

“‘Thou Map of Woe’: Mapping the Feminine in *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*.” *English Studies*. 97(5) (2016): 546-67.

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“‘Thou Map of Woe’: Mapping the Feminine in *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*

Sharon Emmerichs

University of Alaska, Anchorage

Department of English

Word Count: 10,960

Abstract

In this article, I claim that Shakespeare moves beyond the archetypal early modern definitions of land, and the maps that represent it, as benefitting from masculine intervention and argue that he envisions unnecessary masculine interventions regarding the performativity of the feminine in terms of landscape and cartography to be harmful to both the perpetrator and object of the intervention. He acknowledges that there is a connection between how his male characters—specifically, fathers—define their nations and their daughters, but warns that demonstrating a lack of trust or understanding in the agency of women and attempting to overwrite them the way they change boundaries on a map results in tragedy for all involved. I use Judith Butler’s concept of the performativity of gender to demonstrate that such masculine interventions often cannot differentiate between normative and subversive acts, which compounds the dangers of such interferences. Using both his early and later plays, specifically *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tragedy of King Lear*, I show that Shakespeare portrays the desire to treat women as territories or blank maps and to deny his female characters the ability to make their own choices as problematic and dangerous.

Key Words:

Cartography; Shakespeare; Gender; Performativity

## **"Thou Map of Woe": Mapping the Feminine in *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear***

### **Cartography and Shakespeare**

Thanks to critics like John Gillies and Richard Helgerson, cartography in Shakespeare is a well-plundered avenue of inquiry and a wealth of criticism already exists regarding the art and science of cartography in Shakespeare's plays—especially as pertains to *King Lear*. Consider, for example, John Gillies' essential question in *Playing the Globe* that asks, “does the drama serve as a conduit of [cartographic] values, or does it play a more active and critical role, inflecting, qualifying, subverting, or challenging them?”<sup>1</sup> and the multitude of extraordinary literary analysts who have subsequently attempted to answer it. Valerie Traub, for example, beautifully elucidates the scholarship of cartography in *King Lear* when she explains that,

The play's dependence on a ‘cartographic consciousness’ has been analyzed as part of a wider exploration of how a geographical imagination and map-making underwrote early modern social relations, including the practice of historiography, the politics of land ownership, and the emergence of national identity; how geographic space, including landscape and nationscape, was textualized and performed; the inherent theatricality of early modern cartography and, conversely, the effects of ‘mapmindedness’ on Renaissance drama; and the use of maps as theatrical props—notably, in *King Lear*. *Lear* in fact has served as ground zero for literary critics interested in cartography.”<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, critics have examined the concept of cartography through the social and cultural lenses of economics, politics, postcolonialism, performative acts, dramatic staging,

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<sup>1</sup> Gillies, *Playing the Globe*, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Traub, “The Nature of Norms”, 43.

expansionism, and social definitions of human relationships with landscape.<sup>3</sup> However, while intersecting ecocriticism with a feminist theoretical approach, I would argue that in his plays, Shakespeare invariably links the act of mapmaking and maps as physical objects with problems connected to the performativity<sup>4</sup> of the feminine,<sup>5</sup> and I argue that he does so for two reasons. Firstly, it was common in early modern England to equate land and landscape with the feminine, and this manifests itself cartographically, as I will soon demonstrate; and secondly, and perhaps more meaningfully, he does so because he desires to portray the dangers of treating women as territory, as landscapes to be conquered, and as blank spaces waiting for a masculine hand to map her boundaries and landmarks. Women, Shakespeare implies, should have more agency than this narrow definition grants them, and this agency should be acknowledged and respected. Kathryn Schwartz notes that in the early modern era, “women are neither agents nor products of intention” but are in fact “accidents and objects, who acquire value only through an enforced conformity that can be turned to good use.”<sup>6</sup> In Shakespeare’s works, however, when female identity and agency are treated as empty wildernesses waiting to be “civilized” by a masculine cartographical signature, or even as ordered landscapes that must still be realized by the cartographer’s pen, the negative consequences affect not only the women who are victims of this oppression, but the men who attempt to overwrite them. Alexandra Shepard claims that “Imperatives of female

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<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive list of critical works that deal with cartography in *King Lear*, see Valerie Traub’s Note 19, pp. 73-4 of “The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, “King Lear”.” *South Central Review*. 26:1 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10. In this case, I define “performativity” in terms of Judith Butler’s definition of “performativity,” which argues that gender is performative in that it “is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.”

<sup>5</sup> Davies, *The Feminine Reclaimed*, 1, 21. For the purposes of this article, I define “the feminine” with an eye towards Stevie Davies” claim that “Woman in life and woman in art are not the same person” but that “the feminine” in Renaissance poetry and drama is scripted often as connected to the pastoral idea of land and landscapes and shown “as the vitality of our mother-planet.” For other examples of how ideas of the feminine and female identity can be discussed, see *Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism* by Elaine Showalter, *As Who Liked It?: Shakespeare and Sexuality* by Juliet Dusinberre, and *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* by Juliet Dusinberre.

<sup>6</sup> Schwartz, *What you Will*, 6.

subordination were accompanied by warnings about the limits of male authority, and men were exhorted to govern themselves before they could claim the right to govern others,”<sup>7</sup> and in *Titus* and *Lear* Shakespeare thoroughly examines the negative consequences of both excessive patrimonial pressure and an accompanying lack of self-governance in the titular characters.

Interestingly, we see the opposite idea play out in the works of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, both dramatists and cartographers, who more often focus on the relationship between maps and masculine inheritance and profit. Other early modern (male) writers may acknowledge the feminized identities of the land, but they inevitably push for a masculine identity of its owner and cartographer as writing a positive outcome onto that supposedly blank page. For example, in Christopher Marlowe’s (1564-1593) *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II*, Tamburlaine, upon being told by his doctors that he is dying, demands, “Give me a map; then let me see how much / Is left for me to conquer all the world, / That these, my boys, may finish all my wants.”<sup>8</sup> Here Tamburlaine clearly creates a connection between the map—a physical representation of his kingdom—and the patrimonial act of masculine inheritance, ensuring that his sons will prosper and continue his legacy. Likewise, Sir Walter Raleigh’s infamous description of Guiana as a land that “hath yet her Maidenhead, never sacked” speaks of a land that has never been penetrated by “any army of strength”<sup>9</sup> but that has also never been mapped, scripting the cartographer’s pen as a phallic symbol that has never inscribed the “virgin’s” identity with a masculine hand:

How all these rivers cross and encounter, how the country lieth and is bordered, the passage of Ximenes and Berreo, mine own discovery, and the way that I entered, with all the rest of the nations and rivers, your lordship

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<sup>7</sup> Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Marlowe, *Tamburlaine Part II*, 5.3.123-5

<sup>9</sup> Raleigh, *The Discovery of Guiana*, 133.

shall receive in a large chart or map, which I have not yet finished, and which I shall most humbly pray your lordship to secrete, and not to suffer it to pass your own hands; for by a draught thereof all may be prevented by other nations.<sup>10</sup>

Raleigh speaks of himself as both cartographer and the masculine entity that has not only taken the land’s “Maidenhead” but now must protect it from penetration by other entities. He argues that his penetration both of person and pen, however, would result in great riches that “would yield to her Majesty by composition so many hundred thousand pounds yearly,”<sup>11</sup> which Raleigh argues would clearly be beneficial to England and its people. It is not surprising, then, that one of the primary ways critics speak of maps and cartography in *King Lear* is, as Bruce Avery puts it, through “a focal point centered on the discourse of patrimony, a magical place where obedience and gratitude result in ‘gifts’ of land during that familiar ritual, the passing of the torch.”<sup>12</sup> Men are, after all, historically the owners, curators, workers, and rulers of land, and while Queen Elizabeth’s rule did much to convince early modern citizens that a woman could also play these roles, she did so often by reinforcing these more traditionally gendered identifications of land and landscape. Consider her speech to the troops at Tillbury when she states that,

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>12</sup> Avery, *Playing the Globe*, 49.

take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.<sup>13</sup>

Mary Beth Rose accurately identifies this speech as Elizabeth creating for herself a persona of “sui generis, an exceptional woman whose royal status and unique capabilities make her inimitable. Her rhetorical technique involves appeasing widespread fears about female rule by adhering to conventions that assume the inferiority of the female gender.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, Elizabeth herself asks us to define her as the exception, not the rule, and reinforces the idea that men are the proper overseers and defenders of the land.<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare, however, works to forge strong links between land, maps, and women to demonstrate that these connections have value as they stand, and that high-handed masculine interference in such relationships causes more damage than benefits. He acknowledges the problematic restrictions women face regarding how they are traditionally viewed in geographical and cartographical terms—that is, the sexualized female of Raleigh’s metaphor that has either been penetrated by an outside force or has remained innocent and pure—but he, more than any of his contemporaries, examines these perceptions as problematic and damaging throughout his career as a playwright. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tragedy of King Lear*, believed to be among Shakespeare’s earliest and latest plays,<sup>16</sup> in order to demonstrate that this was an idea that stayed with him from start to finish. His invocation of Lavinia as a “map of woe” and of Cordelia as “dead as earth”<sup>17</sup> tie

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<sup>13</sup> British Library

<sup>14</sup> Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 66. Here again Butler’s notions of performativity and subversion as “gender complexity and dissonance” can be invoked.

<sup>16</sup> Clemens, *The Development of Shakespeare’s Imagery*, 29. There have been some recent arguments against the idea that *Titus Andronicus* is one of Shakespeare’s earliest plays, but I tend to agree with Wolfgang Clemens’ contention that the play lacks the polish, developed language and imagery, and literary dexterity of his later works. Clemens also notes Shakespeare’s overuse of rhetorical questions as opposed to actual dialogue in *Titus* and attributes it to his inexperience.

<sup>17</sup> All quotes from Shakespeare are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Second Edition*. Stanley W. Wells, Gary Taylor, Eds. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

together the concept that masculine mistreatment of women is analogous to the mistreatment of territory and the maps that define it, and inevitably results in tragedy.

### **Women as Maps and Landscapes**

First, it would be beneficial to examine some maps and their connection to early modern drama and the feminine. Donald Kimball Smith states that “to think in terms of maps in early modern England was to reach beyond the immediate, local world of personal experience to a newly concrete understanding of abstract space,”<sup>18</sup> which Smith defines as “cartographic imagination,” and it becomes clear that multiple modes of representation—including gender—can exist within such imaginings. The title page of Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, published in 1612 and drawn by William Hole, depicts the figure of a woman dressed in a draped cloth printed with a map of England (Figure 1).

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, *The Cartographic Imagination*, 42.





The woman, labeled “Great Britain” sits like an island amidst a sea of ships, her bare feet planted firmly on a solid foundation of rock, and surrounding her stand England’s four major conquerors—Brute, Caesar, Hengist, and William of Normandy. The woman’s bared breast and rounded arms serve to highlight her femininity, as does the cornucopia—a classic fertility symbol—tucked against her left arm. Map-drawings of rivers, forests, mountains and plains cover her body; just as words overlay a page to create a text, so do identifications of the landscape cover the woman to create a story, one that in this case is meant to reflect Drayton’s own vision and perception of the landscape. Barbara Ewell defines this vision as “the England whose glory and wealth are infinite and eternal . . . Contained and organized by

Albion’s deified body, the discontinuous realities of England are metamorphosed into an ideal unity, a goddess who embodies all space and time into a living, symbolic whole.”<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth Olwig explicates this claim by stating,

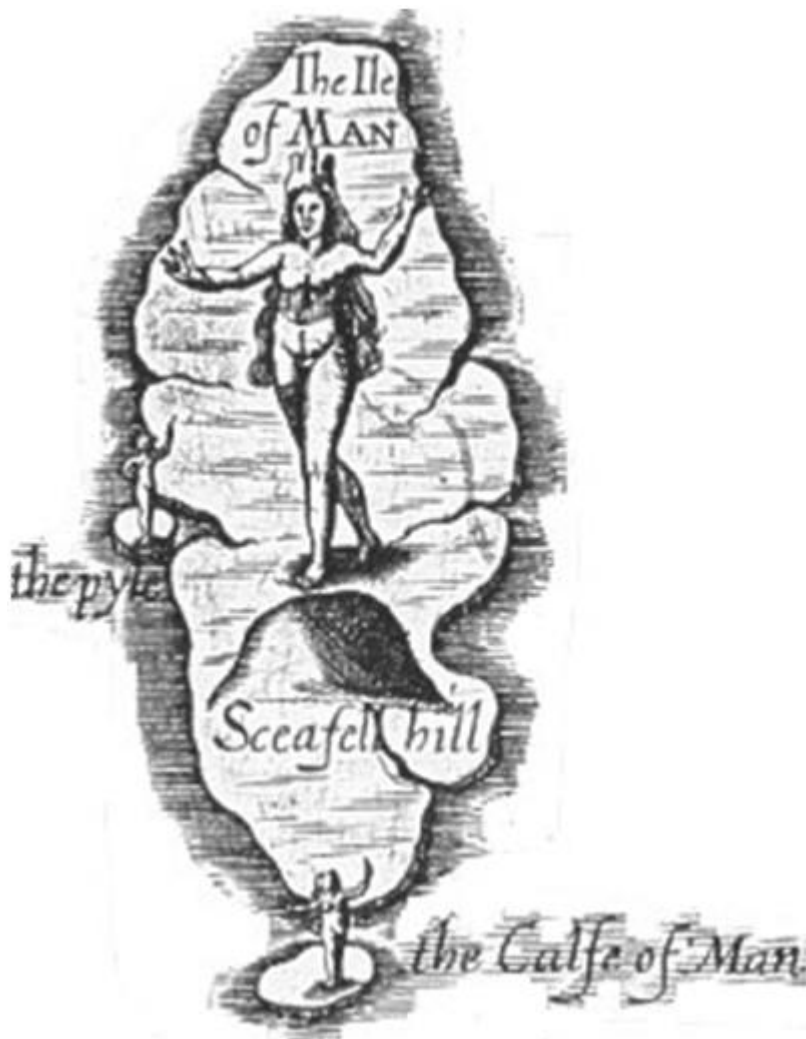
In the maps in the Poly-Olbion, nearly every river and island is represented by a naked female. The towns and valleys also appear to be female, but they are, as befits their civilized state, primly clothed. The elevated hills, on the other hand, are men.<sup>20</sup>

So, even though this map is clearly portraying feminine power and its connection to the land, we still have a masculine intervention in terms of the elevated rock upon which she rests her foot. She is supported and upheld by, according to Olwig, a very masculine symbol. This is further demonstrated by the map of the Isle of Man from Drayton’s text, which shows the body of a native-looking woman as a feature of the landscape within the borders of the island, rather than as the island itself (Figure 2).

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<sup>19</sup> Ewell, “Drayton’s Poly-Olbion”, 299.

<sup>20</sup> Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic*, 127.



Again the map's femininity is emphasized, this time by her near-nakedness, curved hips and breasts, and the length of her hair. The lines of the woman's body join with the natural landscape formations to create an inextricable union between the feminine body and the land; however, she cannot exist within this definition by herself. Drayton clearly felt she needed the masculine intervention of that supportive elevated hill to prop her up. It is her form, however, that defines the landscape; her arms resemble rivers, her breasts hills, and her pubic region—marked by a telltale “linea nigra,” the dark vertical line that occurs during pregnancy—occupies a centralized, inland location that intersects perfectly with the Glen Auldyn River. German cartographer Sebastian Münster in his earlier work, *Cosmographia*, also defines the gendered landscape in terms of motherhood:

Just as heaven is god’s dwelling-place, so is the earth the habitation, even the mother, of man and beast. Because it receives us the way we were born, nourishes and carries us while we’re alive, and lately receives us back into its bosom, and keeps our bodies till the day of reckoning.<sup>21</sup>

However, in his book *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, Bernhard Klein argues that we must look at the gendered landscape through the lens of patriarchy rather than maternalism while still emphasizing the feminized landscape as a generative object: “a geographical space explicitly imagined as female assumes a host of qualities articulated by the signifier ‘woman’ in a patriarchal culture—passivity, fertility, penetrability, a need for male protection, [and] a submissive return to the domestic.”<sup>22</sup> In terms of 16<sup>th</sup> century cultural conceptions of landscape and geography, the “mother as map” construction makes sense,<sup>23</sup> and as we saw in Marlowe and Raleigh, these masculine interventions are portrayed as positive intersections with the feminine; they support, uplift, and protect.

Oftentimes, this protection comes as a response to other masculine interventions that threaten the feminine nature of the map. If Stella Revard is correct in her claim that “Drayton’s aim in *Poly-Olbion* was to create, as it were, a tableau in which the geography of the land becomes one with the history, the morality, the aesthetics of the people who inhabit it,”<sup>24</sup> then it logically follows that both masculinity and femininity must play a significant part in both the scripting of landscape and society, especially in terms of the nation’s history

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<sup>21</sup> Münster, qtd. in Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> King James I. *The Political Works of James I*, 272. This also goes along with the idea put forth by King James I of England that the monarch of a nation takes the role of husband while the land acts as his wife. He famously spoke of this in his succession to the throne of England in terms of a marriage ceremony between both England and Scotland and the monarchy and the populace. He proclaimed to his new English Parliament that “What God hath conjoined. . . . let no man separate. I am the Husband, and the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body.”

<sup>24</sup> Revard, “The Design of Nature”, 111.

of invasion and conquest. *Poly-Olbion*'s frontispiece makes a blatant pictorial reference to the four conquerors as a penetrative force, thereby scripting the woman—Albion, or England itself—as the victim of that penetration as well as the protector of the people within her borders, or to continue with the metaphor, her womb. The text even covertly refers to the four conquerors as Britannia's "lovers."<sup>25</sup> Christine M. Petto explicates this further when she states that "the personification of the land as a fertile female figure provides not only an alluring and surmountable visual but also a figure in need of protection."<sup>26</sup> The landscape must be protected from invasion and foreign influences just as a woman must be protected from unlawful sexual contact that often results in the "infections" of sexually transmitted diseases, loss of reputation, or pregnancy.

However, Bernhard Klein's argument that geography imagined as a feminine space implies a submissive and inherently domestic—i.e., passive—reading only tells a fraction of the story. Other voices—displaying a mode of thinking about landscape towards which I think Shakespeare felt some sympathy—portray the gendered and sexualized landscape through a stronger, more powerful vision (Figure 3).

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<sup>25</sup> Drayton. A2v, *EEBO*. According to Special Collections at St. John's College at the University of Cambridge, "The frontispiece, here with a small amount of hand-gilding added afterwards, shows Britannia clothed in a robe depicting the various rivers and cities of the nation, whilst surrounded by her four lovers and conquerors: Brute, Caesar, Hengist and William of Normandy."

The poem itself describes these relationships through metaphors of wooing and conquest:

In her younger years,  
Vast Earth-bred Giants woo'd her : but, who bears  
In golden field the Lion passant red,  
Eneas' Nephew (Brute) them conquered.

<sup>26</sup> Petto, "Playing the Feminine Card", 68.



Looking at another *Europa Regina*,<sup>27</sup> a map taken from Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* published in 1544, we see once more the depiction of geography as a female figure, though the underlying message implied here is a much more martial, imposing vision that directly contrasts with his own definition of earth as the mother to humankind. Where Drayton’s Britannia offered a sense of placid and pacific womanhood—evidenced by the gentle smile,

<sup>27</sup> For more information regarding how the *Europa Regina* intersects with Shakespeare’s other plays, see A.J. Hoenselaar’s *Reclamations of Shakespeare*. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V. Editions, 1994.

the flowing hair, the emblems of fertility, and the green foliage—Sebastian Münster’s Europe exudes strength and power. Her expression is fierce and unsmiling, her stance stronger—note that she needs no foundational (read: masculine) rock upon which to brace her posture. Her emblems are those of power and authority: the imperial crown, the elaborate scepter, the globe. Her hair is bound up close to her head, and her “gown” covers her like armor, leaving no vulnerable flesh exposed. Her jutting bosom emphasizes her feminine nature, but unlike the *Poly-Olbion* figure, this feminized Europe speaks nothing of motherhood, of submission, or of domesticity.

Shakespeare portrays all these ideas into *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*—women as pastoral and motherly, women as wilderness and martial, women responding to masculine intervention and definition. The difference, however, is that Shakespeare sees these interventions not as beneficial but as harmful. Those who do not trust women, or who treat them as territories to be conquered, he implies, both cause and come to harm.

### **"Thou map of woe"**

In *A Comedy of Errors*, two brothers linguistically “map out” a woman’s role in society using her body as a map, just as Drayton and Münster did cartographically.

Antipholus of Syracuse: What is she?

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Dromio of Syracuse: She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her.

Antipholus of Syracuse: In what part of the body stands Ireland?

Dromio of Syracuse: Marry, sir, in her buttocks. I found it out by the bogs.

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where Scotland?

Dromio of Syracuse: I found it by the barrenness, hard in the palm of her hand.

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where France?

Dromio of Syracuse: In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir.

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where England?

Dromio of Syracuse: I looked for the chalky cliffs, but I could find no whiteness in them. But I guess it stood in her chin, by the salt rheum that ran between France and it.

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where Spain?

Dromio of Syracuse: Faith, I saw it not, but I felt it hot in her breath.

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where America, the Indies?

Dromio of Syracuse: O, sir, upon her nose, all o'er embellished with rubies. . .

Antipholus of Syracuse: Where stood Belgia, the Netherlands?

Dromio of Syracuse: O, sir, I did not look so low.<sup>28</sup>

As a representation of the Renaissance *blazon*, it shares more in common with Shakespeare's own Sonnet 130 ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun") than with the more traditional *blazons* of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* or Spenser's *Amoretti*. However, still it serves the same purpose, which is the "anatomizing of women's bodies, to which Renaissance men devoted so much care, partly because, they said, it was impossible to find beauty perfect in any one woman and they must, therefore, consider parts."<sup>29</sup> In this case, Antipholus' and Dromio's slyly humorous descriptions have their own sexual connotations, from her "hot breath" to her "Netherlands," emphasizing her—and the globe's—femininity and the

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<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare, *A Comedy of Errors*, 3.2.89, 116-44.

<sup>29</sup> Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady*, 195.



problems associated with the feminine. Jean E. Howard notes that “Geographic representation on the early modern stage is important, then, in part because it is connected to real-world developments;”<sup>30</sup> we see here Antipholus and Dromio express the notion that masculine “intervention” has already occurred, which puts Nell in the position of being both physically repellant and sexually useless. Dromio ultimately concludes that “As from a bear a man would run for life, / So fly I from her that would be my wife.”<sup>31</sup> Even in a comedy, Shakespeare scripts this humorous, sexually-charged conflict as problematic for both Nell and Dromio—Nell for her reputation and Dromio in losing a potential wife; in his tragedies, however, a masculine intervention of the feminine map has much more problematic and mortal results.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare maps out for us a world in conflict and his characters become for us a map of the early modern world. From the first scene we see Shakespeare establishing the landscape and Lavinia as parallel entities, both governed by the same characteristics and subject to the same rules. In this world, Rome is scripted specifically as feminine; Titus declares in his own rejection of the throne<sup>32</sup> that Rome deserves “A better head her glorious body fits / Than his that shakes for age and feebleness.”<sup>33</sup> Titus has

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<sup>30</sup> Howard, “Shakespeare, Geography”, 313.

<sup>31</sup> Shakespeare, *A Comedy of Errors*, 3.2.161-2.

<sup>32</sup> Marlowe, *The First Part*, 1.1.6-17. This is not an uncommon trope in early modern drama. Concerns of proper kingship are themes found throughout both *Titus* and *King Lear* as well as other texts of the era. We can see the same concerns in Christopher Marlowe’s *The First Part of Tamburlaine the Great* when Cosroe says to Mycetes, his brother and king:

Unhappy Persia,—that in former age  
Hast been the seat of mighty conquerors,  
That, in their prowess and their policies,  
Have triumph’d over Afric, and the bounds  
Of Europe where the sun dares scarce appear  
For freezing meteors and congealed cold,—  
Now to be rul’d and govern’d by a man  
At whose birth-day Cynthia with Saturn join’d,  
And Jove, the Sun, and Mercury denied  
To shed their influence in his fickle brain!  
Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee,  
Meaning to mangle all thy provinces.

<sup>33</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.187-8.

established his responsibility for and loyalty to both; for Rome, he has been a great and exalted soldier and has sacrificed “one-and-twenty valiant sons. . . / In right and service of their noble country,”<sup>34</sup> and as Lavinia’s father he naturally views her as “The cordial of mine age”<sup>35</sup> and shows his love by wishing her to “outlive thy father’s days.”<sup>36</sup> It is a natural progression, then, that Titus desires to unite these two elements through Lavinia’s proposed marriage to Saturninus, the declared and elected emperor of Rome. By doing so, he believes his house in both the micro- and macrocosms would be in order. However his insistence on masculine intervention regarding Lavinia is what ultimately changes her from a strong and civilized Rome into the conquered “map of woe”<sup>37</sup> he so grievously laments in Act 3. In his desire to unite his nation and his daughter, Titus breaks trust with Bassianus, Saturninus’ brother to whom he has already promised Lavinia’s hand. His own ill-conceived attempt to redraw her boundaries sets the stage for another masculine and foreign invasion to penetrate the two feminine focal points in his life—Rome and Lavinia—in the form of Tamora, Aaron, and her two sons. Titus’ interference becomes the first step in Lavinia’s destruction. If Titus is the masculine rock upon which Lavinia braced her foot, it has now crumbled and fallen into dust and she falls prey to the dangers of invasion and penetration. Left to her own devices to marry Bassianus, Shakespeare implies, both Lavinia and Rome would have been safe. She represents the lost—at least in this play—ideal of civilization, that space in which order reigns. We might imagine her as the smiling queen of Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* map, representing bounty, fertility and prosperity while Tamora would be more akin to the wilder,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.195, 197.

<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, 787. Shakespeare also makes the connection between age and maps elsewhere in his writings, specifically in his Sonnet 68:

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,  
When beauty lived and died as flowers do now,  
Before the bastard signs of fair were born,  
Or durst inhabit on a living brow...

Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 3.2.74-5. This metaphor also appears in *Twelfth Night* when Maria says of Malvolio that “he does smile his face into more lines than / is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies”

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., *Titus Andronicus*, 1.1.166-7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., *Titus Andronicus*, 3.2.12.

more barbaric outer landscapes and the scantily clad island map-women at a distance from the civilized center.<sup>38</sup> Titus’ intervention in both women’s lives—his attempt to marry his daughter to Saturninus and the sacrifice of Tamora’s son, Alarbus—directly leads to everyone’s tragic end, and I would argue that as representations of their respective spaces, Lavinia and Tamora also demonstrate Shakespeare’s discomfort with imperialism forced upon both the landscape and the feminine.

For Shakespeare, the danger lies not only with the victims of imperialism but with the imperialist as well, for such interferences beget retaliation in kind. The best avenue towards Titus’ destruction, Tamora knows, is through his daughter, so she stages yet another masculine intervention for her—and once again, Lavinia is redrawn. Aaron commands Chiron and Demetrius to “Single you thither then this dainty doe / And strike her home by force, if not by words,”<sup>39</sup> which forces Lavinia from her rightful place in Rome into the periphery of its civilization.<sup>40</sup> Aaron’s description of the forest accentuates the danger it poses to Lavinia:

The forest walks are wide and spacious  
And many unfrequented plots there are,  
Fitted by kin for rape and villainy.

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<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 1.5.39-42; Dusinger, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 302. Unlike Shakespeare’s later dichotomist female protagonist Lady Macbeth, who must call upon the “spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts” in order to rid herself of her perceived weak femininity and fill her “top-full / Of direst cruelty,” Tamora’s gendered identity is from the start inextricably linked to her sexuality. She does not wish for masculine strength and resolve; she already embodies it within herself. She is not only capable of masculine violence; she does not hesitate to actually employ it. This transgression of gendered expectations is one of the primary clues of Tamora’s unstable and dangerous nature. Juliet Dusinger, in discussing Tamora’s masculine characteristics, notes that “The violent woman in Shakespeare’s theatre is nearly always an adulteress . . . The adulterous woman adopts a male role; her femininity no longer stands in the way of physical violence.” Despite this, Tamora still needs Aaron and her sons to intervene on her behalf as she, like *Twelfth Night*’s Viola lacks that which would make her a man.

<sup>39</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.118-9.

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Aaron scripts Lavinia here as the prize of the royal hunt that is the reason she left the safety of Rome in the first place. Women, he implies, have no place in the traditionally masculine sport of hunting unless they are the ones being hunted.

The woods are ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull.<sup>41</sup>

Aaron could very well be describing Tamora herself; she has opened herself wide to licentiousness and adultery, she has proven herself ruthless, and she is dreadful in the true and literal meaning of the word. She is deaf to all pleas of mercy, and her “sacred wit / To villainy and vengeance”<sup>42</sup> are “fitted” to the landscape perfectly. Even the “pit” into which she pitches Lavinia’s husband, Bassianus, mirrors her own special brand of feminine performativity, and immediately the “pit is remorselessly anthropomorphized”<sup>43</sup> and likened to a diseased womb from which no life can come, only death. Lavinia’s brother Martius describes it as a “subtle hole. . . / Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briars”<sup>44</sup> and a “detested, dark, blood-drinking pit;”<sup>45</sup> Quintus likens it to a “devouring receptacle”<sup>46</sup> and a “swallowing womb,”<sup>47</sup> and compares its violent nature to the spilling of “maiden blood.”<sup>48</sup> The anatomical and sexually violent nature of these descriptions is difficult to ignore, and the pit becomes an emblem of a *vagina dentata* that swallows the bodies of Lavinia’s husband and brothers whole. Gillies draws the comparison that “As Lavinia’s archetypically Roman womb is polluted and forever disabled as a source of true Roman issue, the ‘loathsome’ womb/pit devours Rome’s remaining sons while spreading a miasma of adulterous contagion.”<sup>49</sup> I would argue, however, that the landscape here is more analogous to Tamora’s body, to her voracious and indiscriminating sexual license, and the breakdown of her gendered identity. The womb/pit does the exact opposite of its feminine duty—it kills rather

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<sup>41</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.115-7, 129.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.1.121-2.

<sup>43</sup> Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography*, 106.

<sup>44</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.198-9.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.224.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.235.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.239.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.232.

<sup>49</sup> Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography*, 107.

than gives life, just as Tamora herself has done.<sup>50</sup> In this way, Tamora has also stolen Lavinia’s husband—the man that only Lavinia herself had lawful sexual access to—and perpetrated another form of adultery with him, this time letting the landscape that represents her surround and enclose him rather than her own body. Both mouths speak of the same violence with the same voice, and both are landmarks on the same map.

Titus cannot read such signs and meanings in the landscape, cannot accurately read this altered map of Rome because he still feels his interference legitimate and necessary. “The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey” he proclaims, and “The fields are fragrant and the woods are green.”<sup>51</sup> The hunt, another emblem of interference that will end in violence, becomes the perfect metaphor for the dangers of masculine power over the feminine, as has been shown in early modern poetry since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup> Titus, however, does not recognize these landmarks of danger, though Tamora expounds upon them fewer than forty lines later:

The birds change melody on every bush,  
The snakes lies rolled in the cheerful sun,  
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind  
And make a chequered shadow on the ground.<sup>53</sup>

Tamora, unlike Titus, recognizes the ominous symbols of the landscape that spell out Lavinia’s dreadful fate. She can read the landscape because she identifies with it, whereas Titus has demonstrated his lack of understanding regarding space and the feminine from the beginning. And yet, Lavinia manages to enact some semblance of justice for herself by writing her own story in the landscape—effectively redrawing the map of Rome and herself

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<sup>50</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 4.2.68. Tamora goes so far as to demand the murder of her own newborn son, issuing orders to “christen it with thy dagger’s point.”

<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.2.1-2.

<sup>52</sup> Petrarch’s Sonnet 190 and Wyatt’s retelling of it, “Whoso List to Hunt” demonstrate the parallels between the feminine and the hart or hind, which is the object of the hunt in both these poems and in *Titus Andronicus*.

<sup>53</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.12-5.

as its representative, showing how the various masculine interferences have changed her.

Immediately after the rape, she is too damaged and traumatized to communicate. Marcus, her uncle, upon finding her alone in this deadly and dangerous forest, defines for her a landscape all her own, a mix of the pastoral and the perilous that have come together in her character to create an abomination of nature:

. . . what stern, ungentle hands  
Hath lopped and hewed and made thy body bare  
Of her two branches. . . <sup>54</sup>

His images of Lavinia as a hewn tree,<sup>55</sup> and later, a polluted river, of a tear-marked tempest making fallow a rich and fertile meadow create the effect that Lavinia herself becomes an emblem for the corrupted landscape and the atrocities performed there when its boundaries are crossed—atrocities from which Titus, as the central patriarchal figure, should have protected her. However, since Titus broke his trust with both the feminine elements of his life—Rome and Lavinia—he is actually partly responsible for her current plight.

Ultimately, Lavinia turns to the landscape of her beloved Rome to tell her tale of woe. In her uncle’s garden she “takes the staff in her mouth, and guides it with her stumps, and writes”<sup>56</sup> the names of her two attackers, Chiron and Demetrius. In doing so, she does more than merely tell of her rape—she reenacts it. If she represents Rome, then the stick becomes a phallus that penetrates the body—the soil—and suddenly Rome and Lavinia resemble each other once more. The act of inscribing her story in the sand is more than a way to bring her tormenters to justice; it is an attempt to divorce herself from the horror-landscape of the forest and the pit, and to rewrite herself from being a “map of woe, that thus dost talk in

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., *Titus Andronicus*, 2.4.16-8.

<sup>55</sup> This directly parallels the “hewing” of Alarbus in Act I.

<sup>56</sup> Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, 4.1.68-9.

signs”<sup>57</sup> back to the order, civility, and lawfulness of Rome.<sup>58</sup> She of course fails, for any such inscription is by definition impermanent. Edmund Spenser demonstrates this for us in his 75<sup>th</sup> sonnet of the *Amoretti*:

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
But came the waves and washed it away:  
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,  
But came the tyde, and made my payes his pray.<sup>59</sup>

Tamora and her sons, however, have written Lavinia’s ruination upon her in indelible ink, and she ultimately meets her end at her father’s hand, and in her father’s house. This is the ultimate masculine interference that mortally damages both Lavinia and himself—he takes his daughter’s life and is ultimately killed in the very space scripted to ensure her safety and protection.

### “Bring me the Map”<sup>60</sup>

Interestingly enough, we see many of these same early ideas, tropes, actions and allusions near the end of Shakespeare’s tenure as playwright. *King Lear* in many ways reads like a revisitation of *Titus*<sup>61</sup>—a father with a daughter on the brink of leaving his sphere of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., *Titus Andronicus*, 3.2.12.

<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, II.1709-13. This action is mirrored in Shakespeare’s poem “The Rape of Lucrece” when he likens rape to the physical act of drawing a map:

With this, they all at once began to say,  
Her body’s stain her mind untainted clears;  
While with a joyless smile she turns away  
The face, that map which deep impression bears  
Of hard misfortune, carv’d in it with tears.

<sup>59</sup> Spenser, “Amoretti”, 425.

<sup>60</sup> All quotes from *The Tragedy of King Lear* come from the 1623 Folio edition.

<sup>61</sup> Montaigne, “On the Affection”, 435; Skura, “Dragon Fathers”, 122. One could add, “Minus the cannibalism, of course,” but even that imagery can peripherally be attributed to *King Lear*. Shakespeare for this play clearly borrows many claims and ideas from Montaigne’s essay “On the affection of fathers for their children” in which Montaigne lays out, without emotion, the problems and trials of the father-child relationship. Montaigne makes the point that children “cannot in truth either be or live except at the expense of our being and our life” a sentiment Meredith Skura unpacks as “Generations always threaten to eat each other like creatures of the deep.” Indeed, the actions of Goneril and Regan are not unlike the imagery Montaigne offers here

influence; a breakdown of both the macro- and microcosms of authority in the governance of the kingdom and of the family; anxiety regarding the obedience of one’s children; the main character’s descent into madness and hysteria; fear of losing power to a foreign entity; and finally, the imposition of masculine influence of both cartographic boundaries and their relationship to the feminine and the problems of its performativity. Sharon Hamilton examines the dynamics of Shakespeare’s father-daughter relationships and claims that,

According to the typical pattern, a middle-aged to old man, usually a widower, has an adolescent daughter just emerging into young womanhood. The daughters are protected for a time—the manor house or the castle contains the whole world in their girlhoods. The plays then take up the stories when the women are on the verge of leaving that insulated circle.<sup>62</sup>

From the very first scene, we see Lear defining his daughters and their relationships with him using the context of a map of his kingdom, and his interference comes in the form of redistribution of both the land, represented by the three women, and the definitions of them as women that Lear has rewritten in his heart. Critics, often using an ecocritical approach, have explored these definitions in terms of Lear’s growing estrangement from his family and his own sanity. For example, Estok claims that:

At a time of unprecedented exploration when the world was getting smaller and the resulting changes in social relations were producing entirely new ideas about space, the relationship between social and spatial alienation in *King Lear* is about more than authorial deftness and writing parallels and analogies. . . Space (and, more specifically, environment) is central to the tragedies of

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<sup>62</sup> Hamilton, *Shakespeare’s Daughters*, 6.



King Lear because. . .without a space to which it refers, ideology cannot exist.<sup>63</sup>

I will take this claim and argue that Shakespeare’s use of spatial representations to define ideology can be associated with how the problems with Lear’s environment become mimetic of the problems he has with feminine performativity, and are not simply defined as “the thematic and symbolic readings that have characterized so much of the critical work on Shakespeare’s representations of Nature.”<sup>64</sup> Estok recognizes that in *Lear*, “the very idea of drawing limits, controls, and boundaries is so much in question in this play” and that “tragedies happen when Nature goes unbounded,”<sup>65</sup> which is demonstrably true; however, he couches the meanings of these boundaries in a utilitarian idea of “an object space that must be controlled; uncontrolled it is a space of chaotic nothingness.”<sup>66</sup> I would disagree, and would instead argue that it is not merely a question of the presence or lack of control that informs our understanding of these spaces in *King Lear*, but how that control can be misused and misinformed. Control does not, for Shakespeare, automatically equal order. Lear’s *imposition* of control based on his misreading of both subversive and normative feminine performativity<sup>67</sup> serves to once again demonstrate the early modern innate masculine mistrust of the feminine, which ultimately acts as a trigger of epiphany for King Lear during the play’s most tragic moment. Instead of “nothingness” there is illumination and self-

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<sup>63</sup> Estok, *Shakespeare and Ecocriticism*, 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1999 Preface xxi. Judith Butler defines the terms “subversive” and “normative” in a way that relates quite effectively to *King Lear*. She states that:

Those who...are willing to decide between subversive and unsubversive expressions of gender, base their judgments on a description. ...a *descriptive* account of gender includes considerations of what makes gender intelligible, and inquiry into its conditions of possibility, whereas a *normative* account seeks to answer the question of which expressions of gender are acceptable.

Lear defines Cordelia’s answer to his “love test” as “subversive” and Goneril’s and Regan’s as “normative,” which is the only way he can make their performativity of the feminine intelligible to him. The fact that he gets the definitions reversed is the basis of all the conflict and tragedy in the play.

enlightenment. There is danger and violence and betrayal, certainly—but there is not “nothingness.” I would go so far as to argue that in the case of *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses this problematic definition of control to warn against the dangers of rewriting the map with, and thereby imposing upon women, *too many* boundaries. Arthur Kinney discusses this problem in the context of the Union of the Crowns, James I’s desire to demolish the boundary between the English and Scottish map:

At the time of the play’s composition and first performances, in 1604-1606, [Lear’s division of the map] must have startled Shakespeare’s playgoers and sounded seditious. . . Whatever underlying and immediate causes have urged on Lear such an absolute, irredeemable decision, it rests on (and in) the map he spreads before his audiences on the stage and in the playhouse. Lear’s vow to take the map of Great Britain advocated by James in Parliament and to cut it up must have seemed breathtakingly subversive.<sup>68</sup>

The post-Elizabethan early modern English person would know, then, that imposing boundaries could be as dangerous as tearing them down. It is inherent in the nature of tragedy that this epiphany comes too late for Lear to enact any change for himself, but it does give the audience something to think about once they have left the theatre.

The very beginning of this play shows Lear struggling with the division of his land amongst his three daughters in anticipation of his own death. . . .we shall express our darker purpose,” he tells Gloucester, and

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided  
In three our kingdom, and ‘tis our fast intent  
To shake all cares and business from our age,  
Conferring them on younger strengths while we

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<sup>68</sup> Kinney, *Shakespeare’s Webs*, 101-2.

Unburdened crawl towards death.<sup>69</sup>

Lear is concerned with what Garrett Sullivan calls “a landscape of sovereignty—a political landscape that reflects and shapes the ambitions and imperatives of those who control or would control the nation.”<sup>70</sup> Lear’s “younger strengths” at the outset refers to his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, but it becomes clear quite quickly that Lear ideally imagines his land passing to their husbands’ rule: “Our son of Cornwall / And you our. . .no less loving son of Albany”<sup>71</sup> along with one or the other of “The princes of France and Burgundy— / Great rivals in our youngest daughter’s love.”<sup>72</sup> Having no sons to whom he can enact the rites of primogeniture, Lear looks to the next male candidates for inheritance. However, instead of dividing his land equally amongst them, as we earlier saw Tamburlaine imply he would do for his own sons, Lear insists upon a form of masculine intervention that links the landscape itself to his daughters—and only his daughters. He devises his contest of love to test them, but does not administer a similar test to their masculine counterparts:

Tell me, my daughters —

Since now we will divest us both of rule,

Interest of territory, cares of state —

Which of you shall we say doth love us most,

That we our largest bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge?<sup>73</sup>

He has no need to test the men; their inherent masculinity ensures that they are able to perform their duties by the kingdom well enough. Lear’s test, therefore, is strictly to demonstrate his mistrust of the feminine, even though they are tied to him by blood and the

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<sup>69</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.1.37-41.

<sup>70</sup> Sullivan, *The Drama of Landscape*, 92.

<sup>71</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.1.41-2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.45-6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.48-53.

men are not. Lear differs from Titus in that he uses emotion<sup>74</sup> rather than ambition as the impetus for his masculine interference, but the result for both motivations is the same: tragedy for both the instigator and the recipient.

As in *Titus*, the natural landscape in *King Lear* adheres to tradition in that Shakespeare designates it a feminine signifier, and once again the maps of Drayton and Münster spring to mind. Edmond, reflecting upon his inability to inherit due to his illegitimacy, proclaims that “Thou, nature, art my goddess,”<sup>75</sup> and Lear himself uses imagery that speaks of femininity to describe the lands that Goneril—whose answer in the contest of love pleased him—shall receive. He offers her “shadowy forests. . .with champagnes riched, / With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads.”<sup>76</sup> The symbols of fertility he uses here—rich fields ripe for sowing, water as a traditional feminine fertility symbol, secret dark places that are often moist and verdant, not to mention the feminine connection to the word “skirted”—evoke the visuals of Drayton’s Albion and her dress overlaid with rivers and forests. However, as we saw in *Titus Andronicus*, shadows and forests denote a place of grave danger to symbols of civilized femininity, and the “wide” skirts of the land echo the licentious openness of an unchaste woman, emphasized by the fertility of the river and the “riched” countryside.<sup>77</sup> Both land and daughter are penned as a danger, and one that Lear, like Titus before him, cannot recognize. Estok makes the claim that “For Lear . . . women and the environment are each viciously unpredictable and dangerous, and women who communicate

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<sup>74</sup> Weisser, *Grieved and Disordered*, 249. Olivia Weisser states that, “Individuals did not commonly use the word *emotion* in early modern England. Rather, expressions of grief, rage, fear, and lust were referred to as *passions*, a term loaded with negative connotations,” often because of its connection to the feminine. By this definition Lear is, if he is anything, passionate, which reflects his confusion regarding the performativity of gender—even his own.

<sup>75</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.2.1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.64-5.

<sup>77</sup> *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream* also plays with these meanings of the forest, and Shakespeare crosses all types of sexual boundaries in his magical woods. Here people fall prey to sexual predation and bestiality, and of the pairing of disparate classes and people of uneven status.

freely are monsters.”<sup>78</sup> I agree with this assessment, but would push the argument further by stating that they are not necessarily each separately dangerous, but connectedly dangerous, as they are clearly inseparable within Lear’s mind. As ecocritic Ynestra King puts it, “the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing.”<sup>79</sup> Lear desires his daughters to match his kingdom in fertility, presumably to produce a male heir to take his place and ensure the continued health of his kingdom, but his demand that they do so according to his problematic definitions of gender performativity ensures his tragic failure.

Cordelia, of course, has the potential to embody all of Lear’s wishes, but he again cannot read her properly and his own interventions cause her to deliberately obscure her meaning. Cordelia gravely disappoints all her father’s hopes by refusing to quantify her love for him. When he bids her, “Speak”<sup>80</sup> she not only says “Nothing”<sup>81</sup> but threatens to remain barren by claiming, “I shall never marry like my sisters,”<sup>82</sup> for if she did, “That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry / Half my love with him.”<sup>83</sup> Lear, wrongly perceiving her promise of infertility as a threat to his kingdom, banishes her from both his seats of authority—the land and his household, the public and the private sphere. He does, in fact, interpret “nothingness” in Cordelia’s “nothing,” in the perceived breakdown of the filial boundaries between father and daughter, but is unable to interpret the wealth of meaning in her refusal to speak. Through her refusals to both barter her love and to breed, Cordelia disassociates herself from Lear’s vision of her as a proper custodian of his land—indeed, from his understanding of her as a performative feminine entity at all—which implies that he envisions his kingdom would mirror its mistress’ refusal to be fertile and fruitful. In his own mind he adheres to James Stone’s vision of the “traditional paradigm that man is the principle

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<sup>78</sup> Estok, *Shakespeare and Ecocriticism*, 20.

<sup>79</sup> King, “Toward an Ecological Feminism”, 118.

<sup>80</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.1.86.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.87.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.103.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.101-2.

of sameness-unto-itself (self identity)” and Cordelia to “its misogynistic corollary, which projects the responsibility for all difference onto women.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, Cordelia’s refusal to give Lear a predictably readable feminine response, to act without the “sameness” of her sisters, causes Lear such terrible anxiety that he exiles her from his land so as to break down the association between the two. He has attached his land to Goneril and Regan, and Cordelia easily sees the danger of that association:

I know what you are,  
And like a sister am most loath to call  
Your faults as they are named. Love well our father.  
To your professéd bosoms I commit him.  
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace  
I would prefer him to a better place.<sup>85</sup>

Lear’s inability to read the maps of his daughter and his country are perhaps not so surprising once we learn from Regan that “he hath ever but slenderly known himself.”<sup>86</sup> His instability, therefore, comes from the fact that he does *not* in actuality fit Stone’s definition of the early modern man. It seems unlikely, then, that he could he reliably read the correct definitions of an early modern woman.

Interestingly, when Cordelia is banished she takes all that is truly feminine and feminized with her from her father’s kingdom, which emphasizes Lear’s mistake in misinterpreting her contribution to his test of her love. Lear’s question to Goneril, “Are you our daughter?”<sup>87</sup> becomes significant; he does not ask if she is his “child” but specifically uses a word indistinguishable from the feminine. Even more significantly, Goneril does not answer the question, and her evasion carries with it the strong implication that the truth would

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<sup>84</sup> Stone, *The Family*, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.1.268-272.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.1.293.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 1.4.755.

be a resounding “No.” Lear also banishes Kent—the man who has most consistently demonstrated archetypal early modern normative masculine<sup>88</sup> performativity—at the same time, demonstrating that Kent and Cordelia are two sides of the same coin, the best and most positive examples of both masculine and feminine behaviors. Kent demonstrates his aversion to Lear’s emotional or passionate behavior when he tries to show Lear the error of his ways:

Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift;  
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,  
I’ll tell thee thou dost evil.<sup>89</sup>

Likewise, Cordelia has proven that she alone amongst Lear’s children possesses the true early modern womanly ability to feel and express emotion appropriately, for her sisters answered their father’s challenge with flattery and deception rather than true filial devotion. So with the perceived<sup>90</sup> removal of these two archetypally gendered characters, both the kingdom and the other characters fall into disarray, their cultural meanings confused and boundaries broken down. Lear falls into madness (an absence of reason) and hysteria (an absence of masculinity) while the sisters Regan and Goneril, like Tamora, have no need to wish upon themselves a masculine capacity for violence, for it is already inherent within them. “Hang him [Gloucester] instantly” Regan demands, while her sister says, “Pluck out his eyes.”<sup>91</sup> Clearly, Lear’s masculine interference in Cordelia’s performativity as a woman and of her place on his map disrupts both the feminine and masculine normative spheres in the play.

The landscape demonstrates a similar confusion of identity. King Lear establishes boundaries within his kingdom and his family that cannot be sustained, and it is when those

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<sup>88</sup> As with Davies’ definition of “the feminine,” I would argue that “the masculine” also differs quite radically between life and art.

<sup>89</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1.1.162-5.

<sup>90</sup> Perceived by King Lear, that is, since according to his knowledge Kent is removed from his country. He is unaware of Kent’s deception and disguise, and therefore acts and reacts as if Kent were truly gone.

<sup>91</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.7.3-4.

boundaries come crumbling down that Lear finally has his epiphany. First, the boundaries he drew for Goneril and Regan on his map break down as he learns that they have both betrayed him. Both daughters, secure in their inheritances, spurn their father and turn him from their homes. Lear attempts to reestablish his authority over his daughters by reinstating the love contest, but fails; they evict him from his own kingdom, just as he evicted Cordelia in an equally inequitable and unwarranted fashion. His land and his daughters are now both strangers to him and have become sites of danger, just as Cordelia had predicted they would.

He blusters:

No, you unnatural hags,  
I will have such revenges on you both  
That all the world shall—I will do such things—  
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be  
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep.  
No, I'll not weep.<sup>92</sup>

Here he attempts to reinstate his masculinity, rejecting emotion, tears, and invoking the concepts of violence and revenge.<sup>93</sup> And, at that very moment, the storm hits. The tempest, the “terrors of the earth” all mirror Lear’s inner turmoil and it’s as if regaining his masculinity shows him the extent to which his interference has disordered his world. There is enlightenment and epiphany; the destruction reflects his horror at how he has been so drastically wrong in his readings of his daughters and his kingdom, as well as in the choices he has made regarding them. The landscape itself weeps the tears Lear proclaims he will not shed in the form of a wild and raucous storm, for its mistresses are acting against their filial natures, their roles as keepers of the kingdom, and their performative identities as women.

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, *King Lear*, 2.2.452-7.

<sup>93</sup> For more information regarding the connection between revenge and space, see James J. Condon’s essay “Setting the stage for revenge: space, performance, and power in early modern revenge tragedy.” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*. 25 (2012) 62-82.



The forces of nature become an emblem of the demolition of Lear’s conceptions, and the realization of his own transgressions. It is chaotic, of that there is no doubt; but it is not empty—the map is not blank. It exhibits the emotion—the *passion*—that Lear mistakenly felt Cordelia lacked at the beginning of the play. His railing speech at the storm mimics his angry expletives towards Goneril and Regan, indicating his subconscious recognition that the destructive and fatal behaviors of nature are mimetic of his daughters’ deadly natures:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
You sulph’rous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o’th’ world,  
Crack nature’s moulds, all germens spill at once  
That makes ingrateful man.<sup>94</sup>

Their actions are not only unwomanly, but they have unmanned him as well. Their betrayal has “drenched [his] steeple” and “drowned [his] cock,” leaving him even less of a man. His attempt to reclaim his own performativity of gender has failed and he finds himself a victim of his own misguided interference.

It is not until he is mired in his grief over Cordelia’s death that Lear too late recognizes the connection between his kingdom and his favorite daughter—and ultimately, in their relationships to himself. Once again he rages at the storm, but this time his epiphany is complete; he knows what he has lost both as a father and a ruler:

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones.

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<sup>94</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.2.1-9.

Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.  
I know when one is dead and when one lives.  
She's dead as earth.<sup>95</sup>

The landscape, represented in this speech by Lear's invocation of “stones”<sup>96</sup> and “earth,” is suddenly mute, blind and dead, as is Cordelia. This is in direct opposition to Lear's description of his lands as “champaigns riched” and “plenteous rivers” while she lived. His map, the divisions of his kingdom, fall victim to the same fate as the mistress it should have had, and too late does Lear recognize the connection. Cordelia's promise to remain barren has been fulfilled, though only through Lear's interference, and the earth reflects that barrenness in its own vision of death. Lear soon follows suit, unable to sustain the knowledge that his folly destroyed the two things he loved most—his daughter and his kingdom. And, like Titus, he loses everything, including his own life, because of his inability to trust his daughter and her performative femininity.

Titus and Lear, Lavinia and Cordelia—from the beginnings to the end of his career Shakespeare made his audiences feel the importance of women's relationships with space and the cartographic representations of that space, and the dangers of disrupting those connections with unnecessary masculine interference. Women clearly have a problematic relationship with land and maps in Shakespeare's plays but, he seems to argue, that isn't always their fault or due to their inherent feminine natures. Proper stewardship of one's land and one's daughter involves trust, a concerted and deliberate relinquishment (as opposed to lack) of control, an ability to read and understand normative and subversive performativities,

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., *King Lear*, 5.3.232-6.

<sup>96</sup> Shakespeare's use of the plural “stones” here, as opposed to the singular “stone,” leads me to believe he was speaking not just of an idea of hardness or of impassivity, but of landscape. “Men of stone” and “men of stones” have two very different implications, the first being an internal and abstract description and the second indicating a more physical, concrete representation. These men are not just “like” stone — they are *made* of stones, and thereby become a part of the landscape itself.

and appropriate performativity of one’s own masculinity. The fact that both of these stories focus on a problematic father-daughter relationship is perhaps even more indicative of Shakespeare’s insistence that masculine interference harms the perpetrator as much as its object. When fathers refuse to allow their daughters to make their own choices, live their own lives, be their own people, reflect their own definitions of the spaces they inhabit, they destroy not just a woman but their own hearts, a part of themselves. As a father to two daughters himself, only one of whom he trusted with the bulk of his fortune after his death,<sup>97</sup> we can imagine he understood both the desire a father would feel to impose order on his daughter’s lives and the pain it would cause when that interference simply made matters worse.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Susanna and her husband were named executors of Shakespeare’s will and inherited the bulk of his fortune while Judith inherited a much smaller lump sum.

<sup>98</sup> One may be led to wonder about his part in the scandal surrounding his daughter Judith’s marriage to a man convicted of “carnal copulation”—that is, getting another woman pregnant after he was already betrothed to Judith Shakespeare—and the effect it may have had on his health, considering that he died only weeks later.

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