

CRIP / EARLY / MODERN: THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF DISABILITY IN  
ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

A Thesis  
by  
EVYAN D. GAINEY

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APPROVED BY:

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David L. Orvis, Ph.D.  
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

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Susan C. Staub, Ph.D.  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Başak Çandar, Ph.D.  
Member, Thesis Committee

---

Carl Eby, Ph.D.  
Chairperson, Department of English

---

Max C. Poole, Ph.D.  
Dean, Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies

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## Abstract

### CRIP / EARLY / MODERN: THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF DISABILITY IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

Evyan D. Gainey  
B.A., Appalachian State University  
B.S., Appalachian State University  
M.A., Appalachian State University

Chairperson: David L. Orvis

This study inquires into the ways sick and disabled bodies bear a sexually politicized thrust within several dramatic and poetic works of the English Renaissance. I would like to add to the growing conversation concerning literary interpretations of disability by suggesting that disabled embodiment was often rationalized within early modern literature as a force of subversive sexual power—embodiment figured as not only improperly sexual but also, at times, hypersexual, threatening to the sociopolitical environments of the textual worlds I examine. To make this argument, I consider three Renaissance works—William Shakespeare’s problem-play *All’s Well That Ends Well*, Richard Barnfield’s pastoral poem *The Affectionate Shepherd*, and Thomas Heywood’s domestic tragedy *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. The social arenas depicted in these texts demand bodies to acquire able-bodiedness and, by consequence, sexual use-value and productivity, employing efforts of medicalization and social erasure to make this happy ending a happy reality.

## **Acknowledgments**

This project has been in the works for a long time and I have many people to thank. I'm incredibly grateful for my additional committee readers, Susan C. Staub and Başak Çandar, for not just agreeing to read my work, but also for being invaluable mentors throughout my time in Appalachian's graduate program. I have been inspired by so many incredible people here over the past few years, and it has meant the world to me that two of the smartest scholars I know agreed to read my ramblings. I hope this was as much fun to read as it was to write.

Over the past year and a half I've been lucky enough to present various sections of this project at numerous national conferences and symposia; Chapter One was delivered at George Washington University's "Premodern Disorder" graduate symposium, while early versions of Chapter Three were delivered at the 2016 meeting of the Southeastern Women's Studies Association (SEWSA) and, later, at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's "Old and New Humanism(s)" conference. I'd like to thank the numerous audience members who offered valuable feedback, some of which I have applied to the revised versions here. I've been the fortunate recipient of numerous travel and research grants from both the English Department and Cratis D. Williams Graduate School, and many thanks to Amy Greer and Teresa Greene for finalizing my funding to attend these events. I can truly say I've benefitted from the experience.

It goes without saying that grad school is unbearable without a supportive community of peers; three in particular have meant the world to me. I'd like to thank Cindy McPeters, who I met in a literary theory course and who later forced me to voice my opinions aloud. I've rarely stopped since. Over the past few semesters, we've travelled together; she's ironed my shirts at conferences, and she's usually the first person I confide in during times of stress and crisis. She's my friend for life. Kylee Neal is one of the hardest working people I've ever met. To me, she is the model grad student, someone who never seems to lose her nerve or cave to stress and circumstance. Someday she'll have to teach me these skills, too. One of my few regrets at Appalachian is that it took so long to know Myra McCoury. I could say so much about Myra, but I'll stop at this—I've learned who the real Evyan Gainey is by knowing her. She continues to bring out the best in me, time and time again. Many thanks to my parents as well, who have supported me throughout my time at Appalachian. I love you.

Is history tyranny? Three years ago, in the spring of 2014, I took a Shakespeare course on a whim. Now, I find myself en route to an Ivy League Ph.D. program. The culprit behind this sea change is, without question, David Orvis. Any student should thank his or her director for unwavering inspiration and support, but this alone cannot express how much his guidance has altered my life, for better or worse. I don't know where my graduate career would be without him, assuming I'd have one at all. Leaving Appalachian for Columbia and New York is nerve-racking, but mostly because I worry I won't find a mentor as irreverent, as stimulating, as absolutely fabulous, as he. Thank you. It's been a very good three years.

## **Dedication**

For my brother, for everything.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Sexual Politics of Disability in English Renaissance Literature**

This study inquires into the ways sick and disabled bodies bear a sexually politicized thrust within several dramatic and poetic works of the English Renaissance. I would like to add to the growing conversation concerning literary interpretations of disability by suggesting that disabled embodiment was often rationalized within early modern literature as a force of subversive sexual power—embodiment figured as not only improperly sexual but also, at times, hypersexual, threatening to the sociopolitical environments of the textual worlds I examine.<sup>1</sup> The social arenas depicted in the following readings demand bodies to be normative in terms of use value and sexual function, and will do anything to make this happy ending a happy reality.

A perennial point of critique offered by the still developing fields of disability theory and, more recently, queer/crip studies, posits that the disabled body has been culturally imagined within a kind of self-contradiction. Many disabled people are at once framed as asexual—that is, below sexual capacity and incapable of either sexual performativity or sexual attractiveness. But the disabled are, oddly enough, simultaneous emblems of hypersexuality; the very idea of a disabled person having sex, for example, often becomes interpreted as a strange fetish or a site of strong sexual deviance, automatically figured as falling into a category of unacceptable sexuality worthy of society's condemnation. Only

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<sup>1</sup> I deploy “embodiment” throughout this project to refer to the way in which bodies' material conditions might be figured according to matters of sexual capacity and (dis)ability. In other words, my argument examines the notion that embodied erotic subjectivity can be determined by ability, and vice versa, rather than necessarily emerging as a material condition of the body.

able-bodied individuals, it seems, can perform sex right and well. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow's *Sex and Disability* aims at bringing to task such assumptions, and has been a point of inspiration for my own project. McRuer and Mollow's text probes why visualizations of the sexual disabled body seem incongruous and unimaginable in cultural estimation, framed, in their words, as either "tragic deficiency" or "freakish excess," exposing a world of intersectionality between sex and disability that queer theory and disability studies have left unexplored for far too long.<sup>2</sup> As the scholars write in their introduction, sex and disability are more intimately related than social discourse would like to let on; sexuality and erotic desire pervade the disabled experience, just as disability shakes up traditional notions of what might count as acceptable or comprehensible sex. Furthermore, McRuer and Mollow aim to interrogate how disabled bodies negotiate sexual identity within a heteronormative culture that privileges able-bodiedness and demands useful forms of able-bodied sexual experience and production.

If deficiency and loss are indeed at the heart of social imaginings of sex and disability, related studies have helped conceptualize the homeostatic norms underpinning disability anxieties in the first place. Margrit Shildrick's excellent work *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity, and Sexuality* argues that in modernity the conjunction between disability and sexuality is a dangerous idea threatening the longevity of existing, normative orders, producing what Shildrick calls "dangerous discourses." Individuals who experience subjectivity promoting non-normative or unnatural sexual desire or embodiment are marked in social imaginations as in need of realignment and immediate discipline and control. Such figurings of the sexual disabled body are dangerous, in Shildrick's appraisal, precisely because they promote an open-ended understanding of sexual bodies that may or

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<sup>2</sup> Anna Mollow and Robert McRuer, *Sex and Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

may not promote the workings of teleology. In short, few guarantees of linearity surface in this model of embodiment, but in the end this unpredictability makes the sexual disabled body as radical and subversive.

Radicalism and social resistance has itself been a continued point of intrigue informing the still developing field of crip theory, a politically infused turn in disability studies positioning the disabled body in epistemological resistance to narratives stressing bodily normality and framing disability as some broken, useless thing. The broadening deployment of the term “crip,” this four letter word implying much more than bodily materiality, establishes the disabled body as a subject rather than a mere object, one that desires and is, potentially, desirable. While the popularization of the word in academic discourse would develop only years later thanks to foundational works such as McRuer’s *Crip Theory*, writings similar to disability and trans activist Eli Clare’s earlier *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation* helped pivot the conversation of disability/crip studies towards the “dangerous” sexual politics of the disabled body, whose very existence proves a continual challenge to hegemonic narratives of social and sexual acceptability. Clare’s monograph notes that social objectification often pigeonholes disability as uselessly asexual, a gaze defining disability as congruous with a childlike state of underdevelopment requiring realignment through discourses of cure and medicalization. The question is how to liberate oneself away from such constrictive reductions that, among other things, impose limits on sexual desire, who can experience sexual pleasure, and who deserves to be a sexual and desiring subject.

While the field of disability studies emerged as much more than a mere consequence of advances in queer theory and sexuality studies, such questions criticizing social

configurations regarding who experiences sexual subjectivity finds great precedent in queer discourse. Judith Butler argues in *Bodies That Matter* that hegemonic power structures delineate the figurative “matter” of bodies and viable sex, configuring sex itself as a “regulatory practice produc[ing] the bodies it governs.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the compulsory need to produce—that is, to affirm sex as assuredly useful in the reproduction of bodies and normative sexual ideology—is exposed, and the role of sex and embodiment as supporting pillars of social expectation are elucidated. Although Butler’s writing fails to mention disability at all, her thesis helps explain why disabled sexuality is scattered to polarized extremes in communal imagination. It appears that disability either occupies a place of inadequate sexuality (asexuality) or excessive debauchery, both of which cluster away from a normalized social expectation of properly performing bodies.

As the vanguard topics of queer theory evolved—ranging from the deconstruction of façades veneering sexual normality, to a focus on teleology and futurity, to an emphasis on the viability of resistant queer identity—calls for queer defiance against cultural assimilations of bodies were bound to materialize. Leo Bersani’s *Homos* offers one such critique, providing much of the groundwork for the “no future” turn in queer theory that would later influence a slew of critics.<sup>4</sup> In his earlier essay “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani offers an examination of the homophobic and hostile attitudes directed at gay men during the years of the 1980s AIDS epidemic. Bersani seeks to uncover how an entire group of people can be labeled “killers” or “threats” to society based on a bodily disease that appears connected to the queer community—HIV/AIDS equated in cultural discourse with sexual

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xi.

<sup>4</sup> One particularly well-known example is Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), a study I consider in my first chapter on *All’s Well That Ends Well*.

practices marked as “other” and distant from normative sexual identity. *Homos* sought to expand this conversation, outlining the viability of real queer resistance in a world where gay activism aims for acceptance into normality and social inclusion. In Bersani’s opinion, the desire for mere acceptance or tolerance does little to challenge power relations continually bent on disciplining gay identity and shaping sexual bodies into something more tolerable and less radical. Drawing upon the work of critics such as Judith Butler, Bersani builds his critique against culture’s reductions and erasures of sex and eroticism, sexuality being, in his interpretation, the key to queer resistance in a society that attempts to normalize bodies through a regulation of sexual practice.

Yet despite these intelligible connections forged between sexuality and the social/material considerations of the body, disability was still rarely if ever mentioned in conjunction with queerness or queer theory in a cotemporary context. The aversion to fashioning such a connection from a queer perspective is, admittedly, understandable. The historical classification of homosexuality and other non-normate sexual identity as mental illnesses, bracketed as deserving medical-level attention and realignment no doubt haunted the memory of numerous critics. As the work of Butler and Bersani shows, it is as if a thick layer of carefully lined ice separates the association of queerness with disability; one is viewable from the placement of the other, yet the two are catatonically held in place, too dangerous to associate or touch. But, as time passed, the urge to light a fire melting away this transparent layer eventually proved irresistible. In a thesis developed across numerous essays including “As Good as It Gets: Queer Theory and Critical Disability” and the more well known queer/crip classic "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," McRuer argues that queerness and disability can be considered “partner”

identities owing to similar histories of oppression within heteronormative privileging of usefully sexual bodies. His theory of “compulsory able-bodiedness,” evoking Adrienne Rich’s earlier marking of “compulsory heterosexuality,” argues that able-bodiedness, like heterosexuality, becomes a hegemonic form of identity/embodiment that functions as a compulsory ideal in contemporary culture.<sup>5</sup> Able-bodiedness emerges, in effect, as the standard, disability thereby marked as abnormal and falling short of social expectation.

Developing Bersani’s call for queer resistance against normative narratives of sexuality and McRuer’s revelations on the inextricable partnership between sex and embodiment, a handful of disability and crip studies scholars have offered insight into queer/crip existence as a unique phenomenological bodily experience. Most notably, Alison Kafer’s *Feminist, Queer, Crip* invites a slew of topics (futurity, ecology, identity politics) into a much needed dialogue with disability studies, many of the resulting conversations holding a significant bearing in my own study to come. For example, Kafer considers disability within the context of reproductive capacity, childbirth, and eugenics. Another chapter explores the role of disability in nature, interrogating if natural ecological boundaries resist accommodation of the disabled body, as social rhetoric so often posits. Yet another section of Kafer’s thesis explores the viability of crip resistance in a culture privileging able-bodiedness as much as heterosexuality. Kafer works towards a theory of “curative time” that describes the social expectation for disabled individuals to strive to “get better” through medicalization and rehabilitation, disability rarely considered a legitimate identity category.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 5.4 (1980): 631-660. For another critique of Rich’s work in a disability studies context, see Alison Kafer’s “Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-bodiedness,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15.3 (2003): 77-89.

<sup>6</sup> Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 18.

The last of these issues, medicalization's connection to materiality and social constructivism—especially surrounding social stigma attached to disablement—draws upon important preceding debates within the discipline. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Erving Goffman discusses stigma as encompassing anything from bodily “abominations” to homosexuality and “unnatural” passions, determined by the society that crafts such attributes as “blemishes of individual character,” incongruous with its bodily conception of how an individual should appear or act.<sup>7</sup> It is in the midst of the resulting stigma that certain social minorities have long been labeled “cripples” and “queers,” broken beings somehow in need of rehabilitation, repair, or realignment into an unaccommodating society. Goffman's subject as a whole examines the phenomenological experience of individuals who society figures as abnormal, as well as the sense of social place and belonging that such individuals craft for themselves in relation to that which is “normal.”

Although Goffman's text is several decades old, it fostered an important discussion on how social stigma functions as a force of discipline and social ostracization.<sup>8</sup> This point would soon resonate as one of disability studies' foundational critiques on the body. In what would become known as the social model of disability, much early scholarship on disabled embodiment aimed to position disability as assembled from society's lack of accommodation for bodily difference. As Tom Shakespeare points out in “The Social Model of Disability,” this understanding was formulated as an improvement over the medical or “individual” model, which bases disability in terms of individual deficit and posits that cure can be reached through medicalization and rehabilitation efforts. This individual approach to

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<sup>7</sup> Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 4.

<sup>8</sup> I would note here that Michel Foucault explores similar social forces of stigma and bodily realignment throughout a body of scholarship, some of which I will discuss later in Chapter One.

studying disabled existence adopts the argument that society and social oppression has little to no role in determining disability, and that an increased clinical understanding of bodily impairment can eliminate disability through charity and cures. One of the biggest criticisms of the medical model, articulated in Shakespeare's essay, is the way it frames the problems disabled people face as exclusively based in one's bodily materiality, without acknowledging that many problems form as a consequence of social oppression.

The complex power of social assemblages will be a recurring theme within my own discussion later in this project, but I would be remiss here not to cite one of the glaring issues in adopting an exclusively social basis of understanding disability. As Tobin Siebers argues in "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body," although the social model of disability rightfully critiques society as playing a role in disabling individuals through non-accommodation, the materiality of bodies must not be forgotten if one wishes to understand the diversity of disabled experience. In other words, social constructivism too often overgeneralizes disability as emerging exclusively from society's imaginings, which, for physically impaired individuals, is not a viable critique. As Siebers cautions, an emphasis on the social model can do more harm than good at times, as the material conditions comprising the foundation of disabled identity are left little discussed.<sup>9</sup> In the textual readings that will follow in my subsequent chapters, crip resistance occurs not only in defiance of social expectation of the useful and the sexually productive body, but also in an embrace of the bodily materiality that facilitated such resistance in the first place.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Sieber's examination of (dis)ability in an early modern context in his more recent chapter "Shakespeare Differently Disabled" in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 435-454.

While I have hitherto discussed a wide array of work in social theory influencing my own understanding of disability and crip studies, I must reiterate that my larger hope for this project is to contribute to the growing conversation surrounding literary representations of disability, and I follow in a long line of disability and crip theorists in this respect. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor" offers a long overdue critique of a recurring theme in literary representations of disability. Mitchell and Snyder argue that disabled bodies commonly serve a narrative purpose upon which plots rely, a "metaphor" deployed as a symbolic trope to be fixed or overcome in offering a compelling happy ending that is also distinctly able-bodied. The problem is that, in positioning disability as a mere "symbolic figure," such narratives rarely account for the complicated social and political aspects of disability situated beyond the material. Similarly, Lennard J. Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, a work predating Mitchell and Snyder's article, considers aesthetic representation as a site in which bodily wholeness is awarded to able-bodied subjects, but denied to bodies deemed fragmented and physically disabled. Davis's text would prove one of the first full-length studies conceptualizing what would become disability studies, arguing that the category of ability/disability is just as fraught in concerns of identity politics as class, race, gender, and sexuality. The foundations to the discipline appear to have been informed, then, by issues raised in literary and aesthetic representation, social theory and literary interpretation becoming intertwined and mutually informative.

Although the works previously mentioned belong to a particular period of social and cultural theory, my argument suggests that the self-contradicting fiction spun around sex and disabled embodiment, ever torn between opposite extremes, is not confined to some recent

moment in cultural history. Rather than finding exclusive emergence in our contemporary social climate, this also appears in early modern literature with similar demands for the compulsory production of the “useful” sexual body very much intact. While it is not my intention here to make any grand statements on the precise historical imagining of disability in the early modern period (if such a comprehensive sentiment existed at all), I find it interesting that a recurring theme in Renaissance literature places disabled bodies within a familiar framework stressing social necessity (i.e., reproduction, health, sexual capacity) over individual identity and desire divergent from the enactment of sexual norms and expectations—queer erotic desire and desire for disablement being two such examples.

In exploring such complexities of sexual power and social expectations of the body within my own reading of early modern texts, I have benefitted from the work of numerous queer Renaissance scholars. James Bromley and Will Stockton’s volume *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England* is one such study, offering various chapters explicating an array of sexual practice and possibility in early modern literary texts. Bromley and Stockton’s introduction and overarching thesis provides a provocative examination of one seemingly simple question: what is sex? In other words, what counts as sex in historical periods of literary production other than our own? The discussions offered in this collection span a wide array of representations expanding the epistemological limits of pleasure and eroticism, perhaps debating the assumption that normative practices of sexuality were of immediate concern in many Renaissance texts. This proposed inquiry has helped germinate my own thesis because it positions Renaissance literature as an arena of sexual practice and desire that resists easy classification through contemporary modes of interpretation. Like

Bromley and Stockton, I would like to help disassemble assumptions over what counts as sex, who is able to perform sex, and what sexual practices resist narrative use-value.

With this focus on the infinities of possibility and the uncertainty of knowing in mind, concurrent studies have dug deep into the political and social implications of certain forms of sex and sexuality in Renaissance texts, finding traces of familiar narratives relating to hegemonic demands for bodily usefulness and production. Bromley's *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* argues that Renaissance literature plays host to a variety of non-standard and non-normative sexual practices that often pose a challenge to dominant cultures depicted within texts. In the process, complex forms of intimacy and eroticism are offered for the reader's imagination. Bromley bridges a gap between contemporary theory and Renaissance literature in his noting of familiar fixtures of social discipline and control of sexual bodies, including cultural figurings of "proper" and acceptable intimacy—often framed in terms of teleological sex. Bodies that do not fit this expectation become, in Bromley's estimation, "failures" of intimacy within the cultural landscape of particular texts, perhaps privileging a hegemonic ideal of the proper use of sex and eroticism. In similar ways, Melissa Sanchez's *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* uncovers sex and eroticism as inextricable from political concerns within early modern texts. In Sanchez's estimation, to experience erotic passion and desire, violent or not, carries with it considerations shaking up sociopolitical mappings of gender, the body, and acceptable sexual power relations within social discourse. Sanchez's interest in tracing the complexities of erotic enjoyment and desire, including considerations of abjection, self-masochism, and self-subordination as appealing and desirable offers yet another compelling

study of erotic enjoyment in reference to the body that I have found useful for this project on sex and disability in Renaissance literature.

Discerning some degree of recognizable sameness within the literature of the past has been a point of volatile recent debate within queer early modern studies. In *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film*, Madhavi Menon critiques historicism as a discipline that has for too long been consumed in establishing an unappealing partition of difference between past and present that is, if anything, limiting, despite claims by historicists that this model best represents historical accuracy and objective fact. She argues that queer theory can illuminate our understanding of Shakespeare's works and the way we view the temporal footing of Renaissance literature in general, offering the term "homohistory"—interpreting history and its literature without an obsession of finding difference between past and present—as an alternative to what she calls "heterotemporality" (the idea that the past is very different from us). Menon attempts to challenge dominant historical methodologies in interpreting Shakespeare's texts. In defense of historicism, Valerie Traub posits in "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies" that the kind of "homohistory" Menon describes belittles the importance of certain historical considerations, offering little more than an overgeneralized view of a constant history that erases nuanced understandings of the past and the past's bearing on the present. Traub argues that teleological thinking can be present in queer historicist interpretation, true, but this does not mean that queer historicism is synonymous with notions of "temporal normativity" or "straight time." Her article emphasizes queer historicism's ability to explore more complex

links between sexuality, time/temporality, and history making—placing emphasis on modes of difference that are apparently too important to discard or ignore.<sup>10</sup>

It is not my intention within these pages to engage in a prolonged debate on the merits of (un)historicizing and, indeed, I am still not convinced that Menon and Traub’s supposedly divergent theses cannot exist in tandem. But, by virtue of the works that I have found so germinal in engendering this project, I recognize my own interest in exploring markers of recognizable sameness within the literature of long ago. At various points in my thesis, this will mean that my trajectory will employ certain anachronistic terminology in the act of interpretation. My intrigue over the possibility of uncovering social and sexual bodily “norms” in Renaissance literature is one such example that has occasioned criticism in recent years. Here, Karma Lochrie’s *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn’t* offers an extensive critique of deploying the terms “normal” and “norm” in the interpretation of Renaissance works. Lochrie argues that we must avoid configuring the premodern and early modern past with concepts such as “heteronormativity” and “normative sexuality” when we cannot know for sure that such demands for normative bodies and sexualities were in place during the period. Although I would like to acknowledge the importance of such a glaring issue and see the concerns of haphazardly deploying anachronistic language in my own analysis of texts, I feel this debate is a mere quibble over words. As my chapter on *All’s Well That Ends Well* shows, for example, the social expectation for sexual bodies to fall in line with what is “natural” or based in nature is hardly far removed, in my own interpretation, with what might be considered a norm in our contemporary sense of the word. To clarify, this an instance of the chameleonic sameness that I find so appealing.

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<sup>10</sup> See also Traub’s more recent monograph *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

I cannot imagine that the textual analyses comprising the rest of this project would have been possible had many of the theoretical works previously cited not availed themselves beforehand, lighting my own path in assembling connections that make centuries-old texts fresh again. As Carla Freccero has argued in her study of queer temporality in *Queer/Early/Modern*—a variation on which I have titled this project—the possibility that past, present, and future discourses might appear out of sequence or even as simultaneous happenings within the act of reading a text muddies a clear sense of what belongs firmly to the past and what to the present. Like Freccero, I find something attractive in the possibility that much interpretative nuance of the past’s literature can only be unlocked through the continually developing discourse of the present day. My chapter on Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* would not have been feasible, after all, without the relatively recent advancement of theories such as reproductive futurism, compulsory able-bodiedness, and curative time; my analysis of Richard Barnfield’s poetry would have been unimaginable without the help of the still developing discipline of ecocriticism and its bearing on the disabled body; it was crip theory’s advances in body theory and identity politics that inspired my analytical intervention in *A Woman Killed With Kindness* above all else. My point is that, in contemplating texts of an age in which so little is firmly known, the social theory on which I have built this project entrenches it, as Freccero might say, in a temporality never fully belonging to a teleological past or a present, beginning or end, before or after.

In what follows, I would like to explore how disability, when conflated with a certain kind of sexual experience, is at times juxtaposed with desirability even to those who might otherwise be considered healthy and able-bodied. In the texts I discuss, social pressure is

placed on disabled bodies simply to choose to get better—to heal, to rehabilitate, to realign with cultural expectation. Given some of these texts’ bizarre presentation of disability as emerging from specific sexualities or sexual concerns and/or practices, the expectation that disability is curable or preventable through realignment into “proper” (i.e., useful/acceptable) sexuality is hardly surprising. But the final recurring theme I want to spotlight within these works is that such realignments too commonly fail. As the narratives come to a close, a happy, able-bodied ending is forced, at times only intact through the interpretative liberties of the reader. In pulling together the works of critics as diverse as McRuer, Mollow, Bromley, Stockton, Sanchez, and many others, this study will explore the interconnectivity and intersectionality of sex and disability because, in the early modern works I will discuss here, one cannot exist without a necessary consideration of the other, often resulting in society’s overwrought attempt to modify or erase one or both. As the following texts explore, sex can be disability. Disability can challenge preconceived expectations of proper sexual bodies. Sex can pave the way for social and physical disablement. And disablement can be, for lack of a better word, sexy, inspiring desire and socially figured in the context of erotic intrigue. Terminal disability potentially represents the most dangerous and dangerously erotic subjects across numerous Renaissance texts, three of which I explicate for this project.

My first chapter, centered on the medicalization of disability in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, applies some of the foundational concerns of disability theory in a new reading of one of Shakespeare’s greatest problem plays. With its obsession over healing sick bodies and desires, coupled with an emphasis on medicalization in both text and performance, *All’s Well* is a microcosm for many of the ongoing debates that characterize contemporary disability

activism—chiefly among them, the limitations of an exclusively medical model of understanding disabled existence. In this chapter I seek to develop a queer/crip exploration into the root of characters’ obsessions over fixing “broken” bodies and curing queer identities, and make the argument that such endeavors are wrapped up in securing an able-bodied reproductive futurity for society—queer sexuality compromises the assurance of a future through procreation, just as disability jeopardizes an able-bodied homogeneity that can itself reproduce. In *All’s Well*, disability is present in both material form (the diseased, physically disabled King) as well as through social model stigmatization (Bertram, whose queer desires are treated with the rhetoric of disease, an unacceptable bodily state). Yet, a strict adherence to medicalization prevails but, as I will show, ultimately fails to situate sick characters into the demands of compulsory able-bodiedness, or back in line with the play’s societal anxiety for bodies and identities to fit into a schema of reproductive use value—perhaps questioning whether all is really well in the end.

My second chapter, inspired by Richard Barnfield’s seductively homoerotic *The Affectionate Shepherd*, offers commentary on the disabled body’s position within ecocritical discourse as it pertains to environmental and bodily sustainability. This mirrors the issues I discuss in *All’s Well* in eerie ways. Indeed, the very ingredients for the apothecary drugs that Helena carries in her doctor’s satchel seem to have blossomed in Daphnis’s pastoral. In *The Affectionate Shepherd*, the poet imagines for himself an idyllic landscape of longevity and ecological rejuvenation accompanying his erotic desire for a young man. However, although the poem’s musings for such a world are praiseworthy in their temporary resistance against the social necessity of male-female coupling as a means of prosperity, the ableist rhetoric figuring homoerotic love as distinctly able-bodied and opposed to terminality is much less

so. A primary staple of contemporary queer/crip studies, as I've previously detailed, suggests that queerness and disability overlap in shared experiences of oppression, emerging as stigmatized partners in heteronormativity's calculated demands for sexually useful bodies. Such considerations layer the foundation of my queer/crip critique of *All's Well*; however, Daphnis's verse re-maps this perennial relationship, partnering undesirable disability with sodomitical heteroeroticism, both interpreted as sickening and therefore useless in his assembled world of bodily longevity. I'm interested in the ways disability is collapsed into sodomitically undesirable sex (in this case, male-female affection), crafting a hetero/disabled association deemed threatening to the fulfillment of the poet's affections. The shepherd's argument posits that homoerotic affection is based in the natural world, but, much like the culture of *All's Well*, his poetic conceit is one championing cure and rehabilitation rather than accommodation. Ultimately, Daphnis's denial that terminal disability might be associated with homoerotic affection pushes the pastoral paradise into ecological atrophy.

My third and final chapter explores identity politics emerging from the intersections of sex and disability in Thomas Heywood's domestic tragedy *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. Heywood's play is fraught in the kind of homosocial relations that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick once critiqued as providing for a traffic in women, here made manifest in Frankford and Wendoll's attempts to reduce one of the play's few female characters, Anne, to the level of an objectified commodity, useful insofar as she allows for the realization of same-sex desire and partnership between men. I explore this aspect of the plot for the way it informs a crip defiance of such relations; Anne's embrace of anorexia following her public shaming as an adulteress forges curious connections to what has become known in disability studies as "transability"—the purposeful disablement of one's outward body to match an

inner self-identity. Transabled existence is active within Heywood's work as a force of female agency and defiance in the face of domineering male-male relations, placing Anne out of the service of a patriarchal system that attempts to strip her of personal identity and selfhood for the sake of sexual use-value. As I'd like to show, Anne's self-disablement is performed to make her sexually unavailable for her husband's use. Although this sentiment is problematic, reiterating the now commonplace sentiment that the disabled body is always asexual, this need not mean that disability is below desirability. Anne's calculated disablement fulfills a desire of making physical an internal core identity, filling a void that her marriage to Frankford once degraded and ripped away. In a new interpretation of the intriguing stage direction "*Enter ANNE in her bed,*" I consider Anne's material embodiment as inseparable from the trappings of her disablement by the end of the play, a compelling figuring of the body in which markers of mobility become inextricable from the imagination of the self. Yet, as the play comes to a close, the inability of the social world to comprehend this new display of bodily identity becomes unbearable. The only way to lower Anne back into the confines of social and sexual control is in the forced reimagining of her dead identity, manipulated after death to accommodate the cultural fantasy that homosocial sexual exploitation always retains control over the workings of the body.

Any serious literary study is difficult to reduce to a single sentence or conflated concept. But my hope is that this project will help conceptualize the intertwined connections between sex, sexuality, and (dis)ability as representing a powerfully charged connection that, when studied closely within early modern literature, expand upon various proposed epistemologies surrounding the parameters of the sexual body. I have assembled these particular works because they flirt with such suggestions while stimulating extensions in a

multitude of new and exciting—perhaps even experimental—directions. The following chapters do more than imply that a connection between sex and disability exists within Renaissance literature; they propel this connection to surprising depths of interconnectivity, exploring, if only theoretically, the disabled body's subversive power in readings that traverse the early and the modern, the Renaissance and the contemporary, the queer and the crip.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **“Health shall live free, and sickness freely die”: Medicalizing Disability in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well***

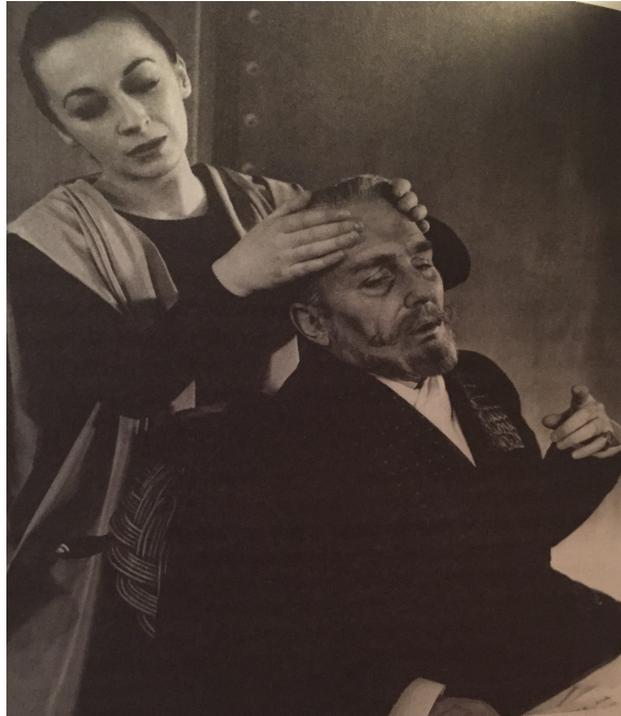


Figure 1.1: Zoe Caldwell (Helena) and Robert Hardy (King) in Tyrone Guthrie’s 1959 Old Vic production.

Source: Angus McBean © Royal Shakespeare Company

Among the ranks of notable productions in *All’s Well That Ends Well*’s stage history is Tyrone Guthrie’s “watershed” 1959 Stratford revival, greeted by critics at the time with enthusiasm and described as “about as perfect [an interpretation] as we are likely to see.”<sup>1</sup> One of the few production photos that survives depicts Helena, the poor physician’s daughter with inherited medical knowledge, hovering over the King, who has, in this sudden

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Alvarez, “*All’s Well That Ends Well*,” *New Statesman* 57.1 (1959): 1467.

theatrical moment, become her de facto patient, a docile body submitting to her cure. Critic Muriel Byrne specifically cites Guthrie's 2.1 curing of the King for its ingenuity:

[Helena] makes a quick and unexpected move, stands behind the King's chair, and places her hands on his brow. He makes an impatient gesture as if to brush aside her insolent presumption—stops at her invocation of 'the great'st grace' (2.1.173), relaxes, closes his eyes and listens, while she speaks the couplets, with their fanciful, stilted phrasing, as an incantation, a charm: and carried beyond herself, rises to the crucial answer upon which her life and fortune depend... a moment of pure theatrical magic. It is quite breathtaking, and, somehow, completely right.<sup>2</sup>

The wonder that Byrne expresses here is not altogether unfounded. The King, who previously in the production has spoken in "broken speech," whose mind seemed to have had "no firm grip" on his surroundings, and who, until this moment, has relied on a wheelchair in order to move,<sup>3</sup> demonstrates the "theatrical magic" of the scene, and, for the first time, stands up and walks. Helena precedes this spectacle with the last of her couplets, and her final so-called incantation poses a promise: "What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly / Health shall live free, and sickness freely die" (2.1.180-181).<sup>4</sup> In these short lines *All's Well's* preoccupation with health as assured life and sickness as certain death is exposed and exploded. Henceforth, as Helena proceeds to cure sickness and fix intents to ensure her own life in a reproductive bond, one would be remiss not to ask: what makes this death of sickness, this triumph of health, life, and able-bodiedness "completely right" or even "perfect"? As I will show, in a play that privileges teleological living on, reproduction and rehabilitation become essential elements in ensuring life and, in a world that promises "all's well that ends well," an able-bodied future.

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<sup>2</sup> Muriel Byrne, "The Shakespeare Season at the Old Vic. 1958-1959 and Stratford-upon-Avon, 1959." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10 (April 1959), 545.

<sup>3</sup> Description referenced in: J.L. Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance: All's Well That Ends Well* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 52.

<sup>4</sup> All play quotations are taken from: William Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well (The RSC Shakespeare)*, ed. Jonathan Bate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Situating *All's Well* within current debates in disability studies and activism, a movement that attempts in part to position disability as a construction determined by a stigmatizing society, this study explores ableist anxieties over disabled embodiment and queer sexuality as evidenced in both the original playtext and in the more physical realm of performance. The work of sociologist Erving Goffman discusses stigma as encompassing anything from bodily “abominations” to homosexuality and “unnatural” passions, determined by the society that crafts such attributes as broken beings in need of rehabilitation, repair, and realignment into an unaccommodating society.<sup>5</sup> Similar failings to either accommodate or understand the complex workings of disability as both construction and identity both persist today and also find ground in *All's Well*, which manages to play host to the controversial workings of abjection and defiance, rehabilitation, medical intervention, and, perhaps most strikingly, medicalization’s limits.

While the roots of the stigma and intolerance that Goffman explains are often elusive, *All's Well*’s own fleeting source of anxiety is something I would like to expose as entangled in reproduction. Stephen Guy-Bray writes that reproduction functions as “a way of harnessing sexuality in the service of society,” usually for the purposes of constituting a “teleological narrative” that only procreation is able to write.<sup>6</sup> I agree with Guy-Bray, and would add that when sexuality fails to be recuperated into such use-value, stigma of the variety Goffman contemplates is the likely consequence. Bodies that are unable or unwilling to assimilate into the mandates that such a system calls for position queerness and disability

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<sup>5</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 4. It is not my intention in this analysis to ground disability completely in social constructivist terms. Later on I will consider Tobin Siebers’s argument that the materiality of bodies must not be forgotten if one wishes to understand the diversity of disabled lived experience, particularly in relation to the visibly impaired body of the King. However, social constructivism plays a large role in Bertram’s figurative disabling and also the shame resulting in the King’s later acceptance of a cure, so its importance in this play cannot be underscored enough.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Guy-Bray, *Against Reproduction: Where Renaissance Texts Come From* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 22.

as threats to the compulsions of hegemonic society, bedfellows poised against the reproductive sexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness that too often masquerade as necessity. *All's Well* is, in short, a play very much open to critique by the insight that queer/crip studies can offer.

In what follows I will explore three distinct but ultimately interrelated concepts. The first considers the importance of reproduction and futurity in *All's Well*, a play that, as I will argue, is built on the very anxiety that Lee Edelman's so called "reproductive futurism"<sup>7</sup> establishes—namely, that the image of the Child and reproduction are essential components towards ensuring a future and living on. In the hegemony and "absolute privilege"<sup>8</sup> that teleological sexuality enjoys, and the disabling environment that it forges as a result, I will embrace the negativity of Edelman's *No Future* to define "queerness" in terms of those who dismiss survival through compulsory reproduction, accepting "no future" by denying reproductive sexuality's supremacy. I will simultaneously use this definition to analyze Kathryn Bond Stockton's notion of "growing sideways,"<sup>9</sup> which I will consider as positioning the Child in opposition to growing up into the goals of procreation and teleological sexuality, a form of resistance in *All's Well* insofar as it sidetracks established, acceptable, and useful forms of intimacy and sexuality that position reproduction as what is normal or natural.<sup>10</sup> Bertram's motivations to resist the reproductive components of marriage throughout much of the play will be of primary interest here.

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<sup>7</sup> Edelman, *No Future*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child: Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Although I will generally avoid using the term, throughout the course of this essay I will consider *All's Well*'s embrace of teleological sexuality as a clear "norm" within society, while certain social institutions (i.e., marriage) also enforce naturalized, normalizing heterosociality. For an extensive critique on the problematic use of this word in reference to early modern literature, see Karma Lochrie's *Heterosyncrasies, Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't*, whose argument I have previously outlined in my introduction. For the

The second concept I wish to explicate involves disability and the threat it poses to *All's Well's* preoccupation with reproductive futurism, to such an extent that it must be cured or fixed at all costs. In the process, I will attempt to explore a relationship between disability and queerness insofar as both present a challenge to able-bodied reproductive futurism. While Edelman provides for the possibility that disability can indeed be decidedly queer,<sup>11</sup> I will draw upon more recent advances in queer/crip theory to discuss ableism at the heart of *All's Well*, which positions disability in terms of sickness (i.e., the King), or, in Bertram's case, defiance that becomes figurative disease by those who value the future that reproduction promises. The intersections between queer and disability theory will be of particular note in this section, which considers the ways in which reproduction and able-bodiedness are intertwined and masquerade as the "natural order of things" to the point that disability and, likewise, queerness, is subordinated.<sup>12</sup> I will gear my trajectory here towards analyzing what has been referred to in crip theory as "curative time," the idea that disabled bodies must always be in the process of transitioning toward or achieving cure and rehabilitation.<sup>13</sup> My aim is to consider the way in which rehabilitation, like reproduction, becomes a tool by which the norm of teleological sex is rooted in place—reproduction

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sake of this chapter, I will argue that sexuality with a reproductive goal does enjoy some degree of "normativity" within the play; after all, characters frequently speak of reproductive sex/procreation in terms of what is "natural"—see my later analysis of Parolles and Helena's conversation on virginity for just one example—which I consider as hardly far from what is "normal" seeing as how both evoke cultural or socially constructed appeals. For a critique of the concept of "normal" in a disability studies context see Lennard J. Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso Books, 1995), which posits that what is "normal" or "natural" is often built on the backs of minority sexual and bodily identities by a society that privileges able-bodiedness.

<sup>11</sup> Edelman, *No Future*, 17. Edelman defines "queers" in terms of "all so stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates."

<sup>12</sup> Robert McRuer, "As Good As It Gets: Queer Theory and Critical Disability," *GLQ* 9, no. 1 (2003): 79. Throughout this article, McRuer positions heterosexuality and able-bodiedness as intertwined, however for the sake of this early modern play I will position the "heterosexual" element of this partnership in line with procreative goals rather than a modern sense of heterosexuality.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of this term, see: Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, which I will discuss more in section two of this chapter.

provides for the future in the form of the Child, rehabilitation for an able-bodied future that can itself reproduce.

My final aim in this essay is to position disability as a social construction as it relates to queerness, interrogating the power of Helena's physic in providing for a happy, able-bodied ending. In what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have termed the "materiality" of the disability "metaphor," disabled bodies commonly serve a narrative purpose upon which plots rely—that is, plot progression through a rehabilitated able-bodiedness.<sup>14</sup> Often used as a symbolic trope to be fixed or overcome, such narratives rarely account for the complicated social and political aspects of disability. It is through a similar understanding that *All's Well's* society operates, and in relation to which I conclude my analysis—given many characters' undeveloped understanding of disability as both a social and material identity, the successful pursuit of an idyllic happy ending is questionable at best. Bodies throughout are subjected to a largely medical model of understanding that positions disability in materiality and individuality, without acknowledging the disabling effects of social stigmatization that I have opted to expose from the beginning. This conflict between the so-called medical and social models of disability finds footing in *All's Well* to lay bare the play's use for able-bodied homogeneity: a drive towards a teleological goal, a future free of the bodily and identity-based difference that challenges whether all is really well in the end.

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<sup>14</sup> See David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor," In *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 205-16. Mitchell and Snyder's "materiality of metaphor" (205) exposes the power of the disabled body as a "symbolic figure" in literature, but proposes that this figuring lacks acknowledgment of the social components of disability that lie outside of the material.

**I**  
**“The web of our life is of a mingled yarn”:  
Reproduction, Futurity, and Queer Existence**

“All in black,” *All’s Well*’s opening stage direction reads, and the audience is thrust into a scene of visual sadness, the somber clothes of the approaching mourners prioritizing the eminence of death and its sobering effect on the living. Withered leaves and broken branches scatter the neglected garden of Rousillon in Guthrie’s production, autumnal beauty falling away for an approaching winter.<sup>15</sup> But, despite this scenery, death and decay are not the only powers at work. Contrast begins to take hold in dialogue, beginning with the Countess’s opening lines that reflect opposition in birth and death, beginning and ending. “In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband” (1.1.1-2), she reminds herself, revealing the source of the sorrow, a dead husband, juxtaposed with the presence of a living son, Bertram. The imagery evoked is striking; the father has passed on, but in this lamentation a simultaneous “delivery” occurs. Childbirth and the child are raised as the would-be signifiers for life and living, hopeful combatants against the despair-ridden ephemerality of the surrounding scenery.

This opening meditation on death connotes an appropriate prologue to what soon follows, shortly countenanced by the evocation of another recently deceased father and his living child. The Countess first describes Helena and her late father, the renowned medical physician Gerard de Narbon, in similar oppositional states of death and life:

This young gentlewoman had a father—O, that ‘had!’ How sad a passage ‘tis!—whose skill was almost as great as his honesty, had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work. (1.1.18-22)

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<sup>15</sup> Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance, All’s Well That Ends Well*, 35.

And, later:

His sole child, my lord...bequeathed to my overlooking. I have those hopes of her good that her education promises her dispositions she inherits, which make fair gifts fairer. (1.1.38-41)

The Countess's initial reminder of her husband's death does not tell a full story, nor can it be considered the exclusive cause of the opening scene's gloom. The Count is dead, true, but so is Helena's father, and, soon enough, the King as well, the leader of the body politic itself. However, like Bertram, Helena is positioned in this context as that which assures life and a future in a world ever threatened by the proliferation of death. Consequently, the bleak imagery that the Countess delivers in these remarks, the "sad passage" that makes de Narbon's potential life-affirming deeds exist as impossibilities confined to the past tense ("had," "would have") now find renewed possibility. Indeed, the Countess's desire for "hope" to be found in the wake of despair appears contingent that certain "dispositions" be passed from parent to child, securing the proliferation of de Narbon's death-deferring abilities into the future. The child's use value is thus affirmed, which, in Helena's case, encompasses the expected inheritance of her father's skill in medical proficiency—the ability to, in the Countess's words, make "nature immortal." This comment's placement next to the mention of death implies that "nature" encompasses notions of life and living, and, given the context with which de Narbon's skill is lamented, health and ability insofar as the remarks make reference to a dying king. Greater than this, though, is the assumption that Helena, by virtue of her status as a child, functions as the crucial agent securing this nature's continuation.

The remarks hitherto discussed occur only moments into *All's Well*, but they nevertheless set in motion ideological rhetoric forming the plot's foundation, the child's conflation with nature an eventual toxic catalyst for a brewing conflict. I am by no means the

first to point out the supremacy of children and childbirth within societal discourse. This subject lies at the center of Edelman's *No Future*, which critiques social idealizations of "the Child" as a life-assuring, future affirming conceptual image. Edelman lays bare such rhetoric as constructed fantasy, an imaginary form whose body is composed of compulsory sexual and social relations, positioned as the main element by which a social order survives:

The governing compulsion, the singular imperative, that affords us no meaningful choice is the compulsion to embrace our own futurity in the privileged form of the Child, to imagine each moment as pregnant with the Child of our Imaginary identifications, as pregnant, that is, with a meaning whose presence would fill up a hole in the Symbolic.<sup>16</sup>

One of the pillars of Edelman's argument is that, if the Child is an essential element in assuring society's continuation into the future, filling up the symbolic hole that represents fear of death and annihilation, then procreative forms of sexuality provide the only way by which this chimeric compulsion can be produced—reproductive futurism, for short.<sup>17</sup>

Although Edelman's treatise centers on the compulsions of contemporary society, I find its exploration of the social fetishization of certain bodies and sexualities as useful, life affirming, and, thus, natural to be a relevant critique even in the context of this early modern play. As I have shown, this elevation of the Child as the privileged signifier for hope and inheritance dominates the play's beginning, establishing a fantasy of natural sexual practice that both shapes, and is shaped by, events that follow.

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<sup>16</sup> Edelman, *No Future*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> A perennial criticism of Edelman's thesis lies in his assumption that the phantasmatic "Child" idealized by society is always already white, non-racialized, and non-queer, hence its ability to be so readily fetishized by mass culture. For an extended discussion of this argument, see: José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). In addition, please note Alison Kafer's critique of Edelman in *Feminist, Queer, Crip* that positions his fantasy Child as also necessarily non-disabled and healthy, any alternative of which would place such a being as an abject other rather than a privileged figure.

This fantasy reveals itself as a structuring principle during Helena's early debate with Parolles on virginity. The conversation sways to this effect following his domineering assertion that

Loss of virginity is rational increase, and there was never virgin got till  
virginity was first lost. That you are made of is mettle to make virgins.  
Virginity by being once lost is ten times found. By being ever kept, it is ever  
lost. 'Tis too cold a companion. Away with't! (1.1.128-133)

This comparison of virginity—abstinence from sexual intercourse and, hence, reproduction or “rational increase”—to “loss” is a rich argument to consider. Increasing the population through procreation is coupled with rationality and common sense; who, for instance, would choose death over the material increase reproduction guarantees? After all, this annihilation is all that virginity can amount to, that “cold companion” evoking the image of a cold, dead body—death incarnate. The usefulness of such a lifeless form can little be imagined, positioning virginity's preservation as an inferior decision in comparison to the body accommodating socially celebrated sexuality. Parolles's mention of the strength of human spirit, the “mettle” of the human body, is put in the service of reproduction in his rhetoric, placing anything short of this spiritual ideal as weak spiritedness, inner inferiority representing a lapse in potential should procreative aims not be achieved. Yet these short lines also lay bare the empty compulsory performance of such actions. Edelman's work critiques the Child as an imaginary form, permitted to have a future only as it consists of passing this prospect on to further children, proliferating the same series of actions in an almost indefinite performance.<sup>18</sup> When Parolles argues that the point of reproducing, of making new virgins “ten times” over, his words can be interpreted as saying that these

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<sup>18</sup> Edelman, *No Future*, 19.

figures are “gotten” for their own ability to be virgins, or, more to the point, their own ability to lose that virginity in an act of future reproduction.

The enabling paradox behind Parolles’s views on sexuality simultaneously invokes and problematizes an assumed binary between virginity and procreative sexuality—that is, the loss of the former should (ideally) result in the acquisition of the latter. This dominant ideology demands that sex and sexuality should always be goal-oriented toward a procreative product figuring the act useful to communal demands. When Parolles concludes his argument, then, with the claim “He that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself /...a desperate offendress against nature” (1.1.139-142), the esteemed category of “nature” is evoked once more, its connotations further specified. The previous coupling of nature with life and health now opposes virginity on the grounds that it too, like death and illness before it, jeopardizes what is future affirming, and therefore merits a collapse into death and annihilation just as committing suicide might. In his analysis of sexual intimacy in Renaissance texts, James Bromley takes such appropriations to task, deploying the phrase “failures of intimacy” to describe that which bears “non-relation to interiority, to futurity, or to both [that] excludes [one] from the category” of useful, productive sex.<sup>19</sup> Here, Parolles’s lines suggest that any form of non-reproductive sexual practice is banished from the category of legitimate sexual relations and intimacy, thereby associated with death itself through such exclusion.

Unlike Helena, the child who will grow into succeeding a father in reproductive capacity and professed medical skill (a topic discussed later in this analysis) Bertram’s own

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<sup>19</sup> James Bromley, *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

ambitions fulfill no such lacuna. The Countess's hopes for her child are clear from the text's beginning:

Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father  
In manners as in shape. Thy blood and virtue  
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness  
Share with thy birthright. (1.1.60-63).

Her hope for the young lord to derive a certain "shape" will soon prove fulfilled; the King later compliments Bertram on how he "bear'st [his] father's face" (1.2.25), the living image of one who has passed on. However, the former element in the Countess's statement, her desire for Bertram to adopt his father's manners as well, will be far more difficult. I find it doubtful that such "manners" might only include the sense of goodness and goodwill that the Countess emphasizes in this moment. Instead, her mention of blood, virtue, and succession underscore the expectation that Bertram will make the transition from child into father, as natural a process as the growth of his body or the blood coursing through his veins. The second sentence begins with the primacy of blood as a subject, connoting inherited nobility, and ends, like the proposed purpose of Bertram's life itself, in further birth, his birthright passed on once again.

Not unlike the previous construction of virginity and reproduction as dichotomous, this growth shies away from alternative methods of sexual identity, not in ignorance that alternatives might exist, but rather for fear of what such alternatives might entail. For much of the play, Bertram will fail to grow into the procreative image of a father that is demanded of him. However, the extent of this so-called failure deserves its own immediate interrogation. In exploring what it means to "grow sideways" developmentally, Kathryn Bond Stockton deploys the image of the queer child to ponder possibilities of non-normative growth into an identity that, in the twentieth-century context of which Stockton positions her

subject, resists heteronormative demands for sexual identity to grow into something useful. While Stockton notes this queer growth's social labeling as akin to developmental failure, framed as "arrested development" or a perpetually adolescent state of immaturity,<sup>20</sup> Bertram's failure to grow into the demands of a more teleological, goal-oriented form of sexual relations frames his queer sexuality as failed intimacy. Although ushered into that culturally sanctioned container of sexual relations, marriage, Bertram's ultimate promise to Helena that "I will not bed her" (2.3.278) nonetheless signifies that his sexual urges remain uncommitted to the reproductive, failing to carry through with the consummative procreation signaling a transition into adulthood. Instead, he secures his placement into what is decidedly queer, growing apart from these concerns and unconcerned with them.

My initial focus on the compulsory aspects of reproduction and its queer subversion within *All's Well* foregrounds concerns relating to disability and rehabilitation that comprise the remainder of this study. The relationship that sex and disability share is often framed in spectacle and wonder, and, although an increasing array of crip scholarship continues to inquire into the ways these categories coexist in powerful ways, *All's Well's* reproductive-obsessed society finds such negotiations dangerous, even deadly. If the play awards sexuality (useful sexuality, that is) primacy before the opening scene draws to a close, then disability's subsequent emergence occurs only within its controlling framework. The remainder of this analysis turns, then, to the unfortunate consequences of this scenario, not only for the queer and disabled identities that function out of line with what is considered productive and useful, but also through the ways such bodies are thrown into the process of realignment to fulfill this expectation.

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<sup>20</sup> Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 22.

## II “Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie”: Disease, Abjection, and the “Choice” of Disability

The playtext’s connections between sex and corporeal ability can better be understood by returning to Tyrone Guthrie’s production, to consider again the image that encapsulates Helena in her “Doctor She” (2.1.86) persona, moments before her mysterious remedy cures the (now) willing King of his illness.<sup>21</sup> The critical response to this scene is a microcosm of many questionable ideas, the most significant of which centers on how the wondrous spectacle of the King’s sudden cure becomes, in one critic’s words, “completely right” and accurate to the point of being commonsensical. This reaction reveals an ableist understanding of disabled existence in the world of the approving theater critics, thus bridging a continuity between what is textually depicted—the easy curing of disability—and critics’ lauding of such a fantasy. Why is it, for example, that this return to able-bodiedness is considered essential and thus somehow beyond reproach in helping the plot progress towards a happy ending? And how might an able-bodied society use the tools of stigma and shame to misconstrue disabled existence as always fixable, to the point that its presence becomes a sign of choice, incompatible with society’s praising of an able-bodied reproductive futurism?

Ableist rhetoric often begins at the behest of the able-bodied, especially those that benefit most from the reinforcement of social convention—in this case, “Doctor She”

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<sup>21</sup> While throughout this work I am interested in depicting sickness and illness as constituting a disability, this association has been a point of contention within disability studies. At what point should a chronic illness or temporary sickness be considered a disability? For invaluable thoughts on this debate see: Susan Wendell, “Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities,” *Hypatia* 16.4 (2001): 17-33. I argue that the King is disabled for several reasons. Many productions (Guthrie’s 1959 version and Meyers’s 2013 production discussed later, to name a few) have depicted him as either bedridden or in a wheelchair, noticeably unable to perform his usual duties as king. In addition, the shame that he experiences from his disease (and that I will soon discuss) demonstrates society’s exclusion and stigma as possible determinates of disabled existence.

herself. Given her status as a physician's daughter who heals "sick desires," a woman who successfully manages to trail her lover through court and country, one might be hard pressed to find a more able-bodied character in *All's Well* than Helena herself. And, following her debate with Parolles on virginity, Helena is the first to claim this status as if conflating reproductive capacity with being necessarily able-bodied, closing her monologue with the notable lines "The King's disease—my project may deceive me / But my intents are fixed and will not leave me" (1.1.226-227). Following the problematic binary that is set up between virginity and reproduction, Helena also establishes a dichotomy here between what is diseased and disabled versus what is "fixed." Within this word lies a wide array of meaning (stable, but also revised, corrected, or repaired),<sup>22</sup> and it's quite possible that Helena intends confluent definitions. If she functions as that which is pristine and stable, then the King's illness-ridden, broken, and, in Guthrie's production, wheelchair-bound body is implied as something malleable and fixable into a state of able-bodiedness. When I refer to the King's docility in the Guthrie image, I am drawing upon Michel Foucault's framing of the docile body as open to similar manipulation and improvement. He writes:

[This] mechanics of power...define[s] how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and the efficiency that one determines.<sup>23</sup>

Helena simultaneously embraces custom and convention by adopting her culture's operational imperatives of heteroproductive sex within marriage, believing that individuals

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<sup>22</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites both of these possible definitions as being in operation around the time Shakespeare wrote *All's Well*. While "fixed" means to fasten securely, to make stable in position, the action form of the verb "fix" is defined in terms of "fixing up," as in working to position something to itself be stable.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage International, 1995), 138.

must grow up into the compulsory operation of procreation.<sup>24</sup> But her goals become muddled in these lines, as disability and sickness, bodily states that might work against the efficiency of healthy procreation, also become part of her project, as if bodies themselves must be useful or, in Foucault's words, "efficien[t]" just as sexuality should be. Reproduction might provide for an assured future, but disability occludes the able-bodiedness that can assuredly perform reproductive capacity. And, as I will soon explore, through this able-bodied/reproductive partnership, Helena positions the concept of disease to encompass much more than material sickness. As *All's Well* unfolds, virtually anything that threatens Helena's bond will be regarded as in need of this fixing—not only the King's sickness but also Bertram's "sick" (queer) desires.

Expanding this emphasis on social expectations of bodily ability and sexuality, *All's Well* proves saturated in the interplay between the social and material aspects of impairment, first made manifest in the play's visibly disabled figure, the King. Tobin Siebers argues that in the wake of a new social constructivist understanding of disablement, the body's material reality must not be ignored. "Strong constructionism," he suggests, "[often] fails to account for the difficult physical realities faced by people with disabilities."<sup>25</sup> Siebers's focus on the corporeal body above social constructivism proves useful to a discussion of the King, whose

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<sup>24</sup> See here Kathryn Schwarz, *What You Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Schwarz explores the extent to which women in early modern literature can exercise power and act as a substantial force when they willingly conform to social conventions. Schwarz writes of Helena that "[She] does not upset conventional arrangement; she speaks in the name of custom, asserting that kings should govern subjects, husbands master wives, and fathers determine children" (114). I agree with Schwarz, and would place Helena's desired bond with Bertram as falling in line with society's compulsory drive towards reproductive futurism, perhaps one of the reasons that she receives so much support in the play. But as Schwarz also notes in her work, women can act as "revisionists...redraw[ing] the lines" in their favor (121). This is a similar idea to my own thoughts on Helena's attempts to alter disability and sickness to fall in line with her conventional goals of marriage and reproduction that complement her culture's larger compulsions.

<sup>25</sup> Tobin Siebers, "Disability in Theory," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 175. See also Tom Shakespeare's exploration of the limits of social constructivism in his article "The Social Model of Disability," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 197-204.

physical state becomes characteristic of his identity to say the least. Theater critic Guy Thornton describes the King's entrance through such terms in Nancy Meyers's recent production for the Royal Shakespeare Company:

The pulse of a heart monitor flashes across the background, and amid a train of white uniformed nurses and modern medical paraphernalia the King makes his entrance in a wheelchair. And rarely has a more sickly, ashen-faced wreck been wheeled into view—grey hair lankly spilling over the neck of his hospital gown and a certain delicacy of seating consequent of his...condition.<sup>26</sup>

The trappings of medical institutionalization are impossible to overlook here. With heart monitors, nurses, hospital gowns, and a horde of nondescript “medical paraphernalia” in tow, the King's body emerges onto the scene, which the audience is given little time to contemplate before its immediate juxtaposition with medicalization, and, thereby, its immediate equation with brokenness. I cite this particular adaptation for the way it prioritizes a flawed understanding of disabled existence that permeates *All's Well's* society, much as it does our own—the notorious medical model of disability, which frames disabled existence in terms of individual deficit and posits that cure can and should be reached through medicalization and rehabilitative efforts. Given characters' opening adoration of Gerard de Narbon's medical skill and his daughter's inheritance of physic knowledge, this association proves not just an invention in production and performance, but is also rooted in the text itself, focusing on the materiality of the individual patient while shrouding the disabling gaze of a culture that celebrates clinical realignments into able-bodiedness.

The medical model's obsession with impairment as individual deficit is palpable in discourse surrounding the King. And Thornton's description of the disabled character as an ashen-faced “wreck” in Meyers's production is, whether he realizes it or not, hardly far

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<sup>26</sup> Guy Thornton, “All's Well That Ends Well,” *Stratford-upon-Avon Theatre Review*, (23 July 2013).

removed from similar rhetoric deployed by characters in the playtext itself. In his first full monologue, the King reminisces of his days with Bertram's late father:

I would I had that corporal soundness now,  
As when thy father and myself in friendship  
First tried our soldiership! He did look far  
Into the service of the time and was  
Disciplined of the bravest: he lasted long;  
But on both of us did haggish age steal on  
And wore us out of act. It much repairs me  
To talk of your good father. (1.2.30-37)

While Helena highlights the “fixed” quality of her able body in reference to the King in the previous scene, his own abject surrender here to this ableist association does little to challenge such claims, but instead reinforces them. By arguing that this conversation “much repairs” him, Helena's warped determination of useful and efficient bodies as being necessarily able-bodied is recognized and internalized. Casting himself as a broken individual in these words, the King surrenders to the notion that his individual deficit is as fixable as *All's Well's* medically obsessed society would like it to be. To be sure, the King's words imply that he has already transported himself into reparation.<sup>27</sup> Any discussion of society's role in determining disabled existence is deferred, as his “wreck” of a disabled body is likened to an individual problem misconstrued with personal will and choice.

This particular passage also delineates the King's wish for a different, more idealized physical body that lies apart from brokenness and disability. In wishing for the “corporal soundness” of a young soldier—suggesting a desire for the physical health and vigor of an able-bodied youth—the King brings attention to the material reality of his current

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<sup>27</sup> I use the word “abject” loosely here to refer to the sense of internalized shame evident in the King's character, but please note Julia Kristeva's well-known exploration of the term in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University, 1982). To Kristeva, the “abject” is that which is an affront to one's sense of self, positioned as intolerable and an infringement to one's being, as well as that which undermines communal consensus and social order. The connection between Kristeva's term and disability, particularly in forging disability shame, deserves greater speculation, and factors into the King's own sense of shame.

impairment only to present it as little more than a degradation of his former self. Traces here can be found of what Robert McRuer has termed “compulsory able-bodiedness,” through which the able-body constructs itself as, to use McRuer’s words, “the natural order of things...assum[ing] in advance that we all agree able-bodied identities are preferable and what we are all, collectively, aiming for.”<sup>28</sup> Able-bodiedness is thus held up as a default standard and continually striven after. When the King insists, for example, that time “wore us out of act,” this line configures the disabled body as a worn away version of a more ideal able-bodied self, in need of physical rehabilitation to be made whole again. McRuer’s argument offers a fitting explanation for why the King, after inquiring about the fate of Helena’s father and his physic skill, affirms that

If he were living, I would try him yet.  
Lend me an arm: the rest have worn me out  
With several applications. Nature and sickness  
Debate it at their leisure. (1.2.81-84)

In addition to Parolles’s former argument that reproduction constitutes “nature,” healthy able-bodiedness is again underscored as procreation’s mutually reinforcing partner. Sickness is not nature, and therefore acts as nature’s opponent, its rival, becoming by default what is “unnatural” in a debate over both the ability of the individual body as well as its actions. McRuer is right to suggest that able-bodiedness may have a compulsory “partner” that provides for a sense of mutual reinforcement.<sup>29</sup> Still, in the context of this early modern play

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<sup>28</sup> Robert McRuer, “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 301. Drawing on Adrienne Rich’s critique of compulsory heterosexuality, McRuer positions compulsory able-bodiedness as the way in which culture sets up able-bodiedness as a “normal” or “natural” state of being, thus casting disability as, not an equal alternative, but as an identity falling short of what is considered dominant. The “compulsory” aspect of the term represents the marginalization and subordination of disability as individuals continually strive to fall in line with what is perceived as “normal” (able-bodiedness) and away from what is considered abnormal or transgressive of this dominant identity (disability).

<sup>29</sup> See here: Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). As McRuer makes clear, “compulsory heterosexuality is dependent on

and the society it depicts, cultural demands for able-bodied capacity seem less interwoven in a sense of contemporary heterosexuality than in the demands of teleological reproduction and sexuality, which the King will openly reject.

This structural order providing the basis to McRuer's critique is evident in much of the discourse surrounding the King's disease—most of all from the character himself. His apparent commitment to death in repeating the words of a dead father establishes a relationship between sickness and death, and thus his body begins to pose a threat to the procreative demands of reproductive futurism:

‘Let me not live.’ quoth he.  
‘After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff  
Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses  
All but new things disdain: whose judgments are  
Mere fathers of their garments, whose constancies  
Expire before their fashions.’ This he wished.  
I, after him, do after him wish too. (1.2.65-71)

Now of the same opinion as Bertram's late father, the King voices his words, which beg for a death that is juxtaposed against the Child's empty image. The capital "C" Child's future exists only to pass futurity on to the next generation, recalling Edelman's conceptualization of reproductive futurity as privileging the imaginary. These "younger spirits" label "useless" anything that is not "new," anything that does not exist to reproduce, just as their judgment is compared to a material interest that quickly expires—procreation—faster than a "garment" grows out of fashion. If this is the life that reproduction promises, the King, who seems to have never reproduced, would rather embrace death. If teleological sex and able-bodiedness are indeed intertwined, then the King exists as a disabled being in both the material and

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compulsory able-bodiedness, and vice versa," (2) arguing that, as dominant identities, heterosexuality and able-bodiedness are figured as the grounds on which other identities are supposed to rest, and become so mutually reinforcing to the point that a threat to one also threatens the other. While it is problematic to read heterosexuality into this play, compulsory able-bodiedness nevertheless finds a partner in what might be considered compulsory reproduction and the affirming of teleological sex and sexuality at large.

social sense. Upon rejecting life and futurity, or at least his culture's trappings of life and futurity, he is subordinated to the level of the sick or diseased, threatening the stability of *All's Well's* social order.

While I have attempted thus far to depict the King's internalized shame and self-abasement as harkening towards a state of surrendered docility to Helena's cure, the before-mentioned passage also underscores the extent of conscious choice and will on his own part. Disability and expected cure are often misconstrued by the play's society as contingent along similar lines of personal choice. Criticisms of the medical model of disability have been commonplace throughout the years; scholars and activists caution against its focus on impairment and disability as grounded in individual fault, and thus somehow subject to cure through individual overcoming. Alison Kafer articulates a crucial point in this debate when she says that "[w]ithin this individualistic framework, disability is presented as something to be overcome through personal achievement and dedication...[the] personal integrity, courage, and ability to overcome obstacles."<sup>30</sup> Before turning her commitment to the King's sick body, Helena begins her closing monologue to Act I with remarks to similar effect:

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie  
Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky  
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull  
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull. (1.3.214-217)

Helena's lines position getting "better" as contingent on little more than choice, improvement framed as a necessary and expected outcome of disabled embodiment. And, by consequence, her rhetoric evokes a perennial staple of ableist logic used to veneer a flawed medical and individualist model of understanding bodily capacity and ability at large. "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie," she insists, asserting that the cure for disability lies in one's

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<sup>30</sup> Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2013), 89.

personal drive to ameliorate his or her situation. Helena thereby flouts any consideration for the material reality of disabled phenomenology that might prove such claims impossible. Disability and sickness may seem “dull” and a “backward pull” to her, but then again this argument is made as an able-bodied beneficiary of a culture that idealizes her identity as the reproductive Child. Helena’s position ensures personal agency as long as she acts in step with the reproductive mandates it sets out—those that are forward pulling, to borrow her rhetoric.

Much as the King’s abjection appears to follow from Helena’s affirmation of what is “fixed,” her determination that disability owes to personal initiative (or lack thereof) soon appears at court as well. This is an idea that permeates *All’s Well*’s culture for the remainder of the play. In yet another expressed wish for the King’s health to return, the following exchange takes place shortly before his cure:

First Lord: Tis our hope, sir,  
                  After well-entered soldiers, to return  
                  And find your grace in health.  
King:       No, no, it cannot be: and yet my heart  
                  Will not confess he owes the malady  
                  That doth my life besiege (2.1.6-11)

Although the two have yet to meet at this point in the play, Helena peddles the same warped view of disability and sickness the King internalizes and takes up in these words. The King describes his disabling “malady” here in connection to his “heart,” and, while there is an attempt to disclaim the notion that the heart—perhaps signifying his inner will and ability to somehow choose the fate of his materiality—has any connection to his current malady, the association is made nonetheless, implying that the King considers his disability along such terms. When Lafew soon after asks the blunt question “Will you be cured of your infirmity?” (2.1.74), the “yes” or “no” structure of this inquiry once again shapes healthy ability as

contingent on a simple commitment to overcome disability. If the King's sickness is owing to his heart's drive to reject the mandates of reproductive futurism then, in Helena's complementary words, at least part of this malady's "remedy" can be found within himself, too.

What, then, finally pushes the King to accept a cure and subsequent realignment into able-bodiedness? As I have demonstrated, throughout the play the King is made to feel abject and broken. Even worse, he is told that such abjection and brokenness is due to a personal deficit in hard work and will. In my reading, this marks what Kafer has recently termed "curative time," described in the following terms:

In our disabled state, [disabled people] are not part of the dominant narratives of progress, but once rehabilitated, normalized, and hopefully cured, we play a starring role: the sign of progress, the proof of development, the triumph over the mind or body...the only appropriate disabled mind/body is one cured or moving toward cure.<sup>31</sup>

Surrendering to his culture's own "dominant narratives" of progress in the form of procreation and able-bodiedness, the King is framed as the broken, unrepaired being that must be manipulated and cured. What better person to facilitate this curative realignment in time than Helena herself, the phantasmatic child who represents this striking image of able-bodiedness and health in her first meeting with the King:

Worth name of life in thee hath estimate:  
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all  
That happiness and prime can happy call (2.1.194-196)

The King's description of the beautiful, youthful, and disease-free Helena is, I should point out, not unlike what Anna Mollow describes as rehabilitation's "poster child"—the fantasy image of the smiling Child, symbol of futurity, inhabiting a disease and disability-free

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<sup>31</sup> Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 28.

world.<sup>32</sup> Given the fact that the King wishes for the sense of immortal youth and vigor apparent in Helena, it is arguable that this image of life, fantastic as it may be, convinces the King that a future can exist and that rehabilitation is an appealing route to embrace. In Helena's words, "health" truly can "live free," and "sickness" (2.3.181), the element standing in the way of his life and her future, must die. And so, the supposed "incantation" that the 1959 Stratford critics noted in Helena's words and image, the start of rehabilitation, is cast.

Whatever Helena's rehabilitative incantation entails, the King's next appearance depicts the character as a different man altogether, boasting the power of compulsory able-bodiedness at its most noticeable.<sup>33</sup> Upon reappearance, the King not only dances a "coranto" (2.3.44), a lively dance, but also delivers the following speech as he tells Helena to select her husband from a host of suitors:

Fair maid, send forth thine eye: this youthful parcel  
Of noble bachelors stands at my bestowing,  
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice  
I have to use. (2.3.53-56)

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<sup>32</sup> Anna Mollow, "Is Sex Disability?," in *Sex and Disability*, eds. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 289.

<sup>33</sup> Numerous scholarly readings have attempted to decipher what Helena's rehabilitative physic entails. While I will reference one such examination later, Will Stockton's reading of Helena's sodomitical art, a particularly interesting critique can be found in Mary Floyd-Wilson's *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), which argues that bodies' occult responses to other bodies goes beyond the physiological and humoral theories of the material world. For Floyd-Wilson, Helena's medical and marital exploits are due to the occult knowledges and magnetic power of the early modern female body. Wendy Wall takes another step toward clarification in "All's Well That Ends Well and Recipe Cultures of Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 131-154. She argues that Helena's "art" can be traced to the "recipe world of letters" (132). The knowledge to successfully wield a recipe indicates, to Wall, a deep knowledge of domestic work at a time when diet and health care were not separate realms of knowledge. While my own argument posits that Helena's accomplishments are underpinned in her culture's privileging of compulsory able-bodiedness, Floyd-Wilson and Wall's arguments nevertheless helps inform the invisible cultural magnetism aligning Helena's success in the play as a figure intimately tied to the Renaissance domestic sphere.

In the midst of showing off his new nondisabled body, another identity slips into the fold—a partner identity, one might even say, making apparent my modified reading of compulsory able-bodiedness. The King has been rehabilitated into the able-bodied form that his society demands. As the mutually reinforcing quality of the partnership inherent in McRuer’s term suggests, a privileged form of sexuality is reinforced by corporeal ability; the King’s rehabilitation awards him the status of procreator as well.<sup>34</sup> No longer does the King sit, sick and disabled, working against reproduction’s compulsory goals and embracing death. Rather, assuming the role of someone who has already reproduced, he stands speaking with a “father’s voice,” now representing the “sign of progress...a triumph over the mind [and] body” to again borrow Kafer’s words. Thus, as the King rises from his wheelchair in Guthrie’s fantasy-ridden moment, he is naturalized into the compulsions his culture holds dear: sexual identity that implies teleological sex and reproduction, as well as the able-bodiedness that can itself reproduce.

### III “Health shall live free, and sickness freely die”: Materiality and the Limits of Rehabilitation

From sickroom to ballroom, from wheelchair to coranto, from death to life, the King’s return to the public eye at court has been a perennial opportunity for productions to exhibit his new and improved body. Guthrie chose to present the scene in the midst of an elaborate orchestra-led Viennese waltz of which the entire court participates; Meyers, in

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<sup>34</sup> In “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Queer/Disabled Existence” McRuer draws on Judith Butler’s argument in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) that compulsory heterosexuality is an impossible performance of identity bound to failure; McRuer extends Butler’s argument to analyze the mutually reinforcing performance of able-bodiedness and heterosexuality, arguing that perfect able-bodiedness can never be entirely achieved either. When I say that the King’s recovery is an example of compulsory able-bodiedness at work, he demonstrates here a similar obsessive performance of outward signifiers as if to qualify his new able-bodied state, visibly dancing and verbally referring to himself as a father to maintain this fleeting performance.

another spectacle of able-bodied capacity, has her King “literally cartwheel across the stage,” if Thornton’s description can be believed.<sup>35</sup> And while the circumstances surrounding Helena’s cure may be debatable, its effects, medicalization’s rehabilitative potency, is much less so according to these adaptations. In her foundational work on illness as disability, Susan Wendell acknowledges this very pitfall of considering disease along such terms. After all, if illness can be cured, Wendell wonders, doesn’t this contribute to the further medicalization of disability, perpetuating the notion that all disablement can and should be cured?<sup>36</sup> This argument is taken seriously by characters in *All’s Well* to push the bounds of what constitutes bodily illness and, hence, what can be rehabilitated in line with societal compulsions. For the purposes of this final section, then, I transition from the realities of material impairment to the fringes of the social model of disability, which argues that society determines what bodily states and identities comprise disability through stigma and non-accommodation. The framing of subversive sexuality in terms of disease is by no means uncommon in early modern drama; however, such rhetoric is particularly pointed in *All’s Well* where the power of physic knowledge is established and reigns uncontested, strengthened now with the endorsement of a king.<sup>37</sup> But who must answer for his raising? And what happens when characters’ embrace of curative time becomes so obsessive that it attempts to treat Bertram’s queer sexuality as it does disease, basing it in illness that has little material or medical foundation? What are, in other words, the limits of rehabilitation, and how might this occlude the able-bodiedness signifying the plot’s happy ending?

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<sup>35</sup> Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance: All’s Well That Ends Well*, 57, and Thornton, *Stratford-upon-Avon Theatre Review*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Wendell, “Unhealthy Disabled,” 17.

<sup>37</sup> See here John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014) and John Ford, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2003). While the former play considers the social perils of procreating outside of one’s class, the latter narrates the stigma attached to incestuous relations, framing such sexuality as something to be cleansed, purged, and cured at all costs.

The King's return to health and his abrupt acquisition of a fatherly identity is far from reproduction's final juxtaposition with physical health, or even the sole point of the court scene as a whole. Rather, the "suitor scene" (as it is sometimes referred) is the play's climactic conflation of medical rehabilitation, able-bodiedness, and reproduction to the point of impossibility, the height of a compulsion's anxiety.<sup>38</sup> I begin, therefore, with a consideration of the gentlemen after which the scene is named. The King introduces them:

Fair maid, send forth thine eye: this youthful parcel  
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,  
...  
Though hast power to choose, and they none to forsake. (2.3.53-54,57)

Delivered by the character who, one scene previously, surrendered to docility and Helena's cure, the phrasing of these lines presents the suitors as packaged into a similar state.

Although far from the condition of the King's previous unhealthiness, they nevertheless stand under his pressure as bodily objects—gifts to be bestowed, rejected, or claimed with little agency to decide otherwise given the arrangement. And, once again, Helena stands in power over the bodies, wielding influence in the form of exercising choice that is backed by her culture's reproductive demands. "Peruse them well" (2.3.63) the King suggests to her, and this she does. Lining the young lords up and checking for signs of sickness and anomaly as a doctor might, Helena says to one in particular:

The honour, sir, that flames in your fair eyes  
Before I speak, too threat'ningly replies.  
Love make your fortunes twenty times above  
Her that so wishes, and her humble love. (2.3.84-87)

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<sup>38</sup> Refer again to McRuer's terming of compulsory able-bodiedness, through which able-bodiedness and, in his original definition, heterosexuality, are mutually reinforcing, but also represent repetitive performances that are bound to failure and can never be achieved once and for all.

And, to another:

You are too young, too happy, and too good,  
To make yourself a son out of my blood. (2.3.101-102)

These statements are not a mere showing of Helena's modesty in possessing "humble blood." Helena realizes that these young men are not the sick "wreck" she cured before, but rather the pretty, healthy gifts that the privileged Child signifies and that the fatherly King bestows at his pleasure. Reiterating the poster image that Helena herself first presented to the King, the suitors appear to be several copies of the perfect Child, who with "fair eyes," happiness, goodness, and, above all, youth, are disease and disability free, ready and willing to procreate. So when Helena wishes them "fortunes twenty times above" others, the multiplying "fortunes" inherent in her comment are not far disparate from the compulsions of reproduction and teleological sexuality hitherto characterizing health and ability. The suitors are in no need of Helena's rehabilitative art, and thus are not the focus of her attention—but another figure is.

I offer this examination of Helena's suitors as a means of interrogating Bertram's difference, to inquire why he, as physically young and fair as they, is ultimately ostracized as a separate other in the scene. A turning point in the play, Guthrie's production brought to life Helena's previous exchange with her suitors, choreographing a series of seamless dances within the whirling waltz of which the rest of court participates, here brought to a crashing halt in mere seconds. She now faces Bertram, the queer child, the one suitor refusing to participate. The beginning of one of the more volatile exchanges in the play, the King demands an answer for Bertram's subsequent refusal, asking "Know'st thou not, Bertram, what she has done for me?" (2.3.114). The question no doubt refers to Helena's cure, as well as his own realignment into able-bodied health; however, given my previous consideration

of the compulsory able-bodiedness of which this cure was part, more is implied. The King solicits Bertram's assumed admiration over the wonders of material health, also relying on the assumption that, following the celebrated spectacle of waltzes and cartwheels accompanying his proud coming out as a father, the young lord desires similar procreative status relations with Helena offers. When this proves unconvincing, the King, in a more desperate plea to keep the idyllic fantasy of the preceding events intact, continues:

She is young, wise, fair.  
In these to nature she's immediate heir,  
And these breed honour. (2.3.137-139)

Implication gives way to overt demand. The Child's eternal image of being young and fair, products of nature, are juxtaposed with her sexual use value breeding for the sake of breeding, compulsory proliferation into the future. However, unlike the sick, abject King who once surrendered to the power of this healthy, life-assuring portrait, Bertram is not fooled by the fantasy. And, as I have argued, he will prove defiant in terms of growing up into "natural" teleological sexuality assuring reproduction, much to the dismay of society and increasing its anxiety to the point of panic.

Bertram's positioning as a social pariah does not trail far behind, framed in similar rhetoric once levied against the King. "Disdain / Rather corrupt me ever" (2.3.121-122) Bertram replies to the latter's demands, reveling in his decision to reject Helena as wife. Yet this very sense of "corruption" will soon be used against him, equated not only to perverse enjoyment or degeneracy, but, rather, to corruption of the body, to disease, and, because of reproduction's rejection, death. In his study of the formulation and deployment of societal stigma, Goffman cites two sources of social ostracization that will soon become interwoven and conflated in the text. While there are "abominations of the body"—disability reduced to

physical deformity in need of fixing—Goffman also mentions social “blemishes of individual character...[based in] weak will, domineering or unnatural passions.”<sup>39</sup> The perceived relationship between personal will and choice presented as the source of disability and illness, a perennial staple in early modern literature and ableist discourse, again rears its head. Bertram expresses here a predisposition toward the socially unnatural—in this case, a resistance against the able-bodied “raising” the King so idealizes. And Bertram does so through all of the implicative choice that the word “rather” implies, articulating a personal preference toward corruption rather than heteroproductivity.

This queer individual passion is, however, twisted under societal stigma stressing the anxieties of corporeal danger—akin to the apprehension toward bodily corruption and abomination Goffman alludes to. In scaffolding this eventual disquiet, the King is the first to deploy the image of “our bloods/...poured all together” (2.3.124-125), originally presented to show that bloods of differing social class are indistinguishable from one another, perhaps meant to heighten Helena’s desirability to the young lord. This rhetorical work implies a sense of close bonding, but when Bertram’s queer “corruption” proves immovable, the power of another, darker, image takes shape. The King, frantic no doubt from the contagion his previous suggestion now assures, threatens:

Do thine own fortunes that obedient right  
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims,  
Or I will throw thee from my care forever  
Into the staggers and the careless lapse  
Of youth and ignorance (2.3.166-170)

The King’s contempt for Bertram’s “ignorance” and immaturity explaining his refusal to grow into a procreative, heteroproductive marriage is equated with the “staggers,” the definition of which is twofold: one, to denote the sudden affliction of an animalistic disease

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<sup>39</sup> Goffman, *Stigma*, 2.

affecting balance, and two, to connote a sense of staggering—unsteadiness and inconstancy open to physical manipulation much as the King’s body once was.<sup>40</sup> But unlike the King, this disease is not material, and judging by the word choice is unhinged from the physical—the name and not the thing. Bertram is thrown into a marginalized “lapse,” but the King and his court thrust this corporeality upon to the lord, however unrealistic it is in bodily materiality. Worse, the speaker adopts the metaphor of able-bodied “throwing” to demonstrate a power over other bodies, both in terms of assigning illness and also potentially curing it.

Despite its lack of material foundation, Bertram’s status as a diseased individual is nevertheless established, which the King’s previous “mixed blood” imagery exacerbates as potential contagion to others. Susan Sontag has written on public attempts to mark disease as other and distant by basing it in personal fault, paired with certain queer identities and sexual practices in a larger process of conflating queerness with disease itself. She writes:

Infectious disease to which sexual fault is attached always inspire fears of easy contagion and bizarre fantasies of transmission by nonvenereal means in public places...Every feared epidemic disease, but especially those associated with sexual license, generates a preoccupying distinction between the disease’s putative carriers...and those defined—health professionals and other bureaucrats do the defining—as ‘the general population.’<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The *OED* cites these specific lines by the King in its definition of “staggers” as a “tottering or reeling motion of the body...through feebleness.” However, I argue for confluent definitions because the definition of “staggers” as disease was also in wide use during the late sixteenth/early seventeenth centuries, a name for “various diseases affecting domestic animals, of which a staggering gait is a symptom.”

<sup>41</sup> Susan Sontag, “AIDS and Its Metaphors,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 154. Sontag’s essay exposes the ways in which HIV/AIDS exists as both a physical disease and as a composition of various stigmatizing metaphors directed at certain sexual/social groups. The public has long equated HIV/AIDS with sexual practices marked as “other”—anal, sodomitic sex, for example—conflating disease with such practice and distancing “normative” sexual identity as somehow removed from disease. See also Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in *Is the Rectum a Grave?: And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)—an examination of the homophobic and hostile attitudes directed at gay men during the years of the 1980s AIDS epidemic. He seeks to discover how an entire group of people can be labeled “killers” or “threats” to society based on a bodily disease that appears connected to the queer community.

I should reiterate here that, although Bertram does not possess bodily disease in a material sense, his queer identity is marked in similar ways to the issues that Sontag raises. In *All's Well*, the so-called general population is differentiated from those who are ill, disabled, or queer, all of whom pose a challenge to compulsory able-bodiedness and the futurity it ensures. For instance, in a bitter denouncement of her own son following the news of his retreat to war, the Countess comforts Helena:

I prithee, lady, have a better cheer.  
If thou engrossest all the griefs are thine,  
Thou robb'st me of a moiety: he was my son  
But I do wash his name out of my blood,  
And thou art all my child. (3.2.63-67)

Compared to the previous illness-ridden stigma launched at Bertram, the bizarre anxiety over nonvenerial disease transmission Sontag outlines acquires traction. If acquisition of disease and disability is based in choice, an idea that much of the play's rhetoric invests in until now, then the Countess's fixation on cleanliness—of washing away that filthy contagion from her blood, her queer son—is a proactive step towards disease prevention ensuring no corruptive transmission occurs. The Countess's use of the word “was” is especially poignant here. Bertram's queer identity, eclipsed by the workings of shame and stigma into automatic association with disease, is distanced, disowned, and, in this particular moment, exchanged for the more ideal child—Helena, the figure signifying healthy able-bodiedness rather than social or material death.

The established link between the healthy, heteroproductive Helena and curative purgation informs Doctor-She's attempt at curing Bertram, which, in the case of an individual embracing sideways growth, requires a sense of reorientation and realignment. I am interested here, though, in how Helena manages to execute such change within the

confines of her society's emphasis on medicalization, the goals of which I have hitherto linked with able-bodiedness and reproduction. In his analysis of the play, Will Stockton considers Helena as a sort of anachronistic ex-gay therapist realigning Bertram's sodomitic, non-reproductive sexual desires by using the bed trick as a form of conversion therapy that "works with, rather than against, Bertram's sodomitical tendencies."<sup>42</sup> I am inclined to agree with Stockton on this point, but argue that Helena carries through with her curative plans to fulfill the logic of compulsory able-bodiedness. Its mutually reinforcing partnership between health and reproductive sexuality has, after all, proven feasible and effective for the King. The bed trick, what Helena calls the "wicked meaning in a lawful deed" (4.1.51), is both "wicked"—i.e., perverted, lustful, playing to Bertram's sick desires that constituted his diseased stigmatization—and "lawful," granting Helena right to consummation as a wife. The following rumor in Florence that Bertram has "perverted a young gentlewoman" (4.3.13) is untrue, not least of which because the young woman he thinks he is "perverting" or corrupting is, in fact, his own wife, drawing him into heteroproductivity even as he believes to be exercising sodomitical resistance to it. Diana is the first to imply his successful entrance into fatherhood as a result:

He knows himself my bed he hath defiled,  
And at that time he got his wife with child.  
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick.  
So there's my riddle: one's that's dead is quick. (5.3.333-336)

I have previously considered the partnership that reproductive futurism and able-bodiedness share, and here Helena bases her cure of Bertram along similar assumptions. Just as the King is rehabilitated into an image of simultaneous wellness and heteroproductivity in his sudden identity as a father, Helena attempts to modify Bertram's identity as a queer child by

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<sup>42</sup> Will Stockton, *Playing Dirty: Sexuality and Waste in Early Modern Comedy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 65.

redrawing the trajectory of his sideways growth into a similarly productive role. In the effort to thwart his resistance against reproductive futurism's goals, the main staple of his queerness, Helena's implied pregnancy—the figure now “quick” in Diana's understanding—writes his role as a procreative parent.<sup>43</sup> This would, of course, fulfill the social demands Bertram's reproductive-obsessed culture asks of him, demands whose failure garnered “sick” stigmatization earlier in the text.

But there are major oversights in Helena's rationale, and, for a play so invested in the appearance of bodies, I should again stress the *implied* pregnancy facilitating Bertram's supposed realignment. Remember that Helena's claim to pregnancy is dubious at best, potentially jeopardizing the happy ending that *All's Well's* society would so readily embrace. In her analysis of this topic, Kathryn Moncrief considers the extent to which the visibly pregnant body acts as an important visual signifier in several of Shakespeare's plays, the presence (or absence) of which can function as “disconcerting evidence” depending on its context.<sup>44</sup> I would argue that such visual cues could be “disconcerting” in the sense that they have the power to question Bertram's role as procreator, and, thus, his supposed realignment with teleological sexuality through Helena's attempted rehabilitation. Consider, for example, the play's notoriously ambiguous concluding exchange:

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<sup>43</sup> I would note here that the description “quick” was a Renaissance term for pregnancy or appearing pregnant. For an examination of this concept and Diana's subsequent textual passage in the play, see Jonathan Gil Harris, “All Swell That Ends Swell: Dropsy, Phantom Pregnancy, and the Sound of Deconception in *All's Well That Ends Well*,” *Renaissance Drama* 35 (2006): 169-189.

<sup>44</sup> Kathryn Moncrief, *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 30. Moncrief considers Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale* as examples of when a visually pregnant body not only functions as a clear indication of previous sexual activity but also becomes a focus of paternity—in *Measure for Measure* Juliet's body serves as an indication of Claudio's fatherhood, and in *The Winter's Tale* Hermione's pregnant body becomes proof to Leontes of infidelity with Polixenes. However, Moncrief argues that *All's Well* relies on very insubstantial visual evidence in comparison, such as Diana's riddle or Helena's final words that simply imply pregnancy rather than visually show it.

Helena: Here's your letter. This it says:  
'When from my finger you can get this ring  
And are by me with child'. etc. This is done:  
Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?

Bertram: If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly  
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly. (5.3.347-353)

The inclusion of “if” in Bertram’s final lines emphasizes the extent to which a concrete happy ending remains unassured—that is, Bertram’s realignment still hinges on Helena’s pregnant body if her logic of sexual rehabilitation is to be followed and interpreted as a cure. “If” Helena’s swelling body does not carry Bertram’s child, or “if” her implied pregnancy is a sham to begin with, Helena’s notion that procreation can strive as a cure in reaffirming able-bodiedness remains unfounded in reference to Bertram, jeopardizing the securement of procreative relations and, in many characters’ warped reasoning, the promise of futurity.

I began this section with a commitment to outlining Bertram’s placement within the social model of disability and, ultimately, this placement limits the physical rehabilitation Helena can hope to achieve. Although the King’s pessimistic attitude and the state of his body initially strive against able-bodied reproductive futurism as much as Bertram’s queerness later does, the King’s disability is, in the end, at least partially rooted in an actual medical condition—fistula—which Helena’s physic and extensive medical knowledge proves proficient in healing.<sup>45</sup> Her mistake, however, is attempting to apply this medical, individualistic approach to Bertram as well, despite the fact that his “disease” is described in metaphorical terms. Bertram’s sideways growth into queer sexuality is defined in *All’s Well’s* society as an improper form of intimacy perceived as curable illness, making it a product of social construction rather than physical illness or impairment. Remember here

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<sup>45</sup> Mentioned on 1.1.34. This “fistula” is an ulcer that Gerard de Narbon’s medical knowledge was capable of curing.

that, under social model ideology, the problem is society's flawed marginalization and lack of accommodation of certain bodies and bodily practices, not the individual. Therefore social change is needed, not personal rehabilitation. Yet, theatrical implementation of such social justice is difficult, if not impossible, to find in *All's Well*. In an ending reminiscent of the tumultuous suitor scene, the King delivers the lines "choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thou dower" (5.3.363) to Diana, as if reaffirming the same system of reproductive necessity in marriage that sparked anxieties over queerness and disability to begin with. Unfortunately, *All's Well's* societal obsession with physic knowledge and a medical approach to facilitating life, reproduction, and able-bodiedness at the beginning remains that way by the close, reinforced by Helena's misguided approach to Bertram's perceived disability.

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I began this chapter with the spectacle of a disabled figure rising from his wheelchair, asking how this fantasy could be interpreted as the most "perfect" and "completely right" moment of a production. Such is a site, I would argue, of how absurd the obsessive privileging of certain bodily and sexual identities can be in terms of securing compulsory able-bodiedness, underscoring *All's Well's* societal demand for bodies and sexual practice to be useful in assuring futurity. As crip scholarship continues to remind us, disability remains detested and disrespected, misconstrued by the able-bodied as something "broken" in the sense of falling short of full functionality, as having lost bodily usefulness, rhetoric that has inextricable links to sex and sexuality. When the disabled are thought of as somehow "out of the sexual running," to use Nancy Mairs's phrasing,<sup>46</sup> or at least out of the realm of society's

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<sup>46</sup> Nancy Mairs, *Waist High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 51.

use of that sexual running, realignment and repair work to elevate ability and able-bodiedness as the natural order, at all times maneuvering toward a happy ending—that which is complete, finished, satisfying. I should reiterate here that the textual ending of *All's Well* is ambiguous, almost notoriously so; its placement by F.S. Boas within the original triad of Shakespearean “problem” plays long ago should not be forgotten, although this concept may have understandably been lost on audiences attending more recent adaptations of the play.<sup>47</sup> A beguiling fairytale of love and war” reads the poster caption to Meyer’s 2013 production, the image depicting Helena and Bertram, standing, kissing, she locked in his strong embrace in a final conformation of the latter’s realignment, his cure.<sup>48</sup> The poster to John Dove’s 2011 Globe production features an almost identical image, with a critic’s blurb “Leaves the audience reeling with happiness!” printed in bold above.<sup>49</sup> Every fairytale, it seems, should have a happy ending, and what this entails is clear. The problem of this “problem” play is resolved, promising, in the end, that no matter the course, the non-disabled and non-queer will always reaffirm control—that most happy of endings.

I am unsatisfied with such interpretations, not least of which because they offer little in the way of challenging what alternate futures, other avenues of ending a plot, might entail—failing to shake things up, so to speak. *All's Well* lays bare the shortcomings of an ignorant preoccupation with medicalization, the result of social anxiety and stigma wielded from demands for sexual bodies to be usefully productive. Perhaps this quality alone frames

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<sup>47</sup> Although subsequent critics would extend the term to a much larger grouping of Shakespearean plays, see here F.S. Boas’s *Shakespeare and his Predecessors* (New York: Gordian, 1896). Boas was the first to cite *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *All's Well That Ends Well* as the three “problem plays,” that fused dark psychological drama and comedic material and refused easy classification into the category of comedy or tragedy.

<sup>48</sup> This promotional image is taken from the Royal Shakespeare Company’s archived photos of Meyer’s 2013 adaptation.

<sup>49</sup> This image and quote are taken from the DVD cover of Dove’s recorded 2011 production for the Globe Theater.

it as a great queercrip gem in the canon, although, regrettably, the before mentioned productions either skirt such uniqueness or provide for its erasure. I wonder, though, if a crip interpretation of *All's Well* can be found amongst these perennial formulaic endings.

My analysis has charted the interest of several productions to make disability visible from the text, plopping it on stage in ways that prove impossible to ignore. But this does not make a performance decidedly crip, no more than the spectacle of disabled children in a pity-inducing telethon might. Rather, I interpret this provocation as requiring acknowledgement of the reclaiming of “crip” itself, which, like “queer,” once used as a derogatory epithet, has gained new power, now deployed by crips themselves for very different reasons. Alison Kafer comments on the term’s sobering allure:

[The] harshness is part of its appeal...this desire to make people wince suggests an urge to shake things up, to jolt people out of their everyday understandings of bodies and minds, of normalcy and deviance. It recognizes the common response of nondisabled people to disabled people, of the normative to the deviant—furtive yet relentless staring, aggressive questioning, and/or a turning away from difference, a refusal to see.<sup>50</sup>

The still burgeoning discipline of crip theory took shape around the provocative thrust of such a word, its outright refusal to privilege the hegemony of able-bodiedness or its reinforcing compulsions, launching a larger interrogation into the exclusions of identity politics at large. Meyers’s and Dove’s performances, however, with their inclusion of disability only as an unresolved plot point, bodies that must achieve repair or realignment in the end, cannot be considered strong crip productions. Their general disinterest in challenging common understandings of bodies and minds proves a waste insofar as the text’s jolting subversion of cultural compulsion is not seized, but rather sidelined in another push

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<sup>50</sup> Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 15.

towards normality, a push that might leave the general audience reeling in idyllic happiness, but rarely the marginalized identities that such glee is built on the backs of.

Is this as good as it gets? Are there productions that champion a queercrip subjectivity rather than a compulsory one? I come full circle at this point in the story, ending the performance from which I found so germinal a beginning. Guthrie's production was hailed as "completely right" in some of its interpretations, but these ableist remarks were, by and large, directed at the romantic notion that a disabled man could rise from his chair with enough will and magical influence in tow. Yet the cutting reality behind this spectacle should not be ignored. Guthrie's performance forged powerful dramaturgical parallels to Edwardian-era England, the final heyday of the landed aristocracy, precursor to the onset of world war and the decimation of an entire generation of young men. Distancing nostalgia and romanticism as relics of the past, this foregrounds the text's societal obsession to hold on to what one knows—ability, life, a future—no matter if this proves to be a fleeting or impossible performance in the end.

Moments before the curtain falls, the scene is set like an eerie repeat of the opening. Gone are the elaborate waltzes, the music, the revelry, of before. A chandelier hangs above, draped in dust and torn chiffon, cobwebs forming in a haunted house.<sup>51</sup> Characters don mourning black—but for who do they mourn, or for what? Bertram's cryptic final lines often provided the precursor to the heterosexual finality depicted in the previous contemporary production images, but here no such outcome is offered. "Bertram has a concluding couplet which is perhaps the worst that any actor could be asked to speak," Muriel Byrne reports, "but...I did not hear him speak it...I saw nothing but Helena."<sup>52</sup> And see her we do. In her

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<sup>51</sup> Styan, *Shakespeare in Performance: All's Well That Ends Well*, 114.

<sup>52</sup> Byrne, "The Shakespeare Season at the Old Vic. 1958-1959 and Stratford-upon-Avon, 1959," 566.

final moments on stage, Helena stands, veiled, her body now the spectacle for the audience, the conclusion that it alone must signify. So what does it mean? Like the text itself, we cannot be sure. As Byrne states, we see nothing but Helena, the daughter of a dead physician, her face obscured, a figure in a world quickly slipping away—her midsection enclosed in a corseted gown, fitting far too tight for comfort, far too tight, that is, to escape the informed viewer’s notice.<sup>53</sup>

Disability rights activist and poet Eli Clare once referred to the words “queer” and “cripple” as “cousins... words to shock, words to infuse with self-love, words to resist internalized hatred, words to help forge a politics.”<sup>54</sup> I do not describe Guthrie’s production as queercrip merely due to its jarring bleakness, as if to suggest that queerness and disability hold little place in a future that is not apocalyptic or entirely nonexistent, although this is a narrative that *All’s Well*’s society spins for itself. Rather, this ending suggests the kind of shock that Clare and Kafer celebrate, and that I find stimulating and thought provoking in its resistance. The magical curing of disability at the beginning, outlined in vivid detail by theater critics as “completely right,” lures its audience into the spectacle of fantasy, the promise to make all well in the end, only to break apart this ridiculous simulacrum at the close as if throwing cold water over a docile, prepackaged outcome. Characters’ logic that queerness and disability risk annihilation, a future without the guarantee of life, pervades the play—this much I have proven during the course of this study. But, as it turns out, the fetishizing of reproduction and rehabilitation that crystalizes in response leads, in these final moments, to pretty much the same place. For once, the inevitability of annihilation is avowed in an ending that medicalization and compulsory reproduction prove incapable of

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<sup>53</sup> Scenery descriptions taken from Byrne.

<sup>54</sup> Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 84.

having prevented, their logic twisted back in an ending that denies the audience's refusal to see and understand. And so, in the 1950s Stratford playhouse of Guthrie's production, decades before the onset of major queer and disability rights movements, the possibility of queer resistance and crip defiance in the play were realized, however briefly, however darkly, and to the point that, as the curtain fell, nothing felt as real.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **“Thy ill my hell, thy weale my welfare is”: Terminal Apocalypse in Barnfield’s *The Affectionate Shepherd***

Helena’s emphasis on heteroproductive sex becomes, in her final moments of Guthrie’s production, immortality failing to signify on the body. Dark uncertainty consumes the stage, but, with this image in mind, I turn to a text at no loss for color. From dark comedy to the seductive poetry of male-male affection, *All’s Well’s* disintegrating world is a far cry from Richard Barnfield’s *The Affectionate Shepherd*. The former begins in black autumnal disintegration, and concludes as if in bloomless winter. The latter claims budding springtime, temporally disparate in season. A new morning sun breaks though the darkness of night, lighting the shepherd Daphnis’s world in pleasure, sunlight, and blossoming flowers—the keys to fortitude, health, and undying power. Yet just as Roussillon’s budding beauty rests on the effects of fantastic cures, Daphnis’s ecology is composed of similar earth, multiplied a thousand-fold in its lovesick world. Helena’s apothecary drugs find an unlikely echo in *Shepherd’s* pastoral, blooming in a perpetual springtime and fertilized as much by sexual compulsion as spring rain and sunshine. In this dull morning light, Daphnis forges an ecoerotic covenant between affection and ability, and, as if fulfilling his end of a ritual bargain, doctors away anomalous desires like diseased plants in a botanical garden. Daphnis’s thistle spring unfolds, his flowers blossoming first for aesthetic beauty, then for medicinal dust.

In his examination of homoerotic space in Renaissance literature, Stephen Guy-Bray offers one of the more compelling explications of Barnfield's poetry to surface in recent years, positing that, when read as a narrative, much of the poet's repertoire tells a story of "the extinction of the homosexual, if not of homosexuality itself."<sup>1</sup> While Guy-Bray's comments concern the evaporation of affectionate space, I cite his argument not just for its unabashed ahistoricity—drawing tempting parallels between homoerotic space's shrinking to modern homophobia—nor do I estimate it so merely for its forthright examination of (homo)sexual identity's elimination, centuries before such categories ostensibly rose to prominence. Rather, I find Guy-Bray's claim irresistible in implicating Daphnis' pastoral as not only a self-evident ecology of shepherds and blissful pastures but, within Barnfield's narrative, one also shaped by anxieties over bodily and sexual ephemerality. In my reading, Guy-Bray's remark implies that sexual experience and, to the extent we can discuss it, sexual identity may become "extinct" in the way an over-poached prey might, informing anxieties of ecological survival as much as same-sex erotic desire. Who, in Daphnis's pastoral land of biological abundance, of infinite milk and honey, performs such necessary poaching? And how does his pastoral paint homoerotic affection as natural to the point of sustainable empowerment, casting itself as both hunter and gardener in the biological web?

As these provocations imply, this chapter will similarly focus on space, but expands this poetics of shrinking ecologies and erotic elimination as intertwined with matters of (dis)ability and ecological sustainability. Daphnis imagines a landscape of botanical longevity accompanying his desire for Ganymede, offering the latter a pastoral world of bodily health should his love be reciprocated. But, while these musings meritoriously frame

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space: The Poetics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 151.

male-female coupling as peripheral to sexual prosperity, the poem's ableist rhetoric figuring same-sex eroticism as characteristically able-bodied is much less commendable.<sup>2</sup> Daphnis considers impairment a detriment to homoerotic desire's enactment, glorifying ability as a jeweled ecological centerpiece insofar as it succors botanical longevity.

My argument pivots around Daphnis's rhetorical conflation of sodomy, sexual ability, and ecological prosperity. I first turn my attention to his prideful desire for young Ganymede's affections. The urgency behind this rhetoric is initially entrenched in the pleasures of non-teleological sodomy, resistant to some Renaissance discourse lambasting its disruptive debauchery and perverse intemperance. The important work of scholars from Alan Bray to Jeffrey Masten have explored sodomites' negotiation of a culture framing such behavior as everything from environmentally destructive to health assuring and productive. I am interested in the extent to which the fundament—and, in turn, the homoerotic use of it—is framed as environmentally stewarding and therefore vital for ecological health.<sup>3</sup> Mario

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<sup>2</sup> I do not intend to make the debatable parameters of queer desire a central focus of this chapter, but, as in the last chapter, I will define queerness as delineating sexual experience subverting dominant reductions of sexuality to something teleologically useful and goal-driven. Given this definition, one could make the argument that Daphnis's homoerotic desire simultaneously is and is not queer depending on the passage one examines in the poem. As I will discuss at later points in this chapter, Daphnis's desire defines rather than subverts the hegemonic sexual standard reigning over the text's ecology, although this power grab might itself be read as subverting the longstanding dominance of hetero relations—particularly their claims to being “natural,” an especially revered label in *All's Well*.

<sup>3</sup> I acknowledge that the terms “gay” and “homosexual” may appear anachronistic, and I am well aware that such terms delineate sexual identity that may not have existed in Barnfield's time. This debate has been a prolific topic in Renaissance scholarship to say the least. See here Alan Bray's foundational *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Bruce R. Smith's *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Gregory Bredbeck's *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Claude J. Summers's “Homosexuality and Renaissance Literature, or The Anxieties of Anachronism” *South Central Review* 9, no. 1 (1992): 12-23; Mario DiGangi's *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Kenneth Borris's more succinct introduction to *Same Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts 1470-1650* (New York: Routledge, 2004), among others, for various examinations of this debate. While I acknowledge the pitfalls in deploying such terms, I will do so largely as a matter of convenience to refer to same-sex desire (and, in some instances, professed “love”) between men. Although this is not the central focus of this chapter, I would argue that *The Affectionate Shepherd* lends itself to such terminology more than most Renaissance texts and, given Guy-Bray's claims mentioned earlier, I can hardly be alone in this thinking. Although Daphnis's professed love

DiGangi has rightfully examined the disorderly quality of Daphnis's verse, arguing that the shepherd both desires sodomy and shapes his language to accomplish its disruptive potential.<sup>4</sup> I agree to some extent, but will further examine the shepherd's drive to construct his pastoral in blooming longevity, blockading assignment of disease and destruction to non-heteroproductive desire.

I think it necessary, though, to differentiate between the homoerotic and the sodomitical, not least of which because Daphnis's verse seamlessly slips between the two in form and content. Bruce R. Smith notes that the broad category of sodomy could concern a "variety of heterosexual acts" in the Renaissance and was closer to a species of cultural crime than a precise sexual act.<sup>5</sup> Sodomy is, to be sure, a rather expansive category (or, as Foucault posits, an "utterly confused" one),<sup>6</sup> and I am indebted here to Cameron McFarlane's reminder that, at its core, sodomy was less a culturally feared sexual practice than a signifier for dreaded social disorder, the sodomite a "conduit for [a] chaos beyond representation."<sup>7</sup> That this impossible representation nevertheless appears as various erotic affections in the poem does not make the concepts synonymous; like a cell in biological anaphase, the verse's homoeroticism splits from a sodomitical, disorderly force and into affection underpinning ecological prosperity. Jonathan Dollimore argues that perversion, despite being pushed to the margins of social acceptability, often helps conceptualize

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for Ganymede is certainly homoerotic, labeling it homosexual implies a power-ridden identity that requires, by consequence, the exclusion of alternative bodies and identities in order to exist. This becomes important in later sections of the poem, which I discuss in subsequent sections of this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Mario DiGangi, "My Plenty Makes Me Poore": Linguistic and Erotic Failure in 'The Affectionate Shepherd'" in *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield*, eds. Kenneth Borris and George Klawitter (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2001), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*, 11. See also DiGangi's argument in *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* that "there is no singular or 'real' definition of what sodomy is" in the Renaissance (20).

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (New York: Vintage International, 1995), 101.

<sup>7</sup> Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire 1660-1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 26.

idealized order; this chapter examines this essence in action, Daphnis reigning environmental stewardship even as he defines the parameters of environmental harmony.<sup>8</sup>

But this defense of homoerotic affection alone barely scratches the surface of *The Affectionate Shepherd's* trajectory. Daphnis's claim to environmental accommodation requires exclusion as the necessary scaffolding to sexual power, which he pinpoints as heteroerotic coupling threatening the pastoral's homoerotic foundations. Much historical scholarship reminds us that even non-normative forms of heteroerotic behavior were deemed as socially disruptive as same-sex sodomy and buggery.<sup>9</sup> I am intrigued, however, by Daphnis's pairing of hetero coupling and disability as poised against sustainability, figured thereafter as sodomitically disruptive in deploying death-inducing disablement. Daphnis's claim to sexual hegemony labels unnatural any embodiment unaligned with his own teleological goal—acquisition of Ganymede's body, if not his requited affections. Criticism examining queerness and disability as perennial partner identities is thus broken apart and reassembled in Daphnis's ecology, his aim being the exclusion of sickness and disability as if to maintain a legitimate hold over the pastoral world.<sup>10</sup> This pruning of anomalous bodies divulges his environment's apothecary goals; an inventory of plants blossom to cure sickness and rehabilitate disability—a springboard toward eliminating hetero relations altogether. Daphnis's rhetoric emphasizes that his homoerotic world's sustainability is assured by such medical cure, stressing the realignment of bodies unconformed to able-bodied male-male desire. Only the cured disabled or sick body is acceptable in the speaker's framework, if only

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> See again Robert McRuer's exploration of queerness and disability as oppressed partner identities under heteronormativity in "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence." My mention of queerness here is indicative of McRuer's argument. I do not mean to suggest that Daphnis's actions are necessarily indicative of queerness by this point in my analysis, but concerns instead an established disconnection between homoerotic affection and disability.

because any alternative signifies erotic coupling which, like an invasive species, threatens ecological balance.

As this chapter closes, I consider the larger stakes of Daphnis's banishing of disability and sickness from his environs, ultimately bearing the fruits of his undoing. The shepherd figures disability as cataclysmic, even apocalyptic, to an ecology contingent on enacted sex with Ganymede. Homoerotic coupling is thus made essential to biological prosperity; however, Ganymede disrupts this fragile ecology in his apparent denial of Daphnis's affection-fueled cures. The tears of the affectionate shepherd contribute, in the end, to his own sickness, as Ganymede's preferred illness taints the land to an ecological and corporeal hellscape. The blissful paradise underwritten in the compulsory fantasy of able-bodied, homoproductive sex crumbles, as the shepherd's obsession with bodily wellness makes uninhabitable a space necessarily conjoined to sickness, disablement, and heteroerotic affection. *The Affectionate Shepherd* is indeed about extinction, but this biological ruin emerges in the name of natural selection, fabricated from the insuperable overlap between sustainable desire and erotic ability.

## I

### **“The Time, the Place, the sense, the sin”: Sodomy, Sublimity, and Subversive Space**

For a poem ultimately frozen under ecological anxiety, *The Affectionate Shepherd* buds from Daphnis's candied lamentation for Ganymede's love. As the text opens, Daphnis's fantasy for the “sweet fac'd Boy” (7) dominates the shepherd's daydream of homoerotic sex:

Scarce had the morning Starre hid from the light  
Heavens crimson Canopie with stars bespangled,  
But I began to rue th'unhappy sight  
Of that faire Boy that had my hart intangled;  
Cursing the Time, the Place, the Sense, the sin;  
I came, I saw, I viewd, I slipped in. (1.1-6)<sup>11</sup>

To paint a vanilla coat over Daphnis's words, the shepherd fantasizes an erotic liaison requiring entanglement of the lovers' corporeality. While the speaker's heart is "intangled"—twisted or enwrapped in—thoughts of Ganymede, this remark also enwraps the physical bodies in the first place, the shepherd's innards becoming the playthings for the young boy to entangle.<sup>12</sup> Paul Hammond writes that viewing becomes a kind of "conquest" in the lines; entanglement occurs through the vehicle of sight and bodily presence.<sup>13</sup> Ganymede is, in short, offered a level of erotic fondling that Daphnis is more than willing to submit to. His deployment of action verbs ("I came, I saw") in part represents an intended presence in relation to his lover's body, "coming" and "viewing" a prerequisite for entangling himself in Ganymede's affectionate tampering.

In the midst of this erotic engagement, the verb "came," when juxtaposed with the phrase "I slipped in," escalates the erotic entanglement Daphnis means to perform. In a contemporary sense, it is difficult not to interpret "Came" as an allusion to the speaker's

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<sup>11</sup> All poem quotations are taken from: Richard Barnfield, "The Teares of an affectionate shepheard sicke for Love, or, The Complaint of *Daphnis* for the Love of *Ganimede*," in *Richard Barnfield: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Klawitter (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1990). This chapter largely concerns the first and second day's lamentation of *The Affectionate Shepherd*, so, unless otherwise noted, my parenthetical line citations will be preceded by a "1" or "2" signifying the section of the larger work I am referring to.

<sup>12</sup> "entangled, adj." OED Online. October 2015, Oxford University Press. The erotics of corporeal possession and bloody entanglement are a recurring theme throughout numerous Renaissance texts showcasing male-male sexual desire. For a detailed scholarly discussion of the trend especially in reference to religious works, see Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). For another example of this kind of erotic discourse, see my discussion of Wendoll's professed desire for Frankford's body in the next chapter on *A Woman Killed With Kindness*.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex Between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73.

immediate orgasm in positioning his body next to the youth's.<sup>14</sup> Yet this orgasmic reaction—what might be interpreted as the climax of erotic engagement—itself comes too soon in the line. In a display similar to what Patricia Parker explicates as a “preposterous event” in poetic verse, Daphnis structures last his claim to have penetratingly “slipped in” to Ganymede’s body, implying that sexual intercourse is not teleologically performed as if to amount in orgasm. This may be a slight of tongue, the shepherd putting the proverbial cart before the horse in the midst of sexual arousal. But the placement of “came” at the beginning of a list ending with “slipp[ing] in” also continues the lovers’ engagement indefinitely, disregarding, in Parker’s terming of the preposterous, “what should naturally follow what...the preposterous figured as the disruptive inverse of the proper and natural.”<sup>15</sup> While Daphnis will later redirect this disruption into his own conception of the natural, for now he comes in the mere presence of his lover, views his engagement with the youth, and once again penetratively slips into Ganymede, presumably repeating the cycle an indefinite number of times—dry, rinse, repeat. And while the variety of sexual acts occurring throughout Daphnis’s lamentation is by no means limited to penetrative sex,<sup>16</sup> his opening emphasis on the pleasures of sodomitical, disorderly sex with Ganymede—perhaps the most

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<sup>14</sup> According to the *OED*, “come” did not actually appear as slang for orgasm until the mid seventeenth century (“come, v.”). However, the term is used as a sexual pun much earlier in my own understanding. Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* repeatedly cites “come” in sexual innuendo, for instance. Whatever the case, my reading is not the first to interpret this remark in such a way. Stephen Whitworth’s similar reading of the line in “Passing for Mean: Barnfield and the Aristotelian Poetics of Copulation,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29, no.3 (1999): 71-86, also employs modern sensibilities to understand the eroticism behind Daphnis’s cleverly ordered words.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>16</sup> I would argue here that “slipping in” implies penetrative sex. Paul Hammond also argues that the remark “clearly...suggests sexual penetration” (73) in *Figuring Sex Between Men*. While I argue that the preposterous arrangement of such acts might imply sodomitical disorder, I am not implying that sodomy need only imply male-male penetration. I will examine this debate later in this chapter but, for an especially detailed consideration of sodomy’s history and representation in the Renaissance and beyond, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

tantalizing of all sodomitical figures—emphasizes the ecstasy of the act.<sup>17</sup> The lovers’ intercourse accommodates a virtually unlimited renewal of pleasure without occlusion, without necessary sexual outcome or production (yet). The erotic enjoyment in Daphnis’s purposeful entanglement, then, does not initially stem from the expectation of an end result, but rather in the preposterous mix-up itself—that is, in performing such liaison(s) in the first place.

Still, to follow Parker’s emphasis on disorderly language, I am interested in how Daphnis’s disruptive verse forges alternative intimacy to what is proper and natural in its rejection of a standard trajectory to sexual enactment. After all, part of the enticing pleasure in Daphnis’s unproductive sodomy comes in his confessional tone to the reader, admitting that he “came...saw...slipped in” but also must “curs[e]” such anal, or, perhaps, oral erotic pleasure as “sin” (5). Why, though, would the speaker preface his lewd fantasy with the admission that his desires are transgressive? Does not this label of “sin” connote something culturally awarded, and, if so, what social standard does his homoerotic desire transgress from? Although the label of transgressive sin no doubt exacerbates the shepherd’s temptations for Ganymede’s body, it also illuminates a layer of social consciousness to these desires. Notice, for instance, his framing of this sexual sin as preceded by “the Time” and “the Place,” capital concerns overshadowing, perhaps even creating, the erotic subversion of

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<sup>17</sup> Numerous scholarly works have helped inform my mention of Ganymede as a sodomitical figure in the Renaissance or, at the very least, engaged in sodomitical desire. In *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* Gregory Bredbeck interprets Barnfield’s poetry as consumed in the “purposeful” voice of the Renaissance sodomite (150). See here as well James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Stephen Orgel’s “Ganymede Agonistes,” *GLQ* 10, no.3 (2004): 485-501; as well as Smith’s *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England*, particularly his chapters on “The Passionate Shepherd” and “Master and Minion.” This identification arguably consumed various visual representations of Ovid’s description of Jupiter and Ganymede from *Metamorphoses* as well. Michelangelo’s *Ganymede* (1532) depicts the figure in consensual exchange with Jupiter, while Rubens’s *The Rape of Ganymede* (1611) and Rembrandt’s later *Rape of Ganymede* (1635) cast Ganymede’s bottom as the focal point, the former going so far as to depict an older youth in clear ecstasy from Jupiter’s penetration. My point here is that Daphnis’s lust for the youth’s body could be informed by cultural knowledge of a figure easily accommodating such “slipp[ing] in.”

the act itself.<sup>18</sup> In his much-cited study of homosexuality in Renaissance England, Alan Bray points out that

homosexuality was a felony punishable by death throughout the period... Taken cold it is difficult to account for the violence associated with its hostility, but in the context of the myths surrounding homosexuality it is more explicable: in them it was part of an anarchy that threatened to engulf the established order, even the very stars in their courses.<sup>19</sup>

I cite this remark not to point out the obvious historical detail that homosexuality—and its most culturally transgressive Renaissance expression, sodomy—was a punishable (if rarely enforced) crime in early modern England, although this scant prosecution provokes questions of how criminally unacceptable sodomy actually was.<sup>20</sup> Rather, Bray’s subsequent reference to stars and homosexuality’s larger astronomical usurpation plays a significant role in *Shepherd*’s opening lines. Recall, for instance, Daphnis’s initial reference to the “morning Starre” overtaking night’s “Canopie with stars” (1-2). The sun’s light replaces the nighttime constellation from before, but this alteration also hosts Daphnis’s erotic activity with Ganymede, lighting the sexual activities and desired body Daphnis claims to have “viewd” and, in turn, to have enjoyed.

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<sup>18</sup> That these remarks indicate Renaissance England is grounded in many assumptions. In the later epistle dedicatory to his *Cynthia* sonnets, Barnfield attempts to explain away the apparent homoeroticism in *The Affectionate Shepherd* by mentioning its imitation of Virgil’s pastoral poetry, which might be read as imitating a cultural context predating Renaissance England. However, I think it would be foolish to take Barnfield’s remarks at face value, or to realistically believe that *Shepherd* relocates itself away from the social context of which it is written.

<sup>19</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> See Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Castlehaven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) for a detailed examination into the legal persecution of sodomy in Renaissance England. As her title suggests, Herrup begins with the case of the Earl of Castlehaven, whose spousal rape and sodomitical exploitation of several servants is one of the few high profile cases available where an individual was charged, tried, and executed for sodomy in Renaissance England. What does it imply, though, that sodomy laws were only rarely grounds for prosecution in the period, and even then usually in instances of rape? The absence of legal cases does not necessarily speak to more pervasive social stigmas attached to sodomy, but it is nevertheless interesting that Castlehaven’s extreme debauchery was considered indicative of “sodomy” enough to prove a valid case by which the law could be applied.

This framing of sexual behavior as celestially determined is not itself surprising given widely circulated astrological writings in the Renaissance, much of which ascribe astral causes to everything from so-called diseases of the soul to “perverse sexual activity” and the effeminate appearance of certain males.<sup>21</sup> But while much of this work attempts to establish some semblance of natural sexual and bodily order, I find more important here the sun’s association with homoerotic affection’s enablement. Ovid’s presentation of the sun god Apollo comes to mind here, whose homoerotic entanglement with the male youth Hyacinthus and, later, Cyparissus associates the god with homoerotic desire. Leonard Barkan goes so far as to argue that the tradition of antiquity surrounding Ganymede, Hyacinthus, and Apollo is “definitionally homoerotic.”<sup>22</sup> My point is that, whatever cultural fears frame homosexuality-as-sodomy as, to borrow Bray’s words, “anarchy” against the “established order” is thus playfully ridiculed in Daphnis’s understanding, particularly his opening invocation of the sun. The shepherd implies that, yes, male-male fornication carries an irreversible progression from night to day, but this advancement is, like the sun’s erectile rising, firmly attached to natural cycles of the earth. The enablement of male-male affection is as inevitable a process as the rising morning—one forward pulling and presided over by

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<sup>21</sup> As Kenneth Borris notes in *Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts 1470-1650*, numerous examples of this kind of writing proliferated in Renaissance England. The astrological aphorisms of Alexandrian Claudius Ptolemy (AD 100-170) noted in *Centriiloquium* and *Tetrabiblos* circulated well into the sixteenth century through various Latin editions, and specifically explicate the astrological root of disease and sexual behavior that, in Ptolemy’s words in the latter text, “fall short of or exceed the mean” (see pg. 363 in F.E. Robbins’s translation, reprinted on pg. 167 of Borris’s sourcebook). “When Venus is in conjunction with Saturn, and has a certain lodger in the seventh house, the native will be given to perverse sexual activity,” Ptolemy argues at one point in *Centriiloquium*, ultimately positing that sexual affiliation is firmly connected to astral explanation (see aphorism 80 in Giovanni Pontano’s translation of the text, edited by Faith Wallis). Julius Firmicus Maternus’s *Mathesis*, meanwhile, was another widely cited astronomical text in Renaissance England, which, like Ptolemy’s writing, attempts in part to explain impure or wanton sexual disposition as predetermined by the stars themselves. However, as Maude W. Gleeson argues in her examination of the text, sections of Maternus’s writing offer a more inquisitive tone, observing that, given the frequency with which sexual deviation occurs, this “raises the question of just what nature is when so many people are destined by the stars to live contrary to it” (66-67).

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 106.

the homoerotic heat of the sun. And while it is true that the disruptive “I came...I slipped in” line ascribes a preposterous, non-teleological trajectory to desire, Daphnis quickly frames the erotic content of these lines as reinforcing solar order.

To better understand Daphnis’s immediate re-privileging of order, his rhetoric merits further unpacking given sodomy’s common conflation with bodily and ecological collapse in Renaissance England. Bray’s study traces this trend to cultural knowledge of Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction, biblical debauchery punished, in Bray’s understanding, “perhaps by plague, perhaps in an earthquake or by fire, but certainly in an upheaval in nature.”<sup>23</sup> Building on these considerations of natural disaster in his reading of Barnfield’s poetry, Kenneth Borris notes that sodomy emerges as “repugnantly unnatural or inhuman...its central paradigmatic meaning” in the period.<sup>24</sup> Bray’s and Borris’s juxtaposed interpretations denude the nexus between so-called sodomitical desire and cultural hysteria toward obliteration. The broad category of feared sodomy—defined narrowly as male-male anal sex to the larger breadth of non-procreative hetero and homoerotic relations or, as Bruce R. Smith notes, an entire “species of crime”—was feared as detrimental both to the self and the social order.<sup>25</sup> Bray, for instance, cites Governor William Bradford’s argument that buggery and sodomy were about as connected to nature “as it is with waters when their streams are stopped or dammed up...it cannot run in a common road of liberty... search[ing] everywhere and at last break[ing] out where it gets vent.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, if attached to the ecological

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<sup>23</sup> Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Borris, “‘He hang a bag and a bottle at thy back’: Barnfield’s Homoerotic Advocacy and the Construction of Homosexuality” In *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield*. See here as well DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, 21, who takes a further step of clarification, explicating narratives of Sodom and Gomorrah destruction as wrapped up more in the necessary prohibition of rebellious, disruptive desire than in homo or heteroerotic relations per se.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> William Bradford, *Bradford’s History ‘Of Plimouth Plantation,’* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1898). Citation taken from Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 25-26.

world, such behavior poisons its flowing order like organ failure in a communal body. The easy slippage here from environmental to bodily anxiety, from matters of ecological prosperity to imagined categories of humanity and inhumanity, is virtually seamless; such is the destructive disorder public thinkers akin to Bradford assign to sodomy—the abject clot to natural corporeal and environmental harmony.

But sodomy as culturally destructive is not the sole focus of Bray’s, Borris’s, or Smith’s investigations and, indeed, this was far from its sole characterization in early modern culture. As Jeffrey Masten argues, the rectum (or, more specifically, the Renaissance fundament) was not always a site of anxiety-ridden annihilation. On the contrary, anality carried productive connotations in public discourse, an orifice as much associated with purgation and waste expulsion as a gateway to the grave:

[L]ike the mouth, the fundament produces health through purgation. And perhaps in this sense it is seen as more productive...the fundament, as foundation and seat, may participate in the rhetoric of the low, [but] this is lowliness with a positive valence—the foundational is hardly a negative rhetoric in this culture.<sup>27</sup>

A focus on the anus and mouth does not necessarily underscore the productiveness of sodomy more broadly; however, Masten’s explication of the fundament as critical insurer of bodily health is a tempting elevation of anal erotic fixation. And while it would be reductive to situate the fundament—and, to a larger degree, sodomy—entirely within destruction or production, Daphnis privileges the latter emphasis on productive health moving forward, purgation contingent on “slipping out” waste but also “slipping in” (in an anal and oral erotic sense). And, if Apollo’s homoerotic visage indeed supervises Daphnis’s rise to power, it

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<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 182. An earlier version of Masten’s chapter appears as “Is the Fundament a Grave?” in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Carla Mazzio and David Hillman (New York: Routledge, 1997), 129-147.

bears remembering that the sun god's power extends not only to music and poetry but health and medicine as well. Apollo is not directly mentioned in the poem, true, yet his rising sunlight is the point at which Daphnis begins his verse, homoerotic activity is lighted, and, as I will later argue, the pastoral's apothecary cures shine into bloom.

I do not wish to argue here that most Renaissance men were entirely predisposed to a standard cultural meaning of sodomy, or to forget that male-male sexual relations were, in many cases, tolerated and even celebrated. The language of male-male friendship was often promoted rather than repressed after all, however blurred the boundaries between social and sexual desire may be.<sup>28</sup> Instead, I want to position this pairing of homoerotic sex with ecological affect as defining Daphnis's beginning position in *Shepherd*, ultimately sprouting desired homoproductivity. That sodomy could disrupt the astronomical balance of the earth while also assuring corporeal purgation suggests concern over bodily longevity as much as ecological prosperity. I have cited Leo Bersani's influential "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in previous sections of this project and, although in many ways historically disparate from Renaissance England, Bersani's work critiquing cultural imaginations of gay men as "killers" or "threats" during the 1980s AIDS epidemic offers a productive point of reference for Daphnis's verse.<sup>29</sup> Public health anxieties are, even centuries later, traced to communal perceptions of sexual behavior and scapegoated as sources of illness and disorder. And while the fundament needn't be a source of degradation in Renaissance culture, the lurking

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<sup>28</sup> For a particularly insightful collection of essays examining this topic, see Katherine O'Donnell and Michael O'Roarke's edited collection *Love, Sex, Intimacy, and Friendship Between Men 1550-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), especially Alan Stewart's "Homosexuals in History: A. L. Rowse and the Queer Archive," which examines the difficulty of "finding" homosexuals in history (56). Stewart examines what he calls the queer archive of "closeted" private and public space, homosexuality as we understand it today emerging as somewhat of an "open secret" (62) in Renaissance culture. The essays in Tom Betteridge's collection *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002) also explore the varying expressions of sodomy's sexual and social representation in the period.

<sup>29</sup> Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?," 13.

conflation of ecological and sexual anxieties is a source of simultaneous annoyance and determination for Daphnis, clarifying his need to frame such behavior in construction rather than destruction. Claustrophobically stuck between a past partially figuring sodomitical desire as unacceptably unnatural, and a future condemning such relations as disease-ridden, damning, and disabling from the Renaissance to the 1980s and beyond, Daphnis wields the space of the present to shift his sodomitical disruption to productive assimilation. The shepherd's beginning embrace of sodomitical sin, the debauched lewdness whose usurpation of power was so culturally feared becomes, in the poem's opening lines, the perpetual law of the land. Daphnis's opening charm denotes sexual acts performed again and again without annihilation—rhymed, easy pleasure impossible to ignore or deny. His initial words thus represent the kind of “break[ing] out” that Governor Bradford fears, planting a hegemonic space away from teleological expiration, away from stigmatizing sexual paradigms, and, most importantly, away from a blanket reduction of anality to an assured grave.

This push back against homoerotic sodomy's established connotations is, in my estimation, representative of what Masten further explores as the transformative power of certain philological concepts—a “philology of the queer,” to borrow his words.<sup>30</sup> My examination of Daphnis's altered presentation of sodomy is inferred from his opening language within a single textual ecology, not a complete history; yet its sexual positioning of bodies, body parts, and sexual acts lay the foundation to a new landscape, one where described acts like “coming” and “slipping in” become the linguistic building blocks to a land of pleasure rather than annihilation. My use of “foundation” here is essential; like

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<sup>30</sup> Masten, *Queer Philologies*, 15. One of Masten's foci is an examination of the way philology is constructed from “normative languages of sex, gender, reproduction, and the body” (18). I will return to these compelling points later in this chapter, examining both Daphnis's role in unraveling these normative approximations and, in the case of the body (i.e., disability and impairment) his role in preserving certain philological assumptions to the sodomitical and non-sodomitical.

Masten, I would like to explore the extent to which the fundament might serve as, to borrow his words, “the seat of desire” between men, homoerotic sex fundamental to ecological productivity.<sup>31</sup> Plotting this elevated territory, Daphnis’s words drape his desire in pride and reverence, the shepherd reveling in sin’s debauched, sticky-sweet appeal:

If it be sinne to love a sweet-fac’d Boy,  
(Whose amber locks trust up in golden trammels  
Dangle adowne his lovely cheeks with joy,  
When pearle and flowers his faire haire enamels)  
If it be sinne to love a lovely Lad;  
Oh then sinne I, for who my soul is sad. (1.7-12)

Gregory Bredbeck discusses this repeated emphasis on “sinne” as “adopting the common legal rhetoric of homoeroticism,” thereby establishing a “clear and purposeful homoerotic voice” in the poem.<sup>32</sup> Daphnis’s repetition of “sinne” three times in a single stanza also wears away at the social shame attached to the word, embracing sin’s debauched appeal and thus robbing it of shame. Daphnis assigns pleasure to a range of erotic acts, sodomitically transgressive insofar as they show little interest in gesturing toward heteroproductivity. The shepherd’s final line claims sinful lewdness as a badge of honor, so long as this assures his continued wallowing in pleasurable fantasies for Ganymede’s body.

Daphnis’s opening celebration of a disruptively eternal present changes quickly with his evocation of a single word—love. A counterweight to the thrice-mentioned “sinne” that becomes Daphnis’s pride, “love” receives equal emphasis here; his alliterative remark “to love a lovely Lad” directs attention to Ganymede’s identity as a “lovely Lad” who deserves physically intimate “love” as if by the term’s easy harmony with the latter two words’ consistent “1.” Daphnis appears to justify his imagined relationship as encompassing more than the sodomitical contact delineated in the opening stanza—the erotic fucking that

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>32</sup> Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 151-152.

suddenly fails to eclipse hetero coupling's starry night on its own, suddenly pails in comparison to mutual, transcendent companionship elevating his desire's viability as environmental capital.<sup>33</sup> When juxtaposed, Daphnis's opening description of the rising sun celestially progresses beside his described love in the second stanza; the rising sun lights "th'unhappy sight" of Daphnis's entanglement with Ganymede, but, even aside from the sun's homoerotic characterization, to forgo loving this intertwining also dismisses the sunlight enabling it in the first place. Such becomes Daphnis's justification for his desire, emphasizing a hypothetical "if" to pronounce a singular imperative—his "love" is only as taboo as the natural light enabling it. "If" it is a sin to love Ganymede, it is equally one for the world to be lit in sunlight, or able-bodied vision to remark this lighting in the first place.

This affectionate praise does more than justify Ganymede's desirability; it frames his sexual body as attached to blooming nature. Daphnis's desire emerges as the necessary germination for Ganymede's—and, soon enough, the pastoral ecology's—flowering. In his infamous dismissal of Barnfield's poem, C. S. Lewis lambasts the text's indiscretion, whose verse is, at best, "bath'd in a melting sugar-candie stream."<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, this liquid confection is hard to ignore in the verse. Daphnis's glossy seed enamels the youth's face and "lovely cheeks," covering it in white pearl and colorful flowers that appear, perhaps even taste, "sweet," not to mention invoking consumption of whatever made those cheeks so. The

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<sup>33</sup> "Love" is an incredibly elastic term whose definition should not be reduced to a set of romantic denotations; however, multiple *OED* definitions cite the term as entrenched in reciprocity—that is, that one's desire for companionship with another is mutual, among other possible meanings ("love," v. 1d). While reducing its deployment to this connotation alone is no doubt problematic and reductive, I interpret Daphnis's deployment along similar terms, if only because reciprocity makes his fantasies more viable, thereby ensuring that his desires continue to prop up the ecology.

<sup>34</sup> C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 497. To his credit, Lewis's description of Barnfield's work as "sugared" or "sugary" is an appropriate description. During the Renaissance, the adjective form of this word denotes something "alluringly sweet" or "deceitfully...pleasant," (sugary, adj. 2) often describing tempting sexual desire that flirts with impurity, as in Spenser's 1591 poem *Prosopopoia* in *Complaints*, a line of which reads: "And with the sugrie sweete thereof allure Chast Ladies eares to fantasies impure" (819). Whatever the case, Barnfield describes his own sonnets as "sugar'd" as if to embrace the textual lewdness Lewis later lambasts.

proverbial candy stream flows, attracting the youth like a swarming bee hardly left wanting for tasty, fertilizing nectar. Such corporeal blooms appear birthed from Daphnis's erotic climax; this botanical embodiment forms from his eternally recurring desire, flowers re-blooming in a perpetual springtime. Remember, for instance, that Daphnis's "coming" and "slipping in" results in the "pearle" now enamoring Ganymede's body, and, as his lines continue, this extends to liquid golden showers as well, wetting simple "amber locks" to "trust[ed] up golden trammels." This perplexing imagery veils itself in valuable "pearle" and "gold"—Daphnis's stipulation being mutual erotic exchange, bathing his generosity in economic expectation. Notice that Ganymede's hair only "trusts up" into gold, only blooms through Daphnis's enacted propositions, his generosity the invested "trusts" that must eventually pay out sexually.<sup>35</sup> Such rhetoric heightens the implications of enacted homoerotic affection. Compulsory sex with Ganymede fertilizes aesthetic beauty, and this is possible only once Daphnis's colorful "sin" is performed.

As the environment is steeped in valuable sexual affection, homoerotic enactment is framed in a political economy requiring repayment, not far removed from what Jonathan Bate cites as the fierce "economy of nature"—the competing relations of human beings with and within their environment.<sup>36</sup> David Hawkes helps examine the pairing of economy and ecology, exploring sodomy's conflation with the language of usury. He argues that this paired discourse questions the "ethical status" of homoerotic desire when sodomy, an already unnatural form of disorder in cultural imagination, is paired with usury, an "immoral

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<sup>35</sup> "trust, v." OED Online. October 2015. Oxford University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Bate, "The Economy of Nature," in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, ed. Ken Hiltner (New York: Routledge, 2015), 77.

and antisocial” vice in the Renaissance.<sup>37</sup> While this conflation can be interpreted as a further tarnishing of sodomy in the period, Hawkes analysis questions how an “internal, subjective appetite mutate[s] into an external, objective power.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, how might sodomy and its economically inflected language signify expected repayment and, thus, reproduction of its own productive capital, even if sodomitical sex proves unproductive? This is an important point of provocation in Daphnis’s verse. His usury loans Ganymede a bedazzled embodiment of pearl and gold, expecting the youth’s reciprocal affection as payoff—the compounded interest of which repays a thousand fold. Ganymede’s pristine body will not only be assured, but the pastoral environs hosting future sexual exploits are guaranteed as well.

The stakes of this established trust are, I examine later, an immense gamble. For now, Daphnis moves from matters of visual beauty to homoerotic sex’s indispensability to prosperity, economic language entrenched in the environment it claims to insure. The shepherd entreats Ganymede:

O would to God (so I might have my fee)  
 My lips were honey, and thy mouth a Bee.  
 Then wouldst thou sucke my sweete and my faire flower  
 That now is ripe, and full of honey-berries (1.95-98)

And, later:

Not proud Alcynous himself can vaunt,  
 Of goodlier Orchards or of braver Trees  
 Than I have planted; yet thou wilt not graunt  
 My simple sute; but like the honey Bees  
 Thou suckst the flower till all the sweet be gone. (1.151-155)

Hardly the most benign set of passages in the poem, Daphnis once again focuses on Ganymede’s titillating orifices, granting his mouth the kind of attention that cannot pride

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<sup>37</sup> Quotations taken from David Hawkes, “Sodomy, Usury, and the Narrative of Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” *Renaissance Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000): 346, and Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury*, 4.

itself on subtlety. While the shepherd's oral fantasies are rather obvious, his prolonged metaphor intertwining homoproductive acts with economic nature is nonetheless notable. Daphnis solicits Ganymede to "sucke my...flower," conflating male-male sex with bee consumption (and, in turn, production) of nectar and honey. He thereby positions himself as Ganymede's desired object of attraction, if not biological partner in nature. In doing so, Daphnis erects his body as the "ripe" play piece attracting the buzzing bee's servicing "all [his] sweet," describing oral sex through the mechanism of sticky honeybee pollination—the mouth being, as Rictor Norton's reading of the passage notes, bees' sole site of reproductive activity.<sup>39</sup>

The accuracy behind this comment exposes the extent to which Daphnis's verse privileges production or, at the very least, productive germination. A powerful process unfolds in which the shepherd repurposes natural, reproductive imagery to reproduce homoerotic sex acts. Ganymede greedily collects the shepherd's nectar load, completing the process by which flower blooming and, hence, ecological equilibrium proves possible. But the cited stanzas also represent the poem's only discussions of honeybee pollination, depicted as homoerotic desire between a male flower and bee. This eroticized partnering is not productive in the sense of reproducing a child; rather, it emphasizes order in the form of bee pollination. It is therefore difficult to deny these relations' hold over the habitat—the pollination process, even bees' innate attraction to honey, are impossible to distinguish from anal and oral erotic pleasure between males. To Daphnis, homoerotic desire does not

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<sup>39</sup> Rictor Norton, "Pastoral Homoeroticism and Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepherd*," in *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield*, eds. Kenneth Borris and George Klawitter, (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2001), 124.

destruct nature's flow; it ensures its botanical development.<sup>40</sup> The shepherd cleverly positions these lines as a complementary fundament to the opening stanzas. Just as the sun rises in the midst of his opening daydream, Daphnis prescribes here the means by which his ecology will survive, his honeybee metaphor implying that, no matter how entrenched in non-teleological sex Daphnis's beginning claims may be, regermination requires economic production. This, combined with the "goodlier Orchards" and "braver Trees" planted transitions the pastoral toward a sustainable future, but away from the pleasures of preposterous sodomy. To reiterate, Daphnis's endpoint is not disorderly but rather bent on a sustainability whose requirements will soon be further defined. His planted seeds become, just like the fundament itself, necessarily productive in assuring health through the expulsion of harmful waste.

If Daphnis's desires appear entirely productive, even monogamous, this would not be an incorrect observation. Sadly, his confectionary moral juxtaposing sodomy and ecology will twist to duller ends—sweet sugar left to burn. While some critics have argued that Daphnis's naturalization of homoerotic affection need not imply a total privileging of male-male sex, these lines on bees and honey, among the most salacious of the entire text, grasp the sexual hegemony that Daphnis so craves—one divorcing itself from disorderly sodomy.<sup>41</sup> No longer is homoerotic affection, socially acceptable or not, confined to the

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<sup>40</sup> Daphnis's honeybee metaphor underscoring natural order is hardly unique to the poem. For another example of this exploited analogy, see Shakespeare's later *Henry V*; in 1.2, Canterbury, defending Henry's claim to French lands, remarks: "for so work the honey-bees, / Creatures that by a rule in nature teach / The act of order to a peopled kingdom" (1.2.333-335). My point is that the species' behavior was, on more than one occasion, invoked in claims to natural behavior and order. Similar themes appear to inform Daphnis's own invocation of the metaphor.

<sup>41</sup> See Borris, "He hang a bag and a bottle at thy back," who argues that Daphnis's "effect is not necessarily to privilege sex between males, but rather to naturalize [homoeroticism] within a playful discourse of enjoyment" (208). Borris's reading of the poem is convincing given his textual evidence. However, in my own understanding of the text, Daphnis's "playful discourse" fails to acquire its desired permanence without the necessary privileging—and, as I argue, hegemony—of male-male intercourse. When connected to the

shadowy periphery of a glorified order. The shepherd successfully elevates homoerotic sex as ecological necessity following a reversal of beginning penetration and end orgasm, a “break[ing] out” supplanting heteroproductive coupling’s exclusive claim to nature. But as if by consequence of his power grab, Daphnis stoops to Bradford’s discursive language, seeking sexual legitimacy through the bellcurve of natural, balanced order, as I will argue later in this chapter. Daphnis’s paranoia that Ganymede will suck “all [his] sweet” is a bitter sample of the “trust” that will prove as disastrous as it is unprofitable. Nevertheless, Daphnis’s ascension to ecological power aims to capture Ganymede’s eye, to prune away the dead, decaying matter to see, to sin, and, of course, to slip in.

## II “I saw, I view’d, I slipped in”: Sexual Ability and Apothecary Ecoeroticism

A sugary, self-indulgent rush to the head, Daphnis’s proposed intercourse dominates the poem’s beginning, but the forces underpinning homoerotic affection’s enactment require more than candied affection. Daphnis’s lamentation is, after all, an appeal for Ganymede’s tempting body, and the shepherd knows that, to sink his hooks into the young man, more than erotic solicitations must be promised. Eerily similar to Renaissance discourse painting a nefarious portrait of sodomy, Daphnis stresses the undesirability of alternative sexual companionship, denying it any stake in his natural world by stressing its connection to sickness and disability. Relating an anecdote concerning Queen Guendolen, the rival suitor for Ganymede’s love, Daphnis warns his lover that

[H]er an Old-Man had beene sutor too,  
That in his age began to doate againe;

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ecological sphere, his enacted affections become less playful than compulsory and anxiety-ridden, seeking to exterminate competing forms of erotic coupling.

Her would he often pray, and often woo,  
When through old-age enfeebled was his Braine:  
But she before had lov'd a lustie youth  
That now was dead, the cause of all her ruth. (1.25-30)

One of the text's few depictions of hetero relations, Daphnis implores Ganymede to reject such sexual coupling, aligning Guendolen's erotic entanglement with disablement or, in Daphnis's estimation, bodily deterioration. The shepherd urges his lover to understand the wicked card trick Guendolen plays, one promising erotic love but draining life force and ability instead. He describes one of her lovers as an "Old-Man" who, despite reacquiring the capacity to woo, represents the kind of old, senile lover representative of dead-end heteroerotic desire. Daphnis mentions the man's ability to "doate againe" following his newfound desire—admitting Guendolen's ability to rekindle sexual arousal—but immediately cautions against such eroticism's impermanence. Guendolen may harden the old man's libido, but, like a deplorable femme fatale, she leads her suitor down a primrose path to mental infortitude. His efforts to "pray" and "woo" result not in consummated sex, but in a more "enfeebled," disabled brain that, to Daphnis, marks him as good as dead. The old man is never mentioned again.

Although Guendolen's characterization has proven a due site of discussion in *Shepherd* scholarship, her sexual villainy is coated in a waxy layer of ableism.<sup>42</sup> The man's characterizing "old" age deserves attention here, which collocates with enfeeblement in Daphnis's distorted portrait of impairment. Daphnis fails to concede that eventual impairment is inevitable in his pastoral landscape. Instead, Daphnis juxtaposes the man's mental disablement as a consequence of Guendolen's fruitlessly pursued affections,

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<sup>42</sup> Critics have noted Daphnis's repeated tone of misogynistic contempt for Guendolen, although there has been some disagreement over whether her depicted wickedness is referenced as personal flaw rather than somehow indicative of women in general. For varying points in this debate, see Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*, 113 and Borris, "Ile hang a bag and a bottle at thy back," 205.

confining mental disablement as the exclusive phenomenological characteristic of someone close to death, as well as tipping all heterosexual desire toward a similar endpoint. This cautionary tale is not an isolated incident, after all. A robust “lustie youth”—“lusty” implying a vigorous sexual appetite—turns up dead after being “lov’d” by Guendolen,<sup>43</sup> Daphnis subsequently relating Cupid and Death’s drunken exchange of arrows where “Love tooke up Deaths dart” (1.47). While the latter scenario explains the old man’s naïve affections for Guendolen, Daphnis positions it as a precedent for the anonymous lusty youth’s fate in context. His erotic body deteriorates due to affection resonating from Cupid-Death debauched mistake; love and death become a partnered “fatall shaft” (1.41) when fueling heteroerotic desire. No causal agent justifies claims that Guendolen is capable of imposing death-inducing disablement, and, here again, Daphnis spares the details, allowing his lover to fill in the ominous blanks. Not only is the young man’s healthy energy sapped, his characterizing youth and futurity confined to a dead body, but Daphnis’s emphasis on his “lustie” nature decries his wasted sexual energy, erotic potential that Daphnis entreats Ganymede to spend, or, at the very least, to avoid wasting on debilitating relations with a woman.

However accurate this moral may be, Guendolen is far more than a competitor for Ganymede’s affections here. Her erotic embodiment becomes both threatening and nightmarish to a world underpinned by homoerotic prosperity, which, from the poem’s beginning, associates orgasmic penetration with “seeing” and “viewing.” Guendolen thereby threatens to taint the youth’s body to sexual disability should a heteroerotic bond be

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<sup>43</sup> “lusty, adj.” OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press.

consummated.<sup>44</sup> Remember that, in Daphnis's approximation, Guendolen's suitors meet equivalent fates—impairment and sudden death—equally useless within his paradigm of sexual viability. Despite the difference in age and erotic vigor between the “Old Man” and “lustie youth,” both are incapacitated, the latter because he now rots in the ground, the former because he is mentally “enfeebled”—sustainable sex and disability incongruous at this point in the poem. That the old man sexually “doate[s] againe” is undeniable; his close proximity to death in old age, combined with the fate of his “lustie” predecessor, however, underscores the transient nature of his desires. Given the stanza's focus on death, the old suitor will certainly not dote for long, and, Guendolen, still grieving for her former lover and characterized by “all her ruth,” is a far cry from Daphnis's opening enjoyment of unlimited pleasure. One lover is dead, and another is near death, drawing the queen's erotic body ever closer to extinction. A strict partition is pulled between disablement and sexual ability, but also between homoerotic desire and sickness, disfigurement, and annihilation as well—all collapsed within the poison of male-female “love” or, in a broader sense, unenjoyable hetero coupling.

Although I mentioned Robert McRuer's explication of queerness and disability as partner identities under heteronormative oppression in my last chapter, his argument merits repeating here, if only to note Daphnis's attempted unraveling of any such partnership. Admittedly, just as I modified my reading of compulsory able-bodiedness to work toward teleological sexuality rather than heteronormativity per se, Daphnis's affections appear more homoerotic than subversively queer by this point in the text. The shepherd glorifies ability as

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<sup>44</sup> Similar fears of bodily deterioration can be found in Shakespeare's much discussed Sonnet 144, the speaker of which expresses concern that, in his perplexing love triangle between a “bad” female and “good” male angel, the former will “fire” the latter one out, presumably through venereal disease and, thus, into incapacity/impairment perhaps signifying sexual undesirability.

the centerpiece of the pastoral world; to accommodate disease risks lapsing again into sodomy's discursive reductions to deadly disorder. As a result, to be sustainably homoerotic requires the repeated denial and distancing of sick disablement in any and all forms. Homoeroticism and ability converge in an intertwined partnership; to falter at one fails the perfect performance of the other.

I think it pertinent, therefore, to emphasize a governing question to this chapter—to Daphnis, is homoerotic sex always already able-bodied? I do not mean this in a historical sense, although, as the work of Bray to Bersani to Masten suggests, from disordered ecologies to the purgatory fundament, anality's broad connotations from the Renaissance to more recent decades are rooted in concerns over able-bodied wellness. Rather, I would like to consider the extent to which homoerotic affection's attempted enactment—the entire trajectory of *The Affectionate Shepherd*—requires ability to prove viable in the first place. As Masten reminds us, the study of sex and gender (and, I would add, sexual ability between or within gender) is, to a large extent, a philological investigation, words signifying certain rhetorical things about pleasures and the bodies experiencing said pleasure.<sup>45</sup> To interpret Daphnis's professed "I came, I saw, I view'd, I slipped in" as homoerotic (and even, at first, sodomitical) requires that we investigate the important middle ground between desire and performed sex which, in this case, concerns "I saw" and "I view'd" as much as Daphnis's more salacious claims. These past tense verbs become crucial for homoerotic affection to reproduce itself. Placing sexual intercourse in an imagined past assures that, as Hammond argues, "past figures future";<sup>46</sup> merely performing sexual engagement assures its perpetual reenactment, refreshing the bodies and environs doing the performing in the first place. But

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<sup>45</sup> Masten, *Queer Philologies*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Hammond, *Figuring Sex Between Men*, 73.

the shepherd's claim to enacted sex is contingent as much on able-bodiedness as intercourse itself and, indeed, proper viewing and seeing becomes a prerequisite to the latter. This is not, given the structure of the line, a prerequisite to "come"; rather, it is a requirement to penetratively slip in again and again. Performed able-bodiedness becomes the enabler linking penetration with orgasm and, later, ecological fertilization. Proper male-male sex requires proper ability, and this telos informs the shepherd's immediate pruning of Ganymede's body.

This partnership between ability and homoproductive viability is entrenched in what Cynthia Barounis notes as homoeroticism's domineering "ethic of able-bodiedness"—that is, the preservation of corporeal ability from debilitating heterosexuality or, in the context of Daphnis's lamentation, heteroerotic coupling.<sup>47</sup> The shepherd cites such affections as wearing out the body, while his own is based in the rather abstract sphere of true "love," different from Guendolen's in that it automatically assumes and awards abled longevity. Yet, by his own definition, this appears removed from the non-teleological escapades of *Shepherd's* opening—"I love thee for thy gifts, She for hir pleasure; / I for thy Vertue, she for Beauties treasure" (1.209-210), Daphnis tells Ganymede later in the text. Given the shepherd's extensively detailed acts which, when performed, "trusts up" Ganymede's physicality into a tempting (and valuable) treasure, these claims are bizarre. Daphnis suggests that Guendolen's affections are driven by personal pleasure and the pursuit of

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<sup>47</sup> Cynthia Barounis, "Crippling Heterosexuality, Queering Able-Bodiedness: *Murderball*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and the Contested Masculine Body," *Journal of Visual Culture* 8, no.1 (2009): 54. Barounis's article offers an insightful reading of the 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain*, the plot of which tells the homoerotic love story of two cowboys in the American West. Like Daphnis's pastoral, the lovers' sexual intercourse in *Brokeback Mountain's* remote locale associates male-male sex with a natural world of pleasure and bliss, while the cowboys' domestic, heterosexual lives off the mountain are depicted as debilitating and ultimately disabling. The typical partnership between queer desire and disability is broken apart, and, here again, to elevate homoerotic affection as legitimate or even superior desire is built on the backs of disability and sickness, playing the role of permanent, undesirable degradation elevating same-sex affection's desirability.

treasured erotic beauty—the very portrait of his own usury-like affection described in the premier stanzas. But Daphnis is not unaware of the similarity. Distinguishing his idiosyncratic vision of sexual hegemony as disparate from Guendolen’s disabling affections, the shepherd describes his desire in terms of loftier “Vertue” and selflessness, the antithesis to anything the sick queen enacts. If at any point the shepherd’s admirable embrace of erotic lewdness, pleasure for pleasure’s sake, turned to the most bourgeois of affections pandering for its grip on power, this is it. Daphnis’s prolonged honeybee metaphor entreating Ganymede to suck his “faire flower” frames homoerotic desire in ecological viability. But his claim to preserving Ganymede’s bodily integrity requires a disavowal of what made his affections so non-teleologically subversive in the first place—away from lewd sexual behavior and toward loftier, useful love; away from sugared sodomy and toward a bitter façade built on apothecary survival.

These inconsistencies in Daphnis’s argument have not gone unnoticed by scholars. DiGangi, for instance, has made the argument that the shepherd’s lamentation is representative not only of his linguistic disorder but also “a sign or symptom of [Daphnis’s] erotic disorder...serv[ing] to produce and reproduce that disorder.”<sup>48</sup> I will discuss later why his potentially disordered and unwell body is so anxiety inducing in the pastoral but, for now, such reference to “sign[s]” and “symptom[s]” is an astute observation on its own, particularly given the immediate content of the text. I would posit that (dis)order haunts Daphnis’s argumentative language too, and that this realization both informs and is informed by his remaining insistence on botanical longevity. If we apply DiGangi’s specific description of Daphnis’s language to the text, he emerges as someone already experiencing the symptoms of sickness threatening to undercut sexual permanence. Daphnis’s subsequent

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<sup>48</sup> DiGangi, “My Plentie Makes Me Poore,” 150.

attempt, then, to fertilize his pastoral landscape accomplishes compatible aims—to win Ganymede’s affections, to expel any comparison to Guendolen’s heteroerotic entanglement, and, most importantly, to frame the pastoral as curative to secure the first goal while erasing the disabling sexual relations of the second, thus reaffirming healthy order.

To accomplish these ambitious objectives, the shepherd does not populate his landscape with generic, unnamed plants, but rather describes it as a garden dazzling the senses:

There growes the Gilliflowre, the Mynt, the Dayzie  
(Both red and white,) the blew-veynd-Violet:  
The purple Hyacinth, the Spyke to please thee,  
The scarlet dye Carnation bleeding yet;  
The Sage, the Savery, and sweet Margerum,  
Isop, Tyme, and Eye-bright; good for the blinde and dumbe. (1.175-180)

After bribing Ganymede’s affections with presents including “[fishing] hooks of silver” (1.138) and even a “Little lambe” (1.197) to play with, it is easy to interpret these remarks as another generous gift to the youth. But, like almost everything else in the pastoral, stipulations are to be expected, this time stressing the sensory abilities required to enjoy the ecology. The shepherd cites gillyflowers, blue violets, “bleeding” carnations, and red and white daises boasting visual aestheticism; however, just like his desired sodomitical sex, this ecological beauty cannot exist for pleasure’s sake alone. Notice that Daphnis frames his pastoral in visual terms, telling Ganymede that, in order to “please thee,” the flowers’ optical adjectives—the “purple,” the “blew,” the “scarlet”—must be realized. Remember, too, that Ganymede’s face is previously showered in similar “pearle” and “gold”; his body blooms in the pastoral’s botanical flowers but, more than this, it radiates the visual splendor essential to ecological attachment. The shepherd also cites the culinary herbs sage and “sweet” marjoram similarly connoting the pleasures of taste. As I have already argued, Ganymede’s body is

coated in combined visual and, to a lesser degree, tasty, sticky “sweet” palatability. The point here is twofold: first, to offer Ganymede guaranteed affinity to pastoral nature should he choose to accept Daphnis’s affections and, second, to reiterate that the homoerotic sex securing this—and the ecology hosting it—requires visual and sensory ability to participate in ecoerotic enjoyment.

Given Daphnis’s catty harangue of Guendolen, this clarification is important. As the shepherd has shown, his homoerotic affection both germinates and yearns for default able-bodiedness, compromised only by the disabling hetero relations implicated in Guendolen’s association with mental disability. The message is simple: ecoerotic inclusion can only be accomplished should certain physical and mental ability be embraced. In his examination of the pastoral genre’s default emphasis on a body-environment dyad excluding disabled bodies, Matthew Cella writes:

One of the main limitations of . . . pastoral fantasy characteristic of the pastoral tradition as a whole is the ableist foundation upon which it is based. That is, conventional pastoralism presumes a compulsory able-bodiedness. Access to the remote and isolated rural locations, which are so integral to pastoral experience as it is typically conceived, is limited for people with disabilities, particularly those with physical impairments. What happens when someone is not able to get to the woods or to the pumpkin patch? Does the environmental imagination atrophy?<sup>49</sup>

Although Cella’s critique focuses on the work of American transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau, it remains applicable to Barnfield’s text. Indeed, I would argue that Daphnis constructs his landscape along similar provocations, defining the pastoral as able-bodied to banish Guendolen’s competitive affection. The compulsory connection between ability, ecological accommodation, and sexual entanglement could not be more direct; compulsory able-bodiedness, glorified ability accomplished through equally glorified sexual hegemony,

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<sup>49</sup> Cella, “Retrofitting Rurality: Embodiment and Emplacement in Disability Narratives,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 30, no.1 (2016): 2.

occurs through Daphnis's phantasmatic environment stressing sensory beauty. The "red" and "white" flowers are only pleasurable if one can view them; the "Margerum" is only "sweet" if one can taste it. Such is the exclusive access Cella interrogates; the shepherd establishes a quota of able-bodiedness to enter and enjoy his environs, without which sexual pleasure and ultimate corporeal transcendence cannot be achieved.

It would be inaccurate, however, to posit that Daphnis does not extend an accommodating olive branch to sexual ability and desire unaligned with his ecoerotic paradigm—albeit a medicinal, rehabilitative one. His mention of the plants "Isop" (hyssopus), "Tyme" (Thyme), and "Eye-bright" (euphrasia) prove the most powerful of all his botanical selections, if only because they are the most ambitious in effect—less visual or culinary but proportionately more apothecary. John Gerard's widely circulated *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* describes wild thyme's virtues in no uncertain terms:

It bringeth down the desired sicknesse, provoketh urine, applied in bathes and fomentations it procureth sweat: being boyled in wine, it helpeth the ague, it easeth the angurie, it stayeth the hicket, it breaketh the stones in the bladder, it helpeth the lethargie, frenzie, and madnesse, and stayeth the vomiting of blood.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> John Gerard, *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (New York: Dover Publications, 2015), 571. Admittedly, Gerard's text was not printed until 1597 and did not widely circulate until the seventeenth century, years after Barnfield's poem was written. It is possible, however, that the medicinal uses for Daphnis's plants were known in many Renaissance households as home remedies, and Gerard's text might be viewed more as a collection of such knowledge rather than revealing breakthrough medicinal cures in all cases. Elaine Leong's "'Herbals she peruseth': Reading Medicine in Early Modern England" *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 556-578 notes the reverence with which Gerard's text was regarded in early modern households, as well as the extent to which his herbal was partially constructed from content and woodblock images sourced from earlier sixteenth century botanical books. Although published in the latter half of the seventeenth century, Hannah Woolley's *The Gentlewomans Companion; or, A Guide to the Female Sex* (London, 1675) notes that, "if you would know the nature of Plants, *Gerhard* and *Parkinson* write incomparably on the Subject" (161). The "Parkinson" to which Woolley refers is John Parkinson, apothecary and botanist to Charles I, whose 1640 herbal tome *Theatrum Botanicum* followed Gerard's; however, my point is that Gerard's content (wherever it was sourced from) may have enjoyed a great deal of cultural permeability in and around the seventeenth century and likely much earlier.



Figure 2.1: Wilde Time of Candy (Thyme) as illustrated in John Gerard's *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes*. © Dover Publications

An incomparable cure-all if there ever was one, Gerard notes thyme's ability to combat debilitating "ague" (fever), "hicket[s] (hiccups), and lethargy, realigning the body back into a state of medicinal wellness.<sup>51</sup> Sickness's temporary symptoms are not the sole target of the drug, however. Note that "frenzie" and "madnesse" receive equal mention, the implication being that mental impairment can be soothed, if not cured outright, by the plant's effects. Given Daphnis's previous emphasis on Guendolen's lovers, thyme's textual inclusion is not accidental. Daphnis invokes a presumed cure to mental disability in opposition to Guendolen's "enfeebled," heteroerotic scourge, and advocates the old man's return to able-bodiedness should this pastoral cure be accepted. Gerard's explication of Eye-Bright's virtues covers separate but related ground:

It is very much commended for the eyes...taken it selfe alone, or any way else, it preferues the sight, and being feeble and loft it restores the same: it is

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<sup>51</sup> "ague, n." and "hicket, v." OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press.

given most fitly being beaten into powder...Eye-bright layd upon the eyes, or the juyce thereof mixed with white Wine, and dropped into the eyes, taketh away the darknesse and dimnesse of the eyes, and cleareth the sight.<sup>52</sup>

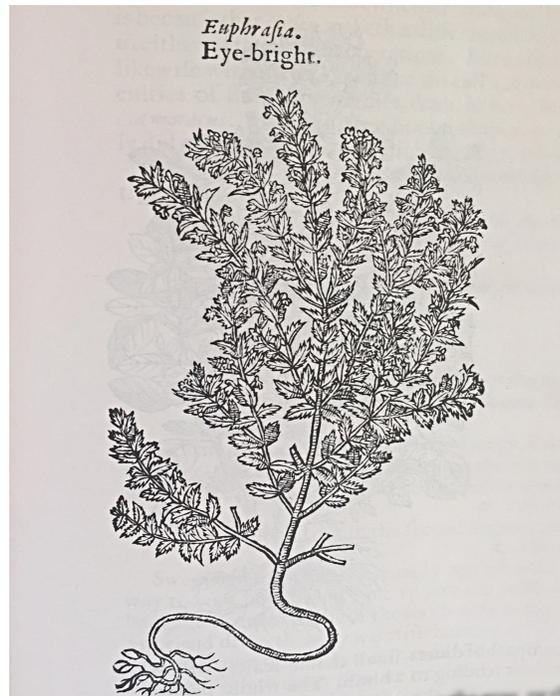


Figure 2.2: Eye-bright (euphrasia) as illustrated in John Gerard's *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes*. © Dover Publications

Beautiful as it appears, Eye-bright is best ground to medicinal dust should its true virtues be appreciated. To say that the plant merely cures visual impairment would be an understatement. Instead, Gerard's detailed description posits that "darknesse" and "dimnesse," a rather simplistic phenomenological reduction of blindness, can easily be restored when Eye-bright is taken as an apothecary solution. Gerard's wording further describes the flower as that which "preferues the sight," the implication being that, as an ecological product, Eye-bright's able-bodied effects are as based in nature as the plant itself, personifying nature's compulsory able-bodied intents.

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<sup>52</sup> Gerard, *Herball*, 663.

Daphnis's emphasis on the abilities to taste, see, and feel the beauty of his pastoral does more than stress the importance of ability to its environs. It also suggests the "blinde" and "dumbe" individuals incapable of doing so represent anomalies in nature, unable to access the homoerotic pleasures Daphnis praises. Why, it seems, would a person continue to be sick or disabled if the ecology offers, perhaps even yearns for, medical cure and realignment into able-bodiedness—Eye-bright's apparent preference for visual capacity or Thyme's cure for mental impairment? This textual assumption rehashes misconceptions that disability studies lambasts: wouldn't the disabled rather be able-bodied? Wouldn't life prove more enjoyable if he or she simply "chose" cure? That these questions are about as nuanced as Gerard's botanical reduction of blindness to darkness should be clear. Daphnis's pastoral relies on the phantasmatic quality of compulsory able-bodiedness as sexual affection's insurer. The shepherd does not wish to cure disability for cure's sake, although he partitions his desire from disablement as much as possible. Instead, the aim is to rehabilitate anomalous bodies signifying undesirable sexual capacities and affections. Unlike my last chapter, disability represents far more than a "broken" body disinterested in sex and procreation; it is embodied hypersexuality approaching repulsive, sodomitical disorder. Sex and disability's relationship merge in the form of an "enfeeble[ment]" working in tandem with Guendolen's savage affection, both proving ecologically destructive to proper homoerotic affection.

Daphnis's focus on apothecary rehabilitation concerns disability only in an epidermal sense. By this point in the poem, impairment is indicative of heteroerotic coupling which, by virtue of its anxiety-ridden separation from homoerotic desire, is so incompatible with ecoerotic enjoyment that the botanical world longs to rehabilitate it. Daphnis's conclusive

presentation of the “red,” “white,” and “sweet” botanical flowers with the affirmation that Isop, Thyme, and Eye-bright are “good for the blinde and dumbe” is strategic; it stresses the final trio’s invested curing of incapacity occluding visual and sensory enjoyment. And, given disability’s previous conflation with “enfeeble[d]” heteroerotic desire, these plants ideally cure the corporeal signification of such desire as well. Disability is synonymous with sodomitical, heteroerotic sex, but only as a mechanism to erase Guendolen’s brand of erotic coupling from the pastoral—able-bodiedness presumably the defining component of Daphnis’s homoerotic affection next to ecological prosperity. His pastoral weighs economically competitive bodies, judging ecological balance as most insured by the able-bodied, homoerotic sex engendering ecological blooms. Remember that the flowers triggered from Daphnis and Ganymede’s intercourse are literally worth their weight in gold; the latter blooms in valuable “pearle” and “golde,” superior to heteroerotic deterioration and death. What, Daphnis asks, assures a sexual body’s adaptation and biological survival, especially when that desire is too easily reduced to deadly extinction? How might sexual embodiment maintain its longevity, securing exclusive claims to ability to win the ecological survival of the fittest? Homoerotic affection’s resilience is made solely contingent on a fragile claim to ability, an enterprise requiring proper visibility, taste, mental capacity, and physical ability to “slip in.” It matters not whether the sexual copulation propping up environmental prosperity concerns oral or anal sex, semen consumption or bourgeois, heteroproductive sex; as long as disability is volleyed away from such affection, its chances of being annihilated under the culture’s evolutionary selection proves minimal.

The takeaway here is that ability’s ontologically blurred lines are informed by the power structures of proper, hegemonic sex and, dare I say, sexuality. The social model of

disability considers disablement is partially determined by social stigma and exclusion although, as Daphnis's landscape shows, such assigned roles have automatic implications on the body.<sup>53</sup> This in turn dictates who belongs to the natural environs, who is invited into the folds of sexual endurance, and, hence, who survives and dominates in the ecology. I would again turn to Cella here, who explores a so-called ecosomatic paradigm in literature to imagine, in his words, "a key method by which to deconstruct norms of embodiment" within lived ecologies. For Cella, exploring disciplinary social stigma surrounding what is "able" or "natural" helps illuminate disability as an ecocritical enterprise.<sup>54</sup> How, for instance, might a discussion of the social model's emphasis on non-accommodation as producing disability intersect with ecocriticism's emphasis on the formation of space and human embodiment within that space? More importantly, what happens when someone is not able to access the pastoral, not able to achieve transcendence, if only because one is not able-bodied enough? Daphnis's emphasis on the importance of sight, mobility, and mental fortitude becomes a place making process, one reinforcing the shepherd's conception of productive homoerotic affection.

Yet this attempted escape from the inevitabilities of sickness and disability is, as McRuer might suggest, a fleeting, impossible game. To develop the final stretch of this chapter, I would like to explore what DiGangi has duly noted as the "sign[s]" and "symptom[s]" of the shepherd's verse, uncovering the erotic and physical disorder plaguing his investment in wellness, itself contingent on Ganymede's economic paying out to Daphnis sexually and, thus, ecologically. As Daphnis's spring petals fall away, Cella's earlier quoted

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<sup>53</sup> See here again Tom Shakespeare's "The Social Model of Disability" for a more detailed analysis of this debate and its criticisms.

<sup>54</sup> Cella, "The Ecosomatic Paradigm in Literature: Merging Disability Studies and Ecocriticism," *Isle-Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 20, no.3 (2013): 575.

provocation haunts the verse—that is, how might disabling sickness cause the environmental imagination to atrophy, and with it transcendence of a disordered, death-assured embodiment? Daphnis issues one final ultimatum to his love. Rather than offering the pleasures of immortal desire, he turns to the threatening pains of ecological collapse, transferring the weight of sexual embodiment to environmental degradation and framing a corporeal hellscape in heaven’s despite.

**III**  
**“Thy ill my hell, thy weale my welfare is”:  
Illness and Apocalyptic Terminality**

The morning sun crystalizing a paradise from rhododendron bloom and gillyflower hue veils itself as night approaches. Daphnis’s thistle spring becomes more a halcyon fantasy than an enduring ecology, and the shepherd, wondering when his planted seeds will harvest, delivers his rhetoric with less benevolence than accusation, less innocence than crippling expectation. Far from sitting back in restful contemplation in this eleventh hour of imaginative creation, Daphnis considers the consequences of exposing his corporeal innards to Ganymede’s tampering. Framing the youth’s wellness as tied up in the mattering of his body and, furthermore, environmental prosperity itself, Daphnis begs to know:

When will my May come, that I may embrace thee?  
When will the hower of my soules joying?  
When dost thou seeke in mirthe still to disgrace mee?  
Whose mirth’s my health, whose grieffe’s my harts annoying.  
Thy bane my bale, thy blisse my blessednes,  
Thy ill my hell, thy weale my welfare is. (1.223-228)

Daphnis delivers a triad of rhetorical inquiries answered as back and forth internal debate—a maddening dialogue spiraling into high-strung anxiety. Daphnis repeatedly emphasizes

“when” as if stressing the looming uncertainties of temporal time and space. His third question is answered first, the first question is answered last, like echoes falling on deaf ears.<sup>55</sup> Still, this non-response from Ganymede at the climax of the day’s lamentation is desirable to Daphnis so long as it structures the youth’s “mirthe.” Perhaps this cruel enterprise is the so-called love Daphnis craves, Ganymede given huge latitudes to spurn the shepherd in exchange for a chance embrace, the hope that his economic gamble will soon prove prosperous rather than, in his words, “disgrace[ful].”

Whatever the case, Daphnis’s benevolent emphasis structures the stanza’s feigned altruism. He temporarily transitions away from discussing erotic engagement and focuses instead on Ganymede’s health, although, as his previous verse reveals, this topic is a veiled anxiety over ecoerotic sustainability. Daphnis translates his lover’s mirth and grief into bodily health, further entangling the lovers’ bodies within the biological web. As I have argued, much of the preceding lamentation frames Ganymede’s pleasure as contingent on pastoral prosperity resting on homoerotic enactment. These remarks suggest anything less than this outcome—Daphnis’s insistence on being “intangled” with his love—signifies illness. Daphnis realizes that Ganymede’s selection of wellness implicates his own corporeal well-being; should sexual engagement be enacted with Guendolen, the shepherd’s body risks contamination. “Thy weale my welfare is,” he reminds the youth, implying that, should Ganymede become sexually ill, Daphnis’s sickness emerges from the enacted failure of homoerotic sex. The youth risks sexual disablement akin to Guendolen’s “Old Man” and “lustie youth,” and this bears consequences outside his individual body. The pastoral fantasy

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<sup>55</sup> Although Daphnis dwells less on deafness than blindness and mental disability, I would note that anxieties toward deafness in early modern literature has proven a germinal point of interest in Jennifer L. Nelson and Bradley S. Berens’s “Spoken Daggers, Deaf Ears, and Silent Mouths” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), 52-74.

risks atrophy as its homoerotic scaffolding collapses, Daphnis's petulant pleas to the youth bent on averting impending catastrophe.

Daphnis thus presents environmental apocalypse as emerging from failed able-bodied health. Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*, often regarded as a foundational text introducing the perils of climate change to public readership, proposes a similar association, positing "the end of nature... makes us reluctant to attach ourselves to its remnants, for the same reason that we usually don't choose friends from among the terminally ill."<sup>56</sup> It would be inaccurate to spin McKibben's thesis as primarily grounded in ableism, and even more of a stretch to frame Daphnis's verse as concerned with climate change. Yet McKibben's remarks appropriate illness as metaphorical to the natural world's collapse much as its Elizabethan counterpart does. It suggests environmental preservation and stewardship require an emphasis on bodily health as much as ecological conservation; to surround one's body in sick, disabled individuals is to associate oneself with destruction and degradation. And so a conflation spanning Bradley's emphasis on environmental prosperity to Daphnis's claim to sustainable eroticism again elevates itself in biological imperative. The unquestionable goal of planetary wellness is acutely compromised by illness; should health and rehabilitation fail, terminality is the gateway into a damned, hellish existence.

Just as Gerard's apothecary notations presuppose a compulsory ability endorsed by nature, Daphnis re-appropriates this brash understanding of ecological health, constructing the visage of an endangered optimal harmony. Laying bare such assemblages of environmental idealism, John C. Kricher notes that

The balance of nature paradigm is of little value within evolution and ecology. It has never been clearly defined and is basically misleading. But the

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<sup>56</sup> Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989), 179.

balance of nature is aesthetically satisfying, a fact that is largely responsible for its continued vigor through the ages.<sup>57</sup>

Kricher's point is not that environmental equilibrium is a biological myth, but rather that its parameters are continually manipulated to accommodate ideological compulsion. Bradford's diatribe against ecologically disruptive sodomy is one such example. Daphnis imposes a similar paradigm to stress homoeroticism's natural harmony, true, but conjoins environmental endurance to male-male sex so that the latter's failed performance blights the landscape. "Thy ill my hell, thy weale my welfare is," Daphnis argues, expanding anxieties over his bodily health to binary ecosystemic conservation, the ecology judged according to an "ill" / "weale" health paradigm determining larger "welfare" or "hell[ish]" ecological atrophy. This conflation is similar to what Serenella Iovino has noted as a "transcorporeal horizon of hybridized boundaries" in ecocritical discourse, through which human corporeality can little be judged apart from its material environs and physical footprint.<sup>58</sup> In other words, embodiment and embodied agency emerge in the cross section between politics, capital, and human-ecological interactions. With a similar focus on agency in mind, Daphnis expects Ganymede to choose the right sexual affection should he care about a sustainable future for homoerotic vitality. The shepherd's phrasing structures Ganymede's health as determining his own, illness preceding "hell" and alternative, homeostatic welfare contingent on Ganymede selecting wellness.

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<sup>57</sup> John C. Kricher, *The Balance of Nature: Ecology's Enduring Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 23. For an earlier argument concerning classical approaches to ecology, see Daniel Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>58</sup> Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, "Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych," *ISLE—Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 19, no.3 (2012), 449. See also Iovino and Oppermann's expanded edited collection *Material Ecocriticism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), particularly the essays in Part IV: Poetics of Matter. For another detailed examination of material ecocriticism and ecologies' connections to corporeality, see Iovino's chapter "Material Ecocriticism: Matter, Text, and Posthuman Ethics," in *Literature, Ecology, Ethics*, ed. Michael Sauter (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 51-68.

This moral fails to register to the youth, or, if it does, is intentionally defied. While Ganymede fails to speak throughout *Shepherd*, the youth's will is hardly eclipsed. His preferred illness becomes the adulterating pestilence driving anxieties of environmental apocalypse.<sup>59</sup> If, as Greg Gerrard remind us, the trope of environmental "health" implicates cultural perceptions of ecological resilience, Daphnis's invocation of a looming hellscape occurs because of, not in spite of, the pastoral's intolerance of sexual biodiversity.<sup>60</sup> The problem is that his ecosystemic paradigm merging personal and ecological health does not allow for ecoerotic elasticity; bodily health and pleasure rely on nature cures, but the environment also counts on (specific) sexual activity in order to preserve these drugs. When Daphnis cites his living "hell," the fantasy of environmental equilibrium tips the ecology to a breaking point. The environment cannot sustain itself because it fails to offer dynamism even a step above or below a niched mean, hostile to the possibility that, even at risk of disablement, Ganymede might prefer the nymph queen's indecent affection. Daphnis's apocalyptic approximations are, therefore, more than the work of queenly exaggeration; the ecological atrophy emerging from failed sexual enactment is as materially likely as Ganymede's seed-filled body would otherwise be.

Admittedly, there is little textual evidence that Ganymede resists Daphnis's solicitations other than the former's sustained silence and the latter's persistent whining. However, if Gerard's words are any indication, ability or disability is, as Helena defines it in

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<sup>59</sup> The only time Ganymede speaks throughout Barnfield's poetry is not in *The Affectionate Shepherd* but in Sonnet XI: "And what is she (quoth he) whom thou do'st love?" (9) Ganymede inquires, wondering whom Daphnis appears so lovesick for. This is an interesting quote to juxtapose with *Shepherd*. It implies that Ganymede is either unaware of Daphnis's affections or purposely ignorant of them; Ganymede's automatic assumption that Daphnis's love is for a "she" is curious as well, perhaps illuminating his own sexual preferences despite his history as a homoerotic plaything.

<sup>60</sup> Greg Gerrard, "Nature Cures? or How to Police Analogies of Personal and Ecological Health," *ISLE-Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 19, no.3 (2012): 494.

*All's Well*, highly contingent on preference.<sup>61</sup> Passing another lonely night without acting as the pillow to Ganymede's "sleepy head" (1.1.14) Daphnis builds his second day's efforts in describing the scornful youth's disabled state:

Fond love is blinde, and so art thou (my Deare)  
For thou seest not my Love, and great desart;  
Blinde Love is fond, and so thou dost appeare;  
For fond, and blinde, thou greevst my greeving hart:  
Be thou fond-blinde, blinde-fond, or one, or all;  
Thou art my Love, and I must be thy thrall. (2.139-144)

Daphnis interprets disability as wholly contingent on personal will here.<sup>62</sup> Rationalizing Ganymede's continued aversion as a product of the poem's opening scenario—Death and Cupid drunkenly mistaking arrows and blinding the wrong target—Daphnis follows through on his warning that dead-end heteroerotic desire disables the body, reducing the youth's desire for Guendolen to his literal inability to see. But this stanza's rhetoric cites the words "fond" and "blinde" to imply more than Ganymede's zombie-like thralldom in mindlessly following Guendolen into oblivion. Daphnis relies on twisted exaggerations and spotty information throughout much of the poem, and his claim that Ganymede must be "fond-blinde, blinde-fond, or one, or all" point toward a similarly mangled conclusion. Namely, the youth purposely embraces blindness, no longer ignorant of the stakes of Guendolen's "enfeeb[ing]" affections but rather reveling in the corporeality she imposes. His preference for heteroerotic affection becomes indistinguishable from an affinity for blindness, but whether blindness emerges from fondness for Guendolen or fondness emerges from (and

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<sup>61</sup> I am referring here again to Gerard's *Herball* entry stating that Eye-bright "preferues the sight" (663), assigning purposeful will and preference to whether one is disabled or able-bodied. Remember here too Helena's notorious opinion in *All's Well* that "our remedies oft in ourselves do lie," a line pressuring the King on the importance of accepting rehabilitation to return to able-bodiedness.

<sup>62</sup> I would note that this issue of purposeful disablement is a topic I consider in detail in my next chapter on *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, Anne purposely disabling herself to take her body out of the play's homosocial traffic in women.

for) disablement is impossible to tell. What is clear, however, is that the youth fails to swallow (or even acknowledge) Daphnis's ripe Eye-bright flower.

The necessity of visual ability to “come” and “slip in” proves devastating, as blindness figures impossible the “seeing” and “viewing” conducting ecoerotic pleasure since the beginning. Disability, perennially cast as the weak link in natural selection, assures bodily obliteration in line with Guendolen's previous suitors, yet Daphnis, in his last vain attempt to win Ganymede, curiously keeps his affectionate tone throughout the stanza; “my Deare” is added to soften his harsh criticism, and the shepherd continues to refer to Ganymede as “my Love.” Subtle clues emerge regarding the realities of disablement in the ecology. Disability does not make homoerotic desire and affection impossible, but is rather Daphnis's petulant attempt to legitimize homoeroticism's exclusive claim to prolonged able-bodiedness. Why else, one wonders, would Daphnis offer to be Ganymede's affectionate “thrall” even while “blinde” disablement proliferates in the stanza? I would return to DiGangi's reading of the text here, which interprets the increasingly chaotic and self-contradictory nature of the second day's lamentation as plagued by unreachable homoerotic affection. To DiGangi, the “signs” and “symptoms” of the verse “conflate[e] the textual and bodily symptoms of Daphnis's sickness...Barnfield's shepherd cannot control the flow of tears from his body [m]ade sick, effeminate, and garrulous by his love for a boy.”<sup>63</sup> The poem's perplexing orifices begin to close. As its complete title suggests, *Shepherd's* titular figure is racked with a terminal sickness, only curable should homoerotic sex be enacted. But, according to Daphnis's logic, this is difficult when seeing and viewing are prerequisites to penetration—impossibilities given Ganymede's heteroerotic blindness and made further

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<sup>63</sup> DiGangi, “My plentie makes me Poore,” 156.

unlikely given the youth's failure to consume an apothecary solution.<sup>64</sup> The lamentation perpetuates disability's inevitabilities, as well as homoeroticism's sickening melancholia; to again borrow DiGangi's words, it "produce[s] and reproduce[s]...disorder."<sup>65</sup> But what DiGangi gestures to I would like to directly state: Daphnis's attempt to transcend his sick body not only fails, but also reproduces the terminal disability his verse simultaneously invests in curing.<sup>66</sup>

If apocalyptic, illness-ridden disorder indeed haunts Daphnis's mind—as his reference to thralldom and the "thy ill my hell" comment imply—he arguably follows the youth into this corporeal state. While never unwilling to go down for the youth, Daphnis nevertheless stresses an ecological idealism sacrificed, now a flaccid, bygone memory that will never come again:

O glorious Sunne quoth I, (viewing the Sunne)  
That lightenest everie thing but me alone:  
Why is my Summer season almost done?  
My Spring-time past, and Ages Autumne gone?  
My Harvest's come, and yet I reapt no corne:  
My love is great, and yet I am forlorne. (2.7-12)

Mirroring the optimistic opening stanza, Daphnis interrogates the ruling "Sunne," questioning why his investment in Ganymede's pearl and gold body, made all the more tantalizing under its glittering rays, has proven unprofitable. Daphnis has "reapt no corne"

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<sup>64</sup> When I claim that seeing and viewing are prerequisites to Daphnis's desired engagement with Ganymede, I am referring to his claim that "I saw, I view'd, I slipped in" mentioned at the poem's beginning.

<sup>65</sup> DiGangi, "My plenty makes me Poore," 150.

<sup>66</sup> For a compelling examination of the stakes of using terminality to discuss ecological health, see Sarah Ensor's chapter "Terminal Regions: Queer Ecocriticism at the End," in *Against Life*, eds. Alastair Hunt and Stephanie Youngblood (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016). Ensor's argument is especially pertinent here as it considers how "queer theory, queer literature, and queer modes of affiliation have [much] to contribute to environmental thinking" (43)—that is, that an acknowledgment of the inevitabilities of bodily terminality (rather than its compulsory fear) can reconfigure how we imagine ecologies, not describing sickness as a dreaded, melancholic endpoint but as itself a valuable subjectivity to understanding temporal space. Although, again, I would not describe Daphnis's verse as queer in regard to the body/ecology paradigm he institutes, Ensor's "terminally queer" thinking might prevent the imagined ecological apocalypse from occurring, which emerges from Daphnis's sustained belief that terminality can little be a part of ecological prosperity other than to ring its death knell.

and been, as a result, “forlorne,” merging ecological damnation and an eternal loneliness framed as sexual failure. Drawing attention to his own able-bodiedness soon to be juxtaposed with Ganymede’s blindness, Daphnis accentuates his “viewing” the sun in parenthetical emphasis, already three quarters of the way toward “slipping in” according to his beginning trajectory to erotic enactment. This little matters, however. The recipe’s remainder, pastoral bloom perpetuated from homoerotic sex, as well as the apothecary harvest sustaining immortality, would be torn asunder in the hellscape’s scorched earth. Spring, summer, and autumn shrink toward winter following an especially unproductive day. Still, given the debauched candy stream of the preceding verse, one regrets that this scourge is not sweeter, drowned in excess rather than dehydrated for affection.<sup>67</sup>

Despite his best attempts to exploit ability’s partnership with empowered sexuality, Daphnis has lost the game of natural selection, the result of a pestilence he imagines as ecologically taxing. I would return to Guy-Bray’s reading of the text at this late point, to consider again what makes *The Affectionate Shepherd* representative of “extinction”—that stifling of homoerotic affection in favor of heterosexual affection. As Guy-Bray reminds us, “the most significant feature of English Renaissance pastoral is its increasing heterosexualization” effectively shrinking homoerotic space.<sup>68</sup> Given *Shepherd*’s initial profusion in male-male affection, this decline is especially noticeable in the second day’s collapse into a heteroproductive lecture, the jejunity of which I am little interested in dwelling upon. Instead, I want to ask—how does the candy stream’s annihilation occur

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<sup>67</sup> Barnfield’s Latin epigraph for *The Affectionate Shepherd* reads *Amor plus mellis, quam fellis, est* (love has more honey than gall). I agree with Guy-Bray’s assertion that this hints at the possibility of a happy, triumphant ending, one where Daphnis’s naïveté that love’s tasteful pleasures outweigh its effrontery is proven correct. And, when juxtaposed to this point in the text, the epigraph acquires a cruel pathos that callously rips apart this expectation, perhaps mocking the shepherd’s failure to win required affection.

<sup>68</sup> Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space*, 134.

following homoeroticism's rise to power, desiccating the anal into the banal? Heteroerotic desire poses a destructive poison to Daphnis, but homoeroticism risks extinction because it glorifies a straight teleology invested in curing terminality rather than embracing it—that is, in meticulously ordering the world rather than embracing its sodomitical disorder. This distinction is important considering the poem is a lamentation. As the shepherd's titular tears imply, homoerotic poetic space is defined and confined by sickness. Male-male desire emerges from love sickness and ends in further sick disablement should Daphnis continue to desire Ganymede. Homoerotic space becomes synonymous with melancholic loss and unrequited affection, but terminality is the fledgling seed blossoming Daphnis's flowers in the first place, however provisional such springtime beauty is.

Unfortunately, such corporeality signifies shame to Daphnis, something dismissible and, should he hope to grasp sexual hegemony, necessarily disposable. Heterosexualization indeed adulterates the text, and this is rooted in Daphnis's abandonment of the non-teleological lewdness making his pastoral so seductive. In the end, the ecology cannot sustain itself because its maker finds too torturous an embodiment that is temporary rather than immortal; expunging sickness requires effacing the homoerotic pastoral's locus of germination. "I hy'd me homeward by the Moon-shine light; / Forswearing Love, and all his fond delight," (2.443-444) Daphnis finally remarks, ever the unsettled consort. His pastoral no longer a home to him, Daphnis's escape under darkness is the culmination of a regrettable evening equally unprofitable as impure. While the masculine "Love" might represent Cupid himself, it more likely represents Ganymede, whose "delight" Daphnis sunders from himself. Whether this separation occurs because of contaminated heteroerotic love or polluted sodomitical desire involving the (now) contagious Ganymede is difficult to tell.

Moonlight envelops the land, but whether homoerotic sunlight will rise again in the east is uncertain. For Daphnis, the ecology is lost, or, at the very least, forsworn for the present.

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Why, Daphnis asks, is homoerotic desire necessarily conjoined to ephemerality, to terminal sickness and death? This established partnership is hardly new. Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for instance, delivers several such tales involving melancholic love, overshadowed by the storyteller Orpheus's (apparently) tragic turn to boys. Among these is that of Cyparissus, a beautiful youth turned to a cypress tree, Hyacinthus, the boy lover of Apollo killed by a discus, and the famously brief tale of Ganymede, a Trojan youth espied and stolen away in the talons of Jupiter. None of these tales is particularly joyful; Cyparissus turns into a tree. Hyacinthus's spilled blood sprouts into a hyacinthia flower. Ganymede is ripped away without consent, depending on the aesthetic rendition one consults. Orpheus's song emphasizes the temporary nature of homoerotic desire, the living product of which is bound to die away like an earthly plant. Although immortality is thrust upon Ganymede, in keeping with Orpheus's preceding morality tales, this may well be to ensnare others, like Daphnis, in temptation and, finally, melancholic affection. What is clear, however, is that such male-male sexual endearment emerges from and perpetuates its own dejection and tragic transience.

When I note, then, that Daphnis questions why this must be the case, trying and failing to throw off homoeroticism's perennial characterization, I do not wish to argue instead for its fragile claim to regenerative immortality, as he does. Rather, I wonder why transience is considered too repellent to be beautiful and desirable for its own sake. Why,

from Orpheus to Daphnis to Helena, is immortal productivity the ultimate goal, Orpheus's eternal interment with his dead spouse, for instance? Much like Cyparissus and Hyacinthus, Daphnis figures Ganymede in plant-like beauty, a flower whose beauty peaks in mid spring, but why is this impermanence insufficient in itself? Why does Daphnis insist on more, spurning his own body racked with sickness and, in a kind of homoerotic denial, insist on perfect able-bodiedness and ecological balance that cannot be sustained?

That *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Affectionate Shepherd* are disparate texts in form and content is obvious, yet their interpretations of sickness and disability as erotically subjective are remarkable. How, I wonder, might the disabled King whose "broken" body signifies disinterest in procreative sex be as socially disruptive as his opposite, Guendolen's hypersexual affections perpetuating physical and ecological disablement? Like Bertram, Ganymede, ever the perfect sodomite, desires terminality through the mechanism of sexual affection—the tempting disorder that Daphnis vehemently opposes. But to what extent might an acknowledgment of terminal disorder allow a greater appreciation of homoerotic beauty—affection little interested in phantasmatic immortality, but instead embracing the imminent ephemerality of erotic desire? One might insist that heterosexuality infests Daphnis's pristine world, but, on a baser level, its apocalypse occurs through a denial of what makes homoeroticism signify, which, from the rhetoric of Sodom and Gomorrah to Orpheus's tales to Daphnis's verse and beyond, was always a seductive impermanence.

My third and final chapter performs one last scene change—a return to drama. While Bertram and Ganymede's desire for disordered ability is coupled with the pursuit of alternative affection, I now turn my attention to a character whose self-disablement is much less ambiguous. Anne's motives for her corporeal transformation are, however, entrenched

in equally complicated anxieties over sexual power, disability threatening the value-laden economics of erotic affection. For a project centered on the erotic subjectivity of sickness, impairment, and disability as mine is, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* represents the heightened stakes of physical correction, the compulsory nature of which requires greater rehabilitative insurers when medicinal cure proves insufficient.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **“Enter ANNE in her bed”: Annuling Transability in Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness***

In what arises as one of the most peculiar production elements of Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Scene 17 is abruptly interrupted by the line “Enter ANNE in her bed,”<sup>1</sup> a stage direction that has long baffled scholars in its apparent incomprehensibility. How, after all, was such a direction carried out? Was a curtain drawn and Anne simply revealed to the audience? Did the actor playing Anne walk onstage and jump into the bed, pretending to be bedridden? Was Anne carried onstage bed and all, as if her anorexic body and its disabled trappings were, in these brief moments, impossible to separate? Katie Mitchell’s 2011 production of the play for the National Theatre, roundly criticized by theatre critics for its anachronistic alterations of the text,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless managed to offer one possible conclusion, itself the source of pointed intrigue in reviews. This ending scene, the textual site of Anne’s bodily reveal as a self-disabled woman within the confines of her former husband’s estate, is transported by Mitchell to the realm of a public hospital, arrangements that force Anne’s intriguing “coming out” disabled to be realized—that is, fastened to a hospital gurney, wheeled in for the audience and her domineering male

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<sup>1</sup> 17.37 (s.d.) All play quotations are taken from: Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. Frances E. Dolan (London: Methuen Drama, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian* theatre critic Susannah Clapp noted many of the issues plaguing Mitchell’s production. Despite Mitchell’s attempt to transport the play to the 1920s in order to anachronistically associate it with the rise of women’s rights movements, her attention to set design over dialogue and characterization made such changes ineffectual to the audience, at least according to Clapp. In addition, audio issues and lack of annunciation by actors made much of the plot unintelligible to the audience outside of dumb show. See: Susannah Clapp, “A Woman Killed with Kindness; Loyalty; Ghost—Review,” *The Guardian*, July 23 2011.

acquaintances to behold.<sup>3</sup> I preface this chapter with such production details because, to the informed reader, a compelling connection materializes, one of bodily control and obsessive use-value not unlike that visible in *All's Well's* society or Daphnis's pastoral. Mitchell manages to trade the final makeup of domesticity as it exists in Heywood's domestic tragedy with that of a controlled, sterile environment, well within the jurisdiction of systemic control and, in turn, into the hands of a flawed medicalization that calls for the erasure of disabled bodily identity.

I would like to offer an alternative reading of the playwright's stage direction, one that I hope illuminates the queercrip potentiality that is stifled and redirected by the same brand of power to which Mitchell's adaptation uncovers visual cues. Mishandled as Mitchell's production may have been to some viewers, I would argue that her staging in this scene offers a powerful examination of what is lost in relation to Anne's bodily existence by play's end, which can be read as an unbearable crip identity that relations between men attempt to foreclose and annul. As this chapter intends to show, however Anne manages to enter "in her bed," in so doing she appears to her acquaintances and the audience in the anorexic state she alone has embraced, inseparable from the confines of her bed even in mobility between scenes. One might be reminded here of the argument posed by countless disability rights activists, particularly those who are wheelchair bound, that one's identity does not exist separate from one's wheelchair, but rather functions as an inextricable component of the individual body, the foundational makeup of selfhood, identity, and, perhaps more subversively, sociopolitical resistance. I am interested, then, in considering disability within the play as an important focal point of feminine defiance within Heywood's work, agency not easily sundered from the play's discernable nexus aligning disability,

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<sup>3</sup> Tim News, "A Woman Killed with Kindness," *Curtain Up London Review*, (20 July 2011).

eroticism, and the economics of sexual function and ability. As I hope to argue, compulsory concerns surrounding the last of these elements enact a forced bookending of disability for its failure to recuperate into the sexually useful direction of male-male homosocial bonding.

In what follows, I will explore three interwoven topics within Heywood's work that offer ripe opportunity for crip existence to emerge, but in response to which recuperation and realignment are unleashed in preserving the sanctity of a social normality once again associated with the sexual use-value of bodies. The first section examines the homosocial relations driving the text. Although homosociality carries a basic definition of social relations usually between men, I will be relying on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's famous interrogation of the term as encompassing much more, providing for what she cites as a "traffic in women,"<sup>4</sup> under which men reduce women to the level of exchangeable commodities to foster strong same-sex bonds. As I will show, Frankford and Wendoll's relations within the play exist along such terms, reducing one of the few female characters in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Anne, to the level of an owned object, her body idealized for the value it offers—a vessel for homosocial transaction. In the text, this use-value appears as the realization of male relations existing as part of a larger homosocial economy between men, at all times demanding that the play's gender minority lie subordinate to male use.<sup>5</sup>

While this forging of same-sex desire emerges in a cesspool of lewd erotic potential waiting

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<sup>4</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 25. Sedgwick draws from Gayle Rubin's work in deploying this phrase, highlighting Rubin's assertion that this "traffic in women" functions as a strong enabler of patriarchal power relations. For further reading on Rubin's critiques, see: Gayle Rubin, "Sexual Traffic," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, no.2 (1994): 62-99.

<sup>5</sup> I am not the first person to point out the strong likeness that Heywood's play shares with the points raised in Sedgwick's thesis. For one such notable example see: Rebecca Anne Bach, "The Homosocial Imaginary of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Textual Practice* 12, no. 3 (1999): 503-524. While I commend Bach's reading of the play, I intend to use this chapter to consider some of the larger implications that homosocial desire can have beyond the realm of queer relations and sexuality, and towards a greater sense of intersectionality with disability and crip existence within the plot.

to be enacted, I do not necessarily consider such relations indicative of queerness, which I've defined in previous chapters as encompassing resistance to sexual and bodily normality. Rather, Frankford and Wendoll's sexual and social rapport, erotic as it may be, masquerades as an enforcer of normality in its enabling of patriarchal control. This is an issue explored throughout a body of queer studies scholarship by Laurie Shannon, Alan Bray, Jeffrey Masten, and others who explicate male-male friendship as a means of affective (and corporeal) bonding between men in the Renaissance. The nexus between sex and disability, meanwhile, appears robust, fleshed out under the play's stifling homosocial environment in which feminine agency and expression can little be achieved outside of Anne's drastic self-debilitation and disablement.

In the second section of this analysis, I will consider Anne's drive toward self-starvation and anorexia not, in the words of some recent critics, as self-mutilation, but rather as a complex attempt to modify her outer body into the disabled state matching outer physicality to inner subjectivity. While Anne's self-starvation arguably complements dominant ideology in the Renaissance prescribing how an adulterous woman should atone for her sins, I argue that this ignores the complexities underlying Anne's drive toward self-disablement. Such deliberate modifications of the body transitioning one towards disability is constitutive of what has become known in disability studies as "transability," a particularly incendiary distinction in terms of its challenge to social structure within the play. Transability, I argue, holds an important bearing on the plot as it is the means by which Anne proves capable of claiming agency through securing control of her own materiality, owning it as a means of redemption against the supremacy of male-male relations that otherwise reduce her to a mediator or, worse, a vessel of homosocial desire made flesh.

Distant from a mere literary plot point to be overcome by the story's end, how feasible is it that disability can emerge not as simple embodied misfortune, but rather as identity with political and social dimension, a defiant force that challenges social convention as long as the crip, Anne, remains alive?

The reference to life and death contained in this question is hardly arbitrary. Indeed, the visual that Mitchell's closing depicts for the viewer divulges issues of medical and, thus, social recuperation that lurk within the text of Heywood's tragedy. The move to erase or at least reverse Anne's crip existence back in line with that which connotes "useful" existence appears as a less obvious flaunting of bodily normativity than, say, Helena's medical obsessions in *All's Well*. But realignment asserts itself nonetheless—not necessarily in life, but in death, Anne's dangerous crip specter laid to rest, forbidden and forsworn. As Kathryn Schwarz has recently written, the social reimagining of dead bodies and identities, especially female ones, occurs with certain social contrivances very much in mind, the strategic use of these "dead identities" too often reinforcing communal ideology on the proper use of bodies, and, in turn, of sex.<sup>6</sup> In the midst of this domestic tragedy steeped in the necessary dominance of homosocial control and shaken by the presence of disabled identity, I seek to consider the stakes of thrusting bodily signification back in line with such communal demands of the sexual body in the text, which I would argue is not far removed from medical model aims to "fix" broken and useless materiality and, hence, broken and useless sexuality. Why is it that the relocation of the final scene to a medical facility seemed so fitting a modification to Mitchell and her dramaturgical team, the potential trappings of disabled identity morphing into a signified problem, already well on its way towards repair?

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<sup>6</sup> See Kathryn Schwarz, "Death and Theory: Or, the Problem of Counterfactual Sex," in *Sex before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, eds. Will Stockton and James Bromley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 45-70.

And, what might this say about the demands of sexual use and mediation propping up the play's domestic veneer from beginning to end? Perhaps most of all, this chapter seeks to illuminate what is at stake when a woman, Anne, is "killed with kindness" so to speak, by interpreting through a crip lens not only what this "kindness" implies but, even more importantly, what is necessarily realigned, repaired, or, translated in an equivalent way, "killed" in the equation.

**I**  
**"To have and to hold":**  
**Use and Misuse in the Homosocial Economy**

"None lead the bride a dance?" (1.1) the newlywed's brother inquires, swinging the play, feet first, into a dark construction of domesticity—the onset of a wedding reception already bearing the ripening ingredients of domestic tragedy. Mitchell sped the setting forward three centuries, and keeping with the style of 1918 England the bride is heavily veiled to the point of obscurity, her staircase descent into a dimly lit foyer crafting the image of a white phantom already well within death's clutch. And what Anne descends into in this opening scene, the living to whom she will later haunt, is the company of no less than six men, her brother Francis and husband Frankford among the figures dominating the conversation of the scene or, in effect, its bartering.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, "The Shaking of the Sheets," this dance that the bride and groom will soon perform as Sir Charles so bawdily notes in double entendre, is not just a song on sexual craving and desire despite its context, but also rings true as the mortality ballad that it is, leading the dancer toward death once the

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<sup>7</sup> Descriptions of this opening scene are referenced from Lyn Gardner, "A Woman Killed with Kindness," *The Guardian Theatre Review*, 20 July 2011.

temporary contrivances of sexual play are through.<sup>8</sup> But throughout the course of the text, this becomes an ordered process, one that Frankford will, in answer to Francis's initial inquiry, lead, and, in the domestic partnership to come, hold a controlling influence over.

I begin with this emphasis on leading because, in *Woman Killed*, a play so fraught in concerns over the proper positioning of sexual bodies, leading somehow implies ownership, and ownership transitions into objectification and exploitation, all interlocked themes in the opening conversation between men. From the onset, Frankford, the scene's groom, brags to his friends about his new wife, Anne, following their wedding ceremony. "She doth become you like a well made suit" (1.59), his friend Sir Charles remarks, the first of many blazoned compliments that compare the silent and subservient bride to an item, preferably one to be worn, donned, and thrown aside at will, but, most of all, used and directed throughout the process by her husband. To this community of men, Anne exists as a pristine object to be exchanged, the sparkling trinket put on as the "chain of gold to adorn your neck" (1.65), to borrow the continued rhetoric of Sir Charles to Frankford. But this early setting also puts on full display what has allowed this reductive objectification to occur—marriage, or, to be more specific, a partnership with her new husband Frankford. In a description of the abrupt submissiveness of his sister, Sir Francis describes Anne's demeanor in detail:

A perfect wife already, meek and patient.  
How strangely the word 'husband' fits your mouth.  
Not married three hours since, sister. 'Tis good:  
You that begin betimes thus, must needs prove  
Pliant and duteous in your husband's love.  
Godamercies, brother, wrought her to it already? (1.38-42)

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<sup>8</sup> Referenced on line 1.2, 'The Shaking of the Sheets' was a well-known ballad of the early modern period, the lyrics of which position dancing as a metaphor of being physically drawn toward debility and, eventually, death. Although the figure of Death holds power over the song by leading the lyrics and drawing certain individuals into its grasp, the song positions the dancer as being willfully complicit in this process, "dancing" toward Heaven as if through willful intent.

The adoration here of the “pliant and duteous” wife should be of particular notice, as the expectation of bodily docility for sexual purpose, a theme explored in my previous chapters, is once again demanded. Anne is now duteous in her submissive status as a domestic housewife, but in occupying this role she necessarily exists as what is “pliant” as well, diction implying easy malleability and pliability, a material capable of being manipulated in any way one sees fit, submissiveness crucial for her husband’s later exploitations.<sup>9</sup> Worse, Francis’s words state that it is Anne’s relationship with Frankford, barely a few hours old at this point, that has already “wrought” her into acceptable subordination, as if merely entering into the domestic foyer of married life has beat the raw material into the twisted and transformed product—the “perfect wife”: silent, meek, subservient to an apparent duty—docility in form and body that is noticeably juxtaposed in accordance with the whims of her husband’s desires.

Such whims of desire are, I argue, the basis of the objectification and reduction deployed in this opening conversation, a preliminary step in a larger process of use and control enacted for the sake of bond formation among male characters. In her important work analyzing what she considers to be the complicated fostering of male homosocial bonds, Eve Sedgwick critiques male-male relations as often finding an outlet of discovery through the use of women. Drawing on Gayle Rubin’s own study of the commodification of women within such relational parameters, Sedgwick writes:

[P]atriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men

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<sup>9</sup> “pliant, adj.” OED Online. October 2016. Oxford University Press. The *OED* lists several similar denotations of “pliant,” some of which include being “flexible or supple, capable of being bent” (d.1), “able to be modified or modulated,” (d.2) and “easily directed, docile” (d.3). The context of the word seems to both subordinate Anne as a figure and sketch her bodily identity as controllable enough to be later modified and modulated at will.

with men...the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners.<sup>10</sup>

Sedgwick's subject, at its most basic level, is triangulation, the virtual displacement of desire onto a third figure (the woman) positioned as a kind of transitive mechanism upon which affection between men can be rationalized and, in the end, realized—if not to foster social friendship, then to mask non-normate male-male desire through the sexual exchange of the female mediator. As Francis hands his sister over to the household of “Master” Frankford, the exchange value of Anne is apparent; her reduction to a wearable suit or glittering gold chain is quite clear, after all. What's more, such objectification, outlined in detail in this, the premiere scene of the play, establishes, as Lyn Bennett has argued in her reading of the text, a kind of “homosocial economy” that foregrounds the proper function of the mediator body in order to be considered useful in the first place.<sup>11</sup> To Bennett, the social culture of *Woman Killed* considers women not as an equal partner of sexual desire, but instead a “valuable form of capital” positioning the sexual female body as useful only in its fulfillment of homosocial goals, a reading drawn, like my own, from Sedgwick's consideration of homosocial mediation.<sup>12</sup>

I would further argue that Anne, the “well made suit,” accomplishes her tailored silhouette only once she becomes, in Francis's words, “meek”; the gold chain only glitters

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<sup>10</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 26. Although Sedgwick specifically mentions heterosexuality in this passage, this is not to say that her argument is limited to the confines of sexual intimacy that this contemporary label might imply; rather, her argument on the use value of women in homosocial bonds extends, I think, to the relations in this early modern play, where more nuanced senses of sexual desire and intimacy that problematize a strict “heterosexual” label nevertheless seek to objectify women along much the same terms, the aim still being the construction/fulfillment of strong male bonds.

<sup>11</sup> While I find a consideration of homosocial economics vastly important in Heywood's play, my later argument in section two of this chapter also posits that many assumptions on the nature of this “valuable” female body are made within such readings that I believe the text problematizes. For example, how might acquiring anorexia/disability devalue this body of use and exchange, or even take it out of the so-called homosocial economics of the play altogether? Is this shift framed as a mere instance of self-degradation, or does it transition into a source of power/pride?

<sup>12</sup> Lyn Bennett, “The Homosocial Economics of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 24, no.2 (2000): 36.

when it persists in being “patient” (or, perhaps, when all else fails, *the* patient). The part of Sedgwick’s thesis that I would like to highlight moving forward, then, is the expectation, in a play whose titular character will eventually attempt to thwart any such presumption of female docility in this quasi economy, the means by which simple objectification is carried out and homosocial relations are secured.

Anne’s reduction to a product of useful exchange accompanies her emergence as a domestic wife, but the person to whom she will later be offered, completing the transaction in Frankford’s bond formation, becomes apparent only after the reception is long over. True, the wedding guest who remains relatively quiet throughout the proceedings, who seems to display little interest in either bride or the fetishization of her docile obedience, later shows up at her husband’s doorstep and experiences firsthand the receiving end of Frankford’s generosity. Although Wendoll comes to deliver the news of the rapid social downfall of Sir Charles, Frankford’s primary interest seems to be in forging new ties with the messenger, offering Wendoll free rein and use of his estate and possessions in a series of blunt lines:

I know you, sir, to be a gentleman  
In all things, your possibilities but mean.  
Please you to use my table and my purse  
They are yours. (4.61-64)

And, later:

You are full of quality and fair desert.  
Choose of my men which shall attend on you,  
And he is yours. I will allow you, sir,  
Your man, your gelding, and your table,  
All at my own charge. Be my companion. (4.69-71)

Notice how the bonds of economic union and subsequent male partnership form almost as a necessary consequence of one another. While Frankford secures Wendoll the use of his table, food, and possessions all at his own expense (or, to use his words, “[a]ll at my own

charge”), there are, in this homosocial union, signs of sexual longing built into the language of male-male economic relations. Frankford promises Wendoll the use of his “purse,” by which he provides, on the surface, monetary offering and financial support. Yet the word choice of this offering is cleverly phrased, making the impending economic impetus of Frankford’s rather generous extension to Wendoll inextricable from discreet sexual solicitation.<sup>13</sup> In other words, offering socioeconomic favor to the impressionable youth assumes the likelihood of simultaneous erotic exchange. Frankford entreats Wendoll to discharge his overflowing purse, to spend it how and when he sees fit, but this fantasy only achieves consummated reality through the body of Frankford’s wife as mediator. And so this valuable vessel of homosocial exchange steps forth: “As far as modesty may well extend / It is my duty to receive your friend” (4.80-81), Anne insists, evoking her duty at Frankford’s beckoning that everything, table, purse, and wife included, is offered at his bestowal, positioned for the realization of Frankford’s entreating plea to Wendoll, “be my companion.” The proposition is too much for the young gentleman to refuse.

However lascivious Frankford’s purse offering may appear in the previously cited lines, the immediate insertion of Anne into the sexual calculus of male-male desire introduces her role as mediator within the relationship, which, as Sedgwick’s own thesis on homosociality offers, redirects potentially problematic non-normate sexual desire into the appearance of more acceptable hetero, male-female relations.<sup>14</sup> In this case, such recuperation occurs through the objectified vessel of Anne’s body, within the context of an extramarital affair that Frankford organizes. While there is little direct evidence in the work

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<sup>13</sup> “Purse” was commonly deployed in double entendre in Renaissance/early modern literature, usually meaning “scrotum.” See “purse, n.” OED Online. October 2016. Oxford University Press. I am specifically referring to the *OED*’s definition 7a here.

<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 25.

stating Frankford's intentional desire to be cuckolded, I would argue that this sexual implication emerges from his offering Wendoll the use of his "possessions," which, as the wedding reception scene makes clear, includes much more than just Frankford's overflowing, untapped purse. Relating her husband's desires during his brief period of absence, Anne tells Wendoll:

[H]old in estimation his kind friendship,  
To make bold in his absence and command  
Even as himself were present in the house,  
For you must keep his table, use his servants,  
And be a present Frankford in his absence. (6.73-77)

The trajectory of Anne's remarks here deserves special attention. The first line emphasizes, first and foremost, the priority of Frankford's directions—that is, the preservation of Frankford and Wendoll's friendship, the bond that has begun to take shape, must be reinforced. But the lines that follow also suggest that this relationship has escalated to more than just platonic friendship, and the bond that the two men stimulate encompasses more than the subject of economic exchange from earlier scenes. It seems here as if Frankford's primary desire is for Wendoll to become him, to supplant his identity role in the domestic sphere not only for the purposes of using his possessions and relations as he sees fit, but also to spend them with the authority that Frankford's own identity as master of the house and husband to Anne implies.

This shared corporeality between close friends has been a perennial point of critique in queer early modern studies, friendly bonds between men broadening the parameters of the Renaissance body. As Laurie Shannon reminds us, amity was a powerful mechanism by which the individual body's sovereignty might be recalculated to both intimately and legally bond close friends:

Classically derive figures of friendship at the center of the humanist curriculum held out a discourse of more than self-fashioning to readers when they cast the friend as “another self” and merged a pair of friends as “one soul in two bodies.” Referencing an insistently same-sex friendship with complex relations to eroticism, these two phrasings appear across a remarkable range of cultural locations in the English Renaissance...two equal corporeal bodies bound in friendship constitute a single corporate or judicial body, a legal fiction creating an operative unity.<sup>15</sup>

To Shannon, friendship’s banding together of disparate bodies straddles the line between the platonic and the affectionately erotic and, as I will show, the resulting “operative unity” slips towards the latter as *Woman Killed* unfolds. Alan Bray takes another clarifying step in his own work on the body of the friend, positing that such a body becomes a kind of “symbolic gift...a sign of power and security in the friend.”<sup>16</sup> I position Shannon vis-à-vis Bray to underscore a recurring quality of male-male friendship: such close bonds emerge as homonormative in the Renaissance, becoming a controlling mode of influence by which erotic affection slips into the guise of everyday social relations, albeit relations bent on the further exercise of power not only between friends but also among characters outside of the tightly wound relationship.

Shannon’s and Bray’s analyses of these judicial, even erotic bonds of friendship are certainly noticeable as Frankford opens his house and body to Wendoll. But I would add that the former thereby requests, however briefly, to be dominated, to submit master status to

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<sup>15</sup> Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 158. Same sex friendship between men has been a significant site of discussion in queer Renaissance studies. For varying points in the debate exploring the complex parameters between social friendship and more intimate and erotic friendly bonding, see Bray’s earlier “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 1-19; Valerie Traub’s response to Bray’s essay in “Friendship’s Loss: Alan Bray’s Making of History,” *GLQ* 10, no.3 (2004): 339-365; Traub’s monograph on female-female friendship in *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); DiGangi’s *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, John Garrison’s *Friendship and Queer Theory in the Renaissance: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2013); and Jeffrey Masten’s *Queer Philologies* (particularly his chapter “‘Sweet Persuasion,’ the Taste of Letters, and Male Friendship”).

Wendoll within a house that remains firmly Frankford's own, an environment in which he can retain control over the arrangement and the experience. Wendoll's assertion that "I am to his body / As necessary as his digestion, / and equally do make him whole and sick" (6.41-43) affirms the young man's mutual desire for such a substitution, but takes it a step further in terms of fulfillment, introducing a bodily connection between the pair that penetrates, by implication, into deeper crevices of the sexual. Here, Wendoll experiences his friend's body in the most intimate of ways, unconfined to the simple experience of outside bodily contact and affection. Instead, he enters and exits Frankford at will through the arrangement, fulfilling the desire of being inside his master to the point of experiencing and even discharging bodily function. As Wendoll notes with relish, this escalates into being somehow "necessary" for Frankford's body at the height of erotic entanglement, the heated climax to the lewd fantasy.

This tasteful relishing becomes the portal by which male-male bonding is secured and homosocial domination is sustained. In her study of the role of food and consumption in early modern England's literary depiction of the domestic sphere, Wendy Wall outlines the role of food consumption as a depiction of erotic, even gluttonous excess, arguing that, in regard to the evocation of images relating to the kitchen and the table, "economic and erotic [relations] formed...alongside the housewife and husband" offering, in Wall's estimation, the potential for sexual relations typically deemed excessive or transgressive to be formed as part of domestic partnerships.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as Alan Bray reminds us, the symbol of the table was a frequent site of male-male bonding throughout premodern history, a site by

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<sup>17</sup> Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8.

which friendship's shared corporeality could find physical manifestation.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the case, the table's nexus connecting consumption and sexual debauchery could not be more pronounced within *Woman Killed*, however discreet such propositions themselves are. Consider again, for example, Frankford's enticing offer to Wendoll that he might have use of his own "table" within Frankford's estate, or, later, that he might exploit Frankford's "table" as master of the estate in the owner's absence.<sup>19</sup> Both of these passages implicate Frankford's larger hope for Wendoll to dominate his possessions and to use his wife—Frankford's table opening as the orifice by which the economic exchange of sexual favor could be carried out. The argument can be posed, then, that Anne's subsequent future aversion to food, her refusal to participate in the exchange at the table and all that it represents, ushers forth a foreclosing of Frankford's prime locus of exploitation.

The rather fine line between social, friendly bonding and gluttonous erotic perversion is the reason Anne's presence in the relationship is required—to throw a (wedding) veil over the experience, to shroud it under the guise of a more ordinary sexual affair that can be contained and, as the plot progresses, expelled. Anne, unlike Frankford or Wendoll, is not figured as a real recipient or full sexual partner in the duo's exchange, but is instead imagined as a throwaway vessel of enacted desire.<sup>20</sup> Once male-male erotic potential is

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<sup>18</sup> Bray, *The Friend*, 151. One of the texts Bray considers at length is William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (London: Thomas March, 1575), the plot of which is comparable to Heywood's text. Two friends share a table and figurative body the likes of which Bray explicates in his study. One friend betrays the other through an act of marital infidelity. However, the tragedy of the story is not the adultery itself; rather, it is the notion that the duo's intimate friendship spanning a shared bed and bedchamber is driven apart by one friend's inability to tell the other of the infidelity, a contamination of the intimate bonds connoted in Renaissance friendship. Here again, the wife seems, at best, to be an object building the friends' affectionate relationship, but also, in the end, the force driving it apart.

<sup>19</sup> The passages I'm eluding to here are Frankford's 4.69-71 monologue to Wendoll and Anne's lines at 6.73-77 delineating her husband's wishes.

<sup>20</sup> Consider here the lines previously cited at 6.73, where Frankford offers Wendoll use of his table, purse, house, and possessions at large. Wendoll appears to extrapolate this freedom of use to include the realization of sexual desire through Anne, assuming her inclusion on Frankford's list of inanimate, docile objects to use. In other words, the offering is not directly mentioned, but Wendoll's association of Anne as one

realized through the consummation of Wendoll and Anne's affair, Wendoll's previous assertion that he can make his friend "whole and sick" begins to connote for Frankford not erotic bodily engagement—the plugging of his gaping empty parts—but rather contagion, the worry that being wholly stuffed again in such a manner will inevitably make him rather "sick," a loss of control into the realm of sickness and debility that might threaten Frankford's ability to direct and therefore "lead" others. And so the necessary banishment of the vessel imagined as the bodily site of such male-male sexual enactment begins to unfold. Part of a lengthy monologue disowning Anne as his wife, Frankford says:

I charge thee never after this sad day  
To see me, or to meet me, or to send  
By word, or writing, gift, or otherwise  
To move me, by thyself, or by thy friends,  
Nor challenge any part in my two children. (13.175-179)

The demands made in these remarks work with a double layer of meaning. First, they delineate the overwrought expulsion of Anne's character, who, described as possessing "infectious thoughts" (13.128) and a "spotted body" (13.125) following her romp with Wendoll, now bears the loads of both men's sexual engagement, framed as if constituting some contamination or poison that Frankford would rather unload from his household. This compulsory separation spreads to more than physical presence, though. Contact of any kind, whether in writing or through the pesky oral persistence of friends, edges too close to the memory of past encounters for comfort, as if the very idea of what Anne represents, the hosted site of male-male affection made sexual flesh that her body acted mediator to, must be distanced, erased, forgotten altogether.

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of the objects that Frankford insists he borrow positions her as a means toward male-male bonding, which functions as the main thrust of the hospitality offered in 6.73's monologue given the subject of the beginning line.

But a second layer to Frankford's rhetoric posits that, in the process of such banishment, in the complete stripping of Anne's claim to the titles of wife and mother along with any sense of identity that these terms imply, she must still obey Frankford's force of control, continue to accept his master status over her mobility, unable to "move" or "challenge" her former husband as a concurrent consequence of her loss of self-identity. The concluding order states, then, that although Anne's entrance into domesticity was accompanied by her husband's expectation of docility, of surrender to dictation, Frankford's domineering desire to lead her through the wedding dance of sex and death does not end, by consequence, till death do them part.

As the larger crux of my argument posits, however, a body's transition from useful sexual object to the all too convenient grip of throwaway death is not so direct a path as ballads may assume, or so easily traversed as lyrics might imply.<sup>21</sup> Titles can be stripped, but the formation of new, unexpected acquisitions of bodily self-identity and agency cannot be so easily prevented or, outside the scramble towards radical erasure, forgotten. I would like to consider, then, what happens when Anne no longer remains Frankford's to have or to hold, excusing her body from misogynistic transaction and smashing to bits her docile, exchangeable object—with intention, with subversive affect, but, most of all, with disabled power that undermines the communal economy of bodies.

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<sup>21</sup> The ballad and lyrics I am referring to here is the "Shaking of the Sheets" song referenced at the text's beginning, which discusses the easy road from sex to death. See note 8 for the context of this ballad in the early modern period.

## II “In sickness and in health”: Disabled Bodies, Transabled Conditions

In noticeable juxtaposition to the jolly male-male showmanship of the opening scene’s wedding reception, Mitchell’s 2011 production chose to invent a morning-after sequence devoid entirely of words and, like so much else in the adaptation, contingent on visual cues. Anne sits on the staircase to the open foyer, seemingly lost to despair. Her wedding night has not been enjoyable. The elaborate lace and full figure of her wedding dress has been stripped off, and she is left in the loose slip that once layered the inside of the gown. Gone too is the veil, the flowers, the overblown sleeves of white taffeta, from before.<sup>22</sup> Anne’s physical volume is noticeably dissipating, although this is due to much more than a mere stripping away of clothing. Marriage is consuming her like a piece of meat, and soon all that remains will be the picked-clean bones to throw away, the skeleton led down the primrose path to death’s door. By this point in the play, Frankford attempts to do just that, discard her, distancing himself from what he figures to be the site of abject infection, already overexposed to filth in circumstances that seem owing either to his own ignorance or, more likely, his precise arrangement of events. Indeed, if Frankford’s shadowy compulsion to be filled up shows anything, it is in its exposition of characters’ attempts at plugging certain physical and emotional voids. I’d now like to consider how a related hunger becomes central to Anne’s desire for a particular kind of body and capacity, a longing for a transitory form of embodied identity that has only recently been awarded a name in critical debate. In addition, I want to conjecture how and why one of the cruelest and (seemingly) most undesirable of disabilities—anorexia—emerges as desirable in the text and, as

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<sup>22</sup> Scenery descriptions taken from Susannah Clapp’s “A Woman Killed with Kindness; Loyalty; Ghost—Review.”

counterintuitive as it may sound, affords Anne the pleasure of fullness again—an immensity of character and totality of personal identity once robbed but soon to be ten times found.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will consider Anne’s turn to anorexia and self-debilitation as an intentional action that attempts to match a sense of inner subjectivity to the outer body, forging similarities to what has been referred to in disability studies and the social sciences as “transability.” Alexandre Baril details this term as follows:

“Transability” describes an able-bodied person’s need to modify his or her body to acquire a physical impairment or disability through voluntary body modification...in many scientific studies, this need is limited to physical impairment: amputation, paralysis, blindness, incontinence, and so on.<sup>23</sup>

I find Baril’s explanation fascinating because it points out that, like transsexual identity, transability requires a realignment of the individual’s outward body to fall more in sync with a core self-identification—in this case, a disabled one—altering physical bodily traits to reinforce this desired sense of the self.<sup>24</sup> For the sake of my analysis, I would like to take seriously Baril’s in text provocation to explore who might count as transabled and under what context such a desire for a disabled bodily state might appear within the play. My aim is to suggest that Anne’s move toward transabled existence is at least partly motivated by the attempted claiming of a sense of identity and personal selfhood that is deferred and denied during her previous objectification in Frankford and Wendoll’s homosocial triangulation;

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<sup>23</sup> Alexandre Baril, “Needing to Acquire a Physical Impairment/Disability: (Re)Thinking the Connections between Trans and Disability Studies through Transability,” *Hypatia* 30, no.1 (2015): 30-31.

<sup>24</sup> Although I would argue that transexuality and transability share similarities in terms of an outward physical transition reinforcing the core identity of the self, Baril’s article actually centers on how many transabled and transsexual individuals are averse to such comparisons; a common argument posed by transsexuals, for example, posits that surgical modification of one’s body in line with a different sex has everything to do with gender specific concerns and little to do with issues surrounding ability. In other words, a distancing from matters of ability/disability is emphasized and assumed. However, Baril wishes to show that matters of ability/disability and sex/sexuality exist on the same continuum. To Baril, transitioning to a different sex has inherent impacts on ability, just as transitioning into a disabled body involves automatic reconsiderations concerning sex. These connections are apparent even in Heywood’s plot, and I will argue later that Anne’s transabled body, while holding significant implications on her health and ability, also has an important bearing on her ability to “perform” within the homosocial economy.

indeed, this was my purpose in beginning this analysis with Sedgwick's critique on the social power of homosocial relations. Although the sense of bodily modification under consideration here does not concern surgical operation or advanced processes involving technological alterations to the physical body, Baril's basic definition is nevertheless present in *Woman Killed*, the implied sense of agency it suggests soon to become a site of subversive power.

But to anachronistically argue that Anne's self-disablement is indicative of transability requires several foregrounding qualifications. What, for instance, makes Anne's actions indicative of disability rather than, say, mere protest against the actions of her husband and the society of which she lives? This is a valid point to make; after all, how many times throughout history have political protests emerged in the form of hunger strikes or food refusal? Figuring Anne's self starvation as a form of willful protest in a male-dominated world has proven a perennial point of interest in scholarly readings of the play.<sup>25</sup> However, I want to interpret Anne's embodiment out of the shadow of her husband by interpreting it as larger than a temporary act of retribution. To read the character's actions in this way would, I think, direct attention away from the permanence behind Anne's evolving sense of selfhood as a woman trapped within the demands of the play's homosocial economy. If we consider Anne's embodiment as "anorexia," as many scholarly analyses of the play have, then such readings should analyze anorexia for what it is—a disability. Disability is not necessarily something temporary or prone to being stopped or started at any given point. And, as the larger thrust of this project affirms, disability, by its very nature, undercuts and challenges traditional notions of bodily use value by virtue of its mere

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<sup>25</sup> I will discuss several such readings soon, but, for one such example see Nancy A. Gutierrez's analysis of the play in: *"Shall She Famish Then?": Female Food Refusal in Early Modern England*. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003).

existence. This does not mean that disability is inherently a “protest,” which I imagine as a reactionary response aimed at sparking a change in something else, but it does bear sociopolitical implications that challenge traditional, homosocial expectations for useful sexual bodies that can be acted upon.

A more labyrinthine minefield to navigate, however, is the possibility that Anne’s self-starvation coincides with Renaissance attitudes of how an unchaste, adulterous, and lascivious woman should atone for her sins—namely, corporeally inscribing self-starvation as penance for a gluttonous sexual appetite. Indeed, I would be remiss not to note that much criticism touching on self-starvation in *Woman Killed* considers Anne’s actions in line with religious devotion, implying, depending upon the critic’s observations, everything from personal agency and empowerment to an interest in replacing Frankford’s punishment with the presumably more excruciating practice of prayer and fasting. Nancy Gutierrez’s reading of the plot, for example, offers the argument that Anne’s actions represent a potent form of political resistance against traditional “church politics” and the male-dominated world of domesticity and marriage, although her embodiment ultimately aligns with English Puritanism’s promotion of fasting as a redemptive mode of self-empowerment in the end.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Christopher Frey and Leanore Lieblein’s analysis of Heywood’s text argues that Anne’s anorexia, while bearing important medical-level implications on bodily health, situate Anne’s actions within a kind of grand “self sacrifice” marking deep religious piety, the authors noting that extreme abstinence from food in Renaissance society was, lest we forget, “a preferred means of demonstrating one’s spirituality.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See specifically Gutierrez’s chapter “Fasting and Prayer in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*” in “*Shall She Famish Then?*” 35.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Frey and Leanore Lieblein, “‘My Breasts Sear’d’: The Self-Starved Female Body and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*,” *Early Theatre* 7, no.1 (2004): 45.

It is not my intention here to disassociate my argument from Gutierrez, Frey, and Lieblein's work on the text; on the contrary, these scholars' defense of Anne as an effective agent controlling the direction of her body and reputation helps inform my own extension of similar issues in conjunction with sex and disablement. However, I wonder if the continued emphasis on Anne's bedridden body as indicative of self-sacrifice or religious piety does not pander to the very fantasy that the play's homosocial hegemony would like to paste over a much more complicated reality, one muting Anne's control over her own body even as she directs its ability. For the remainder of this chapter, then, I offer a reading where Anne's new corporeality might coincide with the rules of religious piety or marital atonement, true, but her transablement pilots this transition, driving an identification ultimately threatening to undermine the hegemony of homosocial relations in the play.

Returning again to Heywood's text, the rhetoric Anne deploys leading up to her disabling commitment to self-starvation deserves attention, as it implicates a purposeful bodily modification soon to provoke drastic sociopolitical consequences. In one of her few lengthy monologues in the entire play, Anne appears to internalize the shame that Frankford casts upon her following the adulterous affair with Wendoll, lamenting her new status as that which is cast off and shameful:

I am not worthy that I should prevail  
In the least suit, no, not to speak to you,  
Nor look on you, nor to be in your presence  
Yet, as an abject, this one suit I crave  
This granted, I am ready for my grave. (13.102-106)

Complementing Frankford's previous affirmation that the two should have no further contact lest her figurative contamination spread, Anne's specific evocation of the term "abject" is, I would argue, a crucial mark of her self worth at this point in the plot. The basic denotation of

this term encompasses that which is wretched, self-abasing, and of low repute, and, to be sure, the public shame that Anne surrenders to in these remarks promote the validity of such a meaning.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps more relevant here, though, is Julia Kristeva's well known interpretation of the term, positioning the abject as its own living entity, the sense of "other" within one's self that is simultaneously alien to the self, opposed to that which can be, in Kristeva's words, "identified and incorporated" into one's identity.<sup>29</sup> Although Anne's self-proclamation as abject encompasses being a shamed being, a figure that Frankford would like to delineate as separate from his body and bearing no part of the self, the separation inherent in this locution is perhaps tempting to Anne by this scene, as it allows for a dis-identification from the domestic table hitherto enacting homosocial exploitation. Imagining herself as the figurative castaway, she generates the potential to become, in effect, cast away from the control of Frankford and the homosocial economy that governs the play's domestic environment. Frankford's banishment frames Anne's body as an "infectious" entity, a corruption akin to Kristeva's "abject" that deteriorates an otherwise sound, non-corrupted body.

But similar to Bertram's embrace of his supposed "sickness" and socially figured "sick desires" from my first chapter, Anne does not shy away from imagining herself as something other than an able-bodied being, as long as this paves the way for her desired

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<sup>28</sup> "abject, n." OED Online. October 2016. Oxford University Press. The *OED* cites "abject" with comparison to these words—encompassing a person or situation "of low repute; despicable, wretched, self-abasing, obsequious" (d.2).

<sup>29</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 10. Although it is safe to assume that the playwright did not have Kristeva's specific notion of the abject in mind when drafting Anne's lines, I think this argument is beside the point when both versions of the word fit and further inform the performed scenario, and the standard *OED* denotation of the word somewhat inspires Kristeva's usage. To be wretched and despicable comes, at least in my understanding, with the connotation that one will be figured as distasteful, even dangerous, to the self. This is the logic that Anne relies on in my reading—that is, to confirm by implication Frankford's fears that, yes, she does pose a corruption and that he should act accordingly in carrying through with her dismissal.

separation to occur. Assimilation and continued servitude to her husband's sexual desires are rejected for a chance at liberation, and, in the process, the power differential between husband and wife is altered. Notice, for example, the contrast in Anne's remark "this one suit I crave" to Frankford's previously desired "well made suit" (docile wife) mentioned in the text's opening scene. Although Anne's declaration may be referring to a number of separate clauses in the context of the passage cited, the freedom and severance that the "suit" of the abject implies is the separation she finds comfort in at this point in the work, full divorcement from the garish ensemble contoured for Frankford's abrasive grinding. The person once worn begins to perform the wearing, soon to reclaim the helm of her own body in quite dramatic ways.

However, just as Mitchell's production depicts early on, Anne's characteristic shift is not confined to the superficial trappings of a suit of clothes, but rather is indicative of a bodily transposition already in its course of evolution, an alteration this time tailored by Anne herself. Immediately preceding Anne's mention of the abject suit in her monologue to Frankford, the spectator is made well aware of what this desired appearance would ideally encompass. Anne says:

I would I had no tongue, no ears, no eyes  
No apprehension, no capacity  
When do you spurn me like a dog? When tread me  
Under your feet? When drag me by the hair? (13.91-94)

Baril's denotation of transability is, I believe, useful in uncovering the nuances of this passage, implicating desire and disability as inextricably linked. For Anne to have no tongue would be to assume muteness, to have no ears would be to assume deafness, to have no eyes would be to experience blindness. Notice here some degree of semblance to the decision by transabled people to purposely amputate certain limbs in order to accomplish the specific

disabled state he or she so strongly believes matches a desired sense of self. How powerful a statement, then, that Anne wishes for multiple such modifications at once, as if to recalibrate a sense of identity that has been ripped away in the process of Frankford's disowning actions and Anne's ultimate estrangement from her family, to put the body itself back into a state of equilibrium in which outer materiality matches inner feeling.

A simple loss of limbs does not, I realize, represent any complex representation of disabled existence and embodiment, and I must clarify here that Anne's framing of disability as mere loss, as the obliteration of, in her words, "apprehension" and "capacity" is a bit problematic at first reading. Yes this specific emphasis on capacity is key to understanding Anne's reinstatement of personal power in a culture conducted by homosocial valuing of bodies according to sexual ability and use-value. Perhaps the most striking part of Anne's previously cited dialogue is in the way she collocates the desire for disablement with the assumption that transabbling her body in such a way will result in certain lacks in ability that she finds desirable. Although, again, these lines do not overtly emphasize what the specific intent of Anne's loss of capacity entails, one can conjecture that, given this fraught point in the play in which Frankford's sexually manipulative schemes have swung down hard on Anne in degrading ways, the desired incapacity here is characteristic of sexual disability—that is, the desire to forge for herself a body that is sexually unavailable for Frankford's use or as a bargaining chip in the play's sexual economy.

Again, my position here requires taking a step back in the process of evaluation. As McRuer and Mollow have attempted to dislodge in their own work, communal imagination rarely considers disability as congruous with sex or, for that matter, characteristic of subjects capable of sexual desirability or "proper" sexual productivity—a topic hitherto extended in

my previous chapters.<sup>30</sup> Within the context of *Woman Killed*, Anne relies on similar assumptions that position the disabled body as unable to perform the act of sexual mediation. However, this need not mean that disability signifies impotence or powerlessness in the text; instead, it offers Anne an ensured escape from Frankford's established manipulation of her body, a purposeful realignment soon to exhume the potential for bodily experience and comprehensible selfhood.

Before I press this point a bit more, though, I think it necessary to consider Anne's specific disablement as indicative, once again, of disability's connection to sex and sexual power within Heywood's text. After all, although Anne alludes to blindness, muteness, and deafness in her jarring monologue to Frankford, it is in fact self-starvation, later anorexia, that Anne transables herself into. What might help explain this? The study of anorexia as an emergence from social and sexual concerns and expectations extends from early modern culture to more contemporary theories of the body. Just as Wall and Bray connect the table and consumption as invested in the sustainment of friendly desire and erotic bonding, Susan Bordo's own examined connections between female hunger and female sexuality bears important mention here as well. In her study of anorexia and bulimia as extreme products of communal imaginations marking certain female body types as indubitably sexual and sexually desirable, Bordo suggests that a woman's sexual desire has little been detached from the act of eating and consuming in western culture. Critiquing male constructions of what she cites as the "devouring woman," Bordo writes:

Eating is not really a metaphor for the sexual act; rather, the sexual act, when initiated and desired by a woman, is imagined as itself an act of eating, of incorporation and destruction of the object of desire. Thus women's sexual

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<sup>30</sup> See again McRuer and Mollow's *Sex and Disability*, which interrogates the socially convenient argument their disability and sexuality are mutually exclusive identifications.

appetites must be curtailed and controlled, because they threaten to deplete and consume the body and soul of the male.<sup>31</sup>

Bordo's line of thinking explores the male curtailing of women's power and desire, framed in cultural ideology as cravings that threaten to jeopardize existing male structures of control. Here, the hunger of a woman—her appetite, both in terms of the hunger for sex and for food—is framed as a destructive conflation, ever poised against the well-being of men and therefore worthy of being controlled and directed. For Bordo, this often results in women being encouraged to keep slim figures and avoid excessive consumption, the latter of which might signify an allowed excess of desire and control, risky in its potential consumption of a man. When cultural logic suggests, then, that women submit to male directing of proper sexual desires, inextricable from the perception of the proper body image and shape, the socially fraught expectations connecting the female body, that body's function, and its sexual desires and appetites become intertwined in one simple consideration—food.

Despite the difference in temporal context between Bordo's writing and Heywood's text, the latter is, as I've hitherto detailed, itself consumed by attempts to carry out similar versions of male power. When Frankford feels like philandering, the careful maneuvering and bestowal of the table is always of simultaneous concern; his obsession with leading the direction of erotic affection and bodily bestowal is essential for sexual acts to be assigned a use, and for his wife's body to work towards an economically and socially useful direction of sexual desire—male-male bonding. Although appearing shocked at the discovery of Anne and Wendoll's sexual affair in Scene 13, the consummation of this erotic liaison is in fact discharged in conjunction to Frankford's previously granted table to Wendoll. At the

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<sup>31</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 117.

beginning of the preceding scene, for example, Jenkin mentions to the estate staff how “my mistress and Master Wendoll sup in her chamber tonight...you are preferred from being the cook to being the chambermaid” (12.1-2). The trajectory of Frankford’s plotting reaches a climax here, as his directions regarding when and where bodies consume food translates to a virtual leading of those bodies to the bedroom, as well as an enablement of the sexual acts performed there. Consumption becomes consummation; ingestion with and of Wendoll becomes, for Frankford, orgasmic.

My point here is that, given Frankford’s axis of focalized control in and through the carefully administered mechanism of the table, Anne’s outright rejection of this object and the connotations of sexual ingestion that it bears—her statement that “from this sad hour / I never will nor eat, nor drink, nor taste / Of any cates that may preserve my life” (16.100-102)—thus marks a politically charged statement within the play, one resisting preconceived expectations of a properly controlled and controllable female body through male erections of acceptable consumption and material composition. Keeping with the much discussed “four humors” philosophy of bodily wellness and ability, the idea that the body was made up of various “humors” (sanguine, phlegm, choler, melancholy), it was expected that proper food consumption—that is, a balanced diet of foods corresponding to the bodily humors—was essential for healthy longevity.<sup>32</sup> Many Renaissance scholars writing on the connections between food, health, and the body have, meanwhile, considered self-starvation, anorexia,

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<sup>32</sup> David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine, and Society; 1450-1800* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 15. Although a wide array of Renaissance texts centering on the body and medical discourse cover humorism in some capacity, Gentilcore’s quite recent study offers a particularly detailed rundown of the philosophy, as well as its connections to specific rules of consumption for health promotion. As Gentilcore notes, certain foods were known to possess particular humoral qualities just like human bodies; for example, a cucumber might be described as “phlegmatic” in begin cold and moist, and would therefore elevate the phlegm in a human body. The idea was to balance the four bodily fluids out as best as possible through diet for optimal health, and hence notions of proper (controllable) consumption dominated the forefront of humoral philosophy. See also Ken Albala’s *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

and the self-inflicted bodily pains of purposeful undernourishment to be indicative of spiritual obedience to God, framed, in David Gentilcore's recent noting, as a kind of "holy anorexia."<sup>33</sup>

While I suspect that the "holy" aspect bound within such a phrasing is helped to its pious heights by an assumed sexual abstinence or asexuality so often tied to disability, I would also argue that Anne's intentions, religious or not, nevertheless boast secular implications that tumble worlds apart from any discernable tree of obedience. When one considers Anne's transition towards anorexia in lieu of established table of healthy balance, her purposeful disablement and, even more significantly, transablement, begins to reveal itself as crip resistance working against male power structures conceptualizing the optimal healthy body. Within Anne's refusal of food and the table lies an outright rejection of Frankford's window of control over her body as a sexual pawn, even if that nourishment provides for, in her words, the "preserving of life." But, by the same measure, this outright rejection of food also disregards basic humoral philosophy to full effect, ignoring such medical model theories of self-sustainment and ability that, in Gentilcore's approximation, were studies that pushed considerations of the male body's longevity to the privileged forefront, a construction by men for men and never with the female body more than marginally in mind.<sup>34</sup>

And in relinquishing what must have been an unbearable weight from her body—weight signifying her husband's friendly erotic bonding with Wendoll through the sexually gluttonous table, a locus by which his overbearing exploitation of her body is achieved—

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 102. Gentilcore notes that this process of self-starvation to the point of death by monks and nuns in monastic orders was usually a culmination of years of self-enforced abstinence. Again, a connection between anorexia and sex is notable. Gentilcore's phrasing of this term is borrowed from Rudolph Bell's *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> Gentilcore, *Food and Health*, 17.

something unexpected fills the vacuum created in Anne's regurgitation of such burdens. In what appears as Anne's first disabled entrance onstage, an entrance signifying mobility in the bodily signification of selfhood she alone has directed, we are offered the rather stimulating stage direction "*Enter ANNE in her bed.*" That this detail is striking in its flat unconcern for easy rationalization, altogether disinterested in pandering to some trite depiction of bodily materiality easily transferrable from page to stage, requires little extra emphasis. Anne, in a complicated gambit of simultaneous resistance and redefinition of the parameters of the material body, trades dead weight for an alternative lightness of being that easily accommodates a specific object of mobility, the bed, as an indisputable component of the body. The briefness of Heywood's line is tantalizing in its bluntness, its lack of detail forcing the reader to re-conceptualize what the body might encompass, how it might move, and, above all else, how the disabled person depicted might rationalize this mobility as indivisible from the self. Certainly, as the work of much disability activism reminds us, such proud figurings of the body resist medical narratives of progress in relation to disability, narratives attempting to frame one's wheelchair or crutches as little more than undesirable, ugly accessories of burden attempting to recuperate able-bodied mobility.<sup>35</sup> Anne enters the scene as adeptly as ever, yet never more audaciously wrapped in crip dressings, cutting short the conversation of Malby, Sir Francis, Sir Charles, and, last of all, Frankford himself—many of whom have hitherto kept the dominance of homosocial relations in check—in a body that, bed and all, has become impossible to disregard or discount in its now collective immensity. Anne has not wasted away to that nondescript pile of picked clean bones that might have obliged Frankford's leading. The once throwaway vessel of enacted male-male

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<sup>35</sup> For one such critique in disability studies examining this argument, see: Mairs' *Waist High in the World*, which launches a critique against the misconception that a wheelchair acts as a mere accessory of burden hindering a disabled person's body.

desire has instead swelled to a direction of her own liking—one rejecting the homonormative table and the erotic exploitation it represents.

Still, Heywood’s stage direction proves most intriguing in its inducement of shock and disbelief at what the body might find desirable or, in some respects, kindred to the sense of self, the culmination of a simultaneous bodily shrinking and swelling that eludes easy comprehension. In their writings on the experimental parameters of the body and its bearings on social stratification, Deleuze and Guattari have offered their own theory on a virtual “body without organs” (BwO), an image that attempts to uproot conceptions of the body’s material permanence within a social system, as well as that body’s ability to exploit or even reconfigure the rules of social strata as a result:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight... We are in a social formation; first see how it is stratified for us and in us and at the place where we are; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held... It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities.<sup>36</sup>

Considering in their scholarship the possibility that various objects can be incorporated into the often times lax parameters of the identifiable self, Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis celebrates explorative flirtations with various states of transitory becoming, if only for the way such recalibrations of the self expose the body as itself a prepackaged assemblage of social demands placed on the individual. When Anne intentionally trades ability for transabled disability, maneuvering bedridden in her final moments to the astonishment of onlookers both onstage and off, the scene’s placement within communal perceptions of

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<sup>36</sup> Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 182.

comprehensible sexual ability, duty, and exploitation become a centerpiece of attention in the form of Anne's body. As the more voluptuous able-bodied wife to Frankford, Anne proves a viable candidate for homosocial mediation; but, as the disabled woman, this candidacy evaporates, her slim figure unmovable from the confines of a bed and inspiring little more than consecrated pity. "Alas good mistress, sickness hath not left you / Blood in your face enough to make you blush" (17.57-58), Sir Charles notes upon viewing Anne's body. "[S]ickness like a friend my fault would hide" (17.59), Anne ostentatiously replies in one of her final lines, as if harnessing the stale communal perception that visible sickness and disability does not a sexual agent make, itself a clever manipulation of the kind that Deleuze and Guattari might consider to be, in their own words, an "advantageous place" in social expectation that chafes the skin at one turn and unravels mobile freedom the next.

While my reading here might suggest that disability only becomes liberating once Anne abides by the rules of an erroneous communal ideology—that disablement heralds asexuality or is below sexual capacity and use—I find alluring the way in which Anne utilizes in her desiring of disability something similar to the scholars' thoughts on certain "conjunctions" and "connections" of desires and flows that compose the body. Physical sickness is named as the "friend" that provides the means of escape, of flight, of liberating deliverance that cruises the established waterways of sexual strata, judging that Anne, despite conjoined to a major site of sexual activity and erotic pleasure—the bed—is an incomprehensible participant in any such activity given her impairment, altogether failing to fulfill homosocial bonding's lacuna demanding a mediator as able-bodied as she is sexually docile. In these fleeting moments, disability marks the body as that which holds formidable to homosocial use-value, ripping apart convenient reduction of the figure to prized economic

item and sewing with the cutting eye of a needle self-identification from the rags of communal misconception—misjudgment forever deferring association between disablement and useful sexual function.

The tide seems to have momentarily risen to meet Anne's experimental cruising of power, as she maneuvers onstage in the stage direction's dramatic reveal. But I have included mention of the explorative body without organs because this concept implies that the autonomy and power derived from a stratum, while no doubt possible and passable, comes with very stringent fine print. The insubordinate actions of one individual, however successful, does not, as Deleuze and Guattari might argue, imply full divorcement from the stratum of communal control and influence; rather, exploiting the assumptions of the strata might engage one closer into its folds, a caveat Anne overlooks when signing her name and body over to the alluring means of separation and divorce. The wedding vows she once recited enunciate binding eternity, after all—in sickness and in health—and if the spoiled finality inherent in Heywood's blunt title suggests anything, it is the reminder that Anne is in the midst of a game in which final subsumption is not only likely, but altogether inevitable. For what remains of this chapter, then, I must turn my attention back to this concept of eternity, construed in the play's homosocial economy as eternal control, the husband leading the dance to its dizzying conclusion while maintaining the illusion that control was never lost in the first place. If disability does represent a liberating line of flight toward self identity, then *Woman Killed* is a story of that identity's forced erasure, achieved only in tales ill told but well assembled, a phantasmatic erasing of the disremembered. The compulsory need for certain bodies to fulfill sexual function might be challenged by disability, but the final annulment that such identity was ever desirable—indeed, ever possible—reaches

narrative legitimacy not during life but rather after death, an erosive fiction soon to acquire as much cutting power of remedy and realignment as medical physic itself.

### **III** **“Till death do us part”: Dead Identities, Kind Eternities**

Whatever failures can be leveled against Mitchell's production, the visual complexities of her adaptation appropriately broaden Anne's initial ghostlike wedding descent to its sickening depths, that initial prologue to what would become her perdition. Onstage, winding staircases and vacant antechambers seem to lead nowhere. Shut up windows seem appropriate to a body expected to feel indifferent to sunlight's rays, trapped in despondency and en route to death and rot, docile and deferential, temporarily preserved for use but languishing toward eventual decay. Any light that might have once penetrated Anne and Frankford's former courtship is forever confined to an outside world, dimmed to asphyxiation in architectural interior. Mitchell traps the audience, like Anne herself, in marriage and its domestic present, a morgue hosting Anne's slow embalment. And, as the final scene unfolds, the disciplinary matrix of Frankford's estate performs a scene change, as if transfiguring its own anatomy to shroud and suffocate Anne's recalcitrance before its first breath. The medical hospital materializes, and Anne's bodily transition is crushed under harsh fluorescent; her mobility is marked as assumed suffering; the bed-bound woman becomes the patient whose hope of cure has long evaporated. Mitchell's interpretation prods the cultural compulsion in Heywood's text that, in its strict economy of sexual enactment and use, the site of Anne's incomprehensible body must also necessarily double as her medicalized deathbed. And so Anne's presentiment as expendable object in the play's

homosocial economy, until now coerced toward rotting away into eventual disposal, is instead ushered toward a more immediate termination, death itself becoming a rehabilitative tool condoning counterfactuality as much as final extinguishment.

This sense of immediacy overwriting Anne's time of death in terms of elevated medical emergency offers, I would argue, a perforation into the compulsory erasure of bodies failing to register under homosociality's strict appraisals of value. An explication of this point, however, is difficult to unwind from Anne's duplicitous aligning of disability as something separate and below sexual exploitation, a ploy which, following her dramatic bodily reveal, finds resonance with the men present in the scene. Francis, weeping over his now disabled sister, greets her figure in a state of deep dejection:

I came to chide you, but my words of hate  
Are turned to pity and compassionate grief.  
I came to rate you, but my bawls, you see,  
Melt into tears, and I must weep by thee. (17.62-65)

Judgment and scornful reproach melt away into pity and regret, a profuse level of "compassionate grief" at the site of Anne's disabled body that registers an almost martyr-like degree of self-inflicted suffering, penance inspiring necessary forgiveness in the grieving brother's words. To be sure, this focus on pity is, as I've hitherto argued, a desired outcome Anne hopes for in transablement, which might suggest a lack of sexual agency and therefore fault in Frankford's arranged affair. And Francis's grief here is, admittedly, well founded; these lines represent his final textual farewell to Anne, after all. But his words also bear the implication that the sick body lying before him is, by any notable measurement, already dead, already a lifeless entity ripe for special kind of exploitation that any acknowledgment of the living, autonomous Anne would jeopardize. Anne's transablement must, in a sense, be useful, must coalesce respectable intent in its determined loss of ability. If Anne

intentionally forfeits her sexual capacity through self-starvation and disablement, then her actions must have been planned with some comprehensible intent in mind, eclipsing the eyesore of the moving, bed bound figure that refuses to either privilege homosocial use value or pander to its expectations of what a sexually desirable (i.e., economically sexual) body looks like.

While anorexia as indicative of religious devotion has been a well trodden path for numerous critics, I would again underscore that the continued emphasis on Anne's bedridden body as indicative of self-sacrifice, religious piety, or, put more simply, the before mentioned "holy anorexia" masks a rather complicated reality better forgotten by those attending the closing scene. While it is true that the text offers evidence of Anne's wish to transcend to heaven after death,<sup>37</sup> I am suspicious of Francis's quick attempt—conjured in my own understanding of his farewell to Anne—to kneel and weep before his sister's bedridden body as though her bed signifies the hallowed resting place of a dead saint. I wonder what such drastic constructions of assumed piety and assembled bodily consecration hope to accomplish, as well as what profit is to be earmarked from Francis's sudden outpouring of respectful devotion and emotion to this ideal, preferably dead figure, particularly in a social arena continually weighing the scales of economic value and use. What, too, can be made of the fact that the disabled Anne, contingent on her bed for movement and mobility, is so conveniently subordinated, replaced, and even killed outright as this image of the dead martyr is pushed to the fore?

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<sup>37</sup> See here, among other examples, Anne's remark "I am fit for heaven" (17.61) following her comment associating sickness to a "friend," a passage previously analyzed on page 28.

The ugly realities underpinning such provocations unravel as Frankford enters the scene, adopting the role of doting husband as a means of administering the final seconds of his wife's life. Speaking of Anne's bedridden, disabled figure, Frankford remarks:

I see you are not, and I weep to see it.  
My wife, the mother to my pretty babes  
Both those lost names I do restore thee back,  
And with this kiss I wed thee once again. (17.113-116)

Imagine, if you will, the context of this scene in Mitchell's production. Anne no doubt enters onstage less noticeably attached to a bedframe than to a heart monitor and feeding tube, an early twentieth century intensive care unit in which prolonged suffering becomes the focus of attention. Anne's transablement is converted to excruciating misery that skirts the edge of merciful quietus; the former core to Frankford's erotic liaison refuses to simply rot away upon consumption. Yet Frankford's investment in Anne's final moments can usefully be understood through this lens; he attends to offer a grand act of forgiveness and pity—repeating the sealing of the couple's marriage union, the final kiss—but consequently delivers a forced foreclosing of Anne's recalcitrance, pulling the plug on a body whose continued existence has reached intolerability. Consider here Frankford's cunning attempt to cloak a reversal of Anne's desired abjection in his otherwise altruistic reinstatement of Anne as "wife" and "mother," equating the re-adoption of such roles with being "restore[d]." Given Anne's alignment with disability as a means of distancing herself from sexual usefulness—either as sexually exploitable wife or the sexually productive mother—Frankford's evocation of restoration is, to a degree, expected. His lines imply that a transportation of Anne back to the arena of controlled direction and submission in domestic marriage is contingent, even synonymous, with refurbishment, with repairing his wife into

the able-bodiedness that brackets her into the realm of proper sexual control and comprehensibility.

But unlike that ludicrous moment in Guthrie's *All's Well That Ends Well*, Anne does not rise from her bed cured and able-bodied as soon as social expectation wills it, no matter Frankford's summons for bodily restoration.<sup>38</sup> Rather, the homosocial hegemony at work in the playtext performs a more complex maneuver exploiting counterfactual reverence as the tool assembling Anne's reconstruction, ever contingent on death for effectual enactment. In juxtaposing Francis and Frankford's final respective lines to the disabled Anne, I mean to focalize the strategic batting order these men place themselves in—that is, beginning with Francis and ending with Frankford—like choreographed steps to the deadly “Shaking of the Sheets” mentioned earlier. Francis's lines frame Anne's body in terms of religious consecration, twisting the subversive, very much alive disabled body into something dead, tolerably asexual so long as this signifies a dutiful, obedient woman whose body is inscribed in remorseful self-punishment rather than remorseless recalcitrance. The stage is set for Frankford to deliver the killing blow to his newly cemented “wife,” the figure whose proper recycling is achievable now that an embalmed afterimage of steadfast docility and repentance is envisioned. In a rather forthright linking of marriage to death, Frankford's renewal of marriage bonds in the line “I wed thee once again” prescripts Anne's demise mere seconds after Frankford's sealing kiss is fastened to her lips, operating like a quick acting poison suffocating the body and pulling the sheet over its form once and for all. If

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<sup>38</sup> I would note here that the disparate genres between these texts are important. *All's Well That Ends Well* is a romantic comedy reliant on fantastic displays often defying logic. Helena's curing of the King and the notorious bed trick are two such examples, and see here again the critical response to the former scene of which I began Chapter One; Helena's actions are framed as close to, if not entirely, magical. *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, however, is a domestic tragedy far more grounded in realism than magically romantic impossibilities, so, in some sense, Anne's failure to be similarly rehabilitated is expected.

Anne's first marriage ceremony reduced her to the owned object to have and to hold, evident from the start of the text's opening bartering, Frankford's death-fueled reenactment of the ceremony assures the forced reacquisition of that object, enacting the last rites of a body deemed disposable.

My point in centralizing such erasure of the sexually unacceptable and, by the standards of homosocial bargaining, economically worthless disabled body is to note its forced realignment into a comprehensible sexual exploitation that proved impossible in living materiality. Schwarz offers a useful analysis of similar dwellings on death through the mechanism of what she calls "dead identities"—dead bodies, usually female ones, that act as a focal point for communal belief and onto which an idealized meaning can be etched.<sup>39</sup> Because these bodies are no longer alive, but rather dead, frozen, and, in more ways than one, fixed to communal perceptions of proper use, any counterfactual defiance of such assembled projections of meaning no longer run the risk of being challenged by the body's living agency. Applying this discussion to a separate Heywood text that coincidentally complements the ending of *Woman Killed*, Schwarz writes:

Heywood's conclusion models a true enough answer, a bare sufficiency that conserves belief but not blood through a consensual approximation of death to proof. For a patrilineal culture, this reeks of pyrrhic victory. And if it is difficult to make good sense of a body that is literally dead—if even that silent, motionless, undefended commodity cannot be turned to its proper ends—how much harder might it be to carve out usable things with the more abstract weapon of social erasure?<sup>40</sup>

What, one might ask, does Anne's death prove? Much like the textual circumstances at the center of Schwarz's critique, Anne cannot be turned back towards the culturally conceived "proper ends" of commodified able-bodiedness; even her abrupt placement within the

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<sup>39</sup> Schwarz, "Death and Theory," 55.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 69.

medical hospital of Mitchell's production fails to produce such an effect. But I find Schwarz's discussion intriguing in its framing of death as offering a useful blurring of a living body's subversive potential, "proving" through the annihilation of all physical proof the legitimacy of a fantasy-driven contouring of the dead identity to overriding communal perceptions of proper sex and sexual ability.

I might add here, too, that a particular phrase Schwarz lends to this debate—her noting of a reeking "pyrrhic victory" in the compulsory refiguring of dead identities—strikes to the heart of why Anne's transabled capacity, dead or not, offers so powerful a factor of influence and anxiety in *Woman Killed*. Any victory deemed pyrrhic is, I'd remind my reader, one in which immediate triumph is eclipsed by the high toll brought to bear on the supposed achievement; a win is hardly a win if grasping the upper hand means conceding the spoils of victory to the opponent, or, for that matter, further revealing what is meant to be concealed.<sup>41</sup> What I mean to suggest here is that, not unlike Frankford's sloppy fondling of the erotic liaison with Wendoll, exposed to the light through the language of homosocial bestowal, his far messier handling of Anne draws the shrewd spectator's attention towards what is being disposed of, towards the quiet desperation apparent in, say, ushering away Anne's visible materiality, or transporting it to the realm of medical emergency to accomplish the dirty task. In my reading, this suggests that Anne's disabled body—in all its experimental flirtations with hampering sexual capacity and thus potentially excusing itself from a homosocial axis of influence—signifies such a drastic compromising of convention in the text's economy that death must be delivered in an explosive rush. And, although an attempt is made to annul Anne's transability, to socially erase its presence from the scene through the mechanism of death and the subsequent exploitation of a (now) dead identity,

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<sup>41</sup> "pyrrhic, adj." OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press.

disability is, by consequence, spotlighted as something socio-politically empowered, selfhood too dangerous to let live in its capacity to undermine the carefully weighed scales of homosocial transaction and sexual bestowal. I do not mean to suggest here that the disabled body signifies inherently valueless embodiment in the text; on the contrary, disablement maneuvers as an unanticipated force of defiance to a system privileging able-bodied mediation as a desirable default, altogether refusing gratification of that system's championing of mediative capacity as demonstrative of a woman's value.

Keeping with Schwarz's own discussion of conclusions, it follows that this analysis should end with a consideration of *Woman Killed's* own close, a finale tilted to accommodate Frankford's continued emphasis on leading a counterfactual fantasy contingent on the act of modification after death:

[T]herfore on her grave  
I will bestow this funeral epigraph,  
Which on her marble tomb shall be engraved.  
In golden letters shall these words be filled:  
Here lies she who her husband's kindness killed. (17.135-139)

These final remarks represent the culmination of a multi-layered killing stroke brought to climax in Frankford's previous lines to Anne, already forecasting with shameless clarity the intended consequences of spinning Anne's body under the sheets and away from the realities of bodily materiality. The final "I do" of Frankford's perverse reinstating of the marriage bond becomes the vow "I will," precluding his list of promised modifications to Anne's dead identity, the forefront of which concerns her grave, delineated in Frankford's speech as that which must be "engraved." Given the context, the possible meaning behind these words' juxtaposition is twofold, offering concurrent interpretations that reinforce the context of Frankford's actions. The first, more apparent possibility is that of inscription, reinforced in

Frankford's commitment to etch the meaning of Anne's death by writing his reductive epigraph on the surface of her dead identity, the grave. But, as a reminder of the process that made this inscription possible, the proximity of "grave" and "engrave" within the short monologue recalls that, before Anne's body was forever locked in its impenetrable marble tomb, distanced and thereby figured deferential to male leading in the form of her husband's prescribed punishment, the figure herself had to be killed, "en"-graved in the sense that she must be pushed underground in order for the invention to achieve validation or, for that matter, a measure of proof through proof's very lack.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, as the play draws to an end, the before mentioned emphasis on inscription permeates the scene most of all, Frankford's concluding remarks delivered as if completing a full circle assimilation of Anne within the boundaries of homosocial bestowal, however forced this fantasy may be. Emphasis is again placed on inscribing value to his wife's apparently valueless body using the language of exchange currency; Anne's opening reduction to the status of a "gold chain" in the premier scene may have been dashed to bits through her transabled body, but Frankford, spinning his tale in the midst of an economy in which everything must be useful, recycles that valuable, malleable element of homosocial mediation and liquefies its form to adorn his words of permanent control, forever etched upon Anne's physical memorial. Still, in considering these closing details, I find it fruitful to ponder if, in the midst of Frankford's final plea for control in the text, the admission that it was he who killed his wife with "kindness"—that contrived refiguring of Anne to the panes of artificiality, into the vague designs of sparkling cut glass, appearing able-bodied and glittering eyed but holding only minimal semblance to the woman that once was—can this

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<sup>42</sup> I am referring here to Schwarz's thesis regarding how dead identities are formed and socially exploited, which relies on the dead body as proof of a living fantasy—itsself contingent on a lack of proof when the body is silenced forever through death.

fragile victory be interpreted as anything more than decadence, anything outside of pyrrhic accomplishment? If Frankford's gratifying admission of responsibility in Anne's death inspires the beginning of voluptuous satisfaction, the taste of a happy ending either in his own perception of final control or the audience's satisfactory noting of his distress, why does the scene seem consumed by desperation? Why the nervous, quick closing to the play before the gilded trappings of homosocial influence (gold, marble, glass) collapse under the unbearable weight of a haunting figure no longer confined in the whites of a wedding dress, but rather empowered beneath the sheets of a bed?

## CONCLUSION

How, I ask, might (dis)ability emerge as a critical standard by which sexual capability or culpability is assigned? How might abled or disabled embodiment figure a body asexual, below sexual capability, or pragmatically useless in terms of performing the act, however expansive sex's limits are in Renaissance literature? As I have argued, representations of disability or, in a more general sense, terminality in the period's literature carries anxieties of bodily productivity little detached from teleological sexual necessity. My hope is that this project better explores the possibility that disability emerges in textual landscapes as sexual anxiety, true, but also with cutting erotic power, perhaps reimagining who (or what) is considered sexual, as well as who enters the exclusive parameters of useful, valid, and prosperous sex.

My wager is that the study of (dis)ability will better inform the focus on erotic embodiment dominating queer early modern studies in recent decades. And, while the disability and crip scholarship I have found so germinal is far removed in time and context from the arena of early modern textuality, the lines of similarity and, at times, glaring disparity are the points of application where disability studies penetrates Renaissance texts most effectively. One such example, an idea piloting my critique for the last several chapters, is that sex and disability exist within a discursive paradox in which impairment signifies simultaneous asexuality and hypersexuality—non-erotic bodies even while emerging as the most dangerously sexual ones. I find it reductive and simplistic to historicize broad cultural inferences about the Renaissance from a mere sampling of period literature,

and, indeed, my recognition of such similarities likely stems from the contemporary filter through which I interpret texts. But it is compelling that representations of sex and disability's volatile partnership are so apparent throughout several Renaissance plays and poems, three of which I have explicated here. To make such connections is not to reductively historicize or *unhistoricize*, to read texts with an eye for perceptible similarity or incontestable difference. Rather, it is to use the critical techniques of both historical temporality and unhistorical anachronism to better explore the subtle nuances that pervade time and space, even as such subtleties emerge from the textual temporalities of the plays and poems themselves.

Even so, I admit that applying queer and crip theory's anachronistic terminology—reproductive futurism, compulsory able-bodiedness, and transability three such examples—requires greater fleshing out in historical nuance. But it is this process of recalibration, of joining the early modern to the contemporary, that I find so rewarding. How, for instance, might *All's Well's* seeming cultural investment in reproductive futurity intersect with early modern privileging of productive order versus sodomitical disorder? How might the “magical” intrigue described by twentieth-century critics intersect with Renaissance epistemologies interweaving magic with medical science?<sup>1</sup> If compulsory able-bodiedness is too anachronistic a term to apply to a Renaissance text, what might we call John Gerard's claim that certain botanical blooms “prefer” sight, not blindness? While my terminology for this project is far from perfect, the application of disability studies to Renaissance sexual embodiment requires evaluating the historical resonance of certain philological concepts. What are the inherent assumptions in employing phrases conceptually designed to critique

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<sup>1</sup> Again, I would cite Mary Floyd-Wilson's *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* here, which reads *All's Well That Ends Well* and Helena through a similar lens.

contemporary ableism or heteronormativity? How might the textual arenas I examine prove far more nuanced than the comparably simplistic, anachronistic terms available to critique them?

These inquiries yield no easy answer, yet I have nevertheless tried to present (dis)ability as a category through which to interrogate the sexual body's parameters and ultimate performance in Renaissance texts. My beginning chapter on Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* argues that its cultural focus on heteroproductive, teleological sex figures sickness and disablement as occluding a happy, reproductive ending. And while it is true that texts in and out of Shakespeare's canon depict heterosocial and heteroerotic relations as maddening rather than enabling and health-assuring,<sup>2</sup> disability studies' emphasis on compulsory able-bodiedness explores ability's signification as appropriate, useful sexual embodiment. I have offered a reading in which the partnership between healthy bodies and sexual productivity occur as a consequence of one another, even as one can little occur without the other. *All's Well* is a play, lest we forget, whose own title emphasizes wellness coded through teleological ends that, if carried out, accomplish desired and desirable wellness. Marriage is hardly the sole teleological goal in this comedy, especially when marriage implies eventual heteroproductivity, and productive sex signifies able-bodiedness.

But this partnering of useful, future-affirming affection with necessary ability is not confined to texts concerned with heteroproductive sex. I turned to Barnfield's *The*

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<sup>2</sup> Many such examples come to mind in Shakespeare's canon, including *Othello* (the titular character's epileptic fits progressively worsen as his jealous suspicions of Desdemona heighten), *Hamlet* (Ophelia experiences a mental breakdown following Hamlet's dismissal and rejection of her), and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (in which the Jailor's daughter grows increasingly mentally ill as her lovesick obsession with Arcite grows). My point is that, while such examples associate heterosexual affection with madness and mental disability, a text like *All's Well* puts heterosocial and heteroerotic relations in a much different light, perhaps implying that there is little consistency with how heterosexual relations were either glorified or interpreted as themselves disabling.

*Affectionate Shepherd* to argue that even the most divergent of sexually affective locals cite terminality as occlusive to able-bodiedness and, in a grander sense, ecosystemic wellness. For better or worse, there has been no shortage of studies explicating sodomy in the Renaissance. There has been no loss of criticism examining *Shepherd*'s most defining quality—its overt homoeroticism. But these two categories are not identical, and to explore the dark crevices in their estrangement requires focusing on what has been inadequately discussed thus far—disability and terminality. For a period whose notions of sodomy implicated chaotic, destructive disorder more than sexual acts, it seems little surprise that Daphnis's conceptualization of the destructively sodomitical and dangerously sexual accords to the presence or absence of terminal disability. As I have argued, the text explores apocalyptic atrophy as stemming from a compulsory fear of bodily and ecological impermanence. Perhaps more scholarly work should unpack the extent to which disability itself constitutes sodomy in the period—disorderly in the sense that the disabled or terminally ill subject becomes a dangerously erotic one resisting recuperation into the sexually productive, the prosperous, or that which recuperates into cultural order. My point is that a focus on anality as health-assuring fecundity is not enough. *The Affectionate Shepherd* as text requires queer scholarship to take seriously what is at stake when such phantasmatic wellness necessitates a disavowal of the terminal or terminally disabled body, especially when ephemeral sickness characterizes homoerotic affectation in the first place.

Resistance to erotic exploitation lies at the heart of my final chapter on *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Once again, the foundation of my argument rests on a rather well trodden path in queer Renaissance studies—that is, the corporeal bonds inherent in early modern friendship between men. This alone would be enough for a thought-provoking

reading of Heywood's text given Frankford and Wendoll's homosocial rapport and, indeed, it has been.<sup>3</sup> But more deserves unpacking than homosocial friendship here. I was interested in uncovering a recurring theme earlier exemplified in Bertram and Ganymede, but which is central to Heywood's playtext—how might disability be desirable? And to what extent is this desirability inseparable from erotic desire, as was the case with Bertram's affection for Parolles or Ganymede's for Guendolen? While homosocial friendship arguably exploits trafficked bodies in the play, I sought to uncover how disability might be a beacon disrupting the necessity of sexual usefulness so prominent in my earlier readings. Anachronism and historicism are equally imperative here. To what degree, I ask, might an ahistorical consideration of transability better uncover the subtle shifts in erotic power that Anne's straightforward adherence to spiritual atonement masks? Strict attention to ahistorical terminology might indeed peripheralize cultural expectations inherent in the early modern period, but a sole emphasis on historical knowledge of self-starvation might solicit the fantasy of "holy anorexia" recuperating Anne's self-disablement into use-value and exploitation. As stated in my introduction, my aims for this project are far beyond deconstructing a perceived boundary between history and anachronism that cannot, should not, exist to begin with, but my hope is that great future Renaissance scholarship on embodiment will employ the benefits of both. I certainly hope to.

To ask one final time: how might disability fuel sexual anxiety or, alternatively, erotic power in Renaissance literature? What makes the King a procreative father following his miraculous cure? What makes Ganymede so seductive a plaything, an able-bodied status ultimately jeopardized by disabling, sodomitical heteroeroticism? Why might Anne prove

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<sup>3</sup> See again Rebecca Anne Bach's "The Homosocial Imaginary of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*" for one such example.

incapable of performing homosocial triangulation in the end? What made her capable of it in the first place? I am likely far from the last to pose such queries, yet their exploration requires the study of embodied ability as much as sexual affection and enactment itself. If I could ask my audience a final set of provocations, it would be this—how can any study of intimacy, affection, sex, and sexuality, the queer, the sodomitical, or the disorderly, not begin and end with the body, that site at which sexual desire is inaugurated, even as sex figures the material body's ability and, hence, its desire and desirability? Where does embodied affection initiate and conclude its coda, and to what extent can a study of (dis)ability help inform the parameters between straight history and the unhistorical, teleology and the nonteleological, the prosperous and the preposterous? Speaking of codas, this one has reached its end, even if the breadth and depth of issues I temporarily close requires, to quote a certain sodomite, to end ere I do begin.

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## **Vita**

Evyan D. Gainey was born in Snow Camp, North Carolina to Al and Rene Gainey. He graduated from Southern Alamance High School in June 2013. The following fall, he entered Appalachian State University to study English and Political Science. In December 2015, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a Bachelor of Science degree in International/Comparative Politics. In the spring of 2016, he began work as a research assistant in Appalachian's English Department, and began study toward a Master of Arts degree. Since beginning full-time graduate study, Mr. Gainey has been granted numerous research and merit-based awards, and was recently inducted into the Cratis D. Williams Society for outstanding graduate students. He is currently the English Department's representative in the Graduate Student Association Senate (GSAS). Mr. Gainey will complete his M.A. in May 2017.

In September 2017, Mr. Gainey will enter the Ph.D. program at Columbia University to study early modern literature and culture. He currently resides in Boone, North Carolina.