Festival production, Caliban in turn refers to Prospero as a “sorceress” (3.2.41).

Prospero appears defensive about these similarities and seeks to emphasize Sycorax's nefariousness and thus distance herself from the other woman:

> This damned witch Sycorax,
> For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible
> To enter human hearing, from Algiers
> Thou know'st was banished—for one thing she did
> They would not take her life. (1.2.263-7)

Despite her attempts to differentiate herself from Sycorax by referring to her alleged crimes and slandering her as a "damned witch," she unwittingly brings up their shared similarities. Both Prospero and Sycorax are mothers who have been exiled from their homelands. Further, Prospero has only heard the story second-hand through Ariel, having never actually met Sycorax. It makes the audience question whether Sycorax was banished for a crime or merely usurped like Prospero herself had been. Thus, Sycorax's backstory might be a smear campaign concocted to validate Prospero's authority, just as Antonio very well might have created a narrative of Prospero's "incapability" as a leader to justify his usurpation of the Milanese throne. This production complicates the notion of women achieving power because it depicts Prospero as complicit in the patriarchal practice of oppressing disenfranchised groups to achieve power.

The Stratford Festival's Prospero reflects the concern that women might seek to elevate themselves by oppressing racial minorities. For example, Rebecca J. Mead describes how in 1903 members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association sought to gain support from southerners by assuring them that the "race question was irrelevant to their purposes" (7). As Mead notes, these white suffragists unwittingly helped reinforce racist attitudes since they failed to heed W.E.B. Du Bois's warning that their position "represents a climbing of one class

on the misery of another" (7). The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* reflects this structure of a white privileged woman elevating herself by oppressing a black minority. Prospero is depicted as a white noblewoman, while Caliban is portrayed by an African-American actor, Michael Blake. Caliban seems conscious of this slave-master dynamic as he describes himself as "subject to a tyrant, a / sorceress that by her cunning hath cheated me of this is- / land" (3.2.40-2). Further, Prospero continuously uses disparaging language to describe Caliban, choosing to refer to him as "slave! Caliban!" (1.2.313) and "Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam" (1.2.319-20). Michael Blake's Caliban wears prosthetics that give the impression he has spikes growing from his spine and face and that he has an arm disfigured with barnacles. He resembles one of Davy Jones's enslaved hybrid crewmen from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film franchise. In this franchise, the men gain these fish features as a result of their enslavement. Similarly, Caliban's fish features seem to symbolize how Prospero dehumanizes him. She constantly disparages Caliban's appearance when she describes his ties to the island: "Then was this island— / Save for the son that she did litter here, / A freckled whelp, hag-born—not honoured with / A human shape" (1.2.281-4). By dehumanizing him she invalidates his claim to the island since she depicts him as subhuman and therein irrelevant to the succession. This strategy mirrors the American slavery experience whereby "justifications for slavery relied upon racist ideology espousing the animal-like character of the slaves… slaves were perceived as radically dissimilar" (Simons 386). While Prospero does not steal power from white privileged males to gain authority, her claim to power is troubling since it seems to bear vestiges of racism and sexism and thus reflects how women might be tempted to gain a foothold in power by espousing these beliefs.

Martha Henry's Prospero debunks the stereotype that women must abandon their families to pursue politics. In contemporary politics this stereotype persists as female leaders like Hillary Rodham Clinton and Theresa May are constantly scrutinized for how they conform or fail to conform to traditional gender roles. Rodham Clinton succeeded in becoming the first American female Democratic candidate, but failed to become the president. Following the election, she ruminated over why she had lost: "I thought a lot about this. Maybe it's because I'm a woman, and we're not used to women running for President" (40). During the election she acknowledges the backlash she experienced: "after the mean-spirited campaign Trump ran, there was a decent chance I'd get booed or be met with 'Lock her up!" (4). Her account emphasizes how women are still regarded as outsiders to the political arena who should be sent back to the domestic realm. Unlike Rodham Clinton, Theresa May won her election. However, according to Laura Bates, many of her supporters subscribed to traditional gender norms. One of the reasons they supported her was because she "doesn't have any children" which means "she's less likely to be distracted on the job" (Bates). Unlike Rodham Clinton and May, Martha Henry's version of Prospero is a female head of state and mother figure. This Prospero proves that neither role is mutually exclusive. Further, unlike Julie Taymor's 2010 film *The Tempest*, Martha Henry's Prospero holds the position of duchess in her own right. Taymor's Prospera is a dowager duchess who earned the title through marriage (Taymor 14). By contrast, in the Stratford Festival's *Tempest,* there is no mention of Miranda's father or even if Prospero was ever married. Her married status is irrelevant to her position as the ruler of Milan. When discussing how the role of Prospero was adapted to that of a woman, Martha Henry notes that "the only thing we've had to do is change the 'hes' to 'shes,' the 'fathers' to 'mothers' and the 'duke' to 'duchess'—that last one being a bit of a problem because it throws the scansion off. Other than that, the text has

remained the same" (Enright). The relatively effortless transition from male Prospero to female Prospero symbolizes how there is little difference between a woman assuming a position of power, even when it has been traditionally viewed as a male office. Unlike Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (2010), the Stratford Festival production does not change Prospero's name to "Prospera" (Bate 10). This choice might reflect the idea that "Prospero" is not just a name, but also a coveted role that women have been barred from playing—much like how the position of the head of state has been dominated by men. By making Prospero gender-neutral, it reminds audience members that the role of "prime minister" and "president" are likewise roles that a man or woman can equally fill. Nonetheless, while advances have been made towards ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men, there still remains resistance to women transgressing gender roles, let alone female actresses taking on traditionally male Shakespearean roles. As Henry's colleague Seana McKenna astutely notes, "Sometimes when women play men, they're raising their status and that's a bit daunting" (Enright). Likewise, female leaders such as Hillary Rodham Clinton and Theresa May might be interpreted by some as appropriating "male roles."

This depiction of Prospero as both a mother and a head of state suggests that both roles are equally accessible to a woman. Rather than discourage women from pursuing politics, the Stratford Festival's *Tempest* seems to argue that it is dangerous for women to abstain from politics. Prospero admits that the pursuit of her studies led her to defer the government of her dukedom: "the liberal arts… being all my study, / The government I cast upon my brother, / And to my state grew stranger, being transported / And rapt in secret studies" (1.2.73-7). As Stephen Orgel notes, Prospero's use of the words "transported" and "rapt" are significant since "Both words mean 'physically carried away': Prospero describes his studies as a prefiguration of his

abduction and dispatch to the island" ("Notes" 105 n.76-7). In the Stratford Festivals' *Tempest*, Prospero's deep immersion in her studies and indifference to her state seem eerily reminiscent of the traditional position of a woman sequestered in the domestic realm and cut off from the political arena. As a result of her deferral of duties, Prospero leaves an opening for her unscrupulous brother to wield power. Antonio only wants to be the Duke of Milan and is indifferent to the cost of allying with the King of Naples. As Prospero notes, Antonio was willing "To give him annual tribute, do him homage, / Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend / The dukedom yet unbowed…To most ignoble stooping" (1.2.113-6). Antonio's betrayal of Milan recalls accusations regarding the Russian State's interference in the American presidential election. In light of this corruption, Rodham Clinton also refers to this danger of women deferring their power:

> I ran into Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, walking slowly but with steely determination. If I had won, she might have enjoyed a nice retirement. Now I hoped she'd stay on the bench as long as humanly possible. (11)

The Stratford *Tempest* reflects this need to foster female leadership. Prospero is a female leader who takes an active role in educating her daughter and heir, stating "and here / Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / Than other princes can that have more time / For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (1.2.171-4). Miranda's education puts her on equal footing with the male leaders with whom she interacts. Miranda's progressive childhood and education mirror that of Rodham Clinton who was raised according to the "distinctly modern notion that [she] would not be limited in opportunity or skills by the fact that she was a girl" (Bernstein 13). Miranda appears evenly matched with her future husband when in Act 5.1, they are found playing chess. In the Stratford Festival production, she manages to checkmate Ferdinand.

Further, in an earlier scene, 3.1, she rejects Ferdinand's patriarchal belief that it is not fitting for women to take part in heavy labour. She responds that "It would become me / As well as it does you, and I should do it / With much more ease, for my good will is to it, / And yours it is against" (3.1.28-31). In fact in this production she appears to surpass Ferdinand, as she is able to successfully move a tree trunk across the stage, while he fails to even lift it. Miranda and Ferdinand's relationship foreshadows a new generation in which men and women participate in politics on equal footing.

The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* challenges the belief that a female leader's competence is reflected in her appearance. Laura Bates writes that "criticism is far more likely directed at [male politicians'] policies or positions, whereas the abuse aimed at female politicians tends to overlook their ideology altogether in favour of bashing their appearance or simply threatening to rape or kill them" (Bates). In the same article Bates alludes to the fact that someone jokingly suggested Theresa May was worthy of being elected because she "works a good shoe" (Bates). Likewise, Rodham Clinton felt pressure to wear power suits like other male politicians in order to be viewed as a competent leader (Clinton 88). Shakespeare's *The Tempest* reflects this idea of clothing being linked to political power. In the play clothing is a metonym for male authority. As Stephen Orgel notes the "magic garment" that Prospero wears is not merely an accessory but "refers to his cloak of office" and thus his political power ("Notes" 102 n. 24-5). Antonio likewise uses clothing to evoke his new position as the Duke of Milan. When Sebastien confronts him for having supplanted Prospero, Antonio responds "True; / And look how well my garments sit upon me, / Much feater than before" (2.1.269-71). The Stratford Festival's production likewise uses lavish clothing to evoke power. When Prospero reclaims her position as the Duchess of Milan she appears resplendent in a tiara, golden chain of office and golden velvet,

white fur-trimmed mantle. She bears a striking resemblance to Elizabeth II when she dons her robes of state to visit parliament. However, this production also undercuts the idea that clothing equals competence. After all, before Prospero leaves the island, she chooses to discard her chain, mantle and tiara, along with her magic book and staff. This suggests that these accessories are merely symbolic substitutes for the actual power that Prospero wishes to wield. When she reclaims her power she throws these accessories off as useless crutches. Unlike Prospero, the other characters fail to discern true power from empty substitutes. It is humorous to watch Trinculo and Stephano's plot to murder Prospero fall apart because they are tempted to play dress-up with the "glistering apparel" (Orgel, "Notes" 183) which Ariel has laid out to distract them. Caliban wisely tells them to "Let it alone, thou fool, it is but trash," (4.1.223) but they mistake it for true substance and power. Further, Prospero's "magic garment" (1.2.24) is not austere, but instead appears to be a patchwork of scavenged rags and silks. It is a testimony to her ingenuity, rather than her wealth and status. Prospero's typical dress, her long white shift and lace collar, is the antithesis of the ornate lace-trimmed doublets that her brother Antonio and the King of Naples wear. Yet her outfit does not detract from her power and ability to command people. Martha Henry's costume appears simple and non-restrictive. Prospero's outfit gestures towards how female politicians might be slowly moving away from using clothing as status symbols and armour to using it as a means of self-expression. Rodham Clinton acknowledges that her decision to wear purple at her 2016 Concession speech was a "nod to bipartisanship (blue plus red equals purple)" (18). Further, she had planned to wear white if she had won the election because she "had hoped to thank the country wearing white—the color of the suffragettes" (18). It is likely no coincidence that Martha Henry's Prospero also wears white,

perhaps in solidarity with her female predecessors and as a testimony to the strength of contemporary female leaders.

As well as deconstructing stereotypes about women's appearance, this production also deconstructs beliefs that women are too physically and psychologically weak to be effective leaders. Hillary Rodham Clinton alludes to this pressure to present a strong front during the 2016 American election, admitting "I've often felt I had to be careful in public, like I was up on a wire without a net" (xiii-xiv) and that "I wear my composure like a suit of armor" (18). In her presidential campaign speeches, she repeatedly emphasized her "toughness" to prove her worthiness as a candidate (Gutgold 36). Theresa May's critics often refer to her physical weakness in order to emphasize her weak leadership. They draw attention to the fact that "She suffers from diabetes and looks tired and ashen" (Bagehot). Expectations are exacting for female leaders since they are disliked for being assertive, yet dismissed for being perceived as "too weak" (Clinton 119). The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* evokes this need for women to reach a balance between resilience and compassion. Martha Henry's Prospero seems to espouse this belief since in the final scenes of the production she appears to be a strong leader who is able to confront her political enemies, yet treats them with restraint and compassion. She embraces her brother Antonio in forgiveness, yet strongly rebukes him for exiling her:

> For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother
> Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
> Thy rankest fault—all of them—and require
> My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know
> Thou must restore. (5.1.130-4)

Nonetheless, this balance which Prospero exhibits is a far cry from her earlier, more aggressive attempts to assert herself.

To emphasize her absolute authority Prospero brandishes her staff like a spear, threatening to gore the cowering Ariel when he dares to question his subordinate status. She also threatens Caliban: "If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly / What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with achës" (1.2.367-9). Despite his attempt to rape her, Miranda is not insensitive to Prospero's mistreatment of Caliban and physically intervenes by putting her body between the two of them. It is Prospero's servant Ariel who finally confronts her about her mistreatment of her political rivals. He tells her, "Your charm so strongly works 'em / That if you now beheld them, your affections / Would become tender" (5.1.17-9). Shamed by his words, she becomes defensive and declares, "Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling / Of their afflictions, and shall not myself, / One of their kind…be kindlier moved than thou art?" (5.1.21-4). Henry's Prospero cries, covers her face and accepts that her lack of compassion makes her inhuman. She is unabashed by her emotional response since it is this repression of emotion which appears toxic and makes her unnatural and unfeeling. In throwing away her staff, she also throws away her previous leadership style of governing through tyrannical demonstrations of force.

The Stratford Festival's 2018 production of *The Tempest* speaks to the experience of disempowered women, but also to the hope of a future thriving with female leaders. The production chooses to interpret Prospero as an exiled and triumphantly reinstated female head of state. Even the name "Prospero" alludes to this optimism as it signifies 'fortunate' or 'prosperous' (Orgel "Notes" 101 n.1.2). As well as reflecting support for female leaders, the production also speaks to the consequences of women choosing to defer their power. Prospero's

initial choice to withdraw from the world and pursue her studies in isolation resonates with the 2016 American presidential election since Rodham Clinton writes that following the election women apologized to her for "not voting or not doing more to help [her] campaign" (14). She describes how she was frustrated because by not voting they "abdicated [their] responsibility as a citizen at the worst possible time!" (14). This 2018 *Tempest* also resonates with the tribulations women encounter when they attempt to participate in politics. The backlash Martha Henry experienced when she was cast as Prospero parallels the backlash female politicians like May and Rodham Clinton experience in politics. Patrons threatened to boycott the 2018 production (Enright) and the opening night was cancelled due to a bomb threat—the first in the entire history of the Stratford Festival (Nestruck). Yet despite this open resistance, the production, as well as the cast, continually emphasized how it is important to participate and not defer. As Martha Henry notes, representation is important in order to foster female empowerment since "if you don't see yourself represented in any way shape or form, then you think you don't belong" (Enright). Although, Rodham Clinton failed to secure the American presidency, she recognized that her campaign did help "bring into the mainstream the idea of a woman leader for our country" (145). Laura Bates writes that "If we are truly entering new political waters, it would be nice to see fresh attitudes towards female MPs as well" (Bates). When Bates wrote her article, she was anticipating a future wherein Rodham Clinton became the first female US president and Theresa May succeeded as prime minister. She regarded this possibility as a "moment in politics [that] could have an enormous historical impact" (Bates). While Bates's predictions about the elections were inaccurate, her belief that society was "entering new political waters" seems perfectly correct. No doubt this female-driven *Tempest* is a good indication of the "new political waters" that we can expect.

Conclusion to Part II –In the Spotlight: Female Politicians and Shakespeare's Queens

In the twenty-first century, women have starring roles on the political stage. Prime ministers Angela Merkel and Theresa May are just two principal players in the roster of female leaders that currently govern. Yet, despite there being an abundance of women in politics, their presence is still regarded as exceptional, rather than as part of the accepted norm. Hillary Rodham Clinton drew attention to this double-standard when she was interviewed during the 2008 American presidential election:

> when I was asked what it means to be a woman running for president, I always gave the same answer: that I was proud to be running as a woman but I was running because I thought I'd be the best president. But I am a woman, and like millions of women, I know there are still barriers and biases out there, often unconscious. (qtd. in Gutgold 1)

Rodham Clinton's response emphasizes that female leadership still faces many challenges. She acknowledges that there continue to be "barriers and biases out there, often unconscious" which serve as obstacles to women participating in politics. These stereotypes include the belief that ambitious women are unlikeable, that they only achieve power by stealing it from men, that they selfishly sacrifice their families to pursue politics, that their appearance is a reflection of their competence, and that they are too physically and psychologically weak to be capable leaders. It is difficult to overcome these biases since many of them are ingrained in society and become accepted as social norms. For example, the interviewer engaging with Rodham Clinton would have never bothered to ask a male candidate what it means to be a man running for president since it is a situation which is understood to be the norm. While these stereotypes serve as obstacles to female leaders, it is possible to overcome these stereotypes by exposing and challenging them. In this thesis, I have examined how modern theatrical and cinematic

productions of Shakespeare's plays make these "barriers and biases" visible by dramatizing the experience of female leadership on the stage. In Part II of this thesis, I examined three modern Shakespearean productions: The English Shakespeare Company's *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991), The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* (2008), and the Stratford Festival's *The Tempest* (2018). Each of these productions is temporally and/or geographically linked to a historic moment in the political career of a female politician, respectively the aftermath of Margaret Thatcher's Falkland's War campaign, Hillary Rodham Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign and Rodham Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, as well as Theresa May's three-year term as prime minister, which ended abruptly when she was pressured to resign and allow her party to choose a new leader. Each of the production's interpretations of Shakespeare's female sovereign characters responds to beliefs about contemporary female politicians and female leadership in general. By examining these productions, it is possible to trace how beliefs about female leadership have shifted over time.

In the oldest productions that I examine, *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) and *Macbeth* (2008), ambition is depicted as an unlikeable trait in women. This parallels how leaders contemporary to these productions—Margaret Thatcher and Hillary Rodham Clinton—were regarded as aggressive and power-hungry for expressing an interest to run for election. Likewise, the queen characters' ambition spurs them to commit ruthless acts. June Watson's Queen Margaret calmly oversees the execution of the Duke of York and the murder of his son Rutland to secure her husband's claim to the throne. Kate Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth appears full of zeal as she persuades her husband to murder King Duncan and seize the Scottish throne. Since both Watson's Queen Margaret and Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth respectively bear a strong physical resemblance to Thatcher and Rodham Clinton, this encourages the audience to draw

parallels between the actor's depiction of female leadership and the leadership style espoused by the female politician that is contemporary to that production. Further, it influences us to associate the character's ruthlessness with the politician's ambition. The only perceptible difference in the *Macbeth* production's treatment of female ambition is that it associates it with cruelty, as well as mental instability. One reviewer likened Eastwood Norris's Lady Macbeth's ambition to a "fever for power" and suggested that she was "pleading for a tranquilizer" (Marks). By contrast, Watson's Queen Margaret appears cruel, but fully in possession of her mental faculties: she "stab[s] York in a business-like manner and continu[es] on her way'" (Martin 330). These productions' stereotypic depictions of female ambition might reflect how the concept of elected female heads of state was only just becoming a reality in the USA and the UK. In 1991, Margaret Thatcher was ending her tenure as the first female prime minister of the UK and in 2008, Rodham Clinton nearly became the first female Democratic candidate in the presidential election. By 2018, the year that *The Tempest* production debuted at the Stratford Festival, these countries had experienced great strides with regards to female leadership: Theresa May was the second female prime minister to be elected to govern the UK and Hillary Rodham Clinton was not only nominated as the Democratic party candidate for the 2016 election, but nearly became president. These advances in female leadership are reflected in how female ambition is depicted more positively in the *Tempest* production.

The Stratford Festival's *Tempest* challenges the stereotype that female ambition is inherently destructive since it is the male characters, rather than female characters, whose ambition motivates them to commit ruthless acts. Antonio attempts to strand his sister and niece in a ship unfit to be sailed, in order to gain the dukedom of Milan. Sebastien contemplates murdering his brother to become King of Naples and Caliban attempts to rape Miranda in order

to populate and takeover the island. This differs from *Macbeth* (2008) and *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) where male ambition is treated in a more sympathetic light. The Duke of York's ambition for the throne seems justified since he has a better claim to the throne than Henry VI. Despite committing murder and treason, Macbeth is regarded as a sympathetic character. A review of The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's *Macbeth* production describes Ian Merrill Peakes's Macbeth as "a nice guy…led astray to commit murder" (Marks). Yet, despite this disparity in the representation of female ambition, all three productions link female ambition with familial duty. Queen Margaret couches her desire to reclaim the throne from York as a duty to protect her son's birthright. Lady Macbeth wants her husband to attain the "golden round" (1.5.31). It is implied that by urging him to kill Duncan, she is protecting his interests and playing the part of his supportive wife. Even Prospero's interest in reclaiming her dukedom seems motivated by a desire to protect her daughter and secure her birthright. Before Antonio exiles both her and Miranda, she appears indifferent to the idea of governing her dukedom. These three productions suggest that we still view women's ambition as linked to their traditional gender roles.

Another belief about female leadership which seems to evolve over the course of these productions is the idea that power is a zero-sum game and that for women to participate in politics, it means usurping men's place. Both the *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* production and the *Macbeth* production reflect this belief since the queen characters are queen consorts who appropriate their husband's power. They rule by their husband's right, not through their own inheritance or merit. The choice to align Thatcher and Rodham Clinton with queen consorts, rather than female monarchs, in turn suggests that they do not have a right to participate in politics, but have misappropriated men's roles. After all, the traditional role of a consort or

first lady is to be unobtrusive and supportive of her spouse, while not actually participating in the running of the country. Queen Margaret's condescension towards her husband, such as refusing to let him speak and banishing him from his own battle, reflect accusations that Margaret Thatcher emasculated her husband and similarly kept him in a subordinate position while she pursued politics (Martin 325). Thatcher defied societal conventions by entering politics, instead of staying at home to raise her children (Steinberg 213). Colleen Elizabeth Kelley posits that Rodham Clinton's decision to participate in politics would have appeared objectionable to some because as first lady she was a close collaborator with her husband, the president, and some believed that a woman's role was to "'bask in reflected glory' and maintain a comfortable, stable, quiet home environment where her husband may rise to fame without domestic or family distractions" (Kelley 8). Rodham Clinton has frequently been compared to Lady Macbeth as she was viewed as a first lady who, like Shakespeare's queen, exercised considerable power over her husband and his affairs (Smith 9). The productions depict Lady Macbeth and Queen Margaret as domineering tyrants which seems to mirror how Rodham Clinton and Thatcher are caricatured as power-hungry women. Rodham Clinton is demonized as an interfering, ambitious First Lady, while Thatcher is popularly regarded as an "Iron Lady" who neglected her family, especially her husband, "emasculated Dennis" (Martin 325).

The Tempest production complicates this idea that women steal men's power since Prospero is a duchess, rather than a duke, with a legal claim to a realm. Further, unlike the other productions, it is a man who usurps power from a woman. This production emphasizes the idea that women are entitled to positions of power. Hillary Rodham Clinton earned her place as the Democratic candidate in the 2016 election, just as Theresa May won the UK election to become prime minister. Antonio's theft of the dukedom from his sister Prospero recalls how historically

men have disempowered women to elevate themselves by portraying women as subservient to them (Simons 386). However, the production also examines how historically women have been tempted to claim power at the cost of oppressing other marginalized groups. The depiction of Caliban as a man of African heritage who is enslaved by Prospero speaks to how early suffragettes may have willingly or unwittingly reinforced racist ideology in order to protect their own interests (Mead 7). Further, the production emphasizes the similarities between Sycorax and Prospero and suggests that by seeking to distinguish herself from Sycorax, Prospero follows Elizabeth I's precedent of elevating herself by disparaging her fellow female leaders (Heisch 45). The contemporary audience's disgust that Prospero would be willing to disparage a fellow leader to gain credibility reflects how today female leaders are much more interested in supporting other women. As Graham Goodland notes, Theresa May "actively promoted the adoption of more female Conservative parliamentary candidates through the pressure group Women2win, whereas Thatcher always gave the impression that women could succeed through their own efforts, just as she had done" (Goodlad 13). Thus, we can see advances in female leadership just by comparing these two UK female conservative prime ministers and their contrasting opinions about fostering opportunities for women in politics. Like May, Rodham Clinton expressed a desire to encourage female leadership. Despite her loss of the 2016 presidential election, she viewed her campaign as a moral victory because her team "helped bring into the mainstream the idea of a woman leader for our country" (Clinton 145). While she did not succeed, the assumption is that we should support the next generation of female leaders so that one of them will succeed. *The Tempest* production likewise speaks to this idea of fostering the next generation of female leaders. Martha Henry, the actress who portrayed Prospero, began her Stratford Festival career by playing Miranda (Enright). In her forty-fourth season with the

company, she has returned to play Prospero (Enright). Just as Martha Henry has come full-circle, developing from a young woman in a supporting role to a mature woman in a leading role, the production reflects the idea that with the right encouragement Miranda will become a formidable leader, just like her mother.

All three of these modern Shakespeare productions respond to the theme of women transgressing gender roles to pursue traditional male positions of power. *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991) presents this transgression of gender norms as having a negative impact on society. Queen Margaret's ambitions to secure the throne lead her to neglect her family. She emasculates and divorces her husband and her son becomes collateral damage in her ensuing political feud with the Yorks. This reflects how Thatcher was criticized for eschewing traditional gender roles by choosing to enter politics instead of becoming a homemaker. In the production, Queen Margaret's usurpation of the position of the head of state and her participation in the War of the Roses not only fractures her own family, but also the families in her realm. The civil war leads to sons and fathers fighting each other on the battlefield. To a certain extent the *Macbeth* (2008) production mirrors the *Henry VI* production in choosing to depict this transgression of female gender roles as unnatural and disruptive to society. In the *Macbeth* production, women's attainment of power is repeatedly linked to their sacrifice of children. Lady Macbeth swears she would sacrifice her child for the sake of claiming the throne (1.7.64-6). Further, the power of the witches' brew comes from ingredients such as a "Finger of [a] birth-strangled babe" (4.1.30) and "sow's blood that hath eaten / Her nine farrow" (4.1.71-2), suggesting that women's power is drawn from an unnatural perversion of their traditional gender role—the sacrifice, rather than the protection of children. However, this production complicates our beliefs about women neglecting their traditional gender roles since it includes a female character who conforms to gender roles,

but finds little solace in her situation. Unlike Lady Macbeth, Lady Macduff perfectly conforms to gender roles as she chooses to stay at home and raise her children. Yet, she seems no more satisfied, nor secure than Lady Macbeth who feels helpless and driven to commit suicide. The production depicts Lady Macduff as heavily pregnant and stages the murderer stabbing her through her stomach ("Part II FT/TR Macbeth" 0:13:43). Both Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff's gruesome deaths and sense of helplessness might reflect the belief that there needs to be a more options for women. They should have the freedom to pursue politics and raise a family, without the two goals being mutually exclusive. As a mother and politician, contemporary leader Rodham Clinton evokes this perspective. However, it should me mentioned that she only pursued her ambition to be president once she had raised her daughter and supported her husband during his two terms as president (Bernstein 553).

It is this 2018 production of *The Tempest* which speaks to the possibility of women pursuing politics, without being forced to sacrifice their families. Prospero is both a female head of state and a mother. Further, like many career women, she makes use of a daycare service. Miranda recalls that there were "Four or five women once that tended me" (1.2.47). Prospero employed nannies so that she could ensure her child's wellbeing, while still pursuing her role as the head of state. In fact, it was Prospero's decision to isolate herself in her studies, instead of managing the government of the realm, which led to Antonio's usurpation. Rather than discourage women from pursuing politics, the production seems to encourage women to take part since it shows that Prospero's decision to defer her right to rule will lead to less scrupulous leaders like Antonio running the state. After all, Antonio is willing to do anything to become the Duke of Milan, including exiling his own sister and offering Milan as a fief to the King of Naples. This production not only suggests that mothers can take part in politics, but also single

women. *The Tempest* (2018) makes no reference to Miranda's father or the prospect of Prospero's marital status, which suggests that Prospero's romantic relationships have no bearing on her abilities as a ruler. This view is more progressive than those espoused by our current society where there is still an obsession with how female leaders' marital relationships might have an impact on their ability to rule. When Rodham Clinton ran for president in 2016, people had concerns about what title her husband would use if she became president (Winsor). May's supporters thought that the fact that she "[has] been married to the same man since 1980" counted as a reason for them to support her election campaign (Bates). It is telling that even today most female heads of state tend to be matrons, not young, single women, suggesting that we still cling to vestiges of old gender norms.

By examining these three modern productions, it is possible to trace how women's clothing has progressed from simply being used as ceremonial objects to signify their power and competence, to more personal expressions of their identity and political beliefs. In the earliest production, *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991), Queen Margaret wears military dress and an iron-grey skirt suit to emphasize her strength as a leader. Both of these costume choices are evocative of Margaret Thatcher, the "Iron Lady," who was known for donning military regalia to emphasize her strength and align herself with male leaders such as Winston Churchill (Martin 330). Similarly, Hillary Rodham Clinton wore power suits during the 2008 presidential election to emulate the dress of her male counterparts and demonstrate that she was their equal (Clinton 88). Rodham Clinton refused to appear on the cover of *Vogue* magazine because she was concerned that by associating herself with female fashion (Gutgold 84), she would be perceived as weak and frivolous. By contrast, the Lady Macbeth in the 2008 *Macbeth* production seems to embrace outfits that look like they came straight from the "runway." Kate Eastwood

Norris's Lady Macbeth dons pink floor-length gowns with thigh-high slits. Her clothing singles her out from the rest of the cast, especially the male actors, since they wear bland earth-tone clothing. Unlike Rodham Clinton's wardrobe, this Lady Macbeth's clothing emphasizes her femininity. Her clothing does not appear to impede her ambitions as she energetically strides around the stage and rolls up her sleeves to help Macbeth frame Duncan's attendants for murder ("Part I FT/TR Macbeth" 0:34:29). Lady Macbeth feels powerful because of her actions, not her clothing. If anything, her bold clothing choices represent her desire to stand out from the crowd. The 2018 *Tempest* production further unpacks this stereotype that women's competency should be judged based on their appearance. While the male characters such as Antonio, Stephano and Trinculo mistake clothing for an indication of power and authority, Prospero recognizes that it is merely an empty substitute for true power. She dons impressive robes and a tiara to confront her former enemies, but discards them before she leaves the island, suggesting she does not regard them as true instruments of power. Rather, they are distractions meant to confuse her rivals. On the island, she governs Caliban, Ariel and the sprites, but she chooses to wear simple clothing. Her white smock and her cloak made of a patchwork of rags are not particularly ornate, but evoke her ingenuity and suggest a freedom from constraint. Prospero's costume might allude to this shift towards female politicians using their clothing as modes of self-expression. For example, Rodham Clinton's plan to wear white in the event that she won the 2016 election is a political statement, but one that aligns her with women, as she notes that white is a colour associated with suffragettes (Clinton 18). This represents a change from the former practice of adopting men's garb in order to be perceived as a strong leader.

All three productions respond to the stereotype that women are too physically and psychologically weak to be considered strong leaders. The *Henry VI Part II: The House of York*

production challenges this idea by presenting Queen Margaret as a general and leader of men, a role which corresponds to Margaret Thatcher leading the nation as the UK prime minister and overseeing the Falkland's War. Nonetheless, Queen Margaret is depicted as committing acts of violence to prove her leadership, suggesting that she mistakenly believes that using shows of force will prove that she is strong. June Watson's Queen Margaret is a tyrannical, irrational woman who dominates her husband, a depiction which recalls how Thatcher was popularly caricatured as the "Iron Lady" (Moss 810). Rather than empathizing with the character, she appears to alienate the audience. In a poignant scene in which Margaret tearfully pleads for someone to kill her so that she might join her deceased son, the audience laughs when Richard of York shrugs and cheerfully volunteers to undertake the task (" House of York" 2:26:54). Her distress is "played for laughs," suggesting she is not viewed as a sympathetic character, but rather as an outsider who can be ridiculed for the entertainment of the group. This hostile reaction to the character parallels the public's perception of Thatcher as an aggressive interloper on the political scene. In the *Macbeth* production, Lady Macbeth also mistakes the use of violence for a strategy of effective leadership. Her need to prove her resilience parallels how Hillary Rodham Clinton felt she needed to prove her strength as a leader by emphasizing her "toughness" in her campaign speeches (Gutgold 36). Nonetheless, like Queen Margaret, Lady Macbeth's endorsement of violence does not make her appear strong, but rather makes her seem inhuman and cruel. By contrast, the *Tempest* production seems to reflect an image of female leadership which is strong, but compassionate. Martha Henry's Prospero resembles contemporary leader Theresa May: she is a matronly woman of average height with short white hair. To undermine May's authority, her detractors have often drawn attention to her diabetes and tired appearance (Bagehot). Like May, Martha Henry's Prospero does not appear physically

imposing—the actress is not rippling with muscles—yet her intelligence, strategic mind and command of language make her a strong leader. This strength is further implied by the fact that she comes to the realization that her use of magic and threats of violence to rule her subordinates make her cruel and inhuman—a lesson that her counterparts, Queen Margaret and Lady Macbeth, fail to grasp. This epiphany makes Prospero cry, but it is not a weak or shameful response. Rather, it makes her appear human. Prospero's new perspective aligns with Rodham Clinton's belief that women need to be tough and compassionate to be considered effective leaders (Clinton 119).

By examining these modern cinematic and theatrical productions of Shakespeare's plays, it is possible to see how beliefs about female leadership have evolved over time. Further, these productions demonstrate the continuity that exists with regards to the issues we continue to associate with female leadership. When we think about female leadership, it still prompts concerns or debates about women's gender roles, appearance and sexuality. As shown in these productions, these concerns are as prevalent in the twenty-first century, as they were in the twentieth century. Further, these same topics of discussion appear in early modern societies. Elizabeth I's use of an androgynous warrior persona to evoke her power is reflected in how our contemporary female leaders still adopt military dress or power suits to emulate men and gain their authority. Unlike in the early modern period, today's politicians do not need to present themselves as Virgin Goddess figures or worry about providing heirs. However, just like in Elizabeth's time, our current society is also obsessed with female leaders' familial and marital relationships and the impact we perceive these relationships having on their roles as leaders. There are staggering parallels between our perception of female leadership in the twenty-first century and how it was viewed in the early modern period. In the past, Elizabeth I, well aware

that her public keenly scrutinized all aspects of her private life, took great care to maintain her public image as a strong leader. She was aware of how important her image was to her reign: "the eies of manie behold our actions; a spot is soone spied in our garments; a blemish quicklie noted in our doings" (Montrose, "Purpose of Playing" 76). Today, with the extreme pervasiveness of social media platforms to share information and images, it is hard to imagine Elizabeth maintaining such rigid control over her public image, without resorting to sending every single person with an Instagram and Twitter account to the Tower. Like in Elizabeth's time, our perception of our leaders is still influenced by their speech acts, dress and gestures. Like audience members, we eagerly observe them as they perform upon the political stage.

Conclusion: Taking Centre Stage

Shakespeare wrote "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (AYLI 2.7.138-9), but nearly a decade earlier, to an audience no less captive, Elizabeth I proclaimed: "we princes…are set on stages, in the sight and view of all the world dulie observed" (Montrose, "Purpose of Playing" 76). Elizabeth understood the uncanny parallel between a ruler practicing statecraft and an actor performing upon the stage. It is perhaps no coincidence that her contemporary, William Shakespeare, was inspired to create diverse queen characters which he set on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages. Today, his queen characters remain "in the sight and view of all the world" and they continue to speak to the contemporary experience of female leadership. They reflect the place that women currently occupy in society and the place that we believe female leaders should occupy in our society. As Andrew James Hartley notes, "The actor's choices—and therefore those of the director and the company in general…shape the political resonance of the moment in ways not determined by the text alone"

(2). Thus, Shakespeare's queen characters still resonate with contemporary society because they evolve with our shifting attitudes towards female leadership.

During Elizabeth's reign, Shakespeare created queen characters which both flattered Elizabeth and flattered her male subjects' perception that women were generally weak rulers when compared to men. These queen characters prove to be pale imitations of Elizabeth, since though they copy her strategies of statecraft, they fail to implement them as successfully. Like Elizabeth, Shakespeare's Tamora, Hippolyta and Titania are all female monarchs with authority over their respective realms. Elizabeth protected her authority through strategies such as refusing to marry and subordinate herself to a husband, by controlling depictions of her body and sexuality, by adopting a myriad of contradictory personae and by only conforming to gender roles symbolically—"marrying" her country and embracing the role of "mother" to her people. Her Shakespearean counterparts prove much less flexible and much more fallible as female rulers. They marry and lose their status. Titania is forced to concede authority to her husband. Hippolyta loses her crown and realm and Tamora alienates her subjects by marrying into a foreign royal family, abandoning her country and leaving a power vacuum for a man to usurp and turn her people against her. Tamora and Titania fail to meet Elizabeth's exacting standards of chastity. Instead they become embroiled in sexual affairs which create scandals that destroy their reputations and undermine their power. Like Elizabeth, Hippolyta possesses an androgynous warrior persona, but she is forced to give it up when she marries Theseus. She cannot effortlessly switch between her different personae like Elizabeth, who at a moment's notice can become a warrior, a goddess, a fairy queen, a wife, and a mother, no matter how antithetical these personae might be to one another. These Elizabethan queen characters

underscore that Elizabeth is an exception to the rule and not a realistic model that female rulers can hope to emulate.

Following Elizabeth's reign, Shakespeare developed queen characters that further emphasized female rulers' inferiority vis à vis their male counterparts. Unlike their Elizabethan predecessors who were designed to flatter the former Elizabeth I, these Jacobean queen characters are inversions of Elizabeth that parody the former queen's strategies, or else, depict them in a malevolent light. Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth attempt to transgress gender norms. Cleopatra follows Elizabeth's strategy of refusing to marry, playing suitors against one another and creating an androgynous warrior identity. Unlike Elizabeth, Cleopatra's warrior identity has a thin veneer, her strategy to make political alliances through courtship is thwarted by her inability to give up her lover, and so she loses her realm. She commits suicide because it is more palatable than being publically humiliated by her male rival, the future Emperor Augustus. Lady Macbeth attempts to "unsex" herself and gain power, but her transgression of gender norms appears disruptive and immoral since she orchestrates the murder of a king and even boasts that she would be willing to commit infanticide to achieve her ambition. Her degrading sanity mirrors the degradation her country suffers while she is in power. Her suicide allows for the realm to be "purged" and a benevolent male ruler to step in and restore balance. Both Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth suggest that in the Jacobean period gynaecocracy was regarded as unstable and disruptive to society. This depiction of female leadership flattered King James I, who succeeded Elizabeth and was thought to bring stability to the throne since as a man he would not have to defer his authority to his spouse by marrying, nor risk death during childbirth in order to ensure the succession. When compared to Elizabeth I and James I, Shakespeare's queen characters appear flawed and weak. Despite their shortcomings,

these queen characters nevertheless would have had an impact on attitudes toward female leadership. Their presence on the stage in the early modern period brought women into the public realm when traditionally they were isolated in domestic spaces. Shakespeare depicted them enacting statecraft when their presence in politics was still hotly contested. By drawing queen characters from history and myth—Greek mythology, ancient Rome, medieval Scotland and medieval England—Shakespeare reminded audience members that there was a long and enduring history of female rulers and that this legacy would continue as we move forward in time.

Since Shakespeare's time there have been great advances in theatre, as well as in politics. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Shakespeare's queen characters are played by women! Their presence on the stage is an achievement for women's self-representation in the public realm, as well as in politics. Shakespeare's own Cleopatra references the dialogical link between the theatre and the public's perception of female leadership when she complains that she fears that she "shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy [her] greatness / I'th'posture of a whore" (Ant. 5.2.219-21). She fears misrepresentation, to be discredited as a weak leader. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, actresses play Shakespeare's queen characters on the stage and this reflects the idea that just as female actors have become an accepted norm, female leadership is also becoming the norm. Just as theatre has moved away from boys portraying women, so too is there a slow shift away from female leaders holding merely "symbolic positions" to holding active positions of power. In Elizabeth's time, women ruled through patrilineal descent, through marriage as a consort, or as a regent to an underage child. In the twentieth century, the arrival of Canada's first female prime minister seemed more like a "token victory" since Kim Campbell was appointed as a replacement to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney,

rather than elected to the position (Farnsworth). Advances have been made since that time. As Nichola D. Gutgold notes “Chile elected the first woman leader in Latin America who didn’t rise to power on her husband’s reputation” (3). Further, Hillary Rodham Clinton became the 2016 Democratic candidate and nearly won the presidential election. Still, despite the twentieth and twenty-first centuries seemingly heralding a future rich with the possibility of female elected leaders, there are still obstacles which inhibit women from participating in politics.

In the 1991 English Shakespeare Company’s production *Henry VI Part II: The House of York,* June Watson’s Queen Margaret caricatures both Thatcher’s hairstyle and her Falklands War campaign. The production asks the audience to compare Thatcher with the queen consort, Margaret of Anjou, and implies that Thatcher is thus an interloper who has overstepped society’s boundaries by striving for power which she has no right to covet. The production depicts Margaret usurping her husband’s powers. She organizes military campaigns, makes public spectacles of political enemies, delivers speeches to inspire her troops and acts as a diplomatic envoy. By comparison, Henry VI, her mild-mannered husband, appears to be a minor character, despite being the titular character of the production. A title such as *Margaret I: The House of York* would better reflect the centrality of Margaret’s role in the play, as well as the degree of political power she wields. Shakespeare’s Queen Margaret was a character created in the Elizabethan period, yet this production’s treatment of the character aligns with the Jacobean view of a female leader as a disruptive, negative force. Greater emphasis is placed on her transgression of gender roles and her ruthless revenge against the Yorks, than on her abilities as a ruler to plan campaigns and marshal support. Further, the production’s choice to cut part of her dialogue from the script makes her appear less rational and compassionate as it removes her expressions of remorse and acknowledgment that she feels pressured to cultivate a persona of indifference in

order to be respected as a leader. These dialogue edits make Margaret's desire to declare war on the Yorks seem impulsive and spiteful. In the play text she elaborates on her reasons for wishing to fight them. She recognizes that the Duke of York has assembled powerful allies and could easily depose her husband, if left unchecked (Martin 329). Like Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Rodham Clinton has likewise been conflated with a Shakespearean queen in order to criticize her leadership style.

The Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's depiction of Lady Macbeth (2008) evokes the apprehension that people felt towards Hillary Rodham Clinton in her bid to become president in the 2008 election. Rodham Clinton's detractors often equated her confidence and ambition with Lady Macbeth's domineering nature and lust for power. By associating Rodham Clinton with Lady Macbeth, a character that Shakespeare created in the Jacobean period, this in turn encourages us to view her in light of Jacobean criticism of female leadership. Female leaders were regarded as unstable, unruly alternatives to male sovereigns. Rodham Clinton was attempting to break new ground by becoming the first female president of the United States, a country which is dominated by male leaders—there are plenty of "Founding Fathers," but little mention of any "Founding Mothers." By equating Rodham Clinton with Lady Macbeth it likewise suggests that she is a force that disrupts the state and should be suppressed in favor of a traditional, male leader. Further, this association between Rodham Clinton and the Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company's depiction of Lady Macbeth suggests that Rodham Clinton is not being treated as a politician in her own right, but rather as a scheming former first lady who is still grasping for power. This production emphasizes the dialogical link between the theatre and women's place in politics. Aaron Posner, the director of the *Macbeth* production complains that "One of the big problems of the play is it's often famously hijacked by Lady

Macbeth… I wanted to create a different kind of balance…to make sure that this production of *Macbeth* was *Macbeth*, not "Lady Macbeth and Some Guy She Lives With" ("Mr. & Mrs. Macbeth"). Just as the character of Lady Macbeth dominates her husband, Posner suggests that this character also dominates the play. His complaint is reminiscent of how female politicians are often criticized for usurping "traditional male roles." In Shakespeare's time, Lady Macbeth would not have had the same opportunity as Rodham Clinton did to campaign for the position of the head of state. A woman in the early modern period would either have to inherit the position, like Elizabeth did, or else usurp it. Lady Macbeth chooses the latter, urging her husband to murder Duncan and seize the throne. By contrast, Rodham Clinton had legitimate opportunities to participate in politics. The barriers she had to overcome were stereotypes that maligned female leadership.

Like *Macbeth* (2008) and *Henry VI Part II: The House of York* (1991), the 2018 Stratford Festival's theatre production of *The Tempest* also raises questions about the place of women in politics. However, while these earlier two Shakespeare productions reflect the bias against women assuming central roles, the *Tempest* production appears to embrace a supportive attitude towards women assuming positions of power. In the Stratford Festival's *Tempest*, Prospero is re-imagined as the Duchess, rather than the Duke, of Milan. It suggests that women's roles have expanded since Shakespeare's time when they were not allowed on the stage. In the present, women can play "traditional" female roles on the stage and are also gaining access to "traditional" male roles, as well. In the same season that Martha Henry portrayed Prospero, actress Seana McKenna played the titular role in *Julius Caesar* (Enright). These "new queen characters," gender-bent interpretations of male Shakespearean characters, are important since they "multipl[y] and amplif[y] female voices on the stage" (Enright). This contrasts with the

early modern period when women had few platforms to make their voices heard. As Stephen Knight notes, Elizabeth's "favored motto was the Latin *Video et taceo*—'I see, and keep silent.'" (43). Evidently the motto was very apropos since Elizabeth did see the potential of female leaders, but chose to keep silent, jealously guarding her own position and elevating herself at the cost of keeping other women in subordinate roles. Even before its first dress rehearsal, there was public backlash against the Stratford Festival's decision to cast women in "traditional" male roles." As well as people threatening to boycott the performance, the opening night of *The Tempest* had to be cancelled due to a bomb threat—the first one to occur in the history of the Stratford Festival (Nestruck). Despite this public hostility to the prospect of a woman portraying Prospero, the Stratford Festival's decision to allow Martha Henry to assume the role is positive and speaks to a more accepting attitude towards women entering politics. Seana McKenna emphasizes that it is revolutionary to cast Martha Henry as Prospero since it is "allowing the female lens to come into play on some of these roles we thought were 'out of bounds'" (Enright). Further, the presence of strong female characters on the stage in turn changes people's attitudes about female leaders. Some of these careers that "we thought were 'out of bounds'," such as the president of the United States, suddenly seem attainable since as Seana McKenna notes, "if it's in your head, that impossibility becomes a possibility, which may become a probability" (Enright).

When Hillary Rodham Clinton was unsuccessful in becoming the first American president, Nichola D. Gutgold wrote: "In the United States…we have yet to break that proverbial "glass ceiling" (3). In Canada the situation is equally dire. We have yet to see a woman elected to the position of prime minister of our country. Female leadership, especially in North America, continues to face challenges from gender stereotypes and social norms. The question is: What

will finally break this "glass ceiling?" Director Michael Bogdanov's response is "theatre." He recognizes that Shakespeare's plays are "pieces of living theatre material, malleable, expandable, plastic, to be moulded in the shape of the present, not just holding the mirror up to nature, but cracking it and pointing the way forward into the future" ("place of Shakespeare" 59). Just as in Shakespeare's time, his queen characters continue to help break convention, break boundaries and put women "centre stage."

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